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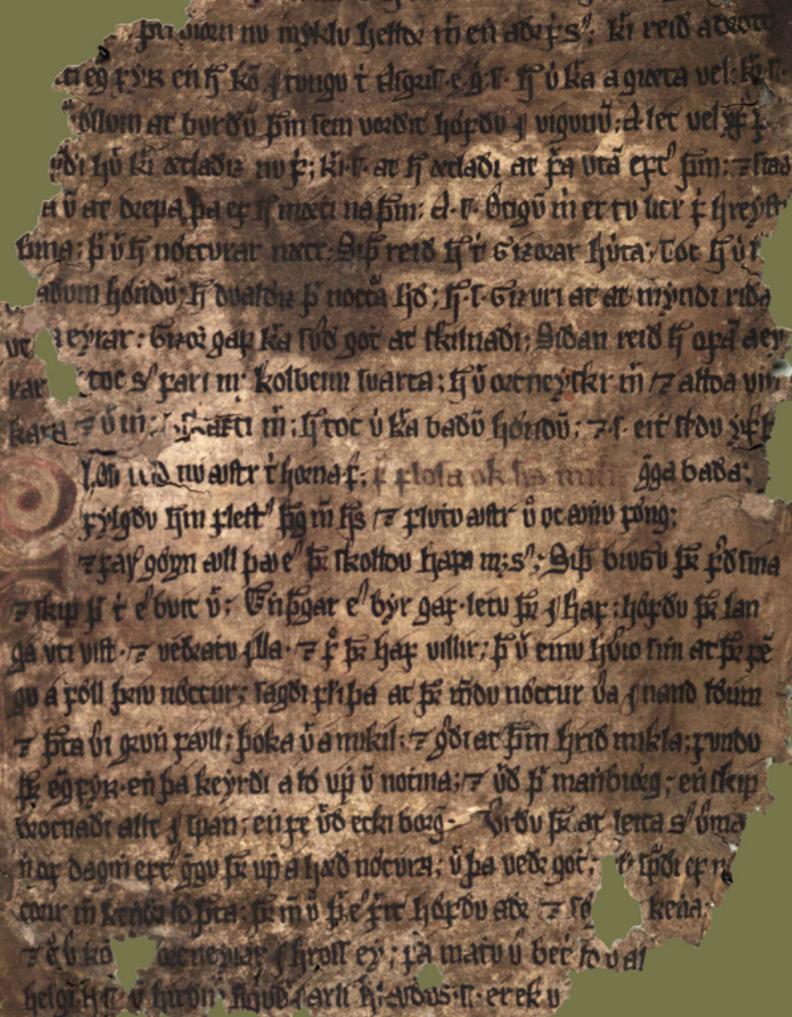


New Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of *Njáls saga*

The *historia mutila* of *Njála*

Edited by

Emily Lethbridge and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir



þu sian nu myklu heitir in en adri s'. ki reid at
aeg þyr en h ko / tungu t elgaut e a t. h u ka a gorta vel. h
ollom at burdu þim sem voadir hofdu i uigouu. a let vel þ
odi ho ki ocladi nu þ; ki t. at h ocladi at þa utā ept þim. z has
a u at depra þa eþ h maeti na þim. a t. þogū in er tu lici þ hreyð
luna; þ u h nocevirar naet. Siþ reid h t s' reoar hira; toc h u
adum hōndū h duaton þ nocta hō; h t. s' ur ar at myndi rida
ve reyrar: þno gap ka sūd got at tkatnadi; Siðan reid h opa aey
var toc s' pari m. kolbenn tuarta; h u oetneytker in / z altha vin
kara z u in. s' afti in. h toc u ka badū hōndū; z t. eit t'rou þ
lōi u d nu aitr t' hena t. z flota ok þa m m. gga bada;
z ylgōv þim flett' þig in h s' z þvivo aitr u oeanu þong;
z þaf gōym all þae' þe t'kolhou hapa m; s'; Siþ biva þe þōtima
z kep þe t' burt u; Siþ þgar e' byr gar letu þe i hax; hōfdu þe lan
ga uti vift. z vedratu þla z þe hax villir; þ u emu hōio þim at þe þe
go a þōll þau noceur; sagði þe þa at þe vōdu noceur þa i mand tōum
z þta vi geuū þvull; þoka u a mukil; z gdi at þim hrid mukla; z vōdu
þe eþþyr en þa keyrði a tō up u notina; z vō þe manþvæg; eū t'kep
þvornadi alle i þan; eū þe vō ecki þog. hōv þe ar letta s' vma
naþ dagni ere ggv þe up a had noceur; u þa vedr got; þe þōt eþ r
oaur in kenda tō þta; þe m u þe þe hōfdu aþe z tō keda;
z e u kō oetneytker i hroll ey; þa maču u þe tō v al
helgi h t u hōm; hōv t'arl h' vōdu s' t. erek u

New Studies in the Manuscript
Tradition of *Njáls saga*

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Introduction

Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir

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WHAT IS IT THAT unites Guðlaugur Magnússon, a nineteenth-century Icelandic émigré to North America; Jacob Golius, a seventeenth-century Dutch orientalist and professor at Leiden University; Þórunn Þórðardóttir, a sixteenth-century parson's wife in Vopnafjörður, East Iceland; and Jakob Rollant, a Catholic priest in twenty-first century Reykjavík? The answer is that they all share the experience of having held in their hands a manuscript of *Njáls saga*. Guðlaugur produced his own handwritten copy of the saga and adorned it with pictures; Golius was given one of the oldest and most complete manuscripts of the saga, Reykjabók (AM 468 4to), by Þorkell Arngrímsson (son of Arngrímur *lerði* Jónsson), who traveled to the Netherlands from Denmark in 1652 and brought the book with him; Þórunn was the mother of Högni Finnbogason who recorded his ownership of Þormóðsbók (AM 162 B 8 fol.) in the margins of that manuscript (she may have been the *dándiskvinna* who gave it to him); Rollant contacted the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík in 2008 to seek advice regarding a book that had been found among the possessions of the Catholic church at Landakot: the book contained an eighteenth-century copy of Reykjabók. These four individuals are just a few examples taken from the scores of people who, from the late thirteenth century onwards, produced, owned, handled, and read a manuscript (or manuscripts) of *Njáls saga*. Most of them remain anonymous—this is particularly true of the medieval scribes and readers—but the sheer number of preserved manuscripts of the saga hints at the fascination that this narrative has held for generation after generation of Icelanders, as well as scholars of Icelandic saga literature.

It follows that investigating the manuscript transmission of such a popular literary work is no task for a single researcher. Not only are the manuscripts numerous, but the text is also very long, and the avenues for exploration that its long history of transmission and reception offer scholars are many and diverse. They span philology in its widest sense, as a discipline

that seeks to illuminate everything that can be brought to bear on the production, history, and interpretation of a textual work.¹ And *Njáls saga* is a riveting case for practitioners of old and new philology alike: on the one hand, it offers a challenge for those who seek to understand how the text developed through copying, and how the manuscripts may be grouped together into families or branches, whereas on the other hand, for those interested in the social history of manuscripts and the things their material qualities may reveal about their (intended) use, the diversity of *Njáls saga* manuscripts opens up many opportunities for very interesting studies. There is great variation in the appearance of *Njála* manuscripts, for instance, and a study of their makeup, layout, and decoration is an important aspect of their history which has hitherto gone all but unnoticed.

It was in acknowledgment of the great potential for further study that the saga offers that a group of scholars associated with the Arnamagnæan Institutes in Reykjavík and Copenhagen, and the University of Iceland, embarked on a project named “The Variance of *Njáls saga*.” We received funding from the Icelandic Research Fund for three years (2011 to 2013), which enabled us to take the first steps towards the gigantic task of mapping the manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga* and answering questions about the differences between the manuscripts—as well as the aspects that unite them—from a philological, linguistic, and literary point of view. In addition to scholars at the two institutes and at the University of Iceland, the research project involved postdoctoral fellows at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík and students at the University of Iceland, the University of Copenhagen, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison as well as students from other institutions who participated in the Arnamagnæan Summer School in Manuscript Studies in 2013, 2014, and 2016. (A list of all participants in the project is provided at the end of the introduction.) We presented the project at the Fifteenth International Saga Conference in Århus in 2012 and at the Science Night “*Visindavaka*” organized by the Icelandic Research Fund in 2013. At these venues (and at others), it was gratifying to experience the enthusiasm stirred up by *Njáls saga* manuscripts among saga experts as well as the general public.

As was to be expected, this initial foray into the field has opened up new vistas, and follow-up projects are already under way.² This collection of essays may be said to be a testament to the first phase of this collaboration on the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, but it is in no way an exhaustive account of all the work that has already been done, nor of individual findings. Some articles that have come out of the project have already

been published elsewhere, and more are in the pipeline. One might say that our scholarly activity on the *Njála* manuscripts forms an analogy with the scribal culture that produced them: there are many individuals involved and they each have their own interests; in many cases people work together, and modern technology allows us to take the collaboration further and to use crowdsourcing when collecting data (see the chapter by Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume). The important groundwork in transcribing and marking up the text of individual manuscripts that is being done within the project and its offshoots will serve future scholars in their research, and it will also, we hope, form the basis for a new scholarly edition of the saga. The transcriptions are stored at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies and some are already accessible through the Medieval Nordic Text Archive (MENOTA). *Njáls saga* has also been added to the website *WikiSaga*, where an annotated bibliography of scholarly articles about *Egils saga* and *Njáls saga* is being compiled.³ Like some of the work done under the auspices of “The Variance of *Njáls saga*” project, *WikiSaga* relies on the input of many, not least students of medieval Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland.⁴

The manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga* is characterized by the fragmentary nature of many of the codices: this is clear from the survey of manuscripts compiled by Susanne M. Arthur and Ludger Zeevaert (see pp. 283–91). No extant medieval manuscript of the saga is now complete, and some are fragments consisting of only one or two leaves. Others lack a few leaves or even whole gatherings. Scribes copying the saga had to meet the challenge of procuring the entire text (and filling lacunae in their exemplar if they existed) by borrowing another manuscript. It is probable that the length of the text also meant that scribes sometimes had to use more than one exemplar; they may have had to return a borrowed manuscript before they had completed the copying. Books that were frequently handled could not escape wear and tear. Owners and readers contributed to the maintenance of the manuscripts by repairing them, adding leaves or missing text when a loss had occurred. The appearance of the manuscripts therefore reveals a great deal about the life they have led, and it is not necessarily the best-preserved codex that attracts the curiosity of scholars—but rather, the reverse. The subtitle of this volume, *The historia mutila of Njála*, refers to the fascination and challenge that the fragmented nature of both *Njáls saga* manuscripts and the history of the transmission as a whole hold for us. The phrase is taken from a document that Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus) compiled in 1662, listing manuscripts sent

from Iceland to the Royal Library in Copenhagen. The list contains two *Njáls saga* manuscripts in quarto, both described by Torfæus as “Njali historia mutila,” (see Emily Lethbridge in this volume p. 58 and Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, p. 88). The main part of this book’s title is meant to express our admiration for the great *Njála* scholar Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and to echo the title of his pioneering work on the manuscripts of the saga.

There are between sixty and seventy manuscripts and manuscript fragments of *Njáls saga* extant (for a complete list, see pp. 283–91). It is difficult to arrive at an exact number because it is debatable how one should count them. There are sixty-four different call numbers or shelf-marks, but it seems that, in some cases, two or more fragments with separate call numbers originally belonged to the same manuscript. This has been argued for AM 162 B β and δ fol., and for AM 921 I 4to, Lbs fragm. 2, and JS fragm. 4, for example. Conversely, some manuscripts with a single call mark include leaves that have been inserted later and may even originally have belonged to a different manuscript (see, e.g., Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in this volume pp. 91–92).

The large number of preserved manuscripts sets *Njála* apart from other Sagas of Icelanders. It is also unusual in that a considerable number of these manuscripts are early. Around a third of the *Njáls saga* manuscripts are written on parchment (and all but two of these are medieval); the rest are paper manuscripts. The three oldest manuscripts, Reykjabók, Gráskinna, and Þormóðsbók (plus the single leaf β-fragment, which may originally have been part of Þormóðsbók), have been dated to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Since the saga is thought to have been put together around 1280, this means that only a couple of decades separate the oldest manuscripts from the time of the saga’s inception. A further twelve manuscript witnesses exist from before 1450, albeit in varying degrees of fragmentation: Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.) and Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.) are the fullest, and at the other end of the spectrum we have the fragments AM 162 B α, θ, and κ fol., which consist of a bifolium each. The late-medieval manuscripts Oddabók (AM 466 4to) and Bæjarbók (AM 309 4to), both dated to the latter half of the fifteenth century, are the last representatives of the pre-Reformation *Njála* tradition. That last statement is not entirely accurate, however, for the sixteenth century witnessed a remarkable restoration program to the old codex Gráskinna, as Emily Lethbridge addresses in her chapter in this volume. This involved making good substantial loss of text by inserting new leaves into the codex and repairing existing leaves, and the effort that went into this shows the

attachment the sixteenth-century owner must have felt for this extraordinary manuscript. Gráskinna left Iceland in the seventeenth century, as, gradually, did all the medieval *Njála* manuscripts that still survive. Most of them were acquired by the great manuscript collector Árni Magnússon, including Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, and Kálfalækjarbók, but three ended up in the Royal Library in Copenhagen: Gráskinna, Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to), and Sveinsbók (GKS 2869 4to).

The seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries saw an upsurge in interest in Old Norse literature and Icelandic manuscripts, not least in Scandinavia. This kept Icelandic scribes busy producing copies of saga literature to quench the thirst of antiquarians at home and abroad. Although *Njáls saga*, with its focus on events in Iceland, may have been of less interest to Scandinavian historians than kings' sagas and *fornaldarsögur* set in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, it was nevertheless copied extensively, summaries were written, and a stab was made at translations into Danish and Swedish and, later, German (see pp. 286 and 288–90).⁵ The scribes doing the copying worked in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and in Iceland, and their patrons belonged to the learned upper class. Reykjabók was copied several times, both in Iceland and in Denmark, but most postmedieval copies of *Njáls saga* turn out to be descended from a vellum codex that is now lost but is referred to by the name Gullskinna (see Margrét Eggertsdóttir's chapter in this volume). It is not known what became of Gullskinna in the end, but it may have sunk to the bottom of the sea when someone attempted to send it abroad. And manuscripts were by no means safe even once they had survived a sea-voyage and entered prestigious collections in Scandinavia. Records show that several paper copies of *Njáls saga* perished in the fires that ravaged Stockholm in 1697 and Copenhagen in 1728 (see p. 291). The fate of these books is a reminder of all the manuscripts that existed at one point or another but were subsequently lost or destroyed. A more recent example is that of two fragments which were in the collection of the National Museum of Iceland when Einar Ólafur Sveinsson was preparing his edition of *Njáls saga* around the middle of the last century but which seem to have vanished soon after (see pp. 286 and 290).

The antiquarian interest in saga literature paved the way for the first edition of *Njáls saga* which was prepared by Ólafur Olavius and appeared in Copenhagen in 1772. The year 1809 saw the publication of Jón Johnsonius's Latin translation of the saga, and in 1844 Ólafur Stephensen on the island of Viðey issued a reprint of the 1772 edition. That edition

probably provided the exemplar for the last complete manuscript copy of *Njáls saga* that now exists: Lbs 747 fol., written by Guðlaugur Magnússon in the winter of 1871–1872 (see Þorsteinn Árnason Surmeli’s chapter in this volume). A fragment of another nineteenth-century *Njála* manuscript was discovered in Seattle in 2016 and is now in the collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík. It appears to be a copy of the 1772 edition, for the scribe has reproduced the border that decorates the first page of the text, albeit with interesting modifications, such as replacing what in the printed edition looks like two gateposts with human figures (Gunnarr and Njáll?). As the nineteenth century came to an end, there was less need for handwritten copies of *Njáls saga*. When Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson edited the saga for the monumental edition published by Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab (1875–1889), a separate edition of the text only, without the textual apparatus, was published (in 1875) to cater for the needs of nonspecialist readers. That edition formed the basis for Valdimar Ásmundarson’s popular edition of 1894, which was prepared for the bookseller Sigurður Kristjánsson, who was a pioneer in the publication of cheap editions of saga literature. Valdimar’s edition was reprinted in 1910. By that time, those interested in procuring a copy of *Njála* to read had several options, of which copying the entire text out by hand was probably the least practical.⁶ The manuscript age was coming to an end as far as saga literature was concerned.

The most extensive treatment of the manuscripts of *Njáls saga* is to be found, as one would expect, in publications connected with previous editions of the saga (for more discussion of *Njála* editions see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume, pp. 1–8). Jón Þorkelsson produced a survey of all *Njála* manuscripts known at the time for Konráð Gíslason’s and Eiríkur Jónsson’s edition. It was printed on pp. 647–787 in the second volume of the edition (1889). In preparation for his edition of *Njáls saga* for Íslensk fornrit (ÍF), Einar Ólafur Sveinsson undertook an extensive study of the manuscripts. He published the results of this thorough, analytical survey in a separate book, *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of Njálssaga* in the series *Studia Islandica* (1953), in an article in *Skírnir* (1952), and as a part of his introduction to the ÍF volume (1954). In addition to this, Jón Helgason produced a facsimile edition of Reykjabók in 1962 with a detailed introduction to that manuscript.

Since scholarship on *Njála* manuscripts has thus largely been conducted within the framework of editorial projects, it comes as no surprise that manuscripts have not all been accorded equal attention: the

focus has been more on those chosen by editors as the basis for their text. Reykjabók has thus been extensively treated, and the same can be said of Möðruvallabók, which further benefits from the fact that it contains ten other sagas and has therefore been the subject of numerous studies. Other manuscripts of *Njáls saga* are much less known and the post-Reformation tradition has hardly been studied at all. It was therefore decided that the project “The Variance of *Njáls saga*” should seek to remedy this by focusing, on the one hand, on Gráskinna and on the medieval fragments grouped together under the call number AM 162 B fol. and, on the other hand, on the post-Reformation descendants of the lost medieval codex Gullskinna. Through this, we hoped to be able to document the diachronic aspect of the transmission while also looking into the variation from a synchronic perspective in the case of the numerous fourteenth-century manuscript witnesses (see the chapters by Haraldur Bernharðsson and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume). An essential part of the project was the electronic transcription of the text of the manuscripts, using XML mark-up, with a view to building an archive of *Njáls saga*’s text in multiple manuscripts. The smaller manuscript fragments proved ideal for students’ final thesis projects, and four students at the University of Iceland each analyzed and edited a fragment (or fragments) under the supervision of Haraldur Bernharðsson: Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson worked on AM 162 B ε fol.; Jerel Lai-Jing Lai worked on AM 162 B ι fol.; Katarzyna Anna Kapitan worked on AM 162 B α fol.; and Beeke Stegmann worked on AM 162 θ and κ fol. Other transcription work was done by Ludger Zeevaert, Emily Lethbridge, Liv Mostad-Jensen, Ryder Patzuk-Russell, and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir. Their task was made considerably easier by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, who generously provided the project with the electronic text of Reykjabók which he had prepared for his edition of the saga for the publishing house Bjartur (2003, 2nd edition 2004). The Reykjabók text could therefore be used as a crib, so rather than having to transcribe every word, the transcribers could simply insert changes into the text where their manuscript departed from the Reykjabók text. To ensure comparability between the transcriptions, Ludger Zeevaert divided the text of Reykjabók up into defined sentences and provided other necessary mark-up (see also his chapter in this volume).

The PhD project undertaken by Susanne M. Arthur at the University of Wisconsin–Madison formed a part of the “Variance of *Njáls saga*” project from the beginning. In her dissertation (which was supervised by Kirsten Wolf, with Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir acting as a secondary

supervisor), Arthur investigated the material aspects of *Njáls saga* manuscripts, analyzing their makeup, layout, and paratextual features. Her chapter in this volume is built on a part of her dissertation, as is the survey of manuscripts compiled by her and Ludger Zeevaert. Similarly, Þorsteinn Árnason Surmeli's article on the illustrations by Guðlaugur Magnússon in Lbs 747 fol. is built on his MA thesis at the University of Iceland (supervised by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson).

In conjunction with the project, *Njáls saga* manuscripts were prioritized in the digitization that is ongoing for the website <https://handrit.is>. We are very grateful to the photographers at the two Arnamagnæan Institutes, Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir and Suzanne Reitz, for their work, and to Haukur Þorgeirsson (Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík), Matthew Driscoll (Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen), and Örn Hrafnkelsson (The National and University Library of Iceland) for their assistance. Thanks are due, also, to the conservators at the Institutes, Signe Hjerrild Smedemark (Reykjavík) and Natasha Fazlic (Copenhagen), who made sure manuscripts were not damaged during necessary handling.

Finally, it is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the financial support of the Icelandic Research Fund (grant no. 110610-021) and the University of Iceland Research Fund.

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NOTES

¹ See Jakob Benediktsson, “Textafræði,” 19–20, 33–35.

² Ludger Zeevaert leads the project “Gullskinna: Postmedieval transmission and reception of a lost medieval parchment codex,” funded by the Icelandic Research Fund; Susanne M. Arthur works on a postdoctoral project funded by the Recruitment Fund of the University of Iceland named “Variance in the *Gullskinna-branch of *Njáls saga*”; Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson is doing a PhD project entitled “The Textual Tradition of *Njáls saga*: The Case of Skafinskinna.”

³ <https://wikisaga.hi.is> The bibliography is edited by Jón Karl Helgason and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir.

⁴ On the project, see Álfðís Þorleifsdóttir, Parsons, and Appleton, “A Selected Bibliography,” 216–19.

⁵ On translations and other rewritings of *Njáls saga* in this period see Jón Karl Helgason, *The Rewriting of Njáls saga*, 24–28.

⁶ See Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 200.

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A Note on References to Editions and Manuscripts in this Book

THE CHAPTERS IN THIS book are diverse and hence call for a somewhat diverse approach when citing *Njáls saga*. Generally, citations are from the 1875 edition of the saga produced by Eiríkur Jónsson and Konráð Gíslason (*Njála udgivet efter gamle håndskrifter*) and are indicated by the letters KG, followed by chapter and line numbers (e.g., KG 37.29–30). Other editions are cited as needed and are all listed in the bibliography under “Primary sources”. When discussion centers on a particular manuscript and its paleographic and orthographic features, the text of the manuscript in question is quoted using a diplomatic transcription and expansion of abbreviations is indicated by italics.

Where authors cite a translation, it is Robert Cook’s (Penguin Classics, 2001). An index of personal names and place-names can be found at the end of the volume; Icelandic convention is followed regarding alphabetization in this index and in the bibliography.

Manuscripts that are known by a nickname (e.g., Kálfalækjarbók) are generally referred to by that name although in each chapter the call number is given on the first mention of the manuscript. A key to the nicknames is provided on pp. 293–94. Other manuscripts are referred to by their call numbers. A survey of all *Njáls saga* manuscripts is found on pp. 283–91, and an index of all manuscripts mentioned in the volume is provided on pp. 315–18.

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Abbreviations

- DI* = *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*
ÍF = Íslenzk fornrit
KG = *Njála udgivet efter gamle håndskrifter*
ONP = *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*

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Whose *Njála*?

Njáls saga Editions and Textual Variance in the Oldest Manuscripts

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Introduction

Njáls saga is a monument of medieval European literature. No other Icelandic saga has elicited as many articles and analyses.¹ Scholars have examined the plot and how it is fueled, pored over minutiae in the characterization of the main protagonists, wondered about the contesting ideologies of heathendom and Christianity and their role in shaping the saga, puzzled over the endless interest in legal procedure that marks it, and admired the narrative skill that is so evident in many places in the text. This they have done either on the basis of one (or more) of the many translations of the saga, or by using the printed editions available of the Old Icelandic text. It is relatively rare to see a scholarly publication on *Njáls saga* which takes into consideration the textual variation that exists between the manuscripts of the saga. This is understandable since the most widely used edition, that of the Íslenzk fornrit series (ÍF), published in 1954, only provides limited access to such information. The current discussion on *Njáls saga* therefore rests on a text that was put together six decades ago and that has shaped the ideas of three or four generations of scholars and general readers. During this time, views of the genesis of saga narrative, of textual criticism, and of manuscript culture have changed significantly, and it is high time to review our ideas of the text of *Njáls saga* and to get behind the editorial construct that shaped them. In this chapter, we will give an overview of the history of *Njála* editions and discuss the principles behind them, before turning to two of the oldest manuscripts of the saga, which are relatively unknown, and presenting their textual characteristics.

Early Editions

Unlike the situation with many of the Sagas of Icelanders where the manuscript transmission is severely fragmented,² there are many early

manuscripts and manuscript fragments preserved of *Njáls saga* (see Susanne Arthur and Ludger Zeevaert pp. 284–85). The dating of these manuscripts can never be accurate (see Haraldur Bernharðsson in this volume, p. 120), but five of them are considered to have been written in the first half or around the middle of the fourteenth century: Reykjabók (AM 468 4to), Þormóðsbók (AM 162 B 8 fol.), Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to), Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.), Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.). In addition, there are six smaller fragments preserved from that period, containing between one and five leaves each. An editor, therefore, has several options to choose from, even if she/he restricts her/his choice of base text to the oldest preserved manuscripts. None of them is complete, but Reykjabók lacks only two leaves of text, fols. 7 and 34—and the text of the latter can, moreover, be made good by using an accurate transcript produced in the early eighteenth century.³ It is therefore not surprising that editors have tended to base their text on that of Reykjabók.

The first printed edition of *Njáls saga* appeared in Copenhagen in 1772, a sign that Denmark was gaining on Sweden in the contest of publishing Old Norse saga texts for a growing market of interested antiquarians. The Copenhagen edition was prepared by Ólafur Olavius who used three manuscripts for his edition, all from the Arnarnagæan collection. He chose Reykjabók as his base text and supplemented it with readings from Möðruvallabók and Kálfalækjarbók. Although Olavius claimed to have followed the Reykjabók text closely, he departed from it now and then, adopting readings from the other two manuscripts.⁴ Following the publication of the *editio princeps*, plans were made for a Latin translation, but considerable time elapsed before it made it to press. It was published in 1809 and included a more extensive critical apparatus than the 1772 edition, based on all the medieval parchment manuscripts and fragments, and ten paper manuscripts to boot.

The next decisive chapter in the history of *Njála* editions came in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Eiríkur Jónsson and Konráð Gíslason set out to produce a new edition of the saga, based on all extant parchment manuscripts. The text was printed in 1875, with accompanying editorial material appearing in 1879, 1883 and 1889. Again, Reykjabók was the point of departure, but Eiríkur and Konráð deviated much more from its text than Olavius had done. They frequently introduced variant readings from other manuscripts into the Reykjabók text and generally went for wordier readings.⁵ The short introduction to the edition gives no clue about the principles applied when readings were chosen, but the

critical apparatus faithfully records the source manuscript for the text in each case. The choice of readings was governed, it seems, by the editors' aesthetic judgment rather than by any theory about the relationship of the manuscripts, although it is clear from Konráð Gíslason's discussion on some of the verses in *Njáls saga* that he reckoned the manuscripts could be divided into main two groups, with Reykjabók and Kálfalækjarbók in one and Möðruvallabók, Bajarbók (AM 309 4to), Oddabók (AM 466 4to), and Gráskinna in the other.⁶

It is safe to say that ever since the *editio princeps* of *Njáls saga*, scholars were aware of the fact that the early manuscripts diverge in places and that a "better" or more original reading might be found in manuscripts other than the one chosen as base text. Editors' treatment of the text of Reykjabók was thus governed by their ideas about the original text of the saga, of how it had been composed and how it might have been "corrupted" in scribal transmission. This is exceptionally clear in the treatment of the verses in the saga. Finnur Jónsson considered twenty-seven stanzas in Reykjabók to be secondary and hence left them out of the edition he produced in 1908 for Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek. As for the prose text, he deviated from Reykjabók when he reckoned it did not reflect the original wording of the saga. In his introduction, Finnur criticized Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson for producing a mixed text based on a subjective choice of readings. Finnur professed to stay much closer to the Reykjabók text, but Einar Ólafur Sveinsson found his text to vary less from that of the 1875 edition than might be expected.⁷

The search for the original text of *Njáls saga* relied on textual criticism in the spirit of nineteenth-century philology.⁸ The first stab at establishing a *stemma codicum* was made by Hans Schnorr von Carolsfeld in 1883, and this stemma was later modified by Jón Þorkelsson who was responsible for a survey of *Njáls saga* manuscripts which accompanied the 1875 edition. It was already evident by then that the texts of Reykjabók and Kálfalækjarbók were quite similar, while Gráskinna and Möðruvallabók each went their separate ways at times. The situation with *Njáls saga* in the fourteenth century thus seems to be not unlike that of *Egils saga*, where three separate branches of text established themselves in the medieval transmission and where the difference between the three lies not only in the treatment of poetry in the saga but also in condensation or expansion of the prose text.⁹ The critical edition of *Egils saga* in the series *Editiones Arnarnænar* (currently underway) acknowledges this by editing the manuscripts of each branch separately, rather than

attempting to reconstruct the text of the archetype by mixing readings from the branches. The difference between the texts is simply too great, and scholars and readers are better served by laying out in this way the development of the text in manuscripts.

Seeking the Author: The Shaping of a Standard Text

When Einar Ólafur Sveinsson was preparing his edition of *Njáls saga* for the Íslenzk fornrit series, which appeared in 1954, he undertook extensive research into the manuscript tradition of the saga and refined the stemmata produced by Schnorr von Carolsfeld and Jón Þorkelsson.¹⁰ Einar Ólafur divided the manuscripts into three branches, X, Y, and Z, but he argued that Y and Z were in fact sub-branches descended from a lost manuscript *V, which would have been a sister manuscript to *A, the archetype of the X-branch. He also drew attention to the fact that several of the manuscripts seemed to contain a mixed text; that is their text would now follow the text of one branch, but then seemed to switch to another branch. This he explained by supposing that the scribes had changed exemplar, arguing that this was understandable given the length of the text.¹¹ When it came to establishing a text for the edition, Einar Ólafur expressed a manifesto of sorts: “Af því að ég hafði sannfærzt um, að unnt væri að komast að texta, sem staði nær frumtextanum en texti nokkurs hinna varðveittu handrita gerir, taldi ég ekki verða undan komizt að gera tilraun til þess” [Because I had become convinced that it was possible to arrive at a text closer to the original than that found in any single preserved manuscript, I felt it was my duty to attempt it].¹²

He endeavored to give readers what he reckoned to be the original wording of the saga, and the text he produced is therefore mixed, as is that of the 1875 and 1908 editions. But Einar Ólafur broke with tradition in that he did not choose Reykjabók as his base text. He decided to use Möðruvallabók, a manuscript from the Y-class, on the grounds that the text in Y and in Z, the sub-branches of V, was generally *fyllri*—more extensive, wordier. Like Konráð Gíslason, he understood modifications to the text in manuscripts to be towards shortening it rather than the opposite: “Eftir athugun og bollaleggingar komst ég að þeirri niðurstöðu, að jafnaðarlega væri orðfleiri textinn upprunalegri” [After examination and ruminations I came to the conclusion that the wordier text was on average the more original one].¹³ The beginning of the saga is lost in Möðruvallabók, and the manuscript also has several lacunae. Rather

than attempting to fill these with a text from Z, Einar Ólafur opted for Reykjabók, one of the main manuscripts of the X-class, but adjusting it to the readings he believed to be original.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson used his stemma to arrive at the supposed archetypal text, which was moreover believed to be close to the original text of the author of the saga, given that only a couple of decades were thought to have elapsed between the composition of the saga and the earliest preserved manuscripts. Assuming that all manuscripts were descended, ultimately, from the same manuscript, and referring to what he termed as “usual principles” of philology, Einar Ólafur judged a reading to be original if it was found in two of the three branches—i.e., X and either Y or Z. If X stands against YZ, it falls to the editor to decide which reading is more likely to have been in the archetype. Einar Ólafur does not lay out the criteria he based his choice on in those cases:

Oft ber það við, að V (þ.e. Y og Z) greinir á við X, og verður þá að meta, hvor muni vera betri. Ófýsi að rugla saman textum veldur því, að farið er stundum eftir V-textanum án sannfæringar, en þegar X-textinn þótti fortakslaust líklegri til að vera upphaflegur, hefur þó verið leiðrétt eftir honum; hef ég farið eins langt og frekast virtist mega í þessari útgáfu að geta neðanmáls þeirra breytinga, en oft hefur útgefandinn orðið að sætta sig við að láta þess ógetið.”

[It is frequently the case that V (i.e. Y and Z) diverges from X, and it then has to be decided which has the better text. Reluctance to mix the texts has sometimes led me to follow the V-text without conviction, but when the X-text seemed to me definitely more likely to be original, I corrected the V-text accordingly; I have, as far as is possible in this type of edition, pointed out such alterations in the notes, but have often had to reconcile myself with passing over such instances in silence.]¹⁴

It is, in other words, not always possible to see how the Íslenzk fornrit text is constructed, from which manuscript a word or a sentence comes. Although significant variant readings are often recorded in the apparatus, the scope of the edition did not allow for a full *apparatus criticus*. The 1875 edition is still the only one that gives scholars access to the entire variation of readings in the manuscripts used for the edition in question. These did not include the manuscripts descended from the lost codex Gullskinna, so the picture of the transmission is not exhaustive, but the edition remains a remarkable feat, regardless. The critical apparatus is very reliable, but it

is dense and requires some determination to penetrate. The edition has never been reprinted so it is not surprising that the ÍF edition is the one most generally in scholarly use.¹⁵

The result of this is that scholars have a hard time extracting the text of a specific manuscript out of the existing editions—with the notable exception of Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson’s recent edition (2003, reprinted 2004) of the Reykjabók text—and comparison between the texts of different manuscripts is very difficult. The editing history of *Njála* has also meant that two of the manuscripts, Reykjabók and Möðruvallabók, are fairly well known, while others remain uncharted territory, although some readings from them may have become parts of the standard *Njáls saga* we all love. As a brief example we might look at the following scene where Þjóstólfr arrives at Varmalækur after he has killed Glúmr, Hallgerðr’s beloved second husband:

Þjóstólfr hulði hræ hans með grjóti ok tók af honum gullhring. Hann gekk þar til, er hann kom til Varmalækjar. Hallgerðr var úti ok sá, at blóðug var øxin. Hann kastaði til hennar gullhringinum. Hon mælti: “Hvat segir þú tíðenda? eða hví er øx þín blóðug?” Hann svaraði: “Eigi veit ek, hversu þér mun þykkja: ek segi þér víg Glúms.” “Þú munt því valda,” segir hon. “Svá er,” segir hann. Hon hló at ok mælti: “Eigi ert þú engi í leikinum.”¹⁶

[Thjostolf covered his body with stones and took a gold bracelet from him. He walked back to Varmalaek. Hallgerd was outside and saw that his axe was bloody. He threw the gold bracelet to her. She spoke: “What news do you bring? Why is your axe bloody?” He answered, “I don’t know how you’ll take this, but I must tell you of the slaying of Glum.” “You must have done it,” she said. “That’s true,” he said. She laughed and said, “You didn’t sit this game out.”]

The text in ÍF here is exactly like that of the 1875 edition (KG 17.24–33). There is a lacuna in Möðruvallabók at this point, so Einar Ólafur Sveinsson could not follow its text. Instead he takes up Konráð Gíslason’s and Eiríkur Jónsson’s text which is a mixture of readings from X-manuscripts on the one hand, and Z-manuscripts on the other.¹⁷ The Z-text is the longer of the two, for it has two sentences that are not found in the X-manuscripts: “Hann kastaði til hennar gullhringinum. Hon mælti: ‘Hvat segir þú tíðenda? eða hví er øx þín blóðug?’” The Z-manuscripts moreover leave out Hallgerðr’s laughter; the words “hló at ok mælti” are not included, but “s(agði) hon” simply added after Hallgerðr’s reply “Eigi ert þú engi í leikinum”. This means

that no manuscript includes a text where Þjóstólfr throws Glúmr’s ring at Hallgerðr *and* where she laughs. It is either-or, and the mood of the scene changes accordingly. In Reykjabók and other X-manuscripts, the laughing Hallgerðr seems callous, while in the Z-manuscripts, Þjóstólfr acts in a provoking manner when he throws the ring at her, and it is possible to interpret the sentence she subsequently utters as the words of a woman who hopes that her worst fears are not realized.

This example illustrates some of the problems faced by an editor who wishes to reconstruct the text on the basis of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s stemma. Since there is no Y-text preserved at this point, the editor has to decide whether X or Z are likely to have preserved the original text. Instead of treating the scene as a whole and sticking to the text of either X or Z, Konráð Gíslason and Einar Ólafur, true to their tendency to choose the wordier alternative, end up mixing the two together, although there is in fact no evidence for the supposition that a manuscript ever contained exactly such a text.

Let us look at another example, this time from the beginning of chapter 45 (KG 45.9–12) where the sons of Njáll prepare to attack Sigmundr and Skjöldr (the spelling of the manuscripts has been normalized to facilitate the comparison; see table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, and Þormóðsbók variant readings, ch. 45.

Reykjabók 24v, lines 5–6	Möðruvallabók 16va, lines 30–32	Þormóðsbók 4va, lines 32–b11
Skarpheðinn sá þá því at Sigmundr var í litklæðum.	Skarpheðinn mælti: “Sjái þér rauðálfinn?”	Skarpheðinn sá þá fyrst ok mælti: “Sjá þér rauðálfinn, sveinar?”
Skarpheðinn m.: “Hvært sjáit ér nú rauðálfinn?”	Þeir litu til ok kváðust sjá hann en Sigmundr var í litklæðum.	Þeir litu til ok sá at Sigmundr var í litklæðum.
Þeir litu til ok kváðust sjá hann.		“Sjá vér hann,” s. Helgi.

The text in the ÍF edition reads: “Skarpheðinn sá þá, því at Sigmundr var í litklæðum. Skarpheðinn mælti: “Sjáið ér rauðálfinn?” Þeir litu til ok kváðusk sjá hann.”¹⁸ Again, the text is a mixture, this time of the texts of Reykjabók (X) and Möðruvallabók (Y). In the first sentence, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson selects the reading of Reykjabók and most other X-manuscripts, which is also supported by a similar reading of Z-manuscripts (“Skarpheðinn sá Sigmundr því at hann var í litklæðum”). Einar Ólafur’s choice is logical, given his aim to reconstruct the archetypal text.¹⁹ If his stemma is

correct, then the archetype would have had a reading of that kind. But it is a reading which preempts Skarpheðinn's famous line, "Sjáið ér rauðálfinn?"; for it explains already that Sigmundur is wearing clothes of (red) color. In Möðruvallabók, Einar Ólafur's generally preferred manuscript, the passage has greater urgency, with Skarpheðinn uttering the sentence first, his brothers then turning their heads, seeing the man and realizing what Skarpheðinn meant. The sequence is somewhat similar in Þormóðsbók, the third manuscript cited, which, like Reykjabók, is believed to be from the beginning of the fourteenth century and hence probably older than Möðruvallabók. Einar Ólafur classified Þormóðsbók as an X-manuscript but acknowledged that it sometimes had peculiar readings that were difficult to explain with reference to the stemma. In the example above, the text of Þormóðsbók is not quite as concise as that of Möðruvallabók, stating as it does at the beginning that Skarpheðinn was the first one to catch a glimpse of Sigmundur and Skjöldr. The explanation about the *litkleði* comes after Skarpheðinn's remark, as in Möðruvallabók, but before his brothers affirm that they have seen the men. Interestingly, in Þormóðsbók the affirmation comes in the form of direct speech rather than indirect when Helgi replies "Sjá vér hann". The passage in the contemporary Reykjabók seems stodgy by comparison: it gives away the sight at the beginning, opts for a wordier formulation of Skarpheðinn's question, and employs reported speech for the reaction of the brothers.

If the dating of the manuscripts is reasonably correct, the variance in these two passages shows that already in the earliest manuscripts, scribes had begun to shape the *Njála* text according to their taste—or that of their audience. The fact that editors have done the same means that our picture of the early stages of the text has been blurred, and a new edition which opens up more of the saga's texts is sorely needed. Not only do we need an archive with transcriptions of all main manuscripts and fragments (the building of such an archive is under way at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík), we also need a scholarly edition based on those, which allows users to grasp the relationship of the manuscripts, appreciate the characteristics of the text of each group of manuscripts, and navigate comfortably between them.

Wherein Lies the Variance?

A natural question to ask at this point is, how significant is the variance between the manuscripts? Does any manuscript present a text of *Njáls*

saga that radically changes our perception of the events and characters portrayed? The short answer is no. A reader perusing the critical apparatus of the 1875 edition will ultimately discover that there is no variation in the plot or the sequence of events. He or she may also admire how stable in the textual transmission many famous sentences uttered by the characters are. There are nevertheless many differences between the manuscripts, some subtle, others less so. It is well documented in scholarly literature on *Njáls saga* that there is considerable variation in the number of verses included in each manuscript. Finnur Jónsson, who was of the opinion that *Njála* as we now know it had been composed from two earlier narratives, a **Gunnars saga* and a **Njáls saga*, argued the reason for this was that only **Njáls saga* had originally contained verses and that, when the two narratives were joined, verses were added to **Gunnars saga* to make it conform. Finnur explained the way they are entered in *Reykjabók* by supposing the scribe responsible was working from a different manuscript than the main scribe (see further Beeke Stegmann's chapter in this volume, p. 30), but he dismissed the fact that, in some manuscripts and fragments, some but not all the stanzas were found as pure coincidence or scribal whims ("rene tilfældigheder eller afskriverluner").²⁰ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson concurred with Finnur that some of the verses in chapters 1–99 were an addition to the original saga and described them as "very late and uninteresting."²¹ He labeled them "additional verses"—an epithet that has stuck to them. Einar Ólafur was not as dismissive as Finnur about the curious distribution of the "additional verses" in manuscripts. He remarked that "the facts [were] very complicated and puzzling," and acknowledged that it was problematic to explain these with reference to traditional philological methods.²² Guðrún Nordal has since examined several of the verses, their distribution in the manuscripts, and their function in the narrative. She points out how the inclusion of stanzas slows down the narrative and deepens the characterization of the characters that speak them, inviting different interpretations of their actions depending on whether the stanzas are included or not.²³ The treatment of the verses in one of the earliest manuscripts, Þormóðsbók, is discussed below.

Less attention has been devoted to a phenomenon that many modern readers of the saga will have sympathy with: the skipping of lengthy descriptions of legal procedures. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson mentions this and notes that it is especially true of *Sveinsbók* (GKS 2869 4to), a manuscript dated to around 1400.²⁴ Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson has looked specifically at *Sveinsbók* and notes that the abridgments sometimes consist

of the shortening and rewording of formulaic legal passages, while sometimes such passages are left out altogether. When the passages are retained, they are sometimes copied by abbreviating every word so that each word is represented by one letter only. Some of these abbreviations are difficult to make sense of, and Bjarni suggests the abridgments may already have been present in the exemplar from which *Sveinsbók* was copied. He notes that the fragment AM 162 B 7 fol. also tends to shorten the legal formulas (see further his chapter in the present volume). *Sveinsbók* is therefore not the only representative of a manuscript type that cuts down the legalistic jargon—it seems there were audiences in the fourteenth century who, like some modern readers, did not have much patience with that part of the narrative.

With the exception of the treatment of skaldic verses in different manuscripts and the curtailing of legal passages, the *Njáls saga* texts tend to diverge from each other at the micro- rather than the macro-level—which is to say that for the most part the texts run in parallel with differences at the word or sentence level, rather than that of the paragraph or bigger, structural, textual division. Although they are on a more self-contained scale, these variants can still exert influence on a reader's impression of the action and characters presented in any part of the narrative as a whole.

In what follows, we will look more closely at two of the oldest manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, and some of the characteristics of their respective texts. These are the manuscripts that have already been mentioned in the previous discussion: Þormóðsbók and Gráskinna, both traditionally dated to around 1300. Neither of them has been used as a base text in an edition, no doubt primarily because both are fragmentary. Þormóðsbók now consists of twenty-four leaves and only contains about a quarter of the text of the saga. Gráskinna has also lost leaves in the course of time, but some of this loss was made good in the sixteenth century when someone (an owner?) repaired the manuscript and copied some of its text afresh, using an exemplar with a different type of *Njála* text (see Emily Lethbridge in this volume, pp. 73–78). But, although the text of these manuscripts is therefore not well known in its entirety, many of their separate readings are now part of the standard *Njála* texts because Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson frequently chose them over the readings of other manuscripts in their 1875 edition. An example of this was shown above, in the passage on Þjóstólfr and Hallgerðr, where elements of the Gráskinna text have colored the scene in all subsequent editions except in that of Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson (2003/2004).

Þormóðsbók

Þormóðsbók consists of four fragments from a manuscript which seems to have been moderately prestigious. Its current dimensions are circa 25×17.5 cm, the text is written in two columns, rubrics are in red ink, and initials are also flourished with red and occasionally inhabited by figures. (See Plate 1.) On top of the recto-side of the first folio, Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus) has written: “Vantar hjer ad framan j Njalu”—which shows that Torfæus was at some point in possession of the manuscript. Another owner, Högni Finnbogason, has written his name on the last folio.²⁵ The first fragment (fols. 1–3) contains the episode of the killing of the servants from Bergþórshváll and Hlíðarendi (cf. KG 36.8–40.19), the second (fols. 4–8) begins immediately before Sigmundur recites the stanzas slandering Njáll and his sons (cf. KG 44.45–51.43), the third (fols. 9–18) ends in the scene where Gunnarr is killed (cf. KG 56.70–77.47), and the fourth (fols. 19–24) describes the dealings of Þráinn Sigfússon and the sons of Njáll (cf. KG 88.162–98.82). It is possible that the fragment AM 162 B β fol.—which consists of a single leaf—once belonged to the same manuscript.²⁶ It contains a text from the first part of the saga describing the dissolution of the marriage between Hrótr and Unnr (cf. KG 7.56–9.18).

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson devotes a chapter to Þormóðsbók in his study on the *Njála* manuscripts, and his main concern there is its classification. He classified it as an X-manuscript, which is no doubt correct, but did not manage to clarify its position satisfactorily, as he himself conceded.²⁷ Einar Ólafur pointed to the fact that it often departs from the main manuscripts of the X-class, Reykjabók and Kálfalækjarbók, and he grouped it with a few other fragmentary texts in the subgroup x².²⁸ He did not, however, seem to have noticed the fact that the fragment AM 162 B η fol. corresponds closely to the text of Þormóðsbók in the chapters where these two manuscripts coincide (KG 44.96–45.90), including in the passage at the beginning of chapter 45 which was analyzed above. The correspondence between the two is such that they may be seen as sister manuscripts. Þormóðsbók and η both skip the stanza Skarpheðinn recites when handing Sigmundur’s head to Hallgerðr’s shepherd later on in the chapter. They prefer to relay his message in prose. That is generally the program followed by the Þormóðsbók scribe; he seems to include only those stanzas which are indispensable to the storyline. This is true of the verses Sigmundur composes at Hallgerðr’s bidding about Njáll and his sons (chapter 44) which Þormóðsbók introduces with these words:

“Þess em ec albuinn, sagði hann [i.e., Sigmundur], oc qvað visor iij. eða iiij” (4ra, lines 4–5).²⁹ Despite stating that the stanzas were three or four (as is done in Reykjabók), the scribe only copies two, whereas Kálfalækjarbók has three, and the same three are added to the Reykjabók text (see Beeke Stegmann in this volume, pp. 46–48). Of course, he may not have had access to more, but it is equally possible that he considered it safe to skip the last of the three because the derogatory nicknames (*taðskegglingar*, *karl hinn skegglausi*), which come to fuel the plot, have already appeared in the first two, so the third one may be seen as redundant. The treatment of the verses seems to reveal that scribes of *Njáls saga* manuscripts often had a choice with regard to whether to present a piece of dialogue in poetry or prose. The former alternative makes for a faster narrative, while the latter can mean a more nuanced portrait of the character speaking. Þormóðsbók leaves out the stanza Skarpheðinn speaks later in chapter 44, when the sons of Njáll leave Bergþórshváll on their way to kill Sigmundur, as well as his stanza in chapter 59, and the stanzas spoken by Gunnarr in chapters 62–72.³⁰ In Kálfalækjarbók (a manuscript closely related to Þormóðsbók), where the stanzas are included, the prose is cut to avoid repetition.³¹ In Reykjabók, the stanzas are added without curbing the prose, with the result that the scribe leaves the choice between poetry and prose to the reader and his audience. The Þormóðsbók scribe consistently opts for prose, leaving out the poetry. The reverse is true in the case of Skarpheðinn’s insult to Hallgerðr in chapter 91. Here, the scribe of Þormóðsbók cites Skarpheðinn’s stanza where he calls her *hornkerling* or *púta*, creating a neat parallel with Sigmundur’s two stanzas of insult earlier in the saga. The last stanza preserved in Þormóðsbók is spoken by Skarpheðinn after the killing of Þráinn. Kálfalækjarbók and Reykjabók include two stanzas at this point, but Þormóðsbók characteristically opts for less rather than more.³²

The treatment of the verses in Þormóðsbók thus seems to show certain thrift. The first scholar to describe Þormóðsbók, Jón Þorkelsson, remarked on similar characteristics in the prose—he praised its “korte og koncise sætninger” [short and concise sentences], of which the passage quoted above, where Skarpheðinn eyes Sigmundur, could be an example. Jón added that the text was occasionally marred by inaccuracy and carelessness.³³ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s analysis of Þormóðsbók led him to remark that some of its peculiar readings were “obvious errors, others [...] quite interesting.”³⁴ It is true that the scribe sometimes makes obvious errors, for instance when he leaves out words so that a sentence becomes

unintelligible. At other times, the omissions seem deliberate: Einar Ólafur points to the exclusion of a passage in the law proceedings in chapter 73 which the scribe probably found repetitive and decided to skip.³⁵ But sometimes it can be hard to gauge whether such omissions occurred by accident or intentionally. Let us take a look at this passage from chapter 92 (KG 92.35–45) which builds up to the plot hatched by Bergþóra and her sons to kill Þráinn (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Reykjabók and Þormóðsbók variant readings, ch. 92.

Þormóðsbók 21vb, lines 1–10	Reykjabók 48r, lines 22–27
Göngukonur þær er þeir Þráinn reiddu yfir fljótit komu til Bergþórshváls. Húsfreyja spurði hvaðan þær væri en þær sögðuz vera austan undan Eyjafjöllum.	Göngukonur þær er þeir reiddu yfir fljótit komu til Bergþórshváls ok spurði Bergþóra hvaðan þær væri en þær sögðuz vera austan undan Eyjafjöllum.
“Hverir reiddu yðr yfir Markarfljót?” s. hún.	“Hverr reiddi yðr yfir Markarfljót?” s. Bergþóra.
“Þeir er mestir oflátar eru,” s. þær, “en það þótti oss hellz at at þeir váru svá fjölorðir ok illorðir hingat til bónda þíns ok sona hans.”	“Þeir er mestir oflátar vóru,” s. þær.
Bergþóra m.: “Margir kjósa eigi orð á sik.”	“Hverir voru þeir?” s. Bergþóra.
	“Þráinn Sigfússon,” s. þær, “ok fylgðarmenn hans* en þat þótti oss hellz at segja þér er þeir váru svá fjölorðir ok illorðir hingat til bónda þíns ok sona hans.”
	Bergþóra s.: “Margir kjósa ekki orð á sik.”
	* Kálfalækjarbók has: “Þeir menn Þráins Sigfúsosnar”, sögðu þær.

If the scribe was fond of a rather fast-paced narrative, he may have sprung over Bergþóra’s second question and the corresponding answer intentionally, leaving Bergþóra to guess to whom the women are referring by calling them *mestir oflátar*. It is equally plausible, however, to explain the omission with reference to philological principles by supposing that the scribe’s eye accidentally skipped from one “s. þær” to the next when copying.³⁶

Þormóðsbók distinguishes itself not only by its tendency towards a more compact narrative but is also interesting on the lexicographical level, for it contains some readings not found in other manuscripts, and these

may occasionally bring a different flavor to the text. One such example is found in chapter 39, at the height of the feuding between Bergþóra and Hallgerðr involving their servants, when Þórðr leysingjason meets Hallgerðr on his way to kill her kinsman Brynjólfur. According to all manuscripts except *Þormóðsbók*, he says to Hallgerðr: “aldri hefi ek sjet mannsblóð” (KG 30.21–22; “I’ve never seen man’s blood”) but in *Þormóðsbók*, the noun used is *heiptarblóð* (3va, line 30). It is a rare word; it crops up in the twelfth-century *Veraldar saga* in the story about Cain and Abel: “varð hann [i.e., Cain] síþan bani broþvr sins. þat kom heiptar blóð fyrst a iorð” [He (Cain) became his brother’s killer. That was the first time blood was spilled in anger].³⁷ It is also found in *Eyrbyggja saga*, where Þórðr gellir declares the assembly ground at Þórsnes “spilltan af heiptar blodi er niðr hafði komid ok kalladi þa jord nu ecki helgari enn adra” [defiled by the spilling of blood in enmity, so the ground there was now no holier than any other].³⁸ Contrary to *mannsblóð*, *heiptarblóð* is not a neutral word but has connotations with Christian ideas about sin and retribution.

Another example of an interesting word choice is found in Hildigunnr’s reply to her brother when he boasts he will kill Gunnarr (KG 61.24–25): “En ec get at þv berir lagt havkvskeggit af yccrom fundi” (11ra, lines 17–18; “My guess,” she said, “is that your beard will be touching your chest when you come from this encounter”), where other manuscripts have either “lágð hqfudit,” or “lágð hqfud ok hqnd.” A parallel to the reading of *Þormóðsbók* is found in *Heimskringla*, in Dala-Guðbrandr’s retort to Ólafr Haraldsson before he succumbs and is baptized. Whether the scribe of *Þormóðsbók* is here subtly alluding to *Ólafs saga* or whether the wording *bera hqkuskeggit* simply sounded more natural to him is hard to determine, but given that *Þormóðsbók* may have been written in the same environment as the *Heimskringla* manuscript AM 39 fol., the former option is not unreasonable.³⁹

More instances can be found where *Þormóðsbók* contains a rare or unusual word without parallel in other manuscripts of the saga. At KG 36.67, for example, it has *féskyft* (1rb, line 32) rather than *erfitt*, and at KG 58.68, we find the hapax legomenon *torþeustr* [til vandraða] (9vb, line 27), where other manuscripts have the more common *seinþreyttr*. But the opposite also happens, as is only to be expected. Examples of *Þormóðsbók* going against other manuscripts by using a less unusual vocabulary include *sverð* at KG 63.3 (11rb, line 11), where other fourteenth-century manuscripts have *sviða* (the change may be due to a misreading of an abbreviation), and *reiðingr* (6va, lines 5–6) instead of the rarer *lénur* at KG 48.20.

Gráskinna

The Gráskinna manuscript, as every other *Njáls saga* manuscript, preserves a text of the saga that, as a whole, is not found in any other manuscript. Discussion about Gráskinna's codicology, scribal hands, and provenance can be found in the chapter by Emily Lethbridge in this volume but in what follows here, attention will be drawn to some of the characteristics of Gráskinna's *Njáls saga* text. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson assigned the Gráskinna text to the Z-class of the manuscripts in his stemma, along with the Skafinskinna manuscript (GKS 2868 4to).⁴⁰ Gráskinna is thus more closely related to the Möðruvallabók text of *Njáls saga* than the Reykjabók text, as Möðruvallabók and the other Y-class manuscripts share (at some removes) a common archetype (*V) and belong to one branch, while Reykjabók (and the fourteenth-century fragments) assigned to the X-class belong to the other (see also Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume). Though Einar Ólafur commented that the general characteristic of the Z-class manuscripts is a tendency to "a little more detailed narrative ... than in X," the Gráskinna text (as Möðruvallabók) does not contain any of the so-called "additional verses."⁴¹

Some time ago, Finnur Jónsson and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson noted that details about genealogy in the Z-class texts seem to have been subject to some influence (or "correction" in Einar Ólafur's phrasing) from *Landnámabók*: one of the examples given by Einar Ólafur is that of Njáll's grandfather being named Ófeigr in Gráskinna and Skafinskinna (in chapter 20), but Þorólfr in other texts.⁴² This, and other variants pertaining to genealogy, do not necessarily have to be explained as the consequence of direct reference to the textual tradition of *Landnámabók* on the part of Z-class *Njáls saga* scribes. But a special or active interest in genealogy on the part of the Gráskinna scribe(s) is suggested elsewhere, however, by the inclusion of additional genealogical material, such as extra names in the Oddaverjar family genealogy in chapter 25 and a marginal note with additional names of Skjöldung family members at 14v.⁴³

This attention to genealogical detail in Gráskinna (at any rate in the Z-class manuscripts) is supplemented by—at times, at least—the suggestion of a slightly greater attention to topographical detail too, especially in the context of travel or descriptions of journeys. At KG 46.12, Gráskinna has the reading "i byskupstungo" (29r, lines 17–18; "in Biskupstunga"), where manuscripts in the X- and Y-classes omit the location. This variant, in Einar Ólafur's opinion, is not "original" although Z's information is "useful for readers in other parts of the country."⁴⁴ Another example

of the additional snippets of topographical detail in the Gráskinna text is the reading at KG 12.58–60, where Gráskinna has “*ok riðu til steingrímsfiarðar ok til liot ar dals ok þaðan til sel ar dals ok sva til bassastaða ok þaðan vm halsinn til biarnar fiarðar*” (7r, lines 25–27; “and they rode to Steingrímsfjörður, and to Ljótárdalur, and from there to Selárdalur, and thus to Bassastaðir, and from there along the ridge to Bjarnarfjörður”); other manuscripts omit the mention of Bassastaðir and the ridge.

The distance of certain journeys, the hurried or urgent nature of them, and the importance of speed are communicated in Gráskinna too, in some places. One example occurs in the description of Þjóstólfr’s journey to Hrótsstaðir in KG 17.39–40, where we read “*tok hann þa hest sinn ok riðr i brott ok lykkr ekki ferð sinni fyrr enn hann kom a rvtz staði vm nott*” in Gráskinna (10v, lines 21–22; “then he took his horse, and rides away, and does not let up on his way until he came to Hrótsstaðir in the night”), but only “*tok hann þa hest sinn ok reið vestr a rútsstaði um nótt*” [then he took his horse and rode west to Hrótsstaðir in the night] in other manuscripts. Another example is found at KG 23.91–92, where Gunnarr’s journey from Holtavörðuheiði to Hlíðarendi is related in Gráskinna with the sentence “*Gunnarr reið til harka dals or fiellino ok fyrir æstan skarð ok sva til hollta vörðu heiðar ok letti eigi fyrr enn hann kom heim*” (13v, lines 9–11; “Gunnarr rode to Haukadalur from the mountain, and east of the mountain pass, and thus to Holtavörðuheiði, and did not let up until he came home”); other manuscripts omit the detail about his not stopping until he was home. Einar Ólafur comments that here, “Z gives a better idea of the long distance from Holtavörðuheiðr to Hlíðarendi and is therefore a more suitable sequel to the enumeration of places in the preceding lines.”⁴⁵

Detailed analysis of other passages gives a stronger and more context-based impression of the flavor of Gráskinna’s *Njáls saga* text, as well as turning up examples that support the general characteristics noted above concerning genealogy and topography. Two sections from the narrative will be examined in what follows.⁴⁶ Firstly, the part of the saga which tells of the famine, of Hallgerðr’s sending of the slave Melkólfr to Kirkjubær to steal cheese for the household at Hlíðarendi, and of Gunnarr’s furious objection to this shameful theft (KG 47–48, Gráskinna 29r, line 17 to 29v, line 19). And secondly, the section which recounts the attack of Gizurr inn hvíti and others on Hlíðarendi, Gunnarr’s brave defense, Hallgerðr’s refusal to aid Gunnarr in the desperate battle by giving him a lock of her hair to replace his broken bowstring, and Gunnarr’s death (KG 77, Gráskinna 48v, line 7 to 49v, line 22).

With regard to genealogy, details in the two sections under scrutiny are worthy of note being small but fitting with these larger patterns. When Þorgerðr, the wife of Otkell at Kirkjubær, is introduced, her genealogy is provided and Gráskinna (and Skafinskinna) give the name of her father as “Ívarr” rather than “Már,” which is found in all other manuscripts. It is striking, too, that Gráskinna is the only manuscript to refer to Gunnarr’s mother by her personal name in the section describing his last fight (“Rannveig móðir hans” 48v, line 28; “His mother Rannveig”). With regard to attention to topography, the place-name Hlíðarendi is reiterated in the section about Hallgerðr and the stolen cheese when Gunnarr rides off to the *þing* and Hallgerðr, “at hliðarenda” (30r, line 15; also in Skafinskinna, Möðruvallabók), orders Melkólfr to raid Kirkjubær. This has the effect of emphasizing the physical distance between the upright Gunnarr and the scheming Hallgerðr. In the section about Gunnarr’s death, Gráskinna is the only manuscript to refer to Iceland specifically as “Ísland” (49v, line 8), rather than the more generic “landit” [the country], which is the reading in all other manuscripts.

It is possible to divide or categorize other textual variants found in Gráskinna according to type and degree.⁴⁷ In both sections under consideration, the types of textual variant encountered include syntactic variation, such as the inversion of a two-word unit,⁴⁸ or variation in the tense of the same verb used.⁴⁹ This variation might affect stylistic emphases (as well as reflecting differing habits or patterns in language use), but the interpretative potential of the text is not affected. In some instances, the Gráskinna reading is unique; in others, it is found in some of the other manuscripts (most often Skafinskinna, the other Z-class manuscript). Synonyms for verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and alternative or interchangeable prepositions or pronouns are found throughout too—and in places, these can, in different ways, color the immediate and cumulative impression of the action being related and the emphases or focus of the narrative.⁵⁰

Most interesting from the perspective of narrative interpretation, however, are the instances where the Gráskinna text provides more explicit or additional information or comment that is not found in other manuscripts, or alternatively, when phrases or nuances in other manuscripts are not present in Gráskinna. Firstly, the addition of intensifying adjectives or adverbs is found in several places, and this frequently serves to give the import of each phrase an extra emphatic resonance. Skammkell of Hof, one of Gunnarr’s enemies, is described (after several negative adjectives) as “vin otkels mikill” in Gráskinna (29v, line 2, also in Þormóðsbók and

Skafinskinna; “a great friend of Otkell”), and when Gunnarr is predicting the shame that will be felt by his attackers if he shoots at and wounds them with their own arrows, the Gráskinna text reads “*skal ek þeirri skiota til þeirra ok er þeim þat mest skæm ef þeir fa geig af vopnom sinom*” (48v, lines 26–27, also the Skafinskinna text; “I shall shoot that arrow to them and that will be the greatest shame to them if they receive a wound from their own weapon”; all other manuscripts have just “*skømm*” rather than “*mest skømm*”).

In the cheese-stealing section, there are two examples of an extra clause giving more emphasis to direct speech, on the one hand, and a narratorial comment, on the other. Gunnarr’s exchange with Otkell at Kirkjubær is reported in direct speech and his request for hay and food is worded thus: “*villtv gera mier kost a eða gefa mier segir Gunnar*” (29v, lines 22–23; “‘Will you give me the option [of buying] or give [the hay] to me,’ says Gunnarr”); the phrase “*gera–eða*” is found only in Gráskinna. Later in the section, after the slave Melkólfr has stolen provisions from the storehouse at Kirkjubær, killed the dog, set fire to the shed, and returned to Hlíðarendi, the narrator reports that he hands over the food to Hallgerðr: “*for þar til er hann kemr til hliðar enda ok förir nv hallgerði matinn*” (30v, lines 2–3; “he goes on there until he comes to Hlíðarendi and now gives the food to Hallgerðr”). This is in all other manuscripts—but in Gráskinna, the narrator adds “*ok sagde henne hvat hann hafðe gert*” (30v, lines 3–4; “and he told her what he had done”). The narrator then reports Hallgerðr’s satisfaction with the situation. This variant is not found in other manuscripts, though Skafinskinna has the phrase “*ok s. henni sína ferð*” [and tells her about his journey] in the equivalent place.

It is notable, too, that in this same passage describing Melkólfr’s secret mission, Gráskinna omits a phrase that is found in most other manuscripts (the other exceptions are Oddabók and Skafinskinna). Melkólfr’s shoelace breaks as he returns to Hlíðarendi, and all manuscripts relate how he stops to fix it, using his knife, which he accidentally leaves behind along with his belt. All manuscripts but Gráskinna, Oddabók, and Skafinskinna record that he becomes aware of this loss once he has reached home but dares not return (KG 48.28–29: “*þá saknar hann knífsins ok þorir eigi aprt at fara*” [then he misses the knife and dares not go back]). Such a comment on the part of the narrator constitutes a direct intrusion into the character’s mental world—and this is something that is not frequently or explicitly done in the sagas. The omission of this intrusion in Gráskinna is therefore striking, and it is tempting to wonder whether it was the

result of a deliberate omission by the Gráskinna scribe (or the scribe of the exemplar used by the Gráskinna scribes) on the basis of a stricter notion of saga style. With such musings, however, we move into the equivocal mental realm of earlier editors of *Njáls saga* and other sagas who emended the manuscript texts before them on the basis of their feeling for the more “original” or “authentic” saga style they believed would have been found in older, no-longer-extant, manuscript witnesses.

In the scene reporting Gunnarr’s last fight, again, a few readings unique to Gráskinna (or found only in some of the other manuscripts) give the section and the presentation of the action its own particular flavor. The attack on Hlíðarendi is led by the chieftain Gizurr inn hvíti who is an honorable man and will not, for example, let the others burn Hlíðarendi with Gunnarr, Hallgerðr, and Gunnarr’s mother Rannveig inside it. The focalization of the scene is skillfully done, with the narrative perspective shifting frequently between Gunnarr and the attackers. After Gunnarr has woken up, hearing the warning and dying barking of his dog, Sámr, and the hall has been described, Gráskinna states that “er þeir komo at bðnom spvrði gizvrr hvart Gunnarr mvndi heima vera ok baðo at einn hverr mvndi fara ok for vitnaz vm” (48v, lines 11–13; “when they came to the farm, Gizurr asked whether Gunnarr was at home and ordered someone to go and find out”). Gizurr is thus foregrounded and in control from the outset. In other manuscripts (with the exception of Bajarbók and Oddabók), the perspective is the third-person plural here and the text reads “enn er þeir kvámu vissu þeir eigi, hvárt gvnarr myndi heima vera” [and when they came they did not know whether Gunnarr would be at home],⁵¹ after which Gizurr orders someone to go and find out.

For all the gravity of much of its action, *Njáls saga* is often humorous, and examples of the dry humor that is typical of its narrative delivery are found throughout this scene, communicated through narrative perspective and direct speech. The attacker who responds to Gizurr’s order to find out whether Gunnarr is at home is a Norwegian man called Þorgrímr: he climbs up the outside of the hall but his conspicuous red tunic alerts Gunnarr who reaches out of a window and picks him off his with famous halberd. Gunnarr, of course, cannot know who the man is, but a slight note of tongue-in-cheek dark humor is suggested in the absolute realism of the focalization. With regard to variants, however, all manuscripts include the detail of the red clothing and Gunnarr’s catching sight of it (“gunnarr sjer, at rauðan kyrtil berr við glugginum” [Gunnarr sees that a red tunic appears at the window], Þormóðsbók and Kálfalækjarbók;

Möðruvallabók, Oddabók, Reykjabók, Skafinskinna, and Bæjarbók all have slightly different word order), but Gráskinna is the only manuscript to present this detail in an explicitly causal relationship, with the construction “*Gunnarr ser at hann berr við glvgginom þvi at hann var i raðom kyrtli*” (48v, line 14; “Gunnarr sees that he appears at the window because he was in a red tunic”). In Gráskinna, Gunnarr’s ensuing attack is, again, more directly causally linked to the sequence of actions and realizations, with the unique inclusion of the adverb “þá” in the phrase “*leggr hann þa vt með at geirnom*” (48v, lines 14–15; “he then stabs out with the halberd”). Explicit humor comes with Þorgrímr’s reply to Gizurr’s question about whether or not Gunnarr was at home, before he falls down dead: “*vitit þier þat enn hitt vissa ek at atgeir hans var heima*” (48v, lines 18–19; “you will find that out but on the other hand, I know that his halberd was at home”). It might be noted here, too, that two manuscripts, Þormóðsbók and Skafinskinna, reverse the word order in the latter half of the sentence, thereby creating a stronger emphasis through the alliteration of *hitt* with *heima* (“at heima var atgeirr hans,” “heima var atgeirinn”).

The portrayal of Gizurr is again nuanced slightly later on in the scene as a result of some other variants unique to Gráskinna. Mörðr Valgarðsson calls to burn the farm and thus overcome Gunnarr, whose defense seems unassailable. As noted already, Gizurr refuses to take this cowardly course of action, even if his life depends upon it. This sentiment is found in all manuscripts but it is particularly heightened in Gráskinna, where Gizurr declares “*þat skal verða allðri . segir gizurr þo at ek vita visan bana minn*” (49r, lines 3–4, “‘That shall never be,’ says Gizurr, ‘though I might know my death were a certain thing’”). The phrase “þó at ek vita, at líf mitt liggi við” [though I might know my life depended on it] is found in all other manuscripts. Gizurr then tells Mörðr to come up with another plan, since he is known for his cunning. Again, here, Gráskinna has a different formulation to that found in all other manuscripts. Where other manuscripts have “er þjer sjálfrátt at leggja til ráð þau er dugi, svá slægr maðr sem þú ert kallaðr” (Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, Kálfalækjarbók; “It’s within your power to suggest a plan that will suffice, such a cunning man as you are said to be”; other manuscripts have slightly different word order, and Þormóðsbók has the addition of pronoun “nokkur” before “ráð”), Gráskinna has the stronger “er þier sialfraðt at leggja til rað þat er likaz er til at yfir taki sva slögr maðr sem þv ert kallaðr” (49r, lines 4–5, “It’s within your power to suggest a plan that is most likely to succeed, such a cunning man as you are said to be”). These textual variants do not

affect the narrative per se, but they do color the characterization of Gizurr in a subtly stronger shade.

Moving from the close analysis of individual scenes, and examples of the local, interpretative dynamics that certain variants create or shape, this analysis will conclude with a brief discussion about a unique textual variant found in one scene in the Gráskinna text which resonates much later in the saga, to interesting effect and with interesting implications. One of the most memorable of the many vivid scenes found in *Njáls saga* is that which describes Skarpheðinn Njálsson swooping as fast as a bird across a glass-smooth sheet of ice besides the Markarfljót river and, while gliding past his enemy Þráinn Sigfússon, burying his axe so deep into Þráinn's head that Þráinn's teeth spill out onto the ice (chapter 92). The dramatic immediacy and power in the account of Þráinn's death is on a par with that of the two narrative climaxes of the saga: Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi's last fight and the burning of Njáll and his family at Bergþórshváll. Skarpheðinn is one of those burned alive at Bergþórshváll, as described in chapter 130 of the saga. As flames lick the farmhouse, Skarpheðinn and one of the burners, Gunnarr Lambason (who has climbed up on the outside of the building), conduct a short, sharp exchange after Gunnarr asks Skarpheðinn, provocatively, if he is crying yet (87r, lines 8–14):

eigi er þat segir skarpheðinn enn hitt er satt at svrnar i ægvnom . enn sva syniz mīer sem þv hlæir eþa hvart er sva . sva er vist segir Gunnarr ok hefi ek allðri fyrr hlegit siþan þv vatt þrain . skarpheðinn mælti þa er þier hier minia griþrinn ok tok iaxlinn or pvngi sinom er hann hafþi hæggvit or þrani ok kastði i æga Gvnnari sva at þegar la vti a kinninne . fell Gunnarr þa ofan af þekivnne

[“It is not that (I am crying),” says Skarpheðinn, “but it is true that (my) eyes are sore. But it seems to me that you are laughing, or is it not thus?” “It is certainly thus,” says Gunnarr, “and I have not laughed since you killed Þráinn.” Skarpheðinn said: “Then here is a memento for you,” and he took from his purse the molar which he had chopped out of Þráinn and threw it at Gunnarr's eye so that it (the eye) hung out on his cheek. Gunnarr then fell down off the roof.]

Readers of all manuscripts but Gráskinna, thinking back to the scene in which Þráinn's death is related as they mentally process the action unfolding between Skarpheðinn and Gunnarr Lambason, will probably remember the detail of Þráinn's teeth tumbling out of his mouth as a result of Skarpheðinn's axe-blow. In order to explain how Skarpheðinn has one

of Þráinn's molars on his person at this later time, readers will implicitly understand that Skarpheðinn must have picked it up as a trophy then. This is nowhere stated. Nowhere, that is, with the exception of Gráskinna, which anticipates the grisly use to which Skarpheðinn puts the molar, or at least foregrounds Skarpheðinn's possession of the tooth ahead of his hurling it from the flames at Gunnarr Lambason and blinding him in one eye. For in Gráskinna's account of the killing, we read that as Skarpheðinn flies onwards across the ice, having felled Þráinn, he bends over, scoops up one of Þráinn's teeth and puts it in his purse (61v, lines 20–23):

*Skarpheðinn berr nv at miok ok hæggr til þrains með ðxinne ok kom
i hæfvðit ok klæf ofan i iaxlana sva at þeir fello ofan a isinn . tok
skarpheðinn vpp einn iaxlinn ok kastaði i pvng sinn*

[Skarpheðinn exerts himself hard and strikes at Þráinn with the axe and it comes down on his head and cleaves into the molars from above so that they fell down onto the ice. Skarpheðinn picked up one molar and threw it into his purse.]

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson notes that this variant (and others of a similar nature) is “innocent, but show[s] the curiosity of the readers of the Saga.”⁵² It is a question of personal taste as to whether or not one considers the inclusion of this detail here in Gráskinna about Skarpheðinn's pocketing of one of Þráinn's molars to enhance the narrative; it is undeniably yet another very visual detail in a scene that is not lacking in visual detail. Its existence (and that of others) is, however, important evidence for the fact that from the earliest times of *Njáls saga's* written transmission—possibly within a couple of decades—the diverse aesthetics and narrative sensibilities of those who copied the saga (as well as their respective individual knowledge about events and characters which feature in the saga on the basis of different [oral] traditions) found distinctive expression in the diverging manuscript texts of the same saga.

Conclusions

The examples we have discussed foreground a number of issues that are bound up with the interpretation and reception of the saga narrative. These examples show how adjustments made to the text from one manuscript to another may affect the portrayal of characters and their interaction in the saga narrative; how the reader's or audience's visualization of

the same scenes can vary as a result of textual variation (compare how the identification of men in red clothes is handled slightly differently in different manuscripts on two occasions); how the pacing of the narrative may be manipulated by the inclusion or exclusion of verse, by the curbing of legal formulas, or by the choice between direct or reported speech; how interest in topography or genealogy can lead to additions and adjustments tailored to the audience; how the choice of vocabulary can have connotations which emphasize Christian concerns.

We have only managed to touch on a fraction of the fascinating detail that emerges when one has the opportunity to scrutinize the texts of different manuscripts and to survey the spectrum of different responses to the same narrative that are manifested in them. Such scrutiny invites new questions regarding the production of these *Njáls saga* texts, as well as those which no longer survive. We might ask, for example, which factors prompted scribes or their commissioners to produce varying texts of the saga. Were they moved by sympathy for certain characters, by interest in their own genealogical connections with saga characters, or by consciousness of local politics, whether past or present? Did local topographical knowledge play a part or, alternatively, perhaps the lack of it? Was knowledge of legal proceedings a factor that prompted active alteration to exemplars? What kind of moral or religious ideas might have shaped the vocabulary employed? And finally, how did aesthetic taste manifest itself in the expression of the narrative at a syntactical level?

The complex reality of textual transmission in medieval and post-medieval Iceland becomes conspicuously apparent when textual variation is explored. It seems likely that from the earliest times of *Njáls saga's* written transmission, contemporary scribes/commissioners/readers/audiences must have accepted the fact that different texts of the same saga were in circulation—nor should it be forgotten, either, that oral traditions connected to the saga also existed and were transmitted in parallel to its written dissemination.⁵³ It is, however, impossible to know how widely varying written and oral traditions were known at different times and, for the most part, it should probably be assumed that the *Njáls saga* that people *knew* was that to which they had access. Here, it is perhaps possible and useful to make a distinction between two primary, initial groups of producers and readers or users—albeit with some overlap. Firstly, we have the medieval scribes and commissioners who took an active and critical interest in the text and who may have been behind the deliberate introduction of textual variants, the implementation of which changed the nuances of

the narrative. Secondly, there are (or were) users or readers who subsequently had access to each respective manuscript and simply enjoyed the *Njáls saga* it preserved, not necessarily knowing or caring about others and their particular formulations of the same narrative.

Moving forward in time, we have a third group of users: the seventeenth-century scholars who displayed an active interest in variant readings and who made the first efforts to collate the manuscripts (see Margrét Eggertsdóttir in this volume, pp. 206–8). The fact that most medieval manuscripts of the saga were sent out of the country in conjunction with the growing academic (and political) interest in Icelandic saga (and other) texts that characterized this period meant, in turn, that the *Njáls saga* that seventeenth- or eighteenth-century domestic or secular readers in Iceland knew was almost exclusively the Gullskinna type. One could argue that, as a result, in the popular reception of the saga in that period, the saga's variance was decidedly diminished. The final phase or chapter of this development with regard to attitudes towards textual variance is bound up with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century textual critics who dissected the manuscript evidence gathered together and available to them, and produced new texts themselves—texts which later became the canonized versions of *Njáls saga*.⁵⁴ There is a certain irony in the fact that the most famous and admired of all sagas is known to modern audiences, Icelandic and non-Icelandic alike, as a text that has certain readings but not others, and that this particular articulation has been enshrined and pored over by scholars, though the reality is that most edited texts of the saga (and even manuscripts, as in the example of Gráskinna) are hybrids that do not reflect the true state of any manuscript.

Each and every *Njáls saga* manuscript thus has its own characteristics and distinctive readings in places: these are readings that can often surprise and delight, as well as puzzle, at times. The sheer wealth of the manuscript material of this single saga also means that it can give unparalleled insight into the working methods of scribes and elucidate the reception of the saga among their audiences. But there is much work yet to do in drawing out the nuances of each manuscript copy and its unique *Njála*. This work will surely continue to lead us to question and refine our ideas about saga style and narrative method. It will also offer valuable lessons that will help us to gain a better understanding of the broader context of the preservation of *Íslendingasögur* narratives and, indeed, medieval Icelandic literature more widely.

NOTES

- ¹ See the annotated online bibliography *WikiSaga*, <https://wikisaga.hi.is>.
- ² Quinn, "Introduction," 17.
- ³ KB Add. 565 4to written by Jón Magnússon, the brother of Árni Magnússon sometime after 1707. See Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xvii.
- ⁴ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xvii.
- ⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 173; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Konráð Gíslason og Njáluútgáfan mikla," 103–106.
- ⁶ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 30–31. Evidence for Konráð's views on the relationship between manuscripts is also frequently embedded in the critical apparatus in the 1875 edition, see e.g., notes to KG 36.43–4 and 85.6.
- ⁷ "When the text of Finnur Jónsson is compared with that of Konráð Gíslason, it is seen that they are much closer to each other than scholars generally suppose. Although Finnur Jónsson bases his text on R, he corrects it freely, especially when M and Gr and some of the others agree against R." Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 173. Finnur's edition was the basis for Guðni Jónsson's edition in his *Íslendingasögur* series (1942).
- ⁸ See Sverrir Tómasson, "The Textual Problems of *Njáls saga*."
- ⁹ Jón Helgason, "Observations on Some Manuscripts of *Egils saga*," 3–47; Chesnutt, "Tekstkritiske bemærkninger"; Clunies Ross, "Verse and Prose"; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Egil Strikes Again," 176–179.
- ¹⁰ In the introduction to the edition he explains somewhat loosely that he surveyed all medieval manuscripts and fragments of the saga, most of the younger parchment fragments, and about ten paper manuscripts. He then states that, for the edition, he used all the medieval manuscripts and those paper manuscripts that had a text which could be used to fill the lacunae of the medieval manuscripts, see Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Formáli," cxlix.
- ¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Um handrit Njálssögu," 126.
- ¹² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Formáli," clv.
- ¹³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Formáli," clv.
- ¹⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Formáli," clvi.
- ¹⁵ The text of the 1875 edition was reprinted with some adjustments in Valdimar Ásmundarson's popular edition for the series *Íslendinga sögur* published by Sigurður Kristjánsson (*Njáls saga* appeared as volume 10 in 1894 and again in 1910). The *Íslendinga sögur* edition published by Svart á hvítu in 1985 and 1986 was also based on the 1875 edition and became, in turn, the basis for the school edition published by Mál og menning in 1991 (with later reprints).
- ¹⁶ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 50.
- ¹⁷ Finnur Jónsson also follows the 1875 edition here with one exception: for *Hann svarði* he follows the Reykjabók text and prints *Hann mælti*, although *Hann svarði* would be more logical since the preceding sentences from the Z-manuscripts are included.

¹⁸ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 115.

¹⁹ The difference between the manuscripts is not explained in the notes, presumably because it does not constitute material difference, and the reading chosen is seen to represent the archetype, cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Formáli,” clvi.

²⁰ Finnur Jónsson, “Om Njála,” 96–97.

²¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 20.

²² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 21.

²³ Guðrún Nordal, “Tilbrigði um Njálu,” 70, 74; Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 198–99.

²⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 25–26.

²⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 679–80. For further information on the manuscript’s provenance see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök Njálu,” 166–69.

²⁶ The dimensions of AM 162 B β fol. are similar to that of Þormóðsbók; it is written in two columns but the measurements of these differ slightly from Þormóðsbók. The script of the two is very similar.

²⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 81–82.

²⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 171.

²⁹ Reykjabók has an identical text here but the stanzas do not follow in the main text; they are added at the back of the manuscript, see Stegmann in this volume. Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi.

³⁰ See the overview given by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 22–23.

³¹ See Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 194–98.

³² This is true also of Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to) in this case.

³³ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 70.

³⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 72.

³⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 25.

³⁶ The same uncertainty concerns instances when the scribe neglects to specify which character is speaking (see, e.g., KG 38.68 and 40.3–4). Einar Ólafur sees all such omissions as a corruption of the original text and silently corrects them (see “Formáli,” clvi), but dropping such information may speed up the narrative and therefore can be a conscious choice.

³⁷ *Veraldar saga*, 9.

³⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga. The Vellum Tradition*, 27. *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, 36.

³⁹ Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök Njálu,” 165–66. Cf. Stefán Karlsson, “Introduction,” 56.

⁴⁰ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 40–45, on Skafinskinna and its relationship to Gráskinna.

⁴¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 105.

⁴² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 106.

⁴³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 106. See also the discussion about marginalia that pertains to genealogy in Susanne M. Arthur’s chapter in the present volume.

⁴⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 143. See also the discussion about marginalia that pertains to geography in Susanne M. Arthur's chapter in the present volume.

⁴⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 152.

⁴⁶ Both sections are copied out in the hand of Scribe B and are thus not part of the later, sixteenth-century replacement leaves whose text belongs to a different branch of the stemma, see further Emily Lethbridge in this volume.

⁴⁷ See Lethbridge, "*Gísla saga Súrssonar*," for a comparable approach to and consideration of the spectrum of variants found in the extant manuscripts of another *Íslendingasögur* narrative.

⁴⁸ Some examples of word-order inversion in the cheese-stealing section include "hon myndi gera sva" (Gráskinna 30r, line 25) where all other manuscripts have "hon myndi sva gera"; "þykkja betr fengit" (Gráskinna 30v, line 18) where all other manuscripts have "þykkja fengit betr" (though Þormóðsbók has "fengit vera betr" and Oddabók has "fengr betri"); "liggr honum eftir knífrinn ok belltit" (Gráskinna 30v, line 2; also Skafinskinna) where all other manuscripts have "honum liggr eftir knífrinn ok beltit" (though Þormóðsbók has "la" for "liggr"). Some examples of word-order inversion in the section describing Gunnarr's last stand include "hefir oss veitt erfitt" (Gráskinna 49v, lines 7–8) where all other manuscripts have "hefir oss erfitt veitt"; "veita ællom yðr" (Gráskinna 49v, line 11) where all other manuscripts have "veita yðr öllum"; "fa þv mier tvo leppa or hari þínu" (Gráskinna 49r, lines 22–23; also Skafinskinna) where all other manuscripts have "fa mier leppa tvá ór hári þínu."

⁴⁹ Some examples of tense variation in the cheese-stealing section include "ok for þar til" (Gráskinna 30v, line 2) where all other manuscripts use the present tense rather than the preterite ("ok ferr þar til" Möðruvallabók, Oddabók; "hann ferr" Reykjabók, Kálfalækjarbók, Þormóðsbók, Skafinskinna); "þat mundi hafa til borit" (Gráskinna 30v, line 8; also Skafinskinna) where Möðruvallabók and Oddabók have "þat mundi til bera" (the clause is not present in Reykjabók, Kálfalækjarbók, Þormóðsbók); "þa slitnar sköpvengr hans" (Gráskinna 30v, line 1; also Möðruvallabók, Skafinskinna) where the preterite is used in other manuscripts ("þa slitnaði sköpvengr hans" in Þormóðsbók, Oddabók; Reykjabók and Kálfalækjarbók have "ok slitnaði"). Some examples of tense variation in Gunnarr's last stand include "ok rak" (Gráskinna 49r, line 15) where all other manuscripts have "ok rekr"; "ok kastaði honum" (Gráskinna 49r, line 15) where all other manuscripts have "ok kastar honum"; "mundi ekki ut hafa leitit við fanga" (Gráskinna 49r, lines 1–2; also Bæjarbók, Oddabók) where Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók and Skafinskinna have "myndi eigi út leitit viðfanga," and Þormóðsbók has "leitit viðfanga."

⁵⁰ Examples of synonyms from the cheese-stealing section include "slo hana pvstr" (Gráskinna 30v, line 14; also Skafinskinna) where other manuscripts have "lýstr hana kinnhest" (Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, Oddabók) or "laust hana kinnhest" (Kálfalækjarbók, Þormóðsbók); "kior" (Gráskinna 30v, line 17; also Skafinskinna) where other manuscripts have "slátr"; "alldri hefi ek stolit"

(Gráskinna 30r, line 22; also Þormóðsbók) where other manuscripts have “aldri hefi ek þjófr verit” (Reykjabók, Kálfalækjarbók, Þormóðsbók), “hefi ek aldri þjófr verit” (Möðruvallabók, Skafinskinna) or “aldri þjófr verit” (Oddabók). Examples from Gunnarr’s last stand include “Gunnarr greip avrina” (Gráskinna 48v, line 28) where other manuscripts have “Gunnarr þreif örina”; “til motz” (Gráskinna 49v, line 9) where other manuscripts have “til fundar”; “hann hefði sært Gunnar’ (Gráskinna 49v, lines 20–21; also Möðruvallabók) where other manuscripts have “hann hefði gunnari veitt’; “meþan island er bygt” (Gráskinna 49v, line 8) where other manuscripts have “meðan landit er byggt.”

⁵¹ Skafinskinna has “hvar g. var heima” [where Gunnarr was at home], though Konráð Gíslason notes in his *apparatus criticus* that “hvar” may be a scribal error for “hvart.”

⁵² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 19.

⁵³ See Gísli Sigurðsson, “Njáls saga og hefðin.”

⁵⁴ On the status of *Njáls saga* in Icelandic cultural and national politics in the twentieth century, see Jón Karl Helgason, “We Who Cherish.”

Collaborative Manuscript Production and the Case of Reykjabók: Paleographical and Multispectral Analysis

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Introduction¹

Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) is one of the oldest and most complete manuscripts of *Njáls saga*. It has received a lot of scholarly attention, not least with regard to the high number of skaldic stanzas preserved in it, and it has served as the basis for several editions.² However, key aspects of its production—especially concerning the extra (or “added”) stanzas found in the margins and at the end of the codex—have not yet been fully understood. This chapter examines the paleographical and material features of these textual additions in order to shed new light on the production of Reykjabók. The evidence of the script, combined with multispectral scanning of the ink, hints at a collaborative production effort: in effect, at close cooperation between two contemporary scribes.

The text of *Njáls saga* found in Reykjabók includes forty-eight stanzas, which is significantly more than is found in any of the other early manuscripts of the saga.³ Twenty-seven of those stanzas are unique to what Einar Ólafur Sveinsson calls the X-group manuscripts and are, together with another two stanzas, often referred to as the “additional stanzas” of *Njáls saga*.⁴ In the manuscripts that preserve them, these additional stanzas occur within the first part of *Njáls saga*, in which Gunnarr Hámundarson is the main character, up until the death of Þráinn Sigfússon. The narrative puts most of the additional stanzas into the mouths of Gunnarr and Skarphedinn Njálsson, whose depiction gains extra depth from the poetry, according to Guðrún Nordal.⁵ In Reykjabók, the first ten of these additional stanzas were copied out as part of the main text. Another twelve stanzas are found in the margins of leaves close to where they belong in the text, and five stanzas have been added at the very end of the manuscript (see Susanne M. Arthur and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, p. 284). In order to differentiate between the seventeen marginal and final stanzas from the larger group of all additional stanzas, I refer to the former as the “added stanzas.”⁶

The age and origins of the added stanzas in Reykjabók have been debated. Early scholarship on *Njáls saga* examined the scribal hands in Reykjabók and concluded that the hand of the scribe who wrote the added stanzas is distinct from the main hand.⁷ Scholars also generally agreed that the two hands are roughly contemporaneous.⁸ Finnur Jónsson proposed that the added stanzas were composed after the composition of the original version of the saga but prior to the production of Reykjabók. Since he found no substantial difference in language or style, he argued that the added stanzas in Reykjabók had been composed around the same time as the other additional stanzas that were written out as part of the main text.⁹ Finnur Jónsson concluded, furthermore, that the main scribe had two manuscripts available to him simultaneously as exemplars, one with the stanzas in the first part of the saga and one without, and that the scribe included some of the stanzas from the former in his text but otherwise followed the exemplar without stanzas.¹⁰ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Jón Helgason, in contrast, proposed that the entire section without the stanzas in the main text stems from a different exemplar, implying that the first scribe simply changed exemplars at some point.¹¹ More recently, Guðrún Nordal interpreted the added stanzas in Reykjabók as a partial later composition in reaction to the already-written codex. Thus, she argued, the added stanzas could hint at an active response by the audience in the fourteenth century.¹²

This chapter provides new insights into the early history of Reykjabók, in particular into the scribe who wrote the added stanzas.¹³ It reexamines the copying process of the codex with combined paleographical and multispectral analysis on the basis of the hypothesis that the second scribe was a close collaborator of the main scribe during the manuscript's production. The first section of this article analyzes the paleographical features of the marginal and final stanzas in relation to other added text or paratextual features in the codex, such as rubrics and contemporary marginalia. The second section experiments with the use of multispectral scanning for codicological research, here, comparing the red ink found in connection with the added stanzas to other occurrences of red ink in the manuscript. While nondestructive spectral analysis of ink is frequently employed in conservation contexts to identify ink types, this technology has hitherto only rarely been applied in the field of codicology.¹⁴ As far as Icelandic manuscripts are concerned, pigments in the red ink and drawing colors in Skarðsbók (AM 350 fol., ca. 1363) have been spectroscopically analyzed.¹⁵ Otherwise, spectral imaging has mainly been used to recover

illegible text.¹⁶ This article therefore aims to show how multispectral scanning, when combined with other codicological methods of investigation, can uncover new aspects of scribal practices and working procedures associated with the production of a medieval manuscript. In the case of Reykjabók, characteristic ink signatures detectable through multispectral scanning reveal that the scribe who added the stanzas was also responsible for the rubrics and potentially the initials in the codex. The third and final section of this article reviews possible scenarios for the production of Reykjabók, arguing for active collaboration between two scribes. Finally, it offers an alternative theory for the manuscript's design, proposing that the added stanzas may have been a premeditated feature.

Paleographical Analysis

The following analysis of the script of the textual additions in Reykjabók is based on paleographical features as well as orthographical aspects of the added stanzas. In the first step, only the marginal stanzas are analyzed and contrasted with the script of the main scribe in order to highlight the central characteristics of the script in those additions. In the second step, the paleographical and orthographical features of the marginal stanzas are compared to other textual additions, mainly the introductory sentences, the added stanzas at the back of the manuscript, and the rubrics, the latter only previously having been described as not being in the main scribe's hand.¹⁷ This comparison reveals other occurrences of the second scribe's script and also answers the question as to whether or not the stanzas at the end of the manuscript were added by the same scribe as the stanzas in the margins.¹⁸ Rather than providing a complete account of the paleographical features of the manuscript, the analysis focuses on the characteristics central to the argument that the second scribe also rubricated the manuscript.

The Script of the Added Stanzas

The script of the second scribe is distinct from the main scribe's script, as both the forms of the letters and abbreviations differ. As the main hand, the scribe of the added stanzas uses Gothic book script (*Textualis*), which is characterized by angular shapes and an alternation between bold strokes and thin hairlines.¹⁹ This script type is the predominant one in Icelandic manuscripts from the late thirteenth and fourteenth century.²⁰ As Jón

Helgason pointed out, one of the major differences between Reykjabók's main scribe and the second hand is that the latter does not employ the long form of *r*, which is frequently found in the main text.²¹ Instead, the second scribe uses the regular, straight *r* that ends on the writing line. Moreover, the letter *a* in the marginal script can be both an open *a*, with the neck not touching the bowl, and a two-story *a*, where the bow bends down to the bowl (figure 2.1). In ligatures, for example of *a* and *e*, only the open form of *a* is employed, as is typical for Icelandic *Textualis*.²² In contrast, the main scribe exclusively utilizes the open variant of *a*, regardless of the context. In terms of the abbreviation markers, it is characteristic of the second scribe to use the abbreviation mark “” with a bar for the sequences “*ra*” and “*va*” (e.g. “m,” fol. 33r, line 32), while the main scribe uses the “-mark without a bar (e.g. “,” fol. 37r, line 4).

The script in the marginal stanzas is more upright, with somewhat shorter descenders than the script of the main scribe, especially if the hairlines are not taken into consideration.²³ The descender of the second scribe's tall *s*, for example, often only extends a short distance below the writing line (figure 2.2). The tall *s* of the main scribe, by contrast, extends far below the writing line where the bold stroke of the descender curves to the left. Generally, the letters in the margins appear wider than in the script of the main hand, the minims being written in a relatively spacious manner. For instance, the space between the upright stokes of *n* and *u* is often wider than one of them is thick (figures 2.3a–b). This wider layout makes the script appear somewhat round at times and less angular than the script of the main scribe.

The form of the letters *ð* and *g* characterize the second scribe particularly well. The ascender of *ð* is straight, but tilts to the left, sometimes ending above the previous letter. The crossbar is a thin but straight stroke that intersects the ascender clearly above the bowl. The bar is tilted upwards to varying degrees and extends substantially to the right, so that the total length of the crossbar often exceeds the length of the ascender (figure 2.4a). Occasionally, the tip of the ascender of *ð* (and of *d*) bends back to the right (figure 2.4b). The *ð* of the main scribe, in contrast, features an ascender with a tip that ordinarily bends to the right and a crossbar in the shape of an upward hook, which is attached to the right of the ascender, but does not cross it. The letter *g* in the marginal stanzas is of the type that Derolez describes as “Rücken-g,” where the second section of the upper lobe continues down to connect to the lower lobe.²⁴ In the marginal script the lower lobe has the shape of a large oblong, or, at times, a

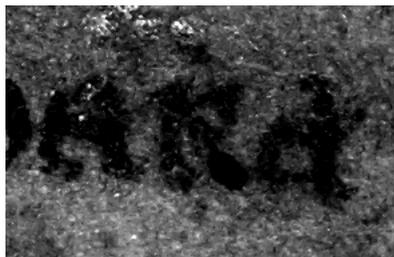


Figure 2.1 Characteristic shapes of the letter *a* by the second scribe (fol. 33r, line 31).

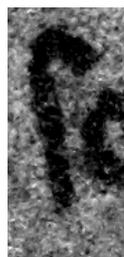


Figure 2.2 Characteristic shape of the tall *s* by the second scribe (fol. 39r, line 31).

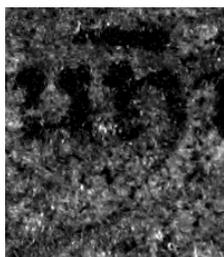


Figure 2.3a Characteristic spacing between minima in the second scribe's script (fol. 40v, second vertical line).

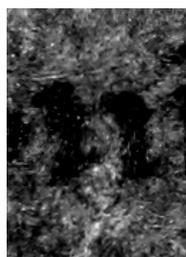


Figure 2.3b Characteristic spacing between minima in the second scribe's script (fol. 24v, line 32).

Figure 2.1–2.3b Reykjabók. Characteristic letterforms in the script of the second scribe, sampled from added stanzas in the margins. (Photos by Suzanne Reitz.)

triangular bowl.²⁵ It is written in several strokes, consisting of one, bold, nearly horizontal line on top, which meets the initial downward stroke, and one to two thinner strokes underneath that close the lobe (figures 2.5a–c). This bowl frequently extends below the previous letter; since the lower part is mostly written as a hairline, sometimes only the top part is visible, giving the impression of a descender that quickly bends to the left (figures 2.5d–e). Additionally, the letter *v* of the second scribe is written in a similar way to an insular *v*. Its main stroke ends below the writing line, where it is met by the right-hand stroke, thus also resembling the letter *y* but without the characteristic dot.²⁶ The upper tips of the two strokes, occasionally the whole upper part of the strokes, bend to the left (figures 2.6a–b). In word-initial positions or as a capital, the left-hand stroke is pronounced and extends at times far beyond the x-height while slightly



Figure 2.4a Characteristic shape of the letter *ð* by the second scribe (fol. 39r, line 32).



Figure 2.4b Characteristic shape of the letter *ð* by the second scribe (fol. 24v, line 33).



Figure 2.5a Characteristic shape of the letter *g* by the second scribe (fol. 37r, line 33).

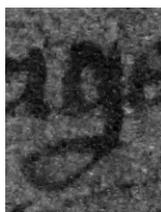


Figure 2.5b Characteristic shape of the letter *g* by the second scribe (fol. 39r, line 31).



Figure 2.5c Characteristic shape of the letter *g* by the second scribe (fol. 39r, line 32).

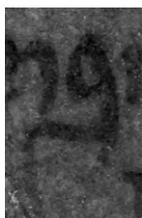


Figure 2.5d Characteristic shape of the letter *g* by the second scribe (fol. 33r, line 31).



Figure 2.5e Characteristic shape of the letter *g* by the second scribe (fol. 39r, line 32).

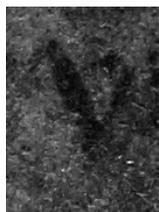


Figure 2.6a Characteristic shape of the letter *v* by the second scribe (fol. 29r, line 31).



Figure 2.6b Characteristic shape of the letter *v* by the second scribe (fol. 29r, line 32).

Figures 2.4a–2.6b Reykjabók. Characteristic letterforms in the script of the second scribe, sampled from added stanzas in the margins. (Photos by Suzanne Reitz.)

bending to the left or right.²⁷ In contrast to the mostly straight descender of *v* in the script of the second scribe (also as a capital), the lower tip of capital *V* in the main text—which also continues below the writing line—quickly curves to the left and forms a descender with a more or less horizontal line (e.g., “Valg^rdz,” fol. 34v, line 30).

The orthography of the second scribe shows a tendency to distinguish between the vowel *u* and the consonant *v*, featured in the distribution of *u* and *v*. While *u* is mostly used for the vowel in word-medial and word-final positions, *v* is frequently written for the consonant, and at times for *u*, especially in word-initial position. There, it often occurs as a capital *V* (e.g., in “Vllr,” fol. 37r, line 32). The main scribe, on the other hand, uses *v* for *u* and *v* almost exclusively. Both orthographical habits can be found in Icelandic manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth century.²⁸ Moreover, the second scribe prefers the ligature *æ* for both *á* (or *é*) and *ó* (or *œ*), indicating the completed vowel merger of *á* + *ó* > *æ*, which started in the middle of the thirteenth century.²⁹ A hooked *e* can be found only in one instance in the added stanzas, namely in the word “mętr” (fol. 37r, third vertical line). The main scribe does not distinguish between the two vowels either, but uses *ę* almost exclusively. The ligature *æ* occurs only a few times in the main text, and mostly for the diphthong *ey*, which is written as *æy* (e.g., “ræyna,” fol. 78r, line 2).³⁰ Finally, for the geminate *kk*, the scribe of the added stanzas writes *kk*, while the spelling *ck*—which is used in the main text—is the predominant but not sole spelling in fourteenth-century Iceland.³¹

Over all, the appearance of the second hand’s script varies considerably. While the basic letterforms and orthography do not change, the size of the writing differs. The script is also more distinct on some pages than on others, causing the hairlines to be more or less visible, which gives the script either a more decorative or simpler appearance. The paleographical and orthographical differences between the main hand and the second scribe described here do not indicate that one is younger than the other. Rather, both scribes show a few traits that are already attested in earlier periods, such as the long form of *r* in the main hand and the rather round shape of some minims in the second hand.³² Nonetheless, the majority of characteristics are shared, and the observed differences fall under synchronic variation in the (early) fourteenth century.

Other Occurrences of the Second Hand

The script found in the marginal stanzas can also be identified in other additions to the manuscript. It is clear that the second scribe was equally

responsible for writing the short introductory sentences that preface the added stanzas. On fol. 39r, for example, the introductory formula reads “Gvñar q̄ð þa.” [Gunnarr spoke then.] (figure 2.7), and the letters *a*, *ð*, *n*, and *v* show the above-mentioned characteristics. Moreover, the abbreviation mark “ $\overline{\text{v}}$ ” (with a bar) is used for the sequence *va*. This opening sentence is written in black ink, the same ink as the stanza in the margin. In most other opening sentences, red ink is used. Nonetheless, all opening sentences can be attributed to the scribe who added the stanzas. In the opening sentence on fol. 24v (see plates 2a–b), for instance, the word *kvað* is abbreviated in the same way as in the introductory sentence in black ink (though here written with *d* instead of *ð*), and the following word, *visu*, exemplifies the usage of *u*, the pointy *v* and the tall *s* with a very short descender. Since the red ink is fading, visual inspection with the naked eye is difficult. The script can, however, be identified as that of the second scribe in a black-and-white image where the contrast is enhanced (see plate 2b).³³

The observation that the opening sentences were written by the same scribe who added the stanzas also holds true in cases where these formulae are found in the outer margin close to the indicated place of insertion, instead of immediately in front of the stanzas themselves. Plate 3, for instance, shows a red cross-mark in the middle of line 7 on fol. 33r and a red opening sentence at the same height in the outer margin. Even though the script is fading, the above-mentioned abbreviation for *kvað* can be made out in the phrase “þ[a] q̄ð .G. vi[*u*]” [then Gunnarr spoke a stanza].

The added stanzas at the end of the manuscript show comparable paleographical and orthographical characteristics to those displayed in the marginal stanzas. The opening sentences of fol. 93v are written in red ink, while the stanzas are in black. This is the same practice as in most of the marginal additions. Moreover, the script of the added text at the back of the manuscript displays the above-mentioned shapes of *g*, *ð*, and *v* and several occurrences of the $\overline{\text{v}}$ -mark and two-story *a*. Finally, the orthography matches the habits found in the marginal stanzas, showing *u*, *e*, and *kk*.³⁴ Thus, in addition to the stanzas in the margins, the second scribe also wrote the stanzas at the back of the codex as well as all the introductory sentences that preface the added material.

The rubrics throughout the manuscript prove likewise to be written by the second scribe. On fol. 38v, for example, the rubric reads “atreið til hlið’e[. . .]nda” [Riding up to Hlíðarendi], showing the characteristic form of *ð* twice (figure 2.8). Similarly, this letterform occurs in the rubric on fol.

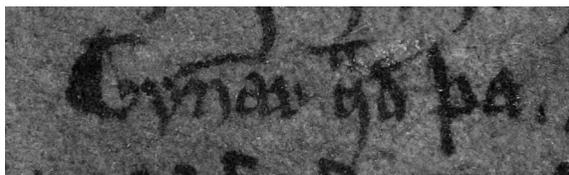


Figure 2.7 Introductory sentence for added stanza in the lower margin of fol. 39r (line 31).

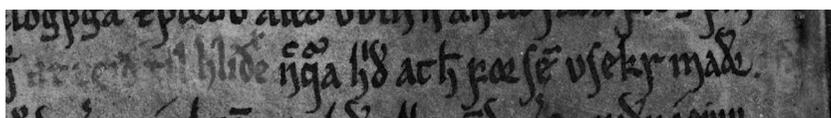


Figure 2.8 Rubric on fol. 38v (line 10).

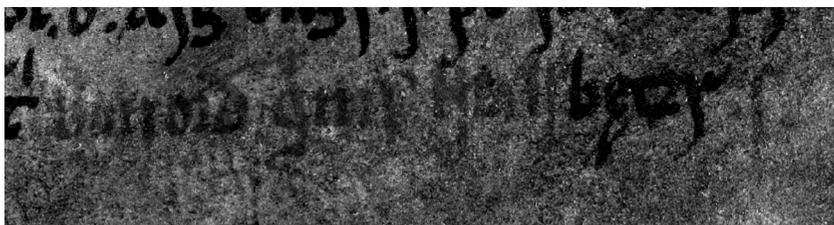


Figure 2.9 Rubric on fol. fol. 15r (line 30).

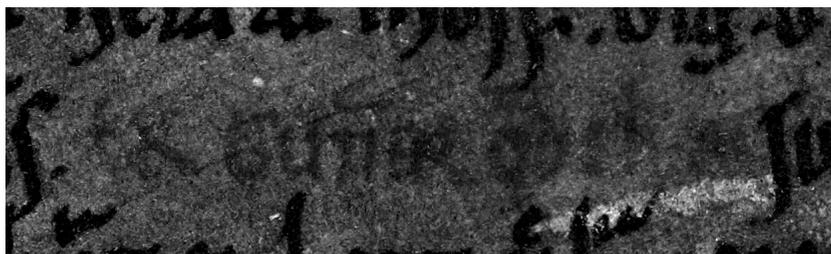


Figure 2.10 Rubric on fol. 39v (line 19).

Figures 2.7–2.10 Reykjabók. Examples of the second scribe's script found in introductory sentences for added stanzas and rubrics. (Photos by Suzanne Reitz.)

15r (figure 2.9), which also features *g* with the looped descender described above. In the third example, taken from fol. 39v (figure 2.10), the rubric contains the word *kvad* written with *q* and a ϖ -abbreviation in the same way that it frequently occurs in the added opening formulae. Furthermore,

this rubric exemplifies the usage of two-story *a* and wide minims, particularly with regard to *u*. Despite the red ink being partially faded, all rubrics are found to be in the hand of the second scribe. With respect to changing size, accuracy, and visibility, they show comparable variation in the overall appearance to the added stanzas, even though the script retains its central features. In sum, this evidence demonstrates that the rubricator also wrote the added stanzas in the Reykjabók manuscript.

The two hands identified and described here—the main scribe and the second scribe—are the only ones in Reykjabók that date to the manuscript's earliest period of existence. Aside from the added stanzas and rubrics, other contemporaneous additions include corrections to the main text. Within these corrections, the hand of the second scribe occurs once. He added the word “hættu” in the outer margin of fol. 47r, as can be seen from the use and shape of the letters *e* and *u*.³⁵ The remaining textual additions are in the hand of the main scribe, who added omitted text in the outer margins of fols. 43v, 50r, 56r, 59r, and 65v. Furthermore, the small *v* that appears multiple times in the margins to indicate stanzas copied within the main text is in the hand of the first scribe (e.g., fols. 39v, 40r, 53r, 91–92r).

Based on the paleographical evidence, two scribes worked on Reykjabók and their hands are distributed in a clear way. While the main scribe was responsible for the prose (including most corrections) and the stanzas that can be found as part of the main text, the second scribe added stanzas outside the main text and wrote the rubrics. Using Gérard Genette's terminology, the second scribe provided *paratextual elements* or, more precisely, the *peritext*.³⁶ The distribution of the two hands, in combination with them being contemporaneous (as far as can be concluded on the basis of the inevitably broad paleographic dating criteria noted above), suggests interaction, if not collaboration, between the scribes. This observation brings into question assumptions previously made by scholars about how Reykjabók was produced, speaking as it does against the interpretation that the added stanzas in the codex were written as an independent response to the main scribe's work.

Multispectral Analysis

This section examines the red ink used in Reykjabók by means of multispectral imaging. First, the method is introduced and discussed with regard to the equipment employed, a VideometerLab 2 spectral imaging instrument,

which is available at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen where Reykjabók is housed. Afterwards, the results from analyzing the red ink in the codex, which occurs both in the rubrics and in connection with the added stanzas, are discussed.

Multispectral scanning enhances features not visible to the human eye by taking images of an object at a variety of wavelengths. It measures the light reflectance properties of different substances at a range of wavelengths. In addition to red, green, and blue light, which are in the visible range of wavelengths (400–700 nm), spectroscopy also includes the ultraviolet (350–400 nm) and infrared (630–950 nm) regions. Spectral imaging was originally developed for environmental remote sensing, but today it is applied in a variety of disciplines, some of which are related to manuscript studies. The “Archimedes Palimpsest Group,” for instance, has employed multispectral imaging techniques to capture previously erased text from manuscripts.³⁷ Multispectral analysis is also common in the context of manuscript conservation, where it is used to identify pigments and binding materials and thereby allows for optimal treatment of damaged illuminations.³⁸ The “MINIARE” project combines conservational approaches with art-historical and codicological research. Although it addresses questions concerning the production procedure of manuscripts and possible collaboration, the focus lies on illuminations and collaboration between individual painters.³⁹

Methodology

Multispectral scanning is frequently used to analyze the chemical composition of differently colored ink and paint in medieval manuscripts. For conclusive identification of pigments as well as suggestions about specific recipes used, it is usually necessary to combine two or more different methods of analysis, such as multispectral scanning and Raman spectroscopy.⁴⁰ Since only equipment for multispectral imaging was available on site, a combined technical analysis of the ink in Reykjabók was not conducted. For the purposes of the current study, however, the exact identification of components was not deemed to be crucial. Moreover, since in this study, the findings of the multispectral analysis are combined with paleographical examination, the results from the multispectral analysis do not stand alone.

The VideometerLab 2 is a compact multispectral device that takes images 2056 × 2056 px in size, with a resolution of 78 μm/px. The

instrument at the Arnamagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen, is equipped with nineteen high-power LED light sources ranging from 375 to 970 nm.⁴¹ For each wavelength, a separate picture is taken measuring the reflectance of the light. Combining the measurements into a single image allows for a spectral analysis of surfaces and colors, and detection of different chemical compositions. Due to separable bands, the reflectance of the wavelengths can also be examined individually. In the VideometerLab 2, the intervals between the bands vary. This complicates the comparison of spectra produced by the device with other reflectance spectra of materials and pigments, which are commonly based on continuous bandwidths.⁴² Still, reflectance spectra taken with the same device can be compared internally.

For the analysis of ink, spectra are created by means of manual sampling. The VideometerLab 2 allows for samples as small as one pixel at a time. The built-in software of the device then compiles that pixel's reflectance percentages for each of the nineteen different bands into a spectral curve. Since the instrument's resolution per pixel is considerably lower than what would be required to select individual pigment particles (not infrequently with a size of 1 μm),⁴³ it can only provide average spectra for ink or paint mixtures found in entire pixels. Studies with a focus on medieval recipes for colorful ink and paint have shown that besides the pigments, the binding materials also have measurable reflectance spectra for the light-range covered by most multispectral devices.⁴⁴ The spectra obtained by the VideometerLab 2 are therefore not pure pigment spectra but reflect, to a certain degree, the ratio between the different components of the analyzed inks, including the materials used as binder. In this chapter, all results illustrated are achieved by measuring multiple pixels and comparing the mean.

To test the equipment and methodology, several early, fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts were analyzed for the occurrence of different red inks.⁴⁵ Most better-furbished manuscripts from that time period have at least two different kinds of red, one lighter and one darker hue. The reflectance spectra of these two colors are clearly distinguishable, as they were presumably based on different pigments. In a study of the Skarðsbók manuscript combining Raman microscopy and visual reflectance spectroscopy that was performed in 1993, when the manuscript was in the UK for conservation treatment, two different red pigments were identified: vermilion and red ochre.⁴⁶ Since Skarðsbók was produced in the latter half of the fourteenth century, it is conceivable that the same pigments were

available to scribes and illuminators around 1300. Encouragingly, the reflectance spectra measured for the test manuscripts roughly match standard reflectance spectra for these pigments. However, no conclusive identification is possible. The spectral reflectance of vermilion is also somewhat similar to the spectrum of minium, so that they could be confused in a noisy sample.⁴⁷ The study of *Skarðsbók* additionally found that the two types of pigments used were mixed together and bound differently to create four different hues of red.⁴⁸

Spectral analysis of a test page from the mid-fourteenth-century AM 226 fol. manuscript of *Stjórn* suggests that there might be three different types of red ink or paint present in that manuscript (see plates 4a–b). In the large initial on fol. 14v, the letter *F*, two hues of red were employed (see plate 4a). The letter itself has a dark-red color, while a lighter red was used in the decoration. On the same page is a light-red rubric, which exhibits a reflectance spectrum that is slightly different to the spectrum of the light-red color found in the initial (see plate 4b). In particular, the diverging measurements at the lower end of the spectrum (<590 nm) might hint at different processing procedures of the same pigment, or the binder ratio varying between the red ink that was used for writing the rubric and the light red prepared for ornamentation of the initial.⁴⁹ On visual examination, the light-red ink from the rubric additionally appears to be flakier than the light-red color found in the initial.

The tests indicate that the reflectance spectra of light-red ink are especially obscured by the parchment shining through when the ink is fading. This phenomenon particularly affects the higher end of the spectrum (>660 nm), where the reflectance curve of fading ink is less steep than in clear samples and more closely resembles the control curve of the parchment on that page. The degree of dirt and overall darkening of the parchment affects the absorption of the light and, consequently, the measured spectra, by reducing reflectance. In the present study, samples were therefore compared, where possible, from pages with similar parchment qualities, or the noise caused by it was factored in. In all spectra given, a reflectance curve of the support is included for comparison. Additionally, some external light present at site may have caused noise in the measured spectra.

Finally, tests were conducted with inks of other colors, namely green, orange-yellow, dark blue, and black-to-brown writing ink. These colors showed their own characteristic spectral signatures that are clearly discernible from the curves of the two different reds and the parchment.

However, testing was not done of a sufficient number of samples of those colors to trace differences that could hint at various pigments or types of ink.

Besides measurements of reflectance spectra for particular areas, the software of the VideometerLab 2 device also provides visual aid in tracing areas of similar chemical composition. The transformation function allows the identification of further occurrences of the properties found in a given area of interest (previously denoted by the researcher) by calculating the reflectance values for the nineteen bands of all pixels in the images. In the CDA (and nCDA) mode,⁵⁰ the function compares different areas of interest against each other and visually highlights pixels in a given image based on similarities with either one of the specified spectral signatures. While the analytical value of such transformations is limited, they allow for prescreening of various parts of a manuscript when searching for further occurrences of a certain ink, which can then be analyzed in more detail, for instance by means of reflectance spectra. In particular, when discriminating two similar hues against each other, this function enables the easy exclusion of cases where the same ink merely appears different to the naked eye due to various degrees of fading.

Composition of Red Ink in Reykjabók

If the same hand wrote the rubrics in Reykjabók as well as the added stanzas and their introductory sentences, it would be logical to expect the red ink found in all of them to be identical.

The spectral signature of the red ink found in the rubrics does indeed match that of the light-red ink occurring in conjunction with the added stanzas. Besides the opening sentences that precede the added stanzas, light-red ink is found where the logical location of the added stanzas is indicated in the text by means of a red mark in all instances except for two.⁵¹ This light-red ink is partially faded but is mostly still clear enough to be compared to the red ink found in the rubrics, which at times is equally difficult to see and measure. Analysis of several examples each for these different types of occurrences of light-red ink returns the same spectral signature, except for when no clear reflectance spectrum could be established due to severe noise caused by dirty parchment or the ink being too damaged or faded.⁵² Fol. 31v features a rubric, a red marker, and a marginal stanza with an opening sentence on the same page (see plate 5a). All three of the red inks show remarkably similar spectra, which differ

considerably from a curve for the black ink of the main text included for comparison (see plate 5b). Slight differences between the spectra of the red ink can be attributed to noise, mainly caused by the parchment. Further, nCDA transformation helped reveal that the fading opening formulae of the added stanzas at the back of the manuscript (fol. 93v) also have spectral signatures similar to those of insertion markers and opening sentences in the margins. This corroborates the hypothesis that the light-red ink used in connection with the added stanzas is chemically identical to the red ink found in the rubrics.

Additional instances of red ink throughout Reykjabók have a similar spectral signature to the red ink used in the rubrics and textual additions. For example, fol. 43v contains light-red lines framing a marginal addition written in black ink by the main scribe, and the red ink of those lines shows a comparable spectral signature to the red ink used elsewhere by the second scribe. Moreover, the light-red ink found in many of the codex's initials has the same spectral properties as the red ink from the rubrics and added stanzas. While some of these initials are rather plain, others are delicately decorated, at times also using green ink, which is extremely faded.⁵³ Additionally, other initials, such as the monochrome letter *P* on fols. 31r and 37v, have a darker red hue that shows a clearly distinct spectral signature.⁵⁴

Plate 6 compares the reflectance spectra of light-red ink found in the opening sentence of an added stanza and a rubric to both the light and dark-red ink from the initials. The measurements of the light-red ink were made on fol. 31v, while the dark-red ink was measured on two different pages, fols. 31r and 37v, which explains the slight internal differences between the two curves. The observation that the spectral signature of the light-red ink from the initials is highly similar to that of other occurrences of light-red ink suggests that the ink used by the second scribe was also utilized for drawing most of the initials in the codex. The darker red initials, on the other hand, appear to have been executed using a different kind of ink, potentially made from another pigment. Therefore, rather than finding chemical differences between the red ink from the added stanzas and the rubrics or the initials, variation occurs within the contemporary initials, indicating that most of the initials were drawn using the same light-red ink as the red textual additions in the second scribe's hand.

In sum, spectroscopic analysis of Reykjabók supports the results from paleographical analysis that the added stanzas and the rubrics were written by the same scribe, as the light red ink from the rubrics has

the same spectral signature as the ink that was employed to mark the added stanzas and to introduce them with formulaic opening sentences. Additionally, spectral analysis reveals that a comparable red ink was utilized for highlighting some of the main scribe's additions in the margins and occurs in many of the initials throughout the codex. Thus, it is tempting to suggest that the second scribe, besides adding the stanzas and rubricating the codex, framed some of the main scribe's additions and potentially even drew the initials. This interpretation adds another aspect to the suggested division of labor between the two scribes, implying that all paratextual features of the manuscripts might be attributable to the second scribe. However, since the light-red initials and highlighting cannot be paleographically analyzed, it is impossible to know for certain if they were implemented by the second scribe. They could have been added by another hand, for instance, that of the first scribe, or alternatively, a third illuminator.⁵⁵

Were the Additions in Reykjabók Premeditated?

Paleographical and spectral analysis suggests that the second scribe played a larger role in the writing of Reykjabók than just adding the seventeen stanzas to the margins and end of the codex. He was also responsible for writing the rubrics and improving the main text by occasionally adding a forgotten word and, presumably, highlighting other additions made by the first scribe. Potentially, the second scribe likewise drew the initials. Based on these new insights into the second scribe's work on Reykjabók, the following section discusses aspects of the codex's early history with particular focus on the added stanzas.

It is, of course, possible that the main scribe did not include the added stanzas because they were not available in the manuscript that was used for the primary copying of the part of the saga narrative in question. For instance, a second manuscript could have been borrowed only after the first scribe had finished his work, or at least his work on the part of Reykjabók where the added stanzas appear. This essentially agrees with Jón Helgason's and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's hypotheses and provides a simple explanation as to why the stanzas are not found in the main text. However, it does not answer the question of whether the added stanzas were known to the main scribe. If he had been aware of additional stanzas, the main scribe might arguably have left blank spaces for them to be added later. An example of a scribe leaving such spaces for stanzas to be filled in

is found in the copy of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* in Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.), where another scribe copied most but not all of the necessary lines, and the manuscript still contains blank spaces in three instances.⁵⁶ Since the main scribe of Reykjabók did not choose to provide spaces, he either did not know about the extra stanzas or chose not to do so in order to avoid a seemingly imperfect layout of his codex. He could even have known that more stanzas existed but may not have been sure about the exact number and/or location of the stanzas and accordingly was not able to provide correct spaces for them within the main text.⁵⁷

That the second scribe appears to have collaborated closely with the main scribe, however, speaks against the theory that the added stanzas were not available or known to the main scribe. While the main scribe did not leave any space for added stanzas, he did provide blank space for both the rubrics and initials. The area provided for the rubrics is not always sufficiently large for the inserted words, but the main scribe undoubtedly expected the codex to be rubricated and equipped with colorful initials. Thus, he did not assume his copying to be the only work done on the manuscript, and it seems likely that he collaborated with a rubricator, potentially one who was also capable of providing elaborate initials. It might be expected that the manuscript was passed to such a collaborator as soon as the main scribe was done with his task of copying the main text. If the rubricator had access to another manuscript, why did the two scribes then not exchange manuscripts the other way around as well? Maybe there was no need for a second manuscript, because the rubricator knew the stanzas he added by heart. Still, if the scribes collaborated in other ways, why did the second scribe then not share his knowledge about the existence of more additional stanzas with the first scribe? Since the second scribe was involved in other parts of the production of Reykjabók, it is at least highly doubtful that the added stanzas were newly composed and included in the codex as some kind of a response to the narrative in the way that Guðrún Nordal suggests.

Close scribal collaboration is witnessed in other large Icelandic parchment codices. The Morkinskinna manuscript (GKS 1009 fol.), for example, was written by two scribes, both of whose hands occur in the main text, while one of them—the more experienced scribe—was also responsible for the rubrics and, in all likelihood, the initials. Alex Speed Kjeldsen characterizes this more experienced hand as that of the scribe responsible for the overall layout and structural decisions in the Morkinskinna manuscript.⁵⁸ In Möðruvallabók, a distinct rubricator was active who added the

red headings and possibly the initials.⁵⁹ Although the nature of scribal collaboration in early Icelandic manuscripts has not been systematically researched, such cases suggest that in the production of larger codices, it may have been common that one scribe was responsible for structural layout or *mise-en-page* and at least simple decoration.⁶⁰ Furthermore, for some medieval manuscripts produced in mainland Europe, there is evidence of collaboration at scriptoria where one scribe was in charge of a manuscript's physical appearance and decoration (which also included rubrics) to various degrees.⁶¹ The way in which the tasks seem to have been divided between the two scribes of Reykjabók makes it therefore likely that they worked in the same scriptorium.

Instead of the stanzas not being to hand, the added material may have been known and available, but the first scribe—or the person responsible for the arrangement of the text—deliberately chose not to include it in the main text.⁶² Judy Quinn has observed how, in other saga manuscripts, poems (which were presumably well known) are not written out in full or are only referred to by name. Quinn argues these references—which usually include a formal introduction to the quotation, but sometimes only give the first words or lines—may have functioned “as a kind of shorthand for readers or reciters.”⁶³ The practice of skipping well-known stanzas or text passages is also common in prayer books and other religious or formulaic writing. In such cases, however, an indicator is usually written out in order to remind the reader that a given sequence is to be recited from memory.⁶⁴ In Reykjabók, by contrast, no such indicators are found as part of the main text. Rather, the prose is continuous without the added stanzas. Consequently, it is doubtful that the main scribe of Reykjabók omitted stanzas to save space, perhaps expecting them to be known by heart. In one instance, on fol. 24r, the stanzas even make superfluous a short part of the main text, which describes the recitation of some poetry by Sigmundur Lambason and makes a quality judgment (that they are bad).⁶⁵ Thus, the three stanzas that the addition offers instead not only expand the main text but provide a textual alternative.

The first scribe may have deliberately omitted some of the stanzas, perhaps on the basis of literary or aesthetic considerations such as the flow of the narrative, but later changed his mind and asked the second scribe to add them as he went over the manuscript. This could explain why the added stanzas only occur in the first part of Reykjabók, assuming that the main scribe reconsidered his approach halfway through. Yet, since the first scribe added omitted prose parts in the margins, he could easily have

added the left-out stanzas himself as he was clearly going over the text once more. While some of his corrections are only single words, the additions on fols. 43v and 50r are longer phrases of almost comparable length to stanzas. Furthermore, both of these longer additions by the first scribe occur in the same part of the manuscript as the added stanzas, the last of which is found on fol. 52r. This could indicate that even if he changed his mind about whether or not to include these stanzas, he seems to have interpreted them as inherently different to the main text in some way.

The decision not to write certain stanzas as part of the main text may, for instance, have been due to the knowledge that the stanzas in question were of a different age or origin from the main text.⁶⁶ If these stanzas were indeed conceived of as not belonging to the main text, in a comparable manner to the other paratextual features, it would be in accordance with the described pattern of work division that they were left to the second scribe, even if the first scribe had access to them. If this theory is accepted, it would not have mattered whether the additional material existed in the same exemplar or not, as long as the stanzas were thought of as structurally distinct from the rest of the text. In that case, including the stanzas outside the main text may even have been an intentional feature and part of the design of Reykjabók.

Supplying stanzas separate to the main text may have had several advantages. For instance, stanzas written outside the main text stand out visually. As Guðrún Nordal has demonstrated, the additional stanzas, to which the added stanzas belong, are linked to central scenes in the first part of the saga narrative and could, therefore, “serve as an index to crucial events in this part of *Njáls saga*.”⁶⁷ Due to their physical placement in the margins (for the most part), the added stanzas could be used as signposts when flipping through the thick codex. Nonetheless, if this was the original intention, why were some of the additional stanzas written by the first scribe? Moreover, why was this practice not continued with at least a few stanzas in the latter part of the long saga, where all stanzas are included in the main text?

Whereas the stanzas written at the back of the manuscript cannot have an indexing function, they are still made available to the reader. On fol. 49r, the second scribe added a clear instruction at the top of the page that the two stanzas that Skarpheðinn spoke are to be found written out at the end of the saga: “ok q^od vífv^r .jj ok eru ritað^r e^{ft}r faugvna.” [and (he) spoke two stanzas, and (they) are written after the saga]. In the other case, on fol. 24r, the indication of where to find the three stanzas by Sigmundur

is not as obvious but still present. The intended location of the stanzas in the text is marked by means of a red line through the words that become superfluous when reading the stanzas, and Jón Helgason conjectured that “three almost completely obliterated lines, also in red, can be traced in the margin, no doubt comprising a reference to the verses.”⁶⁸ Multispectral imaging confirms that there are traces of light-red ink in the margin and that they stem from three written lines. Despite the technology, most of the text remains illegible except for the last two words, which plausibly read “[...] ept’ fauguna.” [(...) after the saga.”] and are thus the same as the last words of the reference in the margin of fol. 49r. Additionally, both on fol. 24r and fol. 49r, the scribe needed to add more than one stanza at a time but otherwise only wrote a single stanza into the margins at a time (with a maximum of two separate stanzas on the same page). Therefore, the originally blank fol. 93v at the end of the codex provided a logical place and ample space for longer material that would otherwise be at risk of being crammed into the margins. Moreover, the second time that added stanzas were placed at the end of the manuscript occurred after the scribe had copied several single stanzas into the margins. It is thus unlikely that the copying method was random or developed from some kind of spontaneous adding of stanzas in the back to placing them in the margins. Instead, the two occasions where stanzas were written at the back of the codex are the only instances among the added stanzas in which a character recites more than one stanza at a time, meaning the placement is consistently based on the number of quoted lines.

Another advantage of adding stanzas in the margins and at the back of the manuscript has been pointed out by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir.⁶⁹ She remarked that the presence of the stanzas in the margins—as at the end of the codex—allows the reader to choose what to read. As Margaret Clunies Ross has noted with respect to the poetry in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, the citation of stanzas can be perceived as disturbing the narrative flow of a saga.⁷⁰ Thus, placing stanzas outside of the main text instead of having them merge into the prose allows a reader to easily continue with the narrative but, at the same time, provides the stanzas for those interested. For *Njáls saga*, Guðrún Nordal convincingly showed that the additional stanzas, to which the added stanzas belong, slow the narrative down as they are not central to the plot but instead offer more nuanced portraits of the main characters.⁷¹ Accordingly, the placement of some of the stanzas outside the main text enables the reader to choose between a more linear or “undisturbed” reading and a longer, more detailed text. By deciding

what to include and what to skip, the reader is able to influence the overall perception of the saga and its characters.

If the marginal and final stanzas in Reykjabók were indeed a deliberate feature intended to provide different options for the reader, they would be an example of an interactive approach to saga writing and reading in Iceland in the fourteenth century that is hitherto undocumented. The carefully thought through placement of the stanzas would thus actively encourage the reader to take part in the performance of the text, beyond a straightforward recitation. Furthermore, such an approach—especially when combined with the assumption that the scribes may have known about different origins of some of the stanzas—implies a high awareness of textual variation and possibly even a critical reflection of the textual instability of *Njáls saga* during the fourteenth century.

In total, newly-gained knowledge about the second scribe of Reykjabók challenges earlier theories about the added stanzas and why they were written outside the main text. Instead of working independently from each other, it seems more likely that two scribes collaboratively produced Reykjabók. It is deemed plausible that the added stanzas were available to the first scribe but purposefully omitted from the main text. The clear division of tasks between the scribes, in combination with the particular arrangement of the added stanzas, is moreover taken to suggest that the layout with added stanzas in this manuscript may have been intentional.

Conclusion

The paleographical and spectral analysis undertaken in this study has revealed that the scribe who wrote the added stanzas in Reykjabók was also responsible for other parts during the production of the manuscript, most notably the rubrics. The two contemporary scribes each had specific tasks in producing the codex, which suggests an intentional division of labor and speaks in favor of a close collaboration between them.

Presently, little is known about working procedures in medieval Icelandic manuscript production and particularly about the role of the rubricator. Questions about whether or not rubricators usually had additional responsibilities, and the nature of their relationship to other scribes, have not yet been fully answered. The methods used in this article present a novel approach to studying the roles of individual scribes in the production of medieval Icelandic manuscripts. Paleographic analysis identified

the second scribe's hand in places hitherto unnoticed, while multispectral imaging suggested that the light-red ink is the same throughout the codex. Even though the spectral analysis does not allow for conclusive results, it indicated that the light-red ink found in parts of the codex which cannot be analyzed by means of paleography is chemically identical with the ink used by the second scribe. Paleography and multispectral imaging have thus been fruitfully combined in this study, allowing new insights into the early history of Reykjabók.

A detailed description of the tasks of the two scribes of Reykjabók has enabled a deeper understanding of their relationship. It suggests that the division of labor was not purely a question of facilitating or speeding up the work. Future application of the results to other early medieval manuscripts from Iceland could be advantageous and would allow for further critical reevaluation. In *Möðruvallabók*, for example, where a very similar distribution of tasks was noticed, the collaboration may have been based on similar principles.

The exact circumstances of Reykjabók's production with regard to the added stanzas have been discussed on the basis of the findings. While it could not be determined from which kind of exemplar the added stanzas were copied, it seems plausible that the stanzas were known and available at the time of writing. In the light of these new results, theories about the added stanzas having been composed and written as a reaction to the existing codex Reykjabók are deemed unlikely. Instead it is proposed that the placement of material outside the main text may have been an intentional design feature, as Reykjabók's layout makes all the material available but leaves it up to the reader to decide what material to include in a reading. If this theory is taken to be viable, it would hint at a conscious approach to saga writing and reception in Iceland which was aware of textual variation and made explicit the active role that both scribes and readers played in the process, as early as the fourteenth century.

NOTES

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² In 1962, for example, Jón Helgason published a facsimile edition of Reykjabók with a detailed introduction, see *Njáls saga, the Arna-Magnæan manuscript 468, 4°*, (Reykjabók). Older editions based on Reykjabók include Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson 1875–1889, and Finnur Jónsson 1908, see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume pp. 1–4. The latest edition of Reykjabók is that of Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, published in 2003 using modernized spelling and reprinted in 2004.

³ Count based on *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson.

⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 20–23. See also Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi, and Finnur Jónsson, “Om Njála,” 94–97. Guðrún Nordal counts a total of thirty additional stanzas, including three instead of two stanzas from Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol., ca. 1350), see Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 186–87, and Guðrún Nordal, “Attraction of Opposites,” 221–23.

⁵ Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 188–89.

⁶ I only refer to the scribes with male pronouns, even though I do not know their gender.

⁷ Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi, xiii, and references within.

⁸ E.g., Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 6, and Finnur Jónsson, “Om Njála,” 94. Jón Þorkelsson is the only one to believe that the added stanzas were written by the main scribe. See Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 650.

⁹ Finnur Jónsson, “Om Njála,” 93–96.

¹⁰ Finnur Jónsson, “Om Njála,” 96–97.

¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 120, and Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xii.

¹² Guðrún Nordal, “Attraction of Opposites,” 225–26. In a second publication on the same topic, she slightly changes the statement, arguing for all additional stanzas being “composed in appreciation of, or indeed reaction against, the written story.” Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 188.

¹³ Since the stanzas in the margins were written after the main text, I refer to the scribe of the added stanzas as the “second scribe.”

¹⁴ See, e.g., Rabin and Binetto, “NIR Reflectography Reveals Ink Type,” 465.

¹⁵ Best et al., “Identification.”

¹⁶ See, e.g., Þorgeir Sigurðsson, “Arinbjarnarkviða,” and Springborg, “Hvad man kan hitte på.” In my PhD dissertation, I also employ multispectral scanning for the comparison of ink. See Stegmann, “Árni Magnússon’s Rearrangement of Paper Manuscripts,” 147–50.

¹⁷ For previous descriptions of the hand responsible for the rubrics see e.g. Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” vi. In this study, I do not consider the younger marginalia found in the manuscript. On later additions, see, e.g., section 6.4.3 in Susanne M. Arthur’s PhD dissertation, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” especially 274 and 282, also Arthur in this volume.

¹⁸ While most publications only speak of a main scribe and a different hand in the added stanzas, Guðrún Nordal claims that the stanzas “at the end of the saga [were written] by yet another scribe.” Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 186.

¹⁹ Derolez, *Palaeography*, 73–74.

²⁰ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Origin and Development,” 91.

²¹ Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xiii. See also Spehr, *Ursprung*, 124.

²² Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, 45.

²³ The descenders of *f*, *g*, *b*, tall *s*, *y*, and *þ* can show hairlines extending further down and partly forming a loop (see, e.g., the marginal stanza on fol. 40v). Since the parchment is relatively dark and thus the contrast with the script in the margins is not evenly pronounced, today, many letters appear not to have any hairlines.

²⁴ Derolez, *Palaeography*, 88. This general form of *g* (“Rücken-*g*”) is predominant in Icelandic script; see Spehr, *Ursprung*, 116–17.

²⁵ Considering the wider development of Gothic book script, the present shape of *g* with a large lower lobe represents a somewhat older way of writing the letter. Gradually, up until the fourteenth and fifteenth century, the proportions were reversed in favor of the upper lobe. See Derolez, *Palaeography*, 88–89.

²⁶ Insular *v* was employed by Icelandic scribes from approximately 1250 until the early fourteenth century, but the *v* of the second scribe in the present manuscript is usually not interpreted as an insular *v*. See Spehr, *Ursprung*, 37–38, and Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, 42–43.

²⁷ The same letterform of *V* is attested for “scribe A” in the Morkinskinna manuscript (GKS 1009 fol., ca. 1275). See Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier*, 71.

²⁸ Stefán Karlsson, “Development,” 837–38.

²⁹ Stefán Karlsson, *Icelandic Language*, 11, and Hreinn Benediktsson, “The Vowel System of Icelandic,” 60–61.

³⁰ See also Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” viii.

³¹ Stefán Karlsson, “Development,” 834–35.

³² The usage of long *r* began in the thirteenth century, but was most common around 1300; see Spehr, *Ursprung*, 123–24, Stefán Karlsson, “Development,” 834.

³³ By filtering out certain wavelengths of light in an image, multispectral imaging can support the reading of otherwise illegible text. For more detail on the application, see the section on multispectral analysis below.

³⁴ Fol. 93v is very dark and hardly legible today. In Jón Helgason’s 1962 edition of Reykjabók, however, the text in black ink on this page is fairly clear. Therefore, I rely heavily on his facsimile image for analysis of the script on this page. For the writing in red ink, however, multispectral imaging has been used.

³⁵ See also Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xiv. He argues similarly that “hættu” was not written by the main scribe but does not attempt to identify the hand.

³⁶ This does not include the occurrences of marginal *v* in the hand of the main scribe. On *paratext*, *peritext*, and *epitext* see Genette, *Paratexts*, especially 4–5.

³⁷ Netz et al., eds. *The Archimedes Palimpsest*. See also, e.g., Giacometti et al., “Cultural Heritage Destruction,” 302, and France, “Advances,” 73–89.

³⁸ Landgrebe, "Evolution," 859–67.

³⁹ See the project website at <http://www.miniare.org> and the description of the project and some of its results in Panayotova, ed., *Colour*, esp. at 119–20.

⁴⁰ Clerke, "The Analysis," 6–13.

⁴¹ Personal communication with Jens Michael Carstensen from Videometer A/S, 28 April 2015. A datasheet with a summary of all technical specifications of the VideometerLab 2 is available online at <http://www.videometer.com/Portals/0/Brochures/VideometerLab%202.pdf>.

⁴² See, e.g., Vane and Goetz, "Terrestrial Imaging Spectroscopy," 3.

⁴³ Clerke, "The Analysis," 12.

⁴⁴ See Pallipurath et al., "Multivariate Analysis."

⁴⁵ For the test-study I used individual pages from contemporary and indisputably Icelandic manuscripts that display the use of at least one kind of red ink. The manuscripts are AM 20 b fol. II (ca. 1300–1325), AM 75 a fol. (ca. 1300), AM 226 fol. (from the part dated ca. 1360–1370), and AM 233 a fol. (from the two parts dated ca. 1350–1360 and ca. 1350–1375). Furthermore, I tested various hues of red ink on the parchment cover of AM 1006 4to (ca. 1650–1700), which to my knowledge is not dated or located with regard to its country of origin, but the parchment proved to have a comparable quality and dirt level to the parchment in Reykjabók.

⁴⁶ Best et al., "Identification," 36.

⁴⁷ For reflectance spectra of red ochre, minium and vermilion see, e.g., http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/conservation_msi.aspx.

⁴⁸ Best et al., "Identification," 36.

⁴⁹ For similar observations about the impact of binder materials as well as pigment size on the reflectance spectrum see, e.g., Best et al., "Identification," 34.

⁵⁰ CDA stands for Canonical Discriminant Analysis.

⁵¹ On fol. 39r, the location for the added stanza is marked in black, and on fol. 52r, there is no insertion mark at all. See also Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xii.

⁵² An example of (part of) an opening sentence, for which no meaningful reflectance spectrum could be established, is found in the outer margin of fol. 32v. Equally, some of the rubrics could not be analyzed sufficiently to establish reliable spectra.

⁵³ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," vi.

⁵⁴ Some initials have been brushed up later using dark brown or black ink because their original color was fading. Such initials, for instance *S* on fol. 32v, which was presumably originally green, and *K* on fol. 43r, which appears to have been red, were excluded from the analysis.

⁵⁵ While it would slightly change the character of the division of labor if the initials were executed by another person than the second scribe, it would not contradict close interaction between the scribes that worked on Reykjabók. Indeed, if both the first and second scribe (or a potential third person) used the same light-red ink, this would further strengthen the argument for active collaboration.

⁵⁶ Bjarni Einarsson, “Indledning,” xxvii–xxix. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Introduction,” 20–21; Quinn, “Ok er þetta upphaf,” 64–65.

⁵⁷ In the case of Möðruvallabók, the person in charge of its production had a precise understanding of where the stanzas had to be added. Clunies Ross, “Verse and Prose,” 207.

⁵⁸ Other than in Reykjabók, the rubricating hand in the Morkinskinna manuscript was moreover responsible for correcting the main text. However, since that scribe also wrote the majority of the main text, this might simply be called logical. Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier*, 43–46.

⁵⁹ de Leeuw van Weenen, *Grammar*, 23; Bjarni Einarsson, “Indledning,” xxx.

⁶⁰ See Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Handritálýsingar í benediktínaklaustrinu á Þingeyrum,” 232–37 and references within. See also Drechsler, “The Illuminated *Þjófabálkr*,” 2–5 and 33.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony*, especially 27, 35, and 102. It seems that in various medieval manuscript cultures in Europe, such a division of labor was not necessarily the norm. I am, however, currently unaware of any comparative studies on that topic and period.

⁶² A similar approach was expressed by Finnur Jónsson (see above, p. 30).

⁶³ Quinn, “Ok er þetta upphaf,” 71. A similar practice may be found in stanza 102 of Morkinskinna where Hand B only wrote the first line. Hand A then added the rest of the stanza in the margin, probably deciding that the whole stanza should be included anyway. See Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier*, 46.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Hansen, “AM 421 12mo,” 2.

⁶⁵ The context of the text passage in question is as follows: After Sigmundur is asked to recite some poetry, he responds: “Þ ē ek alvín. 7 q̄ ð vífvr .iiij. eða .iiij. 7 v̄ allar illar.” [I am ready for that, and (he) recited three or four stanzas, and they were all bad.] The added stanzas make the last six words (“eða .iiij. 7 v̄ allar illar”) of the main text superfluous, which is indicated by a horizontal light-red line that crosses them out.)

⁶⁶ Guðrún Nordal argues that the dating of the stanzas in *Njáls saga*, as in Sagas of Icelanders in general, “is of little consequence to the authors of the sagas [...], only their applicability in the narrative.” Guðrún Nordal, “Attraction of Opposites,” 225. Still, the professional scribes could have been aware of such differences.

⁶⁷ Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 188.

⁶⁸ Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi.

⁶⁹ Paper presentation (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “The Symbiosis of Sagas and Manuscripts: Some Thoughts on Scribes and Scholars”) and oral communication at the conference “The Icelandic Family Sagas: New Trends and Inevitable Questions,” held in Copenhagen, April 16, 2015.

⁷⁰ Clunies Ross, “Verse and Prose,” 199.

⁷¹ Guðrún Nordal, “Dialogue,” 191–200.

Gráskinna: Material Aspects of a Pocket, Patchwork *Njála*

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Introduction

“Manni kemur í hug eitthvert smádýr, moldvarpa eða broddgöltur, sem liggja dauð á hraðbrautinni eftir að umferðin hefur straujað yfir þau” [One thinks of some small animal, a mole or a hedgehog, lying dead on the highway after the traffic has squashed it].¹ GKS 2870 4to, the Gráskinna manuscript of *Njáls saga*, is in a very fragile state today and is not taken out of the vault at the Árni Magnússon Institute except in exceptional circumstances.² It is a small, compact book whose nickname, “Gray-skin,” derives from its wraparound sealskin cover, though only small patches of the original fur (tawny rather than gray in color) survive here and there.³ The quires that make up the text block have slipped in the soft binding over time so that when the book is closed, the curled edges of its leaves lie stacked in a slant (see plates 7 and 8). Despite its disheveled appearance, Gráskinna has a strong claim to be “et af de mærkværdigste og fortrinligste opbevarede sagahåndskrifter” [one of the most noteworthy and best-preserved saga manuscripts].⁴ The text of *Njáls saga* that is preserved in Gráskinna has certain distinctive features and is discussed in the first chapter by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in the present volume. But hitherto, description and analysis of Gráskinna has only been published in the context of catalogue entries, brief notes in the introductions to editions of *Njáls saga*, and in Jón Þorkelsson’s 1889 and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s 1953 studies of *Njáls saga* manuscripts. In this article, therefore, attention will be paid to aspects of Gráskinna’s production, provenance, and the evidence for sixteenth-century repairs made to it, with the aim of building up a better picture of the manuscript as a material object and how it was used or treated over time.

Gráskinna: Origins and Production

Condition of the Support

Gráskinna is a quarto-sized manuscript comprising 121 parchment leaves that measure approximately 220 mm by 150 mm in their present state. *Njáls saga* is the only text in the manuscript, and it is laid out in one column on fols. 1r–120v. Twenty-seven of the total 121 leaves are younger than the rest, having been added in the sixteenth century as replacements for damaged or lost original leaves. These leaves (and their text) are referred to as “Gráskinnuauki” (“Gráskinna-additions,” henceforth “Ga”). The condition of the support throughout varies. The younger leaves (88–89; 95–96; 99–121) are noticeably lighter and yellower in color and, in general, rather less worn than the older, medieval parts of the book. The leaves that make up the first two quires are particularly dark in color, though dark patches can also be seen on many other leaves throughout the manuscript, especially around the outer, lower edges where users may have turned the pages and left greasy deposits on the parchment. Many leaves are creased and wrinkled, presumably as a result of damp or changing humidity levels; the fact that the manuscript was not bound between boards but had a soft cover instead would have made the parchment more susceptible to changes in environmental conditions. Spillages of some kind of liquid have left stains and blotches on a few leaves (e.g., at 26r; 44r). The original text on 1r has been badly rubbed and is illegible; postmedieval inscriptions have been added in the upper margin and across the center of the page (these are discussed below). As well as 1r, the outer leaves of some other quires are rather rubbed (e.g., at 28v–29r; 44v–45r; 68v–69r; 92v; 98v). Rubbing is often taken as a clue to a book having been in an unbound state for a period of time: this may have been the case with Gráskinna, but the collapse of the limp binding may also have exacerbated the problem, allowing the quires some movement within the binding.

Holes, tears and splits in the parchment are found throughout. Some holes clearly existed prior to the writing of the text, though they may have become more marked in appearance or increased in size over time (e.g., at 46r/v; 63r/v; 79r/v; 87r/v; 91 r/v). Elsewhere, they are the result of damage, either deliberate or accidental. In a handful of places, for example, large capital initials or strips of parchment appear to have been cut out of the parchment (e.g., an *H* at 67r; the upright of a *K* at 70r; *N* at 84v;

see also 14r and 14v, and the lower margins of 39r/v, 72r/v, and 73r/v).⁵ The centerfolds of a number of bifolia are badly damaged in places, with splits and cracks particularly around the lower sewing stations (e.g., at 8v–9r and in the second quire in general). In some places, tears have been stitched together (e.g., at 19r/v; 22r/v; 78 r/v; 80 r/v; 83r/v). Corners of leaves are badly dog-eared and curled: in many places, they have been replaced by younger, sewn-on stubs (discussed in more detail below).

Pricking along the outer edges of leaves is very often visible, and, in some places in the manuscript, a double row of prick-marks can be seen (e.g., all leaves except for one in the fifth quire, fols. 29–36). Younger replacement leaves that were inserted as part of the program of sixteenth-century repairs have been drypoint ruled. The size of the margins varies throughout, but this is partly on account of wear to the outer edges of leaves. The lower margin is generally larger than the upper margin, however. There is not much clear evidence for trimming: if some leaves have been trimmed (perhaps with binding or rebinding, see e.g., at 31r/v), the prick-marks are nonetheless still visible in outer margins. The number of lines per page is usually around twenty-nine to thirty. There is some variation in the ink color, which is brown, though this may be partly due to degradation and damage. Rubrics in red ink are found throughout, as are capital initials in red ink (e.g., at 8r; 13v; 24v). Initials usually fill a space equivalent to two lines in height though ascenders and descenders might extend up to three or four lines above and below the body of the initial (see, e.g., *Ð* at 23r). In places where there are spaces for initials but none visible, they may have been drawn in a color other than red: there are traces of what may be faded initials in yellow ink at 29r and at 48v, for example.

Collation

The delicate condition of the book made it difficult to determine the quire structure with absolute certainty, since damage would be caused to the binding and quires by trying to open it fully.⁶ However, sixteen quires were counted, the majority of which comprise four bifolia.⁷ The collation of the manuscript as far as could be determined is as follows: I⁶ fols. 1–6 (three bifolia); II⁶ fols. 7–12 (two bifolia, plus singletons 7 and 12); III⁸ fols. 13–20 (four bifolia); IV⁸ fols. 21–28 (four bifolia); V⁸ fols. 29–36 (four bifolia); VI⁸ fols. 37–44 (four bifolia); VII⁸ fols. 45–52 (four bifolia); VIII⁸ fols. 53–60 (four bifolia); IX⁸ fols. 61–68 (four bifolia); X⁸ fols.

69–76 (four bifolia); XI⁸ fols. 77–84 (four bifolia); XII⁸ fols. 85–92 (four bifolia); XIII⁶ fols. 93–98 (three bifolia); XIV⁹ fols. 99–107 (four bifolia, plus singleton 104); XV⁸ fols. 108–115 (three bifolia, plus two singletons at 109 and 114); XVI⁶ fols. 116–121 (two bifolia, plus two singletons at 116 and 117).

Irregularities in the collation seem to be entirely due to lacunae in the text. The damage must have been incurred at two or possibly three points in time. Firstly, loss of text must have occurred at some point between the time of Gráskinna's production in the early fourteenth century and the time when the sixteenth-century repairs were made, since part of the sixteenth-century repair work involved the addition of replacement leaves where necessary. More will be said about this below. Subsequently, further damage, resulting in loss of text, occurred after the sixteenth-century repairs were implemented but before the manuscript was sent out of Iceland. A list made in 1662 by Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus) with details about manuscripts sent from Iceland to the Royal Library in Denmark mentions two *Njáls saga* manuscripts in quarto format, both damaged. One of these, "Njali cujusdam historia mutila, quarto," was sent out of Iceland by Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson, and is likely to have been Gráskinna: the inference is that the text was fragmentary, or the manuscript incomplete in some way.⁸ Moreover, variants taken from Gráskinna by the Icelandic scribe Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt and copied into AM 134 fol., the seventeenth-century Hofsbók manuscript of *Njáls saga* (probably for Brynjólfur, before Gráskinna was sent to Denmark, see further below), suggest that the lacunae in the Gráskinna text that exist today also existed then. Further damage (such as the loss of some of the repaired corners on leaves) may have occurred after Gráskinna's arrival in Denmark. The lacunae are as follows:

1. The legible text of *Njáls saga* on 1v begins with Hrútr's betrothal to Unnr with the incipit "þenna kost vil ek" (KG 2.47). The first gap in Gráskinna's text of *Njáls saga* is thus not technically a lacuna, as the leaf is present—but the illegible text on 1r would have corresponded to KG 1.1 to 2.46–47. The first quire of Gráskinna is irregular, comprising three bifolia, but it must originally have comprised four bifolia, with the uppermost leaf probably left blank as a flyleaf. See figure 3.1.
2. The second lacuna is between 6v and 7r (as foliated today). The note "vantar" [lacking] is written in a postmedieval hand in the margin at the foot of 6v, the last leaf of the first quire. 6v ends with the excipit

- “ok spotf af heima” (KG 8.52), part of the scene in which the two boys reenact the dialogue between Hrútr and Unnr in front of the household at Lundr in Reykjadalr. The extant text on 7r, the first leaf of the second quire, begins with the incipit “ok mun svanr taka” (KG 12.21). The second lacuna thus corresponds to KG 8.52–3 to 12.21. Assuming the first quire originally comprised four bifolia as posited above, this missing text would have covered the recto and verso sides of the last leaf of this quire. Similarly, the second quire is irregular, now comprising two bifolia and a couple of singletons (fols. 7 and 12), but presumably, this quire too was originally made up of four bifolia. The missing text would thus also have covered the recto and verso sides of the first leaf of this quire (which formed a bifolium with the extant singleton at 12)—i.e., four pages in total. See figure 3.1.
3. The third lacuna is between 11v and 12r (as foliated today). A now-missing leaf must have formed a bifolium with the extant singleton at 7 in this quire. The last legible words at the foot of 11v are “logmaðr svo mikill at ...”; 12r has the incipit “aflino at þv verðir eigi þo kendr.” This lacuna thus corresponds to KG 20.13 to 22.33. See figure 3.1.
 4. The fourth lacuna is between 92v and 93r (as foliated today). 92v ends with the excipit “þa er elldgvnnar inne,” part of a *dróttkvætt* verse uttered by Kári Sölmundarson, and 93r begins with the incipit “ypr læg kvæð.” The missing text thus corresponds to KG 135.13–100. The thirteenth quire (beginning at fol. 93) is irregular, comprising two bifolia that date to the fourteenth century (fols. 93 and 98; fols. 94 and 97), and one (the innermost bifolium, fols. 95–96) that is a sixteenth-century Gráskinnuauki replacement. The thirteenth quire must therefore have lost its outermost bifolium (i.e., a leaf preceding fol. 93 that was conjoint with one following fol. 98), on which the missing text would have been copied. Text that would have been copied on the last leaf of the original thirteenth quire seems to have been replaced by Gráskinnuauki text copied onto a folio at the beginning of the fourteenth quire (present 99r): the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth quires are all later Gráskinnuauki replacement quires—i.e., from 99r to the end of the manuscript. See figure 3.2.

Gráskinna’s Binding

As noted above, the sixteen quires that make up the text block are bound into a wraparound sealskin cover.⁹ It is rather thick and stiff but not com-

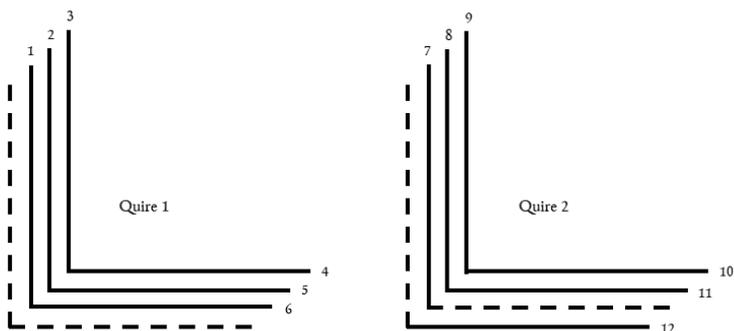


Figure 3.1 Gráskinna. Collation of the first and second quires.

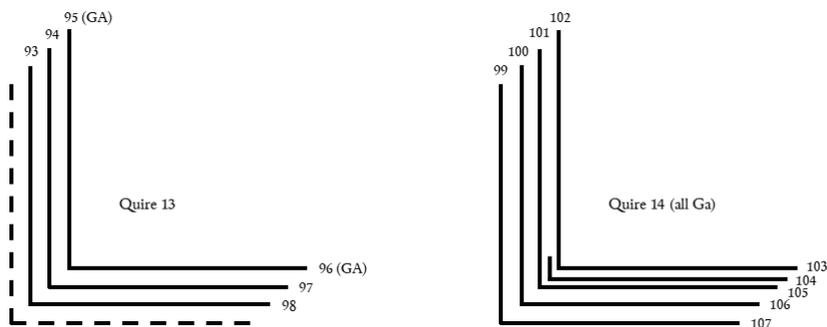


Figure 3.2 Gráskinna. Collation of the thirteenth and fourteenth quires.

pletely inflexible and is made of two pieces of sealskin (1.2 mm to 2.6 mm thick) sewn together with a leather thong using running stitch along the upper edge of the spine. The cover does not seem to have been reinforced inside with other material nor have the outer edges been turned in, in order to strengthen them (both features that are found on some other limp bindings, including Icelandic ones). A pointed flap, which is slightly irregular in shape (perhaps determined by the shape of the skin before it was cut to size), extends out from the back cover and round to the front of the manuscript.¹⁰ The flap would originally have protected the fore-edge of the text block, but because the spine has collapsed and the binding relaxed, it does not now cover the full length of the fore-edge (see plate 7).

The cover is attached to the text block directly by means of tacketing.¹¹ As Agnes Scholla defines it, tacketing “is not sewing in the strict

sense because no continuous thread is employed to link the quires to each other. Instead a twisted strip of parchment is used for each quire and each sewing station.”¹² Rather than strips of parchment or leather, sinew may have been used to attach the Gráskinna quires to the cover; some of the knots are polished shiny and smooth with age and wear.¹³ Each quire seems to have been joined directly to the cover through its central fold in two places, at the head and tail of the spine, so that there are four sewing stations in total. One would expect, then, to find sixteen knotted ends or tie-offs (i.e., one for each of the sixteen quires) lined up or set off at a diagonal at both the head and the tail of the spine. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what technique has been used here, since the loose ends of the tacketing cords have hardened, for the most part, into a solid, snarled mass.¹⁴ The stub-like remains of a cord passed through a hole and knotted onto the point of the flap, and absence of any button or corresponding cord on the upper cover, suggest that the fastening was a wrap-fastening—i.e., a cord that was wrapped around the book and secured by means of tucking the end into the taut winding (see plates 7 and 8).¹⁵

It is difficult to ascertain the age of Gráskinna’s binding, that is, to say whether it is contemporary with the production of the manuscript in 1300, or younger. As is well known, bindings are often younger than the manuscripts they contain, and there are only a very few examples of medieval Icelandic manuscripts in their original binding, which is to say gatherings in a binding that is contemporary to the time of the manuscript’s production. Gráskinna is described as being bound “ganske på islandsk vis” [entirely in the Icelandic way] by Jón Þorkelsson but he did not remark upon its age.¹⁶ In Kristian Kålund’s catalogue entry, only the statement “Indhæftet i omslag af sælskind, der kun ufuldkomment beskylter eller sammenholder bladene” [bound into an envelope of sealskin, which imperfectly protects or holds together the leaves] is found.¹⁷ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson did not comment at all on the binding in his 1953 *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of Njáls-saga*. Birgitte Dall, who conserved the manuscript at the Arnarnagæan Institute workshop in 1980 before it was returned to Iceland, noted in her records that she added new sewing but replaced none of the original sewing.¹⁸ This comment does not shed light on whether Dall thought the binding was contemporary with the manuscript’s production or later, but in a survey article about types of bindings on Icelandic manuscripts, Peter Springborg claims it is “probably from the sixteenth century,” although he does not say what led him to this conclusion.¹⁹

It is hard to use typological features such as the presence or absence of a flap to help determine the age of the Gráskinna binding because, at present, there is not enough information available about extant limp bindings on Icelandic manuscripts to make it possible to map such patterns empirically. According to Scholla, the flap was the most striking feature of limp bindings produced in northwestern Europe and the British Isles from the eighth century to the fourteenth century.²⁰ While virtually all limp bindings were made with a flap between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, in the fourteenth century, limp bindings without a flap began to appear and became more frequent—a development that Scholla suggests “could point to a change in usage of the manuscripts in limp bindings.”²¹ The extent to which these developments may have been mirrored, or not, in Iceland (with Gráskinna either being in line with other bindings or being an outlier) is unknown.

Without resorting to techniques such as DNA analysis of the seal-skin, it is only possible to look for clues that shed light on the relationship between Gráskinna’s cover and the quires bound within it. If the binding were to predate the period when repairs were made to the book in the sixteenth century (whether it was put on around 1300 when the manuscript was copied or at some later point in the fourteenth or fifteenth century), two alternatives were possible with regard to how the cover was handled when the repairs were undertaken. Firstly, all of the quires could have been taken out of the binding and, once made good, the whole book would have been bound back into the cover using the old tacketing holes. Alternatively though, because the quires are each attached independently to the cover by tacketing, they would not necessarily all have had to be taken out of the binding in order for the repairs to be implemented. In the two cases where individual bifolia have been inserted (88 and 89 in the twelfth quire, 95 and 96 in the thirteenth quire), these quires could have been loosened from the binding, made good, and reinserted. The three complete Gráskinnuauki quires (14, 15, and 16) would then have been tacketed in, replacing damaged or missing original quires at the end of the manuscript.

One challenge here, though, is finding an explanation for the fact that the outermost bifolium of the thirteenth quire was not replaced at the same time as the innermost one was. Perhaps the outermost bifolium was still present at the time of the repairs, with the uppermost leaf legible enough to preserve in place while the bottom leaf, on the other hand, was cut away. The text that had been copied on that leaf was written onto 99r, the first leaf of the next, completely renewed quire (14); the singleton that

remained between present fols. 92 and 93 might then have fallen out at a later point, thus causing the lacuna described above. This explanation might also then explain the irregular structure of the fourteenth quire, which is made up of four bifolia and one singleton. Rather than being one leaf out of sync (perhaps the distribution of text across the original quire structure was being followed as closely as possible or an exemplar of the same size was being used), the repairer decided to add an extra leaf to the fourteenth quire in order to fit all of the text into it.

Another possibility is that the binding is contemporaneous with the sixteenth-century repairs. One piece of evidence that might seem to support this, albeit not conclusively, is that where visible, an examination of the sewing stations along the centerfold of each quire reveals the fact that there are additional, unused sewing stations. Specifically, a central sewing station is present but redundant in each quire with the exception of the last two (15 and 16), which are younger, sixteenth-century replacement quires.²² The fact that there are unused sewing stations might therefore suggest that some other kind of binding was either once in place, or was intended, at a point in time prior to the attaching of the present sealskin cover to the text block.²³ An anomaly here, though, that is difficult to explain, is that there is also a central, unused sewing station in the first of the three replacement quires (14). Gráskinna has not yet given up all of its codicological secrets (see plate 9).

Limp Sealskin Bindings on Other Icelandic Manuscripts

Limp bindings, where quires are sewn or tacketed directly onto a soft wraparound cover of leather, parchment, or paper, are in fact the oldest type of bookbinding known.²⁴ They are not, however, very commonly found on extant medieval European or medieval Icelandic manuscripts, nor have they been the subject of much scholarly attention.²⁵ Nicholas Pickwoad has suggested that their low survival rate and rarity in Europe is due, perhaps, to “their uncertain status at the time of binding,” and also to “their entire lack of the sort of aesthetic qualities which would have encouraged antiquarian collectors of the eighteenth and later centuries to preserve them undisturbed.”²⁶ For this reason, many such bindings are “likely to have perished at the hands of both conscientious librarians and at least the wealthier collectors.”²⁷

In medieval Iceland, it is likely that the technique of limp binding (whether in sealskin or other material) was more widespread than

the extant evidence suggests, but possibly not very common.²⁸ Peter Springborg has drawn attention to the fact that “[i]n church inventories from the fourteenth century there is mention ... of manuscripts bound in sealskin.”²⁹ The references in these *máldagar* to now-lost books bound in sealskin are tantalizing pieces of early evidence, though it is difficult to know exactly what significance should be attached to them. It may be that sealskin bindings were mentioned in this context not only because they were distinctive but also because they were somewhat unusual and therefore worthy of special note. This seems to be the implication with regard to the inventory for the church at Klyppstaðir, as preserved in the late sixteenth-century *Gíslamáldagar*: according to the record, the church owned “xix bækur med einne selskinns messubök” [nineteen books with one being a sealskin mass-book].³⁰ Some *máldagar* references provide more information than others with regard to the appearance and the contents of the book in question. The inventory for the church at Þönglabakki (copied into the fourteenth-century *Auðunarmáldagar*), for example, notes the existence of two books bound in sealskin: one is described simply as a “forn bok i selskinne” [old book in sealskin], the other as a “messu Bok forn mykil j selskinne rotnu” [large old mass-book in rotten sealskin].³¹ Other sealskin books owned by churches contained saints’ lives, the Gospel or the Book of Genesis, and sermons—not to mention the fact that the fifteenth-century *Ólafsmáldagar* inventory itself, according to Jón Þorkelsson, was also bound in sealskin until the late nineteenth century when it was taken out of its binding.³²

Other than Gráskinna, a number of manuscripts (both parchment and paper) in limp sealskin bindings do survive in collections held by, for example, the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, the National Library of Iceland, and the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.³³ The so-called Icelandic Homily Book (Holm. Perg. 15 4to) in the Royal Library in Stockholm is a particularly important example of a limp binding in sealskin: it is dated to around 1200 or the early thirteenth century and, like Gráskinna, is bound into a soft, wraparound cover made of brownish sealskin.³⁴ According to Springborg, this binding may be just as old as the manuscript itself.³⁵

It was not possible to undertake a full survey of Icelandic manuscripts with comparable bindings in the context of research on Gráskinna that was conducted as part of the “Variance of *Njáls saga*” project. A comprehensive, typological survey of limp bindings that survive on Icelandic parchment and paper manuscripts in all collections with Icelandic

holdings would be an interesting undertaking, though. As far as the evidence allows, information about features such as the material used for the cover (leather, sealskin, parchment, other) and sewing thread (leather, sinew, flax, other), presence or absence of flap and its appearance if present, fastening method (wrapround cord, clasp), and method used to attach the cover to the text block (sewing or tacketing), would be very useful. In conjunction with noting the types of texts preserved in each respective manuscript, and evidence for how and by whom it was used over time, such information could help to answer questions such as whether limp bindings were particularly favored at one or another time, as well as shedding light on the role that these books played in Icelandic society over time.

Contrary to Pickwoad's suggestion, noted above, that limp bindings on books might have been a temporary measure indicating the "uncertain status" of the book in question (whether at the time of production, or a later point), the decision to bind a manuscript in sealskin in Iceland may well have been a deliberate choice made on the basis of aesthetics, as well as functionality, and the ready availability of the raw material.³⁶ Scholla argues that the limp bindings found on manuscripts produced between the eighth and fourteenth centuries in northwest Europe and the British Isles were not a lower-status, cheaper, or temporary alternative to wooden-board bindings, and that they were often made by professional craftsmen.³⁷ The texts found in the limp bindings examined by Scholla are of all kinds with the exception only of liturgical texts used in public contexts (e.g., in church services) and of the highest status.³⁸ The advantage of the limp binding over the wooden-board binding is to be found in its lesser weight and flexibility, while the fore-edge of the text block is still well protected by the flap.³⁹ These books therefore suit contexts which involve travel and often show signs of heavy usage, a point also made by Pickwoad, who notes that fore-edge flaps "in the western-European tradition at least, are often associated with books intended for hard use and likely to be carried around."⁴⁰

While we cannot know if the Gráskinna manuscript of *Njáls saga* was first commissioned or produced by someone who intended to travel with it, once bound into its sealskin cover, it would have traveled well, being more portable and flexible than the Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) or Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.) manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, for example. It certainly seems to have been commissioned for private use, and, while the possibility cannot be discounted that, prior to it being repaired and (re)bound in the sixteenth century, other texts preceded or followed it,

this seems unlikely. The fact it needed repairing by the sixteenth century (and the types of repairs that were carried out) suggests heavy use or damage incurred by wear.

Scribal Hands

The question of scribal hands in *Gráskinna* is a key one with regard to our understanding of the circumstances surrounding its production. Jón Þorkelsson described it as “en af de skønnest udstyrede islandske håndskrifter i skriftlig henseende” [one of the most beautifully executed Icelandic manuscripts from the perspective of its handwriting].⁴¹ He identified two original, contemporary hands in his 1889 analysis of the script.⁴² Kristian Kålund followed Jón Þorkelsson in identifying two hands, albeit with the reservation that the principal hand of the two varies somewhat here and there.⁴³ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, however, identified four original, contemporary hands.⁴⁴ In addition to the original scribes (however many they were), a later, quite distinctive hand—the *Gráskinnuauki* hand—is found on the replacement leaves.

The first of Jón Þorkelsson’s two posited scribes was responsible for copying the greater part of the saga (1v—and presumably 1r—to the middle of 74v; 76v–87v; 90r–94v; 97r–98v), with the hand of the second scribe (described by Jón as “en meget smuk og tydelig, noget ‘sett’ hånd” [a very beautiful and clear book hand]) found in only one section (from the middle of 74v to the end of 76r).⁴⁵ Kålund described the main hand as being a “noget snirklet hånd af diplom-artet karakter, er hist og her varierer en del” [a rather curly hand with a diplomatic character, which here and there varies somewhat], and he identified the second hand in two places rather than one, at 58v–59r, as well as at 74v–76r.⁴⁶ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s main hand—his Hand 2, that of a scribe with “elegant, somewhat florid, handwriting”⁴⁷—is responsible for all of the text (excluding that in the later *Gráskinnuauki* hand), with three exceptions. Hand 1 is found from 1r to 10v (KG 2.47–17.31); Hand 3 from 58v to 59r (this is the first of the two passages copied by Kålund’s Hand 2; KG 89.93–90.9); Hand 4 from 74v to 76r (the second of the two passages copied by Kålund’s Hand 2; KG 115.11–118.6).⁴⁸

Paleographical analysis of *Gráskinna* confirms Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s identification of four original hands. These four hands are given the designations “Scribe A,” “Scribe B,” “Scribe C,” and “Scribe D” here, in order to avoid confusion, since in the published scholarship on

the subject, the designations “Hand 1” and “Hand 2,” and so forth, are not used consistently to refer to the same sections of Gráskinna. We thus have the following sequence, with “Ga” designating the Gráskinnuauki scribe (on whom more will be said below):

1. A: 1v, line 1 to 10v, line 16
2. B: 10v, line 17 to 58v, line 19
3. C: 58v, line 19 (last three words, “a fund sigurðar”) to 59r, line 11 (first two words, “fe sitt”)
4. B: 59r, line 11 to 74v, line 13
5. D: 74v, line 13 (last four words, “sinna frenda ok ellztr) to end of 76r
6. B: 76v, line 1 to end of 87v
7. Ga: 88r, line 1 to end of 89v
8. B: 90r, line 1 to end of 94v
9. Ga: 95r, line 1 to end of 96v
10. B: 97r, line 1 to end of 98v
11. Ga: 99r, line 1 to end

Although each one of the four original hands has certain distinctive paleographical and orthographical characteristics (see figures 3.3–3.6), they share a number of features which can be used to date (roughly) the time of Gráskinna’s production to the early fourteenth century. These include the presence of the letter *ð* in all hands in medial position except for in Scribe C (*ð* was replaced by *d* over the course of the first half of the fourteenth century); the execution of the letter *z* with a crossbar in some instances in passages copied by Scribes A and C, though not by Scribes B or D (rare in the late thirteenth century but more common in the first half of the fourteenth century); the presence of the insular form of *f* and corresponding lack of closed-story *f* (which supplants insular *f* in the first half of the fourteenth century); use of the earlier form of the Tironian nota (with the stem crossed curling to the left, replaced with the later form from the first part of the fourteenth century onwards).⁴⁹

The script type of the four hands is Gothic *Textualis* with each hand (but especially Hand B) exhibiting a varying degree of influence from Gothic cursive (e.g., letters extending below line; loops on ascenders; tall *s* extending below the line; the general aspect not as rhythmic or angular/heavy as *Textualis*). The Gothic cursive influence is both from *antiquior* (use of two-story *a* by Scribes A, C and D) and *recentior* (use of one-story *a* by Scribe B).⁵⁰ Scribe A’s hand has a slight tendency to slant to the left

and is squarer in aspect than that of Scribe B. Though some ascenders and descenders are looped (e.g., the right-hand descender of *h* which curves to the left, and similarly the right-hand descender of upper-case *N*; the ascender on *d* and *ð* which first extends to the left out of the bowl and then curves to right), the tail of *g* extends straight down and then at a right angle to the left. Some horizontal strokes (e.g., on *k* or *p*) are doubled and some minims have feet. Upper-case *S* is distinctive, being formed out of two overlapping *cs* one on top of the other, the lower one executed backwards. Nasal abbreviation strokes over vowels are frequently oval in shape; the abbreviation for *eigi* is written as *æ* with a supralinear *i*.

The hand of Scribe B is more fluid and florid in aspect. Ascenders and descenders on some letters are elaborately looped (e.g., on *ð*); the second minim of *n* sometimes extends below the line and curls to the left; the tail of *g* curves to the left, and often all the way round so that it forms a near-closed circle; *v* is very distinctive too, with a large loop being formed at the base of the downwards and upwards strokes where they intersect. Nasal strokes are executed with a short, 45-degree downward stroke running right to left and then a straight horizontal bar out to the right; *ekki* is abbreviated as *e* with a supralinear *i*. *Síðan* is distinctive, with *þ* rather than *ð* used medially. The ink in which passages in Scribe B's hand are found is, on the whole, a lighter brown in color than that used by Scribe A; in places, a slight difference in aspect (sometimes denser and sharper, e.g., at 23v, lines 20–21; at 48v, line 11; at 49v, line 18) may be caused by a change or sharpening of pen, or is exaggerated by the poor condition of the parchment support.

Scribe C's hand is smaller and more compressed in aspect, with ascenders and descenders shorter in length proportionally to those of Scribe B, and rather thick vertical strokes (e.g., on *þ*, *b*, *h*, *l*, *k*, long *s*, and the ascender of *d*). The letters *b*, *h*, *k*, and *þ* have loops on their ascenders which curl to the right over the body of the letter. It is notable, too, that abbreviations are rather less frequently employed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson found Hand C "especially interesting" as "it uses 'd' for 'ð' as well as for 'd,' while the main scribe . . . uses alternately 'ð' and 'þ' for 'ð,' and 'd' only for 'd.'"⁵¹ According to Einar Ólafur, Scribe C's orthography is therefore later than that of Scribe B, although the two scribes were obviously contemporary, a fact that would, perhaps, "favour the view that Gr[áskinna] is written somewhat later than generally asserted."⁵²

Scribe D's hand has the strongest Gothic *Textualis* characteristics of each of these four original hands (and even some Proto-Gothic features,

e.g., *ð* with a hook rather than a bar). It is more angular in aspect, with greater contrast between vertical strokes and hairlines, and there are no looped ascenders or descenders. Vertical strokes are distinctively wedge-shaped (e.g., *b*, *h*, *l*, *þ*), and *r* resembles a *v*. Characteristic, too, of Scribe D are in-text corrections: accidental omissions are inserted above the line, for example at 74v line 15, and 76r line 22.

That the four hands are contemporaneous is suggested by the fact that in a number of places, one scribe takes over from the other on the same leaf and even, in a couple of instances, in mid-sentence. It is hard to find an explanation for the uneven distribution of work between the four scribes and, in particular, for the almost negligible contribution of Scribe C. It is worth bearing in mind that A, C, and D might have been responsible for copying parts of the saga that were damaged and replaced by text in the hand of the younger Gráskinnuauki repairer-scribe. A further question with regard to the division of work between these four scribes is whether one or more of them rubricated the manuscript. Because many of the rubrics are very difficult to read, it is hard to answer this question. Some of the legible rubrics that are found for the text copied by Scribe B do not look to be executed by him on the basis of the letter forms and orthography used, e.g. at 14v (“Valgarrdr feck vnnar” [Valgarðr married Unnr]), and at 26v (“Vm vig þorðar leysingia” [About the killing of Þórðr leysingi]). On the other hand, the rubric at 38r line 18 (“föðdr hauskvldr ...” [birth of Hǫskuldr]) does look to be in the hand of Scribe B. Conducting multispectral analysis, as Beeke Stegmann has done for Reykjabók (see her chapter in this volume), would be a potentially rewarding method of clarifying this question and elucidating the division of labor that was undertaken in the production of the Gráskinna manuscript.

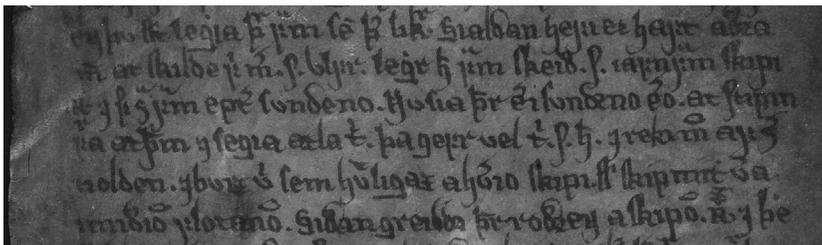


Figure 3.3 Gráskinna. Scribe A, 3v. (Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.)

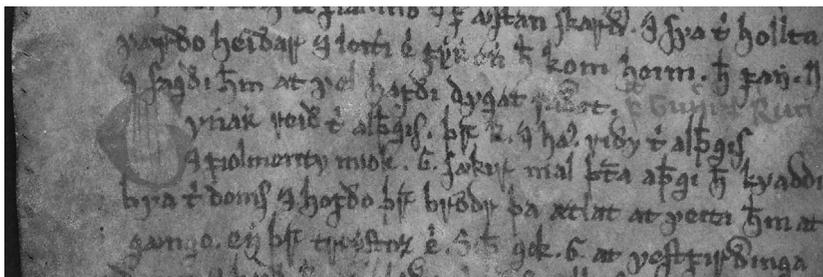


Figure 3.4 Gráskinna. Scribe B, 13v. (Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.)

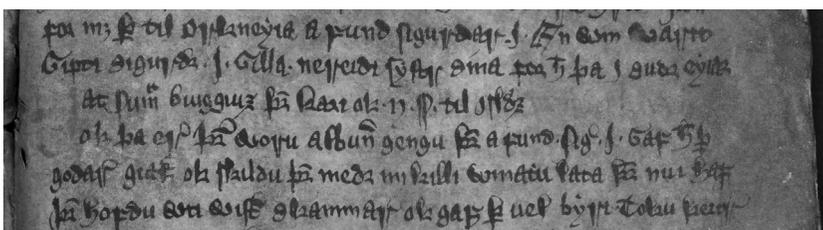


Figure 3.5 Gráskinna. Scribe C, 59r. (Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.)

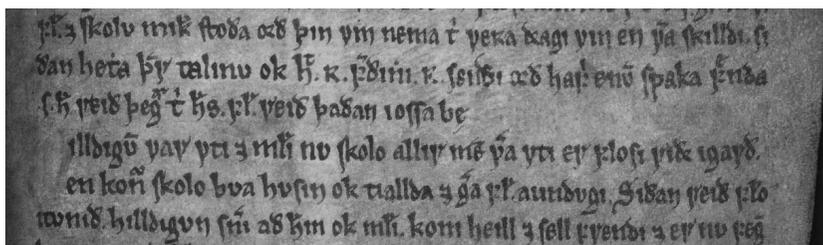


Figure 3.6 Gráskinna. Scribe D, 75r. (Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.)

Gráskinna: History and Treatment Postproduction

Medieval and Postmedieval Evidence Bearing on Gráskinna's Provenance

Very little that is concrete is known about the origins and early provenance of Gráskinna. Apart from scribal corrections in the margins, marginalia dating to the medieval period is only found in a couple of places. Firstly, in the bottom margin on 49v, a hand from around 1500 has noted “Hier

deyr *gunnar hamundar son með heiður*” [Here, Gunnarr Hámundarson dies with honor]. Secondly, on the lower edge of the bottom margin on 58v, a hand from around 1400 has added the rubric-like “fra kara ok nials sonum” [about Kári and the sons of Njáll]; this is rather difficult to read now.⁵³ Unless some other single mishap befell the manuscript, the poor condition overall of Gráskinna by the time repairs became necessary in the sixteenth century suggests it was extensively used in the couple of centuries after its production. These pre-Reformation owners and readers have not left many distinguishing marks on the parts of the book that are original, however.

Nor is there much marginalia from later centuries. The personal name “Gvnlaugur Orms ...” is found in the outer margin on 84v in a seventeenth-century hand; another name is found written in the outer margin of 100v (a Gráskinnuauki insert) in a postmedieval hand; the name or word “Alfur” is found in a sixteenth-century hand in the lower margin on 106r (a Gráskinnuauki insert). Jón Þorkelsson read “Pétur Jónsson hefur þetta klórað” [Pétur Jónsson scribbled this] on the last, unwritten leaf of the manuscript (a Gráskinnuauki insert), and further down the leaf, the female name “María Brynjólfsdóttir.”⁵⁴ According to Kålund, two further names could be found at 121v in marginal comments which read “Jon Biarnason hefur þetta klorat” and “markus hallz son ert fromur” [Jón Bjarnason scribbled this; Markús Hallsson you are honorable], along with “ave maria” and something else that Kålund assumed to be some other devout phrase.⁵⁵ These instances of marginalia are not now legible.

Pen trials or other marks left by users of the manuscript are few though there is a small sketch in the uppermost part of the outer margin at 37v which depicts the heads of two figures conversing or looking at each other (both have curled, jaw-length hair) and a rather crudely executed geometrical knot-shaped design on the blank part of the leaf on 120v, below the closing lines of the saga. This latter sketch, being on a leaf that is part of the Gráskinnuauki replacement text, obviously cannot be older than the date of the repairs; the former sketch may have been the work of an original scribe, however, as it is directly above a scribal addition in the margin which appears to be in the same hand as that of the main text (Scribe B).

Two postmedieval paper copies of *Njáls saga* have a bearing on what we know about Gráskinna’s later provenance and give us glimpses into where the book was at certain times and who was using it. The first of these

two manuscripts is Hofsbók, copied by Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt between 1625 and 1672, possibly for Brynjólfur Sveinsson (it contains corrections and comments pertaining to genealogical points in Brynjólfur's hand, and Jón worked as a professional scribe for Brynjólfur).⁵⁶ Hofsbók has variant readings from Gráskinna in the margins, along with readings from the now-lost parchment Gullskinna and other *Njáls saga* manuscripts.⁵⁷ Árni Magnússon acquired this copy of *Njáls saga* as part of a bigger book that belonged to the Reverend Ólafur Gíslason of Hof; his note states that “Þesse Níals Saga, er uttekin ur bok er eg feck fra Sr Olafi Gíslasynne ad Hofe i Vopnafirði” [This *Njáls saga* is taken out of a book which I got from Rev. Ólafur Gíslason of Hof in Vopnafjörður].

The second of these two manuscripts is AM 135 fol., another professionally-made copy of *Njáls saga*, this one copied by Ásgeir Jónsson for Þormóður Torfason or Torfæus between 1690 and 1697, in Norway. Árni acquired AM 135 fol. in 1720 together with other manuscripts that had comprised Torfæus's collection after his death. The note in Árni's hand that accompanies AM 135 fol. is a key piece of evidence that links both AM 134 fol. and AM 135 fol. to Brynjólfur and to Gráskinna. It reads: “Membranam þä, sem þesse bok [AM 135 fol.] er epter skrifud, virdest mier Mag. Bryniolfur kalle Gráskinnu in margine þeirrar Níals Sögu in fötið sem hann hefr skrifa læted og eg feck af Sr Olafi Gísla synne ä Hofe [i.e. AM 134 fol.]. Membrana þesse (eda Membranæ, kannske bokin sie mixtim ritud efter fleirum) er nu in Bibliotheca Regiä” [The parchment from which this manuscript (AM 135 fol.) was copied appears to me to be called Gráskinna by Mag. Brynjólfur in the margins of the *Njáls saga* which he had copied, and which I got from the Rev. Ólafur Gíslason at Hof (i.e. AM 134 fol.). The parchment manuscript (or manuscripts, since the book might have been copied from more than one exemplar) is now in the Royal Library (in Copenhagen)]. In his catalogue of books acquired from Torfæus (“Catalogus librorum mstorum Thormodi Torfæi. Arnas Magnæus concinnavit Stangelandiæ in Cormtâ 1712 mense octobri,” AM 435 A–B 4to), the same manuscript, AM 135 fol., is described thus: “Níals Saga. ex binis membranis ait Torfæus. Eg hefi fyrrum annoterad hia mier. ad þesse Codex væri skrifadur epter membranä Regiä” [*Njáls saga*. Copied from two parchment manuscripts says Torfæus. I have previously noted that this codex was copied from a parchment in the Royal Collection].⁵⁸

Thus Gráskinna had arrived in Denmark—and possibly traveled to Norway where Torfæus was based, and back to the Royal Library in Copenhagen—by the end of the seventeenth century, after having been

in Brynjólfur Sveinsson's possession in Iceland. How and from whom Brynjólfur acquired Gráskinna is unfortunately as uncertain now as it was when Jón Þorkelsson wrote up his description of the manuscript's provenance.⁵⁹ However, having used the manuscript to take variants from, as noted, Brynjólfur appears to have sent it out of the country, as he did in the case of a number of other parchment manuscripts.⁶⁰ Jón Þorkelsson has suggested that this happened in 1656, on the basis of a reference to a badly damaged and hard-to-read parchment manuscript of *Njáls saga* in a letter from Brynjólfur to the Danish magistrate and book-collector Jørgen Seefeldt (1594–1662).⁶¹ This *Njáls saga* copy was one of four parchment manuscripts listed by Brynjólfur in the letter, and it was “spotted and dirty so that it would fatigue the eyes of a lynx.”⁶² If this *Njáls saga* had been Gráskinna, it is difficult to explain how it did not end up in Sweden along with other manuscripts and books that had been in Seefeldt's possession, since when the Swedish army conquered Seeland in 1658, Seefeldt's library was seized and the collection was sent to Sweden by Corfitz Ulfeldt (King Frederik III's brother-in-law).⁶³ This seems to have been the fate of Holm. Perg. 5 fol., a manuscript containing *biskupasögur* that may have been one of the other three parchment manuscripts listed by Brynjólfur in his letter to Seefeldt.⁶⁴

By 1662, Gráskinna must have arrived in Copenhagen, assuming it was one of the two damaged *Njáls saga* manuscripts that Þormóður catalogued as acquisitions of the Royal Library in Copenhagen (as already mentioned earlier), the other possibly being Sveinsbók (GKS 2869 4to) plus Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to, on which, see further Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in this volume, 88–92).⁶⁵ Gráskinna remained part of the collection held by the Royal Library in Copenhagen until it was sent back to Iceland in 1980. Marks of use that date to this later period in the manuscript's history include the inscription at the top of 1r in an eighteenth-century hand that reads “Bibliothecæ Regiæ sub Littera G,” and below this, “Fol 1 Niala.” In the middle of 1r, the title of the saga, “Nihala” has also been written, possibly in a nineteenth-century hand. The manuscript has also been foliated throughout, with arabic numerals written in black ink in the middle of the upper margin of each recto leaf.

The Sixteenth-Century Repair Program

The possibility that it was Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson who was responsible for the repairs made to Gráskinna was mooted by Jón Þorkelsson, but

Kålund and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson believed the repairs to have been carried out at an earlier date, dating them to the first half of the sixteenth century.⁶⁶ This is also the dating bracket given in the *ONP* index of manuscripts. Furthermore, since (as noted above) it seems likely that the post-repair damage to Gráskinna that resulted in the four lacunae occurred prior to the book being sent out of the country by Brynjólfur in the mid-seventeenth century, Brynjólfur is unlikely to have been behind the repairs and they must have been implemented some time before he acquired the book. The identity of the repairer remains a mystery; Kålund noted a certain similarity between the hand found in the (no longer legible) inscription of the name “Jón Bjarnason” on 121v and that of the Gráskinnuauki scribe, but also conceded that it could be contemporary.⁶⁷

The repairs made to the damaged manuscript in the sixteenth century involved four different kinds of activity. Firstly, new leaves were added in order to fill longer lacunae; secondly, patchwork corners were sewn on to individual leaves where text at the top or bottom was damaged; thirdly, a few sentences were copied into the margins of original leaves; and finally, the original text was retouched. This was thus a whole program of repairs—a carefully executed and systematic operation—rather than a series of piecemeal, *ad hoc* fixes. Tears in the parchment throughout have also been sewn together at some point in time (e.g., at 30r/v, 78r/v, 80r/v, 83r/v). These repairs may have been part of the coordinated repair program, and the sewing technique used in places looks similar to that used to attach the replacement corners, but it is also possible that this was done at a different time.

The insertion of whole leaves and quires was, presumably, necessary where extended sections of text were missing or too badly damaged to read. This kind of repair is found in other medieval Icelandic parchment manuscripts, among them two *Njáls saga* manuscripts, namely *Möðruvallabók* and *Skafinskinna*, both of which contain younger parchment leaves that were inserted to fill gaps in the original text at some point in the seventeenth century.⁶⁸ In Gráskinna, these extended fillings are found in three places: from the first line of 88r to the end of 89v (KG 130.96 to 132.31), from the first line of 95r to the end of 96v (KG 138.26 to 139.46), and from the first line of 99r to the end of the saga at 120v (KG 141.75 to end).⁶⁹ The script of the Ga scribe has a denser and tighter aspect than that of the fourteenth-century Gráskinna scribes (see figure 3.7 for a sample of the Ga hand). In the first insertion, this resulted in overlapping text: the second half of 89v (the last sixteen lines) duplicates text that is found

in the first twenty-three lines of 90r (Scribe B). A later user of the manuscript has marked the beginning of the repeated passage in the Ga scribe's hand on 89v with a square bracket in the margin, in black ink, beside the word "hladit": the first word on 90r line 1 is "laþit." Similarly, at 96v, the last four lines copied onto the leaf by the Ga scribe (lines 23–26; the last quarter of the leaf is blank) have been bracketed off by this text-critical reader, who noticed that they are repeated at the top of 97r (lines 1–3; Scribe B).

The patchwork corners are a unique feature of Gráskinna (see plate 10). Here, a number of the corners of original leaves were replaced with new ones, stitched at a diagonal onto the older leaves, with text copied onto them as necessary in order to match up with that on the inner part of each respective leaf. Some of these patchwork corners are still attached to the original leaves; others have fallen off. Sewn-on corners are found at the bottom of fols. 93r/v, 94r/v, 97r/v, and 98r/v. One sewn-on corner is found at the top of 83r/v. Missing corners are at the bottom of fols. 64r/v, 84r/v, 85r/v, 86r/v, 87r/v, 90r/v, 91r/v and 92r/v. The fact that for the most part, these repairs—and those involving the insertion of whole replacement leaves—cluster together over consecutive leaves at certain points in the second half of the manuscript might suggest that something happened to this part of the manuscript that resulted in significant damage, damage that was more than the consequence of heavy usage. What, however, this might have been, remains open to speculation. Parchment is a remarkably durable, tough support, and corners, even if they become dog-eared, do not just drop off.

The written additions or corrections that the Ga scribe made to the original text in the margins of Gráskinna are not many in total but they are nonetheless worthy of description.⁷⁰ At the bottom of 14r, some additional genealogical information about the Oddaverjar and Sturlungar families has been added in the Ga hand: "hnavgván bayga / halfdanar sonar / froða sonar hræreks / Sonar" [son of Hnöggyvanbaugi, son of Hálfðan, son of Froði, son of Hrærekr].⁷¹ At the bottom of 15v, a line in the Ga scribe's hand reads "*varu bunir sigldu þeir æstr til hisingar*" (KG 29.23, note; "they were ready, they sailed east to Hising"); the place-name "hisingar" can be made out in Scribe B's hand at the end of line 29 but the words before it are indistinct. At 48v, in the outer margin, the Ga scribe has written "*Gunnarr skut [sic] at þeim enn ut ok gatú þeir ecki at gort ok hurfo fra j annat sinn*" [Gunnar shot at them still and they couldn't do anything, and retreated a second time]. An "X" after the last word

here corresponds with a smaller cross in the main text after the phrase “þeir tóku hvíllð ok sottv at i annat sinn” (line 23; “they took a pause and attacked a second time”), indicating that in comparing his exemplar and the Gráskinna text (discussed further below), the Ga scribe had noticed the sentence was not present and wanted subsequent users to see where it should be inserted.

Finally, the phenomenon of retouching or retracing (as with that of the later replacement of whole leaves in order to fill lacunae) is seen in manuscripts other than Gráskinna. In Gráskinna, the places where the original text has been touched up or retraced here and there in the manuscript are, for the most part, easily identified, since the ink is darker than that of the original writing. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson noted retracings at 15r (words at the end of lines 22–30), 16v (the last two lines), 17r (words at end of lines 14–25), 17v (words in the middle of lines 1–3).⁷² To these instances might be added 11v (a few words at the beginning of lines 22–23) and 26v (intermittent words at lines 1–7).

As was noted by Jón Þorkelsson in 1889, and explored in greater detail by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson in 1953, the text of *Njáls saga* that comprises the Gráskinnuauki additions clearly differs in certain respects from that of the original Gráskinna text.⁷³ This is most evident when comparison is made of passages where text is duplicated, and when the patchwork-corner texts and their match (or mismatch) with adjoining text on the original leaves are examined. Einar Ólafur noted one instance in the retracings, too, where it is evident that the Gráskinnuauki text diverges from the original Gráskinna text.⁷⁴

The Ga scribe’s marginal variant about Gunnarr on 48v is found in X-class manuscripts (the original Gráskinna text of *Njáls saga* belongs to the Z-class of manuscripts, according to Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s stemma), and, where the text on patchwork corners clearly diverges from the original Gráskinna text, there is a mixture of readings that are sometimes closer to X-class manuscripts and sometimes to Y-class manuscripts. While the main task at hand was to fill the gaps at the beginnings and ends of lines as neatly as possible, sometimes, obviously, this was not managed without leaving traces of mismatch. As far as the whole replacement leaves are concerned, the text on inserted leaves at 88r–89v follows X-class manuscripts; the text on inserted leaves at 95r–96v follows first X-class manuscripts and then Y-class manuscripts; and the text on inserted leaves at 99r–120v follows Y-class manuscripts.⁷⁵ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s explanation for

this situation with regard to mixed readings in the longer replacement passages (and the shift from X-class to Y-class readings over the course of the second insert) is that rather than having two manuscripts of *Njáls saga* before him, one belonging to the X-class and the other to the Y-class, the *Njáls saga* exemplar used by the Ga scribe to fill in missing Gráskinna text was itself copied from two different manuscripts (or else this manuscript's exemplar was).⁷⁶

Thus, rather curiously, the hybrid nature of the Gráskinna manuscript's *Njáls saga* text as a whole has something in common with later, eclectically edited texts of the saga, such as that produced by Konráð Gíslason or Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (see further Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir's and Emily Lethbridge's chapter in the present volume). Moreover, following Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, the comparative study of the variants allows us to see, or to gain access to, this process of hybridization at a relatively early—that is to say, late-medieval—stage. Perhaps most importantly, and with regard to better understanding the dynamics at play in the written transmission of *Njáls saga* in medieval Iceland, it seems that the mixing of distinctive texts and readings was not necessarily perceived to be problematic, at least not in the eyes of those responsible for repairing the damaged Gráskinna manuscript in the sixteenth century.⁷⁷

Finally, the question of how many individuals might have been involved in the Gráskinna repair program is not one that has been considered. Implicitly, it has been assumed that the same individual must have been responsible for all of the repairs. For the most part, this may well be right, but there is a possibility that two individuals were involved in copying replacement text onto the patchwork corners and the whole inserted leaves, though one is certainly dominant and responsible for the greater part of the replacement leaves. The script is Gothic cursive (*recentior*) with parallels in other manuscripts that can be dated securely to the sixteenth century (e.g., AM 622 4to, from 1549). Some degree of harmonizing with the fourteenth-century original Gráskinna text is evident, or else the orthography of the older exemplar is followed closely (“ek” is written for “eg,” for example, and the svarabakhti vowel is not present) but *ð* has been replaced by *d*, and *f* is for the most part fully closed (β). There is some variation in the hand found on the patchwork corners and on the inserted leaves: in particular, there are two forms of *h* (sometimes with hook to the right of the ascender but most often not), for example, and two forms of the Tironian nota (one resembling a crossed *z* and the other resembling a crossed *j*).

Scribal corrections comprising one or a few words in the same hand as the main Gráskinnuauki one are found in most outer margins of the inserted leaves, as well as the symbol “v” indicating where verses are present in the main text. The phrase “þeim godvm monnum sem þetta” [to those good men that ...], which is the opening formulation for a letter, is found in the lower margin of 102r in a slightly different hand to that of the main (Ga) text (or at least a script whose *þ* and *g* diverge from that of the main hand), and “hallbiorn sterkari var þar nær staddr” [Hallbjorn the stronger was there nearby] is in the outer margin of 105v. A half-legible phrase written vertically up the outer margin of 106v (“[...] þad adur ... ok,” [... that before ... and]); traces of letters written vertically down the outer margin of 107r, and another phrase scrawled in the bottom margin of the same leaf (“þetta er svo sem mælt [...],” [that is as it is said ...]) seem to be marginalia written by users rather than the scribes.

It is difficult to say with certainty that two scribes were at work here copying the replacement text—not least because of the logistical and perhaps constraining factors or circumstances that were at play in copying out the replacement text (such as space, or lack of it), as well as the greatly varying condition of the support (especially on leaves with patchwork corners), and practical considerations such as whether a change of aspect might be due to a change of quill (e.g., towards the end of line 7 on 101r). This is worth considering, nonetheless, along with other clues that shed light on the production and preparation of the parchment used for the repairs, and the possibility that the manuscript was bound into its distinctive sealskin cover at the same time as the repair work. All in all, the repairs required different skills and expertise, possibly (but not necessarily) more likely to have been found at a larger church center or monastery than on a less wealthy farm.

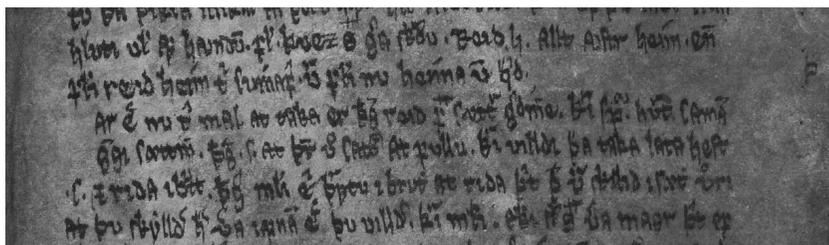


Figure 3.7 Gráskinna. Ga scribe, 110r. (Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.)

Concluding Remarks

The value of taking a single manuscript and studying it from material and textual perspectives as has been attempted in this chapter (and in the companion chapter by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this book) is manifold. Each and every manuscript as an object deserves close scrutiny as much as the text that it preserves does—and an integrated, dual approach can provide insights into the wider changing social context of the object and its text in ways that would not otherwise be possible. The *Njáls saga* text preserved in Gráskinna has several distinctive characteristics, not least, that parts of it (those that were copied as part of the sixteenth-century repairs) are hybrid, thus the filiation of the manuscript as a whole is complex from a text-critical, stemmatic perspective. But the material aspects of the manuscript too—its format and binding, layout, and the extent and nature of the damage incurred by the sixteenth century that made such an extensive and painstaking program of repairs necessary—encourage critical reflection with regard to the attitude of the manuscript's commissioner towards the saga it preserves, as well as the attitudes of its later owners and readers.

Beyond the rarity of the tacketed sealskin binding and its intrinsic importance for understanding bookbinding practices in medieval and postmedieval Iceland, Gráskinna is noteworthy in being the only pocket-sized copy of *Njáls saga* from the medieval period. Elsewhere, I have discussed the fact that medieval copies of *Njáls saga* are unusual compared to other *Íslendingasögur* in being produced as single, stand-alone texts rather than as part of larger saga compilation manuscripts (unusual, at any rate, as far as the limited extant evidence allows us to come to conclusions).⁷⁸ Gráskinna's compact, quarto format and its soft binding (with its protecting flap and wraparound tie) suggest that it was not produced for display but for everyday, low-key use, and it would have been especially durable and suited to travel and reading on the road. Other, larger medieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* such as Reykjabók, Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.), or Möðruvallabók, for example, would have had to have been read (and were no doubt admired as fine objects) at home. Perhaps the commissioner of Gráskinna was an Icelander who—like Snorri Sturluson, Haukr Erlendsson, or other thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Icelanders we know about—spent periods of his or her life abroad, perhaps at the Norwegian court, or traveling elsewhere on administrative or diplomatic business.

The condition of the support (particularly the frayed edges of leaves, and the number of holes and tears in the parchment throughout) does indicate sustained use, though, as observed, the nature of the repairs and the location of damage that they made good suggest that some kind of accident may have befallen the manuscript, as heavy usage alone would probably not have been so localized. Whatever injury Gráskinna was subjected to, the repairs are fascinating evidence for the regard in which books were held in the late-medieval period in Iceland: we gain a sense of their intrinsic value as objects and the lengths to which some individuals might go in order to maintain them for use, whether for domestic entertainment or more antiquarian ends. In the case of Gráskinna, it is more likely that the repairs were made so the book could continue to be used and enjoyed in a secular context, rather than being implemented as an antiquarian exercise (which is the case with the replacement leaves in Möðruvallabók, for example). The care that the sixteenth-century Gráskinnuauki scribe (or scribes) took in copying out the text though—preserving earlier orthographic conventions in some cases and adding variants in the margins in a few places, as noted above—nonetheless demonstrates something of an early antiquarian attitude. And had it not been for the meticulous work of the repairer(s), it would not have been possible for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson and others to make use of Gráskinna by taking textual variants from it later on in the seventeenth century. The manuscript would probably have been lost and with it an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle of *Njáls saga* and its textual transmission, and of manuscript production and culture in medieval Iceland more generally.⁷⁹

NOTES

¹ Pétur Gunnarsson, “Sagan endalausá.” Translations (including those of *Njáls saga* text) are my own.

² Digital images of the manuscript, in color, can be accessed online at <https://handrit.is>.

³ The fur of the harbor seal, or common seal (*Phoca vitulina*), while more often gray in color, can also be brown. While the fact that the fur on the cover is reddish, rather than gray, makes one wonder why the manuscript was called “Gray-skin,” the descriptive element “grá-” in the compound may refer to the overall hairiness of the cover rather than the specific color of the hair (cf. the Icelandic feminine noun “grávara,” “furs”). I am grateful to Haraldur Bernharðsson for alerting me to this. The nickname “Gráskinna” is thought to have been given to

the manuscript by Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson, though Jón Þorkelsson has noted that nicknames of this type were sometimes given to magic-books by people who, in later times, did not have the learning or practice required to easily read or make sense of the contents preserved in old books, “Om håndskrifterne,” 702. Indeed, a magic-book with the name Gráskinna is known in Icelandic folk-tradition (though it is sometimes called Rauðskinna): it was in order to obtain this magic-book that the famous Galdra-Loftur attempted to raise the dead Catholic bishop Gottskálk at Hólar. See further Hannes Þorsteinsson, “Galdra-Loftur. Söguleg rannsókn.”

⁴ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 703.

⁵ These “ghost” initials do not appear to have been corroded away on account of an ingredient such as verdigris reacting with the parchment. See further Baker, “Common Medieval Pigments,” 10, and Panayotova, *Colour*, 31–32.

⁶ Analysis of Gráskinna’s collation was done with Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Signe Hjerrild Smedemark.

⁷ Björk Þorleifsdóttir, “Af bókfelli,” 40, notes that 62.1 percent of the nine fourteenth-century manuscripts examined in her study have quires comprised of eight leaves.

⁸ Kålund, *Katalog*, 43; the second of the two manuscripts, “Njali historia mutila quarto,” was acquired by Torfæus himself and may have been GKS 2869 4to (Sveinsbók) and GKS 2868 4to (Skafinskinna), according to the hypothesis proposed by Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in the present volume, pp. 88–89.

⁹ On limp bindings in general, see Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” and references therein.

¹⁰ Following the typology proposed by Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 145, this flap is either Type D (triangular) or F (irregular).

¹¹ It therefore belongs to category Ia in the typology of limp bindings according to mode of attachment of cover to text block that Scholla proposes, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 135.

¹² Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 136. See also Pickwoad, “Tacketed Bindings,” 119–20, on the differences between primary tackets and secondary tackets.

¹³ Discussion with Signe Hjerrild Smedemark.

¹⁴ The situation is further complicated by the fact that during conservation in Copenhagen ahead of the return of the manuscript to Gráskinna to Iceland in 1980, Birgitte Dall reinforced the binding with new parchment/leather thread, at the top, bottom, or both, of the following leaves: 4, 17, 25, 73, 80, 89, 96, 103. Birgitte Dall, Conservation records kept at the Arnarnagænan Institute in Copenhagen, entry dated February 6, 1980.

¹⁵ See Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 146–47. It is worth noting that in the black-and-white photos of Gráskinna (taken prior to the manuscript’s return to Iceland in 1980), the wraparound cord seems to have been approximately

20 centimeters or so in length, i.e. broken off, but considerably longer than what survives attached to the manuscript today.

¹⁶ Jón Þorkelsson “Om håndskrifterne,” 697. Note that Jón’s comment is wrongly attributed to Jón Sigurðsson in Springborg, “Types of Bindings,” 143.

¹⁷ Kålund, *Katalog*, 55.

¹⁸ “Nye skindtråde indsat: (ingen originale tråde er fjernet),” Birgitte Dall, Conservation records kept at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, entry dated February 6, 1980.

¹⁹ Springborg, “Types of Bindings,” 134.

²⁰ Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 146.

²¹ Scholla, “Early Western Limp Bindings,” 146.

²² This is evident, for example, at the start and end of each quire, and especially at the beginning of the fourth quire where the book falls open easily. It might be noted that where there are traces of linen thread (e.g., at fols. 11 and 75), this seems to be in conjunction with some kind of sewed repair rather than thread that was used to sew individual quires together.

²³ See Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 287–88, for a similar example from Fulda.

²⁴ The oldest known examples are the Gnostic papyrus codices dating to the third and fourth century AD that were found in 1945 in upper Egypt at Nag Hammadi. These codices are bound into soft leather wraparound covers that were fastened by means of winding a thong or wrapping band (attached to an envelope-like flap extending from the back cover) around the outside of the book. See Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 7–12.

²⁵ See Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 285–86, and Pickwood, “Tacketed Bindings,” 119–21.

²⁶ Pickwood, “Tacketed Bindings,” 121.

²⁷ Pickwood, “Tacketed Bindings,” 121.

²⁸ For a survey of different types of bindings found on Icelandic manuscripts, see Springborg, “Types of Bindings,” and Rannver H. Hannesson, “Íslenskt handritaband.”

²⁹ Springborg, “Types of Bindings,” 134.

³⁰ *DI XV*, 689. Note that “messubók” could mean a missal or some other unidentified liturgical book.

³¹ *DI II*, 443.

³² See *DI II*, 435, 436, 437, 443; *DI III*, 161, 651; *DI IV*, 110, 140, 163; *DI XV*, 689. Jón criticizes the decision to take the manuscript out of its sealskin binding, stating (with concern for the physical contexts of books remarkable for his time) that “Það er virðingarverðr áhugi á því, að láta binda handrit inn, þegar þess er þörf, en sá áhugi kemr óheppilega niðr í því að fletta mörg hundruð ára gömlum frumböndum af skinnbókum, enda fordást öll þau söfn, er kunna með handrit að fara, það eins og heitan eld. Að glata slíkum böndum er sama og að glata forngrípum, og má ekki eiga sér stað” [It is an honorable interest to bind manuscripts

when it is necessary, but the interest is unhappily manifested when original bindings that are hundreds of years old are taken off parchment manuscripts, and this is avoided in all collections where it is known how to treat books, as much as they do burning fire. Destroying such bindings is the same as destroying old monuments, and it ought not to happen] *DIV*, 249.

³³ Examples from the Árni Magnússon Institute collection in Reykjavík include GKS 1812 4to (a composite parchment manuscript containing encyclopedic material copied between the late twelfth century and the fourteenth century), whose cover may have been put on the assembled quires in the seventeenth century; AM 84 8vo (a parchment manuscript from 1540–1560 that contains the saint's life *Páls saga postula hin meiri*); AM 548 4to (a parchment manuscript from 1543 that contains the chivalric saga *Vilhjálm's saga sjóðs*); AM 605 4to (a parchment manuscript from 1550–1600 that contains a selection of *rímur*); and Steph 62 (a seventeenth-century paper manuscript in quarto containing legal material).

³⁴ Springborg, "Types of Bindings," 134. The binding is mentioned by de Leeuw van Weenen, "Introduction" to the *The Icelandic Homily Book*, 3–4, but not dated.

³⁵ Springborg, "Types of Bindings," 134.

³⁶ Harbor seals and harp seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) are found in the waters around Iceland; the Icelandic archaeological record, together with documentary sources, confirms that harps were hunted in Iceland from early medieval times onwards. For further references, and for discussion of the presence of seal bone in Icelandic archaeofaunal assemblages from 1200–1900, see Riddell, "Harp Seals in the Icelandic Archaeofauna," especially 60–61.

³⁷ Scholla, "Early Western Limp Bindings," 149–52.

³⁸ Scholla, "Early Western Limp Bindings," 149–52.

³⁹ Scholla, "Early Western Limp Bindings," 149–50. The text blocks of a number of Icelandic manuscripts bound into wooden boards are, in fact, offered less protection (especially where the fore-edge is concerned), since the boards are too small for the text block. An example of this is AM 132 fol., *Möðruvallabók*; see Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, "The Care of the Manuscripts," 63.

⁴⁰ Pickwoad, "Tacketed Bindings," 137; see also Scholla, "Early Western Limp Bindings," 150–51. Pickwoad also stresses the fact that tacketing was used in the archival world for much of the medieval period, and beyond, in order to "make or reinforce strong volumes which would withstand the sort of regular handling experienced by archival records, open well, and allow relatively easy access for writing," "Tacketed Bindings," 121.

⁴¹ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 703.

⁴² Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 703.

⁴³ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 697–90; Kålund, *Katalog*, 55.

⁴⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7–8.

⁴⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 697–98.

⁴⁶ Kålund, *Katalog*, 55.

⁴⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7.

⁴⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7.

⁴⁹ For detailed discussion about the paleographic and orthographic developments in Icelandic manuscripts mentioned here, see Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, and Stefán Karlsson, *Icelandic Language*.

⁵⁰ See Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Origin and Development” for a fuller description of these Icelandic script-types.

⁵¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7–8.

⁵² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 8.

⁵³ The dating of these marginal comments follows Kålund.

⁵⁴ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 703.

⁵⁵ Kålund, *Katalog*, 56.

⁵⁶ With regard to the date of Hofsbók’s production, 1625–1672 is the period when Jón Erlendsson is known to have been active copying manuscripts. Susanne M. Arthur points out that it must have been written between 1640 and 1656, however, with the *terminus ante quem* being the date of Brynjólfur’s accession as bishop and the *terminus post quem* being the date that Brynjólfur is thought to have sent Gráskinna to Denmark, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 56–66. See also Margrét Eggertsbók in this volume, pp. 206–7, and Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, pp. 185, 198–99.

⁵⁷ Jón Þorkelsson prints a list of these variants, “Om håndskrifterne,” 703–6, and notes that on the basis of them and their distribution, Gráskinna must have been damaged and missing the same text as it does today when Jón Erlendsson used it. See further Hall and Zeevaert in this volume on the variants.

⁵⁸ *Arne Magnussons i AM. 435 A–B, 4to indeholdte håndskriftfortegnelser*, 69.

⁵⁹ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 699.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Már Jónsson, *Arnas Magnæus Philologus*, 34–35.

⁶¹ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 699–700. The letter in question is printed in full in Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 700–701. The letter mentions two other figures who are involved in the transfer of manuscripts on this occasion. The first is a certain Matthias Erasmus (who, on the basis of another letter of Brynjólfur’s, dated to August 22, 1658, seems to have been a merchant: he is described as “civis Hafniensis, mercator Hafnefordinus” [a citizen of Copenhagen and a merchant at Hafnarfjörður]). The second is Ericus Munckius, who is called “Eiríkur Munk Eyrarbyggakauþmaðurinn” by Jón Helgason in his article about Bishop Brynjólfur’s printed book collection; Jón also mentions Brynjólfur’s letter: see Jón Helgason, “Bókasafn Brynjólfs biskups,” 136. On Seefeldt, who was a Danish *landsdommer* of Sjællandsfar Landsting from 1630, *lensmand* at Ringsted Kloster from the same time, and a member of the Rigsrådet from 1640, see further Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV*.

⁶² “Nialam etiam membranam, sed maculatam adeo sordidamque ut Lyncis oculos fatiget,” Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 700–701.

⁶³ See Már Jónsson, *Arnas Magnæus Philologus*, 41, on the seizure of Seefeldt's library by Ulfeldt, and the acquisition of the Icelandic manuscripts that Seefeldt had owned by the Royal Library in Stockholm.

⁶⁴ See Már Jónsson, *Arnas Magnæus Philologus*, 41.

⁶⁵ Kålund, *Katalog*, 56.

⁶⁶ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 698; Kålund, *Katalog*, 55; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 8.

⁶⁷ Kålund, *Katalog*, 55.

⁶⁸ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 10.

⁶⁹ See also Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in this volume on Gráskinnuauki.

⁷⁰ See also Susanne M. Arthur in this volume on Gráskinna marginalia.

⁷¹ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 106, also Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge, and Susanne M. Arthur in this volume.

⁷² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 12.

⁷³ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 697–99; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 13 and 58.

⁷⁴ "Sometimes the old lettering can be seen through, sometimes not, and then we cannot be sure that in every case the text of *Gr* and the retraced letters are identical (20/² "Njáls hét" is a retracing different from the original text of *Gr*, which abbreviated the second word, but had a longer personal name, no doubt "Þorgeirs," as had S[kafinskinna])," *Studies*, 12.

⁷⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 58–60.

⁷⁶ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 60. If *Ga* were not copied from **Gullskinna*, then this implies the existence of at least two medieval parchment manuscripts of *Njáls saga* (and possibly more) which are no longer extant, in addition to those which do survive or are known with certainty to have once existed.

⁷⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 28–29, notes that "conflation of the manuscripts for purely stylistic reasons was not likely ... I do not believe in the conflation of texts in matters of style in any systematic way. But if a scribe had two manuscripts, he certainly might *incidentally* adopt a reading from Codex B, although on the whole he adhered to A. Therefore if we can establish the use of more than one manuscript by a scribe, we might properly proceed with caution. As an example of this I may cite the overlappings of *Gr* and *Ga* and the fillings of the corners of *Gr* [...] Here certainly the scribe of *Ga* had two manuscripts, viz the exemplar of *Ga*, and *Gr* itself, and it was necessary for him to study both, so that an intermingling of the two texts was possible."

⁷⁸ See Lethbridge, "Hvorki glansar gull á mér."

⁷⁹ I would like to thank Signe Hjerrild Smedemark for her time and help with examining limp bindings on manuscripts in the Árni Magnússon Institute's collection, and also Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir for her suggested improvements to this article.

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Sveinsbók: A Reexamination of a Fragment of *Njáls saga*

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Introduction

Sveinsbók (GKS 2869 4to) is a small, dark, and worn manuscript. It consists of eleven parchment leaves, averaging approximately 235 mm by 150 mm, none of which is free from some sort of damage. The parchment closest to the spine on some leaves has partly rotted away, presumably due to moisture that the manuscript has come in contact with. In some cases, this has resulted in loss of text. Fols. 6, 10, and 11 have tears in them, and fol. 11 is particularly rubbed, especially on its verso side. Extensive repairs on some leaves, including silk mesh laid over the text, have in some places reduced readability. The text is densely written in a single column and the margins are modest (see plate 11). The number of lines per page varies considerably, ranging from thirty-five lines on 4v to sixty lines on 11v. Capitals are written in green, red, and yellow ink, and rubrics are in red. The dating of the manuscript has varied somewhat, with most scholars dating it to around the middle of the fifteenth century. Most recently, however, it has been dated to ca. 1400.

Sveinsbók consists of four fragments of *Njáls saga*, all from the last part of the saga. The text of the first fragment (fols. 1–3) begins shortly after the burning of Bergþórshváll and ends just before Ásgrímur Elliða-Grímsson attempts to kill Flosi Þórðarson (KG 131.67–136.42). The second fragment (fols. 4–6) contains dealings at Alþingi (KG 139.125–144.191). The third fragment (fols. 7–10) begins with the battle at Alþingi, contains Síðu-Hallr's peace meeting, and ends with Kári Sölmundarson and Björn of Mörk's slayings of the burners (KG 145.169–151.36). The fourth and last fragment (fol. 11) tells of Kári's arrival in Hrossey and *Brjánsbardagi* (KG 155.1–157.111).

Apart from Jón Þorkelsson's short description of the manuscript (1889) and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's discussion of its text (1953) in their respective studies on the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, Sveinsbók has received

minimal scholarly attention, despite possessing what Einar Ólafur called “enigmatic readings.”¹ Sveinsbók is indeed rich with regard to textual emendations and adjustments. Some of its unique readings are corrections of errors in the storyline, but, at other times, subtle changes are made without such an obvious reason. Two major groupings of alterations can be named: the Christian theme of the saga appears to be accentuated, and legal matter is condensed. In this chapter, I will examine the history of the manuscript, revise its position in Einar Ólafur’s *stemma codicum*, and bring the text’s unique features to general attention.

Provenance

Torfæus’s Collection of Manuscripts

In the summer of 1662, Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus) came to Iceland at the behest of King Frederick III, with the intention of collecting manuscripts. In a short period of time, Torfæus managed to get his hands on twelve important parchment manuscripts. According to a list he compiled, two were fragmentary manuscripts containing *Njáls saga*. One of these, most likely Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to), Torfæus received from Brynjólfur Sveinsson, the Bishop of Skálholt, but he did not state from where he got the other *Njáls saga* manuscript.² Until 1980, however, not two but three fragmentary *Njáls saga* manuscripts were kept at the Royal Library in Copenhagen: Gráskinna, Sveinsbók, and Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to). There is no information about when the third manuscript was added to the library’s collection, whether before or after Torfæus deposited the two he listed.³ A likely explanation for this is that Torfæus’s second manuscript was Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna combined.

Gráskinna shares text with both Skafinskinna and Sveinsbók and is bound in an old sealskin binding, making it unlikely that either of the other two manuscripts would ever have been considered a part of it.⁴ Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna, on the other hand, share some features that might explain why the two fragmentary manuscripts could have been thought to comprise a single codex or may have been put together at some point and regarded as one. Firstly, the textual fragments they contain, respectively, do not overlap; Skafinskinna’s text does not go further than chapter 115, while the first fragment of Sveinsbók starts in chapter 131. Secondly, the two manuscripts are similar in size and are of a similar age. That Skafinskinna and Sveinsbók were considered to be a single codex for some time is supported by the

words of Árni Magnússon. In his catalogue of manuscripts acquired from Torfæus, Árni said that, according to Torfæus, the paper manuscript AM 135 fol. was a copy of *two* parchment manuscripts.⁵ In fact, AM 135 fol. is a copy of Gráskinna, Skafinskinna, and Sveinsbók.⁶

AM 135 fol., which only contains the text of *Njáls saga*, was produced by Torfæus's amanuensis, Ásgeir Jónsson, at some time between 1690 and 1697.⁷ Ásgeir combined the texts of the manuscripts into a single *Njáls saga* text. He did not, however, collate the texts: at first, he primarily followed Skafinskinna and, later, switched to Gráskinna. Sveinsbók was almost exclusively used where Gráskinna has lacunae or is difficult to read.⁸ Ásgeir Jónsson's copy is the only copy known to make any use of Sveinsbók.

When Jón Johnsonius started work on his Latin translation of *Njáls saga*, at some point in the 1770s, Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna were apparently still regarded as a single codex. In the introduction to his edition, Johnsonius only makes reference to two manuscripts at the Royal Library: "G," Gráskinna, and "F," Skafinskinna and Sveinsbók combined,⁹ as can be seen from variants extracted from these manuscripts in the edition's textual apparatus. One further fact may strengthen the case that Skafinskinna and Sveinsbók at some point constituted a single codex. Compared with Skafinskinna's first page (1r) and Sveinsbók's last page (11v), Skafinskinna's last page (45v) and Sveinsbók's first page (1r) show minimal wear, indicating that these pages were protected and had not been at the back or front (respectively) of either Skafinskinna or Sveinsbók for a long period of time. In 1786, when Jón Eiríksson (John Erichsen) published his catalogue of manuscripts in the Royal Library, Skafinskinna and Sveinsbók had apparently been separated. In the catalogue, "tre forskiellige Pergaments-Fragmenter af Nials-Saga" [three different parchment fragments of *Njáls saga*] are said to be in the possession of the library and, at the time of writing, being used by Jón Johnsonius for his Latin translation.¹⁰

Provenance Prior to 1662

Little is known about the origins and whereabouts of Sveinsbók prior to 1662, when it came into the possession of Torfæus. A clue can be found in the lower margin of 10v where, in a seventeenth-century hand, we find written "Sveirn Ormsson hefur skrifat bókina" [Sveinn Ormsson has written the book].¹¹ Although the genealogical website Íslendingabók.is lists two men with the name Sveinn Ormsson living in the seventeenth

century, the information about them does not overlap, and, in all likelihood, they are one and the same person: both are said to have lived in the south of Iceland; both are assumed to have been born in the third or fourth decade of the seventeenth century; one has only his parents and siblings listed, the other only his wife and children. If we combine all the information, we find that Sveinn Ormsson was born ca. 1638 to Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir and Ormur Jónsson *lögréttumaður* from Skúmsstaðir in Árnessýsla. In 1681, Sveinn was still living in Árnessýsla, but he later moved to Rangárvallasýsla and died sometime after 1709.¹² When Torfæus acquired Sveinsbók, Sveinn Ormsson was about 24 years old and his parents were still living.

In Skafinskinna, a number of names are written in the margins. According to Jón Þorkelsson, one of them is Jón Ormsson—the name of Sveinn Ormsson’s brother.¹³ This may suggest that both Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna were at the home of the brothers Sveinn and Jón. Sveinn’s signature does not state that he owned the book, only that he wrote (or copied) *a* book, which may or may not be a reference to Sveinsbók. It is therefore probable that both manuscripts were in the possession of their father, Ormur Jónsson, when, or shortly before, Torfæus got hold of them. No direct connection can be found between Torfæus and either Ormur or his sons, but Torfæus had been abroad more or less since 1654.¹⁴ However, Ormur Jónsson was a *lögréttumaður* in Árnesþing—the same *þing* in which Torfæus’s father, Torfi Erlendsson, was *sýslumaður*. From the records, we know that Ormur and Torfi had close contact.¹⁵ It is therefore not unlikely that Torfi acted as an intermediary between Torfæus and Ormur in procuring the manuscript for the Royal Library.

Date and Number of Hands

As stated above, Jón Johnsonius, the translator and editor of the Latin edition of *Njáls saga* (1809), considered Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna to form a single codex. He furthermore believed that this codex was written in three hands in the fourteenth century.¹⁶ Jón Þorkelsson gave a more thorough description of these two manuscripts in his survey of the manuscripts of *Njáls saga* in 1889. He agreed with Jón Johnsonius as to the number of hands, but he did not consider Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna to belong together. According to him, Skafinskinna was written in two hands and Sveinsbók in a single hand, different from those of Skafinskinna. A detailed analysis of Sveinsbók, based on both orthographical and paleo-

graphical features, shows, however, that it was written in three hands: Hand A writes folios 1 and 2 and a few words on the first line of 3r. Hand B then takes over and writes the rest of folio 3 through to, and including, folio 10. Hand C is the only hand in folio 11.

There are certain indications that the three hands are not all coeval. Hand A is a little more conservative than Hand B, but they seem to be contemporaneous; both have orthographic and paleographic features that point to the latter half of the fourteenth century. Hand C seems to be somewhat younger, with features rather pointing to the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Hand C's younger features can, for example, be seen in the spelling "vo" for an earlier "va" (e.g., "fvo" 11v11, "vopnín" 11r48). In contrast, Hand A only has "va" and Hand B has only one instance of "vo," in the word *váttorð* ("vot ord" 6r11). This orthographic change is believed to have begun in the first half of the fourteenth century, but there are still very few examples of "vo" in charters from before 1380.¹⁷ Hand C never uses the letter *q* for *k* before *v*, while it is found in over 50 percent of instances in Hand B and over 70 percent in Hand A. Hand C never uses small capitals to denote a double consonant, e.g., *ŋ* for *nn* or *ʀ* for *rr*, unlike Hands A and B. This kind of use of small capitals, as well as the use of *q*, gradually faded in the course of the fourteenth century.¹⁸ The orthographical rendition of the middle voice used by Hands A and B is almost exclusively *-z* (e.g., "fogdoz" 1r24; "beriaz" 4r12), which was the predominant form in the fourteenth century. Hand C, however, uses the form *-zt* (e.g., "bõrduzt" 11r48), which started appearing in the middle of the century and became more common than *-z* early in the fifteenth century.¹⁹

Hand C's younger features raise the question whether folio 11 is originally a part of the same manuscript as the other ten folios or a later addition. Although folios 8 and 11 appear to be a bifolium, there is a possibility that loose leaves were attached to each other as part of the extensive repairs that were made to the manuscript. Furthermore, as is discussed below, the text on folio 11 follows a different class of manuscripts, making it seem less likely that Hand C copied the same exemplar as Hands A and B.²⁰

All scholars who have previously dated Sveinsbók have dated it as a whole. Jón Johnsonius dated the combined manuscript of Sveinsbók and Skafinskinna to the fourteenth century. Kristian Kålund dated Sveinsbók to the fifteenth century, Jón Þorkelsson and Finnur Jónsson agreed that it was written in the middle of that century, and most recently, Stefán Karlsson has dated Sveinsbók to ca. 1400.²¹ My findings are somewhat in line with those of Stefán Karlsson. The part written by Hands A and B (fols. 1–10)

has features that point to the last quarter of the fourteenth century, while the part written by Hand C (fol. 11) rather points to the first quarter of the fifteenth century. If both parts were originally part of the same, single manuscript, its likely date of writing would be ca. 1400. However, the first part was probably written closer to 1375 than 1400. The second part can hardly be earlier than 1400 and is likely therefore to be a later addition to the manuscript, possibly from another manuscript entirely.²²

Sveinsbók's Relationship to Other Manuscripts

The eleven folios that make up Sveinsbók as it is preserved contain four fragments of *Njáls saga* (see table 4.1). Of the seventeen other pre-Reformation text witnesses of *Njáls saga*, only seven can be directly compared with the text of Sveinsbók (see table 4.2). Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) and Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.) contain all the same parts of the saga as Sveinsbók. Gráskinna, Oddabók (AM 466 4to), and Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.) contain a good deal of the same text as Sveinsbók, whereas the fragments AM 162 B ζ fol. and AM 162 B κ fol. contain relatively little of the same text as Sveinsbók. A leaf from the fragment Óssbók (AM 162 B γ fol.), which contained text from chapters 139–141 of the saga, survived well into the modern era. This leaf was lost, probably at the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth, and only a handful of readings from it are preserved in Jón Johnsonius's 1809 Latin translation of the saga.²³

Table 4.1 Fragments of *Njáls saga* preserved in Sveinsbók and their corresponding locations in the 1875 edition of the saga and the 1954 edition, respectively.

Folios	Incipit	Explicit	<i>Njála</i> 1875	<i>Njála</i> 1954
1–3	“fialfan mik at fvara”	“a(ǫgrimr) tok tueim hondum auxina”	131.67– 136.42	341.18– 361.10
4–6	“þakkade honum vel”	“at dæmt hafði”	139.125– 144.191	373.3– 401.21
7–10	“Nu havftfirðingar vpp vm”	“at þv stigur a”	145.169– 151.36	408.6– 434.4
11	“[N]v er þar til mælf at taka”	“Ravdvm vefti”	155.1– 157.110	442.18– 454.17

Note: The last legible words on 11v are “Ravdvm vefti,” but there is space for a few more words that are now illegible.

Table 4.2 Corresponding parts of manuscripts containing text that can be directly compared with that of Sveinsbók.

Sveinsbók	1–3	4–6	7–10	11
Reykjabók (R)	68v3–72v3	75r16–81r4	82v1– 88r1	89v16– 91v19
Möðruvallabók (M)	46vb30–49rb11	51ra2–54rb27	55ra37– 58b36	59rb37– 60va14
Kálfalækjarbók (K)	79v24–84v22	87v8–90v25* 91r1–91v25*	92r1– 92v5*	94v15– 95v25*
Oddabók (O)	45r39–46v42* 47r1–47r11*	48v31–52r39	53r20– 55v43*	56r2– 57r16
Gráskinna (Gr/Ga)	89r19–92v30* 93r1–94r3*	97v23–103v27	105v20– 113v3	115v27– 118v25
AM 162 B fol. ζ	2v33–2v35* 3r1–4v32*	—	—	—
AM 162 B fol. κ	1r1–2v14*	—	—	—

Note: Parts marked with an asterisk do not contain the whole of Sveinsbók's corresponding text.

Sveinsbók was not one of the six manuscripts classified by Hans Schnorr von Carolsfeld in the first systematic study on the relationship of *Njáls saga* manuscripts, published in 1883. Jón Þorkelsson's filiation of the manuscripts (1889) was largely consistent with Schnorr von Carolsfeld's, and although Jón did not include Sveinsbók in the stemma he drew up, he said that the smaller fragments, presumably including Sveinsbók, were all closest to Bæjarbók (AM 309 4to), Kálfalækjarbók, and Reykjabók.²⁴ He furthermore stated that the text of Sveinsbók was closest to AM 162 B ζ fol. and AM 162 B κ fol., then to Reykjabók and Kálfalækjarbók, then came Möðruvallabók, and finally, Jón found that the text of Gráskinna was the farthest from the text of Sveinsbók.²⁵ Somewhat confusingly, when Jón focused on the relationship of AM 162 B ζ fol. to the other manuscripts, he found that its text stood farthest from Sveinsbók and Gráskinna.²⁶

In his study, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson split the pre-Reformation manuscripts of *Njáls saga* into three groups, represented by the lost manuscripts *X, *Y, and *Z, all of which he said were descended from a single manuscript: the archetype. Unlike previous scholars, who had treated each manuscript as a whole with regard to its relationship to other manuscripts,

Einar Ólafur realized that many of the manuscripts had been copied after different exemplars of sometimes different classes. He concluded that the bulk of Sveinsbók, the first ten leaves (Sv1), was a copy of a manuscript of the X-class—which is, by far, the largest of the three groups Einar Ólafur classified. More specifically, Einar Ólafur placed Sv1 in a subclass of the X-class, the x_2 -class, along with the fragments Óssbók, Þormóðsbók (AM 162 B δ fol.), Hítardalsbók (AM 162 B ε fol.), and AM 162 B ζ fol., as well as parts of Skafinskinna (S2) and Gráskinnuauki (Ga1), the sixteenth-century replacement leaves and patches in Gráskinna (Gr). What the manuscripts of the x_2 -class have in common, according to Einar Ólafur, is “a somewhat freer treatment of the text than in *R* and *K* and a different choice of *Add. vv.* [additional verses] as compared with *R*, *K* and *O*.”²⁷ To Einar Ólafur, their most interesting feature is “that the text of the archetype is sometimes corrected in x_2 .”²⁸ There is nothing to indicate that Einar Ólafur was wrong in his classification of these manuscripts, but it is, however, very difficult to verify as most of them are short fragments; Sv1’s text can, for example, only be directly compared with two of these manuscripts: Ga1 and AM 162 B ζ fol. The x_2 -class of manuscripts is further discussed below.

The second part of Sveinsbók (Sv2)—which only consists of the last leaf of the manuscript—gave Einar Ólafur Sveinsson some trouble with regard to its classification. In his first publication on the matter in the monograph *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of Njálssaga*, Einar Ólafur found that Sv2 was most similar to the Y-class manuscripts Gráskinnuauki 2 (Ga2) and Möðruvallabók (M). He further noted that Ga2 and Sv2 often have readings in common as against Möðruvallabók and said that it could be explained by both being derived from the same copy of *Y. He said that Möðruvallabók could be a direct copy of *Y and that there must have been two other copies of *Y; * y_1 represented by Oddabók 2 and Bæjarbók 2, and * y_2 represented by “*Ga2* (and *Sv2*?)”²⁹ Einar Ólafur seems to have quickly abandoned the * y_2 hypothesis as he placed both Ga2 and Sv2 (including the question mark) directly under *Y in the stemma he drew up in the same publication (see figure 4.1).³⁰ In a note he said that he had returned to the text of Sv2 and “found instances where *Sv2* agrees more or less closely with X as against *MGa*.”³¹ He continued, referencing the chapter and line numbers in Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson’s edition: “Such instances are 156⁸, 13, 53, 157³, 15, 20, and they might favor the view that *Sv2* was outside the Y-class and, perhaps, belonging to Z.”

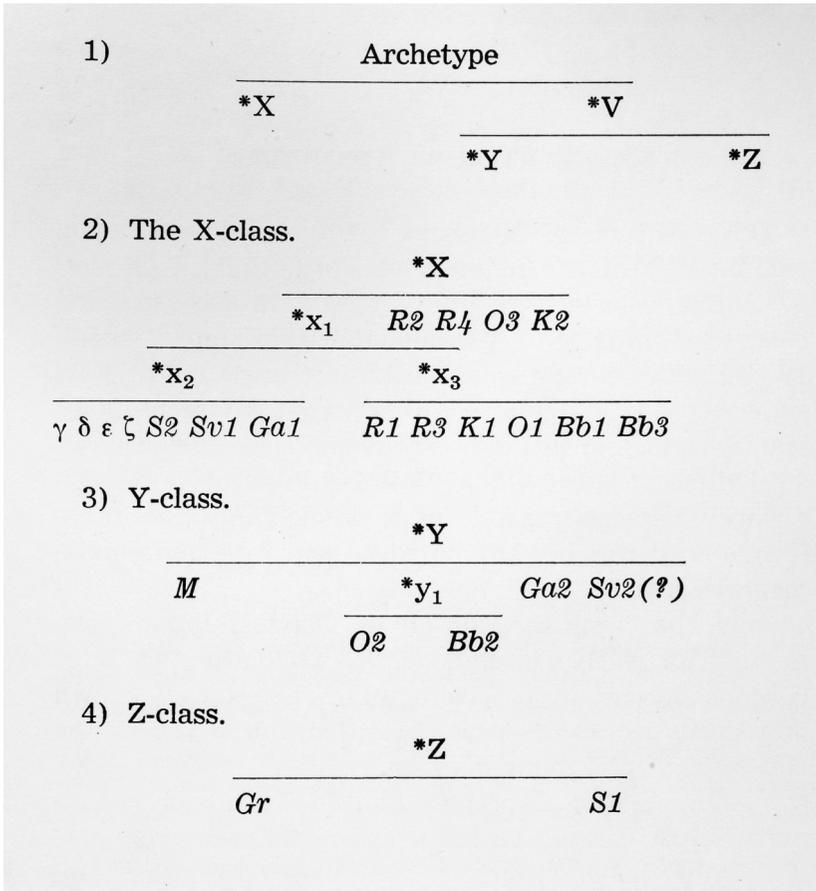


Figure 4.1 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's first *stemma codicum*, printed in *Studies*, p. 171. In his later publications, Sv2 would appear alongside Gr and S1 under *Z.

In his next publication on the matter, an article in *Skírnir* in 1952 (written later than *Studies* despite the publication dates indicating otherwise), Einar Ólafur Sveinsson only spares Sveinsbók a few words, saying that for some time he believed Sv2 to belong to the Y-class, but that he was now more inclined to believe it belonged to the Z-class. Accordingly, his stemma is different from the one in *Studies*—in the article, Sv2 has been moved to the Z-class, along with the question mark he had attached to it.³² Finally, in the stemma published in his edition of the saga in the Íslenzk fornrit series, Einar Ólafur reinforced his stance by removing the question

mark.³³ This final decision—that Sv2 belongs in the Z-class along with Gr and S1—is questionable. Firstly, Einar Ólafur had to disregard his earlier observation that there seemed to be a connection between Sv2 and Ga2, and secondly, Sv2 cannot be compared with any other Z-class manuscript as both Gr and S1 have lacunae corresponding to the text of Sv2. Without showing any special relationship between Sv2 and the two Z-class manuscripts, for example a thematic one, it is highly conjectural to assume any relation between Sv2 and the other two. Einar Ólafur did not point to any positive evidence for his conclusion. He seems to have assumed that since Sv2 neither belonged to the X-class or the Y-class, it must belong to the Z-class.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson did not clearly state which readings led him to believe Sv2 could not be derived from *Y, only providing the six chapter and line numbers of Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson's edition mentioned above. In table 4.3, those readings that he was most likely referring to are numbered 1–6. Readings number 7 and 8 were not mentioned by Einar Ólafur, but as they could be construed as evidence for Sv2 showing affinity to the X-class manuscripts as against M and Ga2, it is likely that they influenced his findings. As they are a very poor indicator of the relationship of manuscripts, examples of polygenetic variants (such as concordance of word order and particles) between Sv2 and the X-class manuscripts as against M and Ga2 are not listed, except for those to which Einar Ólafur apparently refers.³⁴

When the six examples Einar Ólafur Sveinsson gave for how he reached his conclusion are scrutinized, it becomes evident that they were largely based on incorrect readings from Konráð and Eiríkur's edition. Three of the six examples that Einar Ólafur said showed a connection between Sv2 and the X-class manuscripts, numbers 1, 2, and 3 in table 4.3, have errors in them, and so do the additional examples numbers 7 and 8. The last leaf of Sveinsbók—Sv2—is in places illegible, especially its verso side. Eiríkur, who copied the prose of Reykjabók for the edition and excerpted the divergent readings from Skafinskinna, Sveinsbók, and Gráskinna,³⁵ has at times had difficulty in reading the leaf, and some of his readings are wrong. He has presumably relied too heavily on the text of Reykjabók, an X-class manuscript, when trying to determine Sveinsbók's text in those hard-to-read places—and those errors ultimately skewed Einar Ólafur's results.

Let us take a closer look at the incorrect readings. In number 1, Eiríkur said that the word “enn” in the sentence “aðra nótt varð enn gnýr”

was nearly illegible. In fact, the word is not present. In number 2, Eiríkur read the letter *a* and indicated that there was space for three more letters, making it seem likely that the sentence should read “hélsk undr þetta allt til dags.” Here, Sveinsbók is quite hard to read, but there is no space available for this word. Eiríkur has more likely read the *a* in “þetta” twice. In number 3, Eiríkur misread “koma” as “kominn.” In number 7, he could not read the whole sentence but believed he could make out “ek vil f,” indicating that Sveinsbók’s reading matched the reading of the X-class manuscripts: “því at ek vil finna Óspak.” This is not correct as the reading here is “*ok k <vazt> vilja finna ofp <ak>*,” which can be normalized as “ok kvask vilja finna Ósp[ak ...].”³⁶ In number 8, Eiríkur was just able to read a single word: “þa.” Sveinsbók is almost illegible in this area, but what can be made out is “e[o]v [o]vi[o]ir þ[o].” This must be in agreement with the other Y-class manuscripts: “eru óvinir þeir,” meaning that Eiríkur’s reading of “þa” is probably an error for an abbreviated “þeir.”

If we now compare the corrected readings of Sveinsbók with the other manuscripts, we find that examples numbers 1, 2, 7, and 8 do in fact show affinity with the Y-class manuscripts M and Ga2, not with the X-class manuscripts as would appear in Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson’s edition. Although there is an error in Eiríkur’s reading of example number 3, the error does not affect what makes Sveinsbók’s text similar to the X-class texts: the word “allr” that they share but is not found in M or Ga2. In this respect, it is good to keep in mind that not all variants are equally important, and, as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson said, “two scribes, independent of each other, might change the text in the same way.”³⁷ The pronoun *allr* in “skyldi allr herrinn koma” is not essential and its inclusion—or exclusion—has little impact on the meaning of the sentence. The scribes of M and Ga2 may independently have dropped it, but it is equally possible that the scribe of Sv2 added it, thus coincidentally matching the reading of R4 and O3. In fact, this same word is regularly added or omitted. For example, in KG 157.21, Sv2 and O3 have “allr” while the other manuscripts do not; in KG 157.54, Ga2 is the only manuscript missing “allt”; and in KG 157.75, “alla” is present in all manuscripts except M.³⁸

Now we are left with examples numbers 4, 5, and 6. In example number 6, Sveinsbók’s reading is the same as that of the other Y-class manuscripts; its inclusion in Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s enumeration is most likely an error. Example number 5 only shows that Sv2 has the same word order as the X-class manuscripts as against M and Ga2, something that is not a good indicator of whether manuscripts are related, as Einar Ólafur

Table 4.3 Readings from *Njálá* 1875 that Einar Ólafur Sveinsson indirectly refers to (nos. 1–6), and other readings that likely influenced his conclusions (nos. 7–8).

Location in KG	Readings of the manuscripts as printed in KG	Manuscripts containing the reading along with remarks made in KG	My transcription of Sveinsbók
(1) 156.8	enn <i>(omitted)</i>	Sv2 (“næsten ulæseligt”) (=Y/Z); R4, K2, O3 (=X) M, Ga2 (=Y)	<i>(omitted cf. 11r46)</i>
(2) 156.13	“a”000 allt <i>(omitted)</i>	Sv2 (=Y/Z) R4, O3 (=X) M, Ga2 (=Y); K2 (=X)	<i>(omitted cf. 11r49)</i>
(3) 156.53	allr herrinn kominn kominn allr herrinn kominn herrinn allr kominn herrinn	Sv2 (=Y/Z) O3 (=X) R4 (=X) M, Ga2 (=Y)	“allr herinn koma” (11v13)
(4) 157.3	suðrgöngu fyrir hendi suðrgöngu sína at leysa suðr at ganga	Sv2 (=Y/Z) R4, O3 (=X) M, Ga2 (=Y)	“fvdrgöngu fyrir hendi” (11v15)
(5) 157.15	“fýrra ví barizt” fýrr væri bariz bariz væri fýrr	Sv2 (“ví” and “zt” in “barizt” “usikkert”) (=Y/Z) R4, O3 (=X) M, Ga2 (=Y)	“fýrr v(er)e barizt” (11v20)

was very well aware of.³⁹ But in example number 4, Sv2 does at first glance appear to be closer to the X-class manuscripts, as it shares the noun *suðrganga* with R4 and O3. However, the readings are still far from identical. Sv2 has “suðrgöngu fyrir hendi,” R4 and O3 have “suðrgöngu sína at leysa,” and M and Ga2 have “suðr at ganga.” One possible explanation for this may be that the reading of *Y was “suðr at ganga,” which was copied correctly in M and Ga2. In Sveinsbók’s exemplar, however, the infinitive particle was dropped and only “suðr ganga” remained. The scribe of Sveinsbók believed this to be the noun *suðrganga* but had to change its declension and add a couple of words for the sentence to be coherent, perhaps influenced by the words “eigu vér suðrgöngu af höndum at inna” later in the same chapter (not preserved in Sveinsbók).

To summarize: Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson’s 1875 edition of *Njáls saga* contains several errors in its textual apparatus when it comes to the last leaf of Sveinsbók. This is primarily caused by the difficulty Eiríkur Jónsson had in trying to decipher illegible or nearly illegible parts of the manuscript in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson relied heavily on this apparatus in his study of the relationship of the manuscripts and was therefore susceptible to its inaccurate readings. Even though he had found that Sveinsbók 2 has many readings in common with Gráskinnuauki 2 as against Möðruvallabók, indicating that Sv2 and Ga2 might derive from the same copy of *Y, the incorrect readings in Konráð and Eiríkur’s edition led him astray, and he eventually classified Sv2 as a copy of *Z. Einar Ólafur’s early hypothesis, that Sv2 and Ga2 are derived from the same copy of *Y; *y₂, is undoubtedly correct.⁴⁰

Abridgment, Emendation, and Amplification

Abridgments

The text of *Njáls saga* in Sveinsbók is notably different from other manuscripts of the saga in two ways. Firstly, Sveinsbók sometimes has a considerably shorter text. The text seems, for example, to be deliberately shortened in chapters that deal with legal proceedings. These abridgments commonly involve omitting or shortening legal formulae that are repeated several times, changes that many a modern reader would undoubtedly appreciate. For example, in chapter 142 (KG 142.50–144), a passage that largely consists of the direct speech of Mǫrðr Valgarðsson and his witnesses, and covers close to a hundred lines in Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur

Jónsson's edition, is reduced to just fifty-four words in Sveinsbók. Despite this considerable reduction, the main points are still related. The same can be said about other extensive abridgments, for example when the *reifing-armaðr* sums up Mǫrðr's testimony in chapter 144 (KG 144.131–56). This testimony is likely still fresh in the mind of the reader or listener and is apparently deemed redundant by the redactor of Sveinsbók or its exemplar, who reduces this ca. 245-word passage down to these sixteen words: “nv ftod vpp fa er faukin var yfir havfði fram favgd ok reifði aull ord þef{fi}” [Now the man in whose presence the suit had been presented rose and summed up all these words].⁴¹

Another type of shortening occurs in chapter 141 (KG 141.27–40). Here the text itself is not that much shorter in Sveinsbók than in other manuscripts, but it is uniquely abbreviated in such a way that most of the ca. seventy-five words found there have been reduced to a single letter each. This has somewhat garbled the text, making it partly indecipherable, suggesting that the abbreviations are not original to the scribe but copied from his exemplar. Jón Helgason has noted that in Reykjabók's legal phraseology, “certain constantly recurring words are indicated by their first letters only,” and that this has parallels in law manuscripts.⁴² The abbreviations in Sveinsbók are, however, much more extensive.

Sveinsbók is not the only *Njáls saga* manuscript where chapters involving legal matter are abridged. One of the abridgments of Sveinsbók occurs in chapter 135 (KG 135.65–114), where close to fifty lines of Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson's edition are shortened to just one sentence: “tok mǫrðr nu ok stefnum at ser vættfangs buvm .ix. ok bio mal til at logvm. ok lyfti hanfelldrj. fok. þorgeirf. þorisssonar” (3r27–29; “Mǫrðr now took over and summoned nine neighbors and prepared the case lawfully and gave notice of the suit that Þorgeirr Þórisson had turned over”). The same passage is shortened in AM 162 B ζ fol., but the abridgment is not the same as in Sveinsbók and not as extensive: “Epter þat stefnum mǫrðr til fin ix. buum þeir voru aller ve{ttv}angf buar mǫrðr {tok} þa ihond þorgeiri ok tok af honum malit at logvm Siþan lyfti hann vigfokinni ok {bio} malit til at ollv epter því sem þa uaro lavg ilandi” (4v27–30; “After that Mǫrðr summoned nine neighbors. Mǫrðr took Þorgeirr's hand and took on the case lawfully. Then he gave notice of the homicide suit and prepared the case in accordance with the laws of the land”). AM 162 B ζ fol. does not preserve any of the other passages where Sveinsbók has shortened legal text. The manuscripts Óssbók, Þormóðsbók, and Skafniskinna also have evidence of shortening of legal matter. In chapter 73 (KG 73.32–39), in

legal proceedings against Gunnarr Hámundarson, these three manuscripts omit a repetitive passage. Interestingly, all these manuscripts, including Sveinsbók, belong to the x_2 -class of *Njáls saga* manuscripts, raising the question whether the shortening of legal phraseology is an old feature of the transmission of the text, possibly original to $*x_2$.

Emendations and Additions

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson noted that Sveinsbók sometimes has readings different from the other manuscripts and that they are, in his view, at times *better*.⁴³ Some of the changes made in Sveinsbók are clearly an improvement, as they correct errors in the storyline. These include the name of Flosi Þórðarson's brother, Þorgeirr, who the other manuscripts sometimes refer to as Þorgils or Þorgísl. Another example is from chapter 145, where Reykjabók, Oddabók, Möðruvallabók, and Gráskinnuauki agree that Skapti Þóroddsson was compensated for a wound he received in battle at the Alþingi. A single word is added in Sveinsbók, *engu*, meaning that Skapti received *no* compensation for his wound, which is more in accordance with other parts of the narrative. These emendations are made in the X-class part of Sveinsbók (Sv1), but the Y-class part (Sv2) also has similar corrections. In Sv2, two sons of King Brjáll take part and eventually die in *Brjánsbardagi*. However, twice in Möðruvallabók, Gráskinnuauki, and Oddabók, and once in Reykjabók, they are not said to be the sons of the king but the sons of the viking Óspakr, who are otherwise never mentioned.

These emendations are incorporated into the respective editions of Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, and Finnur Jónsson and have subsequently found their way into most other editions and translations. Sveinsbók has many more unique readings that have not always been favored by editors of the saga. For example, after Kári and Björn have routed their opponents, they shout at them as they flee. Here, Sveinsbók adds the words of Björn: “renni þer nu brennvmen” [Now you run, burners!], a reading which was favored by Konráð Gíslason and is printed in the main text of his edition, while Finnur Jónsson and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson disregarded it.⁴⁴ Einar Ólafur did, however, think that the man responsible for this addition had a “curiously deep understanding of the refined irony of the narrative of Kári and Björn.”⁴⁵

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson mentioned many more unique readings from Sveinsbók in his study,⁴⁶ but not all. Two examples of readings that

he did not mention, and that are not found in his textual apparatus, may be given: in the description of Þórhallr Ásgrímsson in Sveinsbók, Þórhallr is (among other things) said to be “daukr aharflít ok manna karllmanligfr. vel ordfilltr ok þo karfkapþr” (3v4–5).⁴⁷ Sveinsbók alone has *manna karlmannligstr* [the most manly man], adding to the already palpable emphasis on masculinity in the saga,⁴⁸ and where he is said to be *bráðskapaðr* or *skapbráðr* [hot-tempered] in other manuscripts, Sveinsbók has the otherwise unattested word “karfkapþr.” This hapax legomenon seems to be a compound made up of the noun *kárr* and the adjective *skapaðr* and is likely synonymous with the related adjective *afkárr* [powerful, violent, remarkable, hard to get along with].⁴⁹

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson went as far as to suggest that the source of some of the corrections in the text of Sveinsbók was “perhaps some sort of sideline of the manuscript tradition, a manuscript close to the original,” and that their origin might be “due to the author’s (or his scribe’s) correction of a very old manuscript of the X-class.”⁵⁰ Einar Ólafur also acknowledged that the changes might be due to a clever scribe but did not find it likely that that would explain all of them.⁵¹ The inventiveness of scribes should, however, not be underestimated. The manuscripts of *Njáls saga* all have unique variant readings, whether they involve changing Rangá to Þverá, as in *Kálfalækjarbók*, or correcting genealogies in accordance with some other source, as is witnessed in *Gráskinna* and *Skafinskinna*.⁵² Other scribes freely add to the narrative, such as the addition of snide remarks about Valgarðr grái and his son, Mǫrðr, in *Oddabók*. A scribe who knows the saga well may see room for improvement and may well imitate the style of the saga. Likewise, the fact that emendations are made to the text in both Sv1 and Sv2 does not necessarily mean that a single person is responsible for them.

Amplifying the Christian Character of the Saga

A group of interesting readings in Sveinsbók show the handiwork of someone who had a good understanding of the saga but wanted to improve upon it. As has been well established, certain aspects of the narrative of *Njáls saga* are informed by ecclesiastical literature.⁵³ A famous example is Flosi’s prophetic dream, where a man emerges from the mountain Lómagnúpr and calls out the names of men who will later die in the same order as in the man’s speech. As Einar Ólafur Sveinsson has shown, this seems to be based on a similar episode in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the

Great.⁵⁴ In Sveinsbók, this Christian character is sometimes amplified by exchanging or adding words and phrases for ones that are more often used in a Christian context.

One such change can be found in chapter 132, where bodies are recovered from the ruins of Bergþórshváll, a scene that has been much discussed in regard to its Christian overtones.⁵⁵ After Skarpheðinn's body has been carried out and his unburned clothes removed, two burn marks in the form of a cross are found on him, "ok ætluðu menn, at hann mundi sik sjálfr brennt hafa. Allir menn mæltu þat, at betra þætti hjá Skarpheðni dauðum en ætluðu, því at engi maðr hræddisk hann" [and people thought he had probably burned these marks himself. Everybody said that Skarpheðinn seemed more at peace in death than they had expected, for no one was afraid of him].⁵⁶ This is the reading in most manuscripts. Critics and translators of the saga have often interpreted the words "betra þætti hjá Skarpheðni dauðum en ætluðu" as meaning that it was easier to be in the presence of Skarpheðinn after his death than people had expected.⁵⁷ This interpretation is problematic. A more persuasive one is that Skarpheðinn's appearance suggests that he is at peace; he feels better where he is now.⁵⁸ This interpretation is supported by the reading of Sveinsbók, which reads: "allir mæltu þat at betra væri yfir skarphedni dauðum en þeir ætludu" (1r38; "everybody said that Skarpheðinn appeared to be more at peace in death than they had expected").

Sveinsbók, moreover, reads: "af því at hann var haitr sem snjó ok eingi hræddiz hann" (1r38–39; "because he was white as snow and no one was afraid of him"). That the body of a dead man is white as snow has parallels in other medieval Icelandic works. The scribe responsible for this additional detail may well have been influenced by the description of Njáll's body, just a few lines earlier. When Njáll is carried out of the ruins of Bergþórshváll, Hjalti Skeggjason says: "nialf likami ok a siona þiki mer sva biartr at ek hefí einkiff. dauðf manz likama. fet jam biartan" (1r25–26; "Njáll's body and countenance seem to me so bright that I have no dead man's body seen as bright").⁵⁹ Lars Lönnroth has compared this scene to a similar scene in *Plácidus saga*, a hagiographic *píslarsaga*.⁶⁰ After Plácidus and his family have been burned inside an "eyruxi" [a brazen ox], their bodies are "oskaddadir, sniofe huitare" [undamaged, whiter than snow].⁶¹ The wording of Sveinsbók, however, is closer to *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*. There, Þórir hundr sees how God's angels take Óláfr's soul to Heaven, but Óláfr's face "sýnist honum hvítt sem snjó" [looked to him white as snow].⁶² In Christian symbolism, the color white is often found

as a symbol of ethical purity.⁶³ If a sinner repents and confesses his sins, even if they are “liotar oc leiðilegar sem kol eða ketilrim. þa skolu þær skiott huitna sem nyfallenn stnior” [hideous and loathsome as coals or kettle-grime, they shall swiftly turn as white as fresh fallen snow],⁶⁴ as is said in *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*. Sveinsbók makes clear what is hinted at in other manuscripts, that Skarpheðinn’s last-minute acts of penance and devotion the crossing of the arms and self-inflicted markings in the form of a cross have cleansed his sins and saved him from burning in the afterlife. His body is white as snow and his appearance suggests that he is at peace in death.

In chapter 146, all manuscripts excluding Sveinsbók agree that Flosi Þórðarson was “glaðastr ok beztr heima at hitta” [a very jovial man and an excellent host].⁶⁵ Instead of the word *gladastr*, Sveinsbók has *góðlátastr* [good-natured, kindly].⁶⁶ This word does not make a frequent appearance in the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic texts; the only other examples of this word listed in *ONP* come from the miracles of *Jóns saga helga* and the exemplum *Afkóngssyni ok kóngsdóttur*. In the exemplum, a son of a king, a cook, and a knight were sat in a king’s hall “ok létu ekki mikit yfir sér, vóru fáskiptnir ok góðlátir” [and kept a low profile, were reserved and kindly],⁶⁷ but in the miracle in *Jóns saga helga* we are told of a man who has the devil banished from his life with the help of the blessed Jón: “giordi hann gudi verdugar þakkir fyrir sina andar hialp æ ollum dogum lifs sins ok for gláðr ok goðlátr til sinna heim kynna” [He made to God worthy thanks for his spiritual help in all the days of his life and went happy and good-natured to his home].⁶⁸

The change from *gladastr* to *góðlátastr* is relatively significant in terms of Flosi’s characterization—instead of being jovial and happy, Flosi is calm and gentle. In the saga, Flosi is, despite his actions, a sympathetic figure who gets a positive treatment. Lönnroth has suggested that the image of the historical figure of Flosi may have been tainted in the memory of the Icelandic people before the writing of *Njáls saga*.⁶⁹ He was remembered as Brennu-Flosi, the man responsible for the killing of the popular Njáll, as well as other questionable deeds. The entire second part of *Njáls saga*, Lönnroth says, may “in fact, be described as an attempt to save Brennu-Flosi’s reputation: it pictures him as a noble chieftain and a devout Christian who was driven against his will to burn Njáll in his home and who later regained his honor by making full atonement for his deed.”⁷⁰ Therefore, it may seem odd that, shortly after the burning and just after he learns that Kári Sölmundarson and Þorgeirr skorargeirr have

killed some of his fellow burners, Flosi would be described as a most happy man. The scribe responsible for this change seems to have found this to be an inappropriate description of a man who had committed an unjust deed but would later go on pilgrimage to Rome and be absolved from his sins. He has chosen instead a word more fitting for someone who knows he has committed acts against the will of God and is starting his journey of atonement.

A more obvious emphasis with regard to Christian themes can be found in chapter 147 when Síðu-Hallr tries to arrange a reconciliation between the burners and Þorgeirr skorargeirr. He tells Þorgeirr and his companions what settlements they are being offered with “morgum fögurum orðum ok góðgjarnligum” [many fair and benevolent words] as is written in Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, Oddabók, and Gráskinna (in Möðruvallabók with a different word order).⁷¹ In Sveinsbók, however, *góðgjarnligum* is swapped out for *guðréttligum*. This adjective (and the derivative adverb *guðrétt(i)liga*) is, according to *ONP*, otherwise only found in kings’ sagas and hagiographic sagas, e.g., *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar* and *Jóns saga helga*. In the *Helgisaga*, Sigurðr slembir urges Óláfr to kill his enemies. Óláfr says: “Eigi vil ek launa svá guði þann fagra sigr, er hann hefir mér gefit, at drepa nú margan góðan dreng hér í dag” [I do not wish to repay God the fair victory He has given me by killing many a good man here today] to which Sigurðr replies: “Víst er þat guðréttligt” [Certainly it is according to the will of God].⁷² In *Jóns saga*, Jón is said to have “guðrettliga ... halldit heilagann hiuskap” [righteously kept the holiness of matrimony] even though he had twice been married.⁷³ The meaning of the word *guðréttligr* is something righteous, “God-right,”⁷⁴ and is considerably different from *góðgjarnligr*, “kind, kindly,”⁷⁵ indicating that Hallr’s words are not just kindly, or well-meant, but that they are righteous and according to God’s will. This fits well with the character of Hallr, who has earlier in the saga acted in the spirit of Christian humility when he, as Andrew Hamer puts it, “rejects all materialist concepts of justice” and refuses to assess the worth of his son in terms of money, pleading for an equal settlement.⁷⁶

Lastly, again in chapter 146, Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, and Gráskinnuauki tell us that Þorgeirr skorargeirr never had fewer than thirty men in fighting form: “aldri var þar færa vígra karla en þrír tigr.”⁷⁷ For *vígri* Sveinsbók has *vígðra* (8r47; consecrated). While this might be viewed as a simple scribal error, as Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson do in their edition (KG 146.98–100), the addition of an extra consonant

is not a typical error for this scribe. The change may also have been made subconsciously, perhaps due to the scribe being more accustomed to writing sagas of holy men, or—although it may be improbable—a deliberate change by a scribe or redactor who found it appropriate for Þorgeirr to be in the company of clergymen. This change would then be in line with other changes where Christian themes are accentuated. In any case, a subconscious change to *vígðra* would seem to betray the scribe's frame of mind or his scribal milieu.

Emendations such as those of Sveinsbók described above, where the connection to Christian discourse is made more prominent, are also present in Þormóðsbók, as Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Ludger Zeevaert have shown.⁷⁸ One of the examples they mention involves incorporating *høkuskegg* where other manuscripts have either *høfuð* or *hønd ok høfuð* in Hildigunnr's reply to her brother Þorgeirr after he has claimed he will kill Gunnarr Hámundarson. As is pointed out, a parallel reading is found in *Óláfs saga helga* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, in Dala-Guðbrandr's retort against God shortly before King Óláfr converts him to Christianity. However, this reading is not confined to the *Heimskringla* version of *Óláfs saga*, it is also found in the *Helgisaga*.⁷⁹ The hagiographical *Helgisaga*, which also includes the readings *hvítt sem snjór* and *guðréttligr* found in Sveinsbók and mentioned above, is a slightly abridged redaction of the very fragmentary *Elzta saga Óláfs helga*.⁸⁰ Since the *Helgisaga* was written in Norway and not known to Snorri Sturluson,⁸¹ the ultimate source of Dala-Guðbrandr's retort in both versions must be *Elzta saga*. Likewise, it was most likely *Elzta saga* that influenced the changes witnessed in Þormóðsbók and Sveinsbók.

Conclusions

In this article, I have provided an overview of a single, fragmentary manuscript of *Njáls saga*—Sveinsbók. For some time in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and perhaps earlier, Sveinsbók seems to have been regarded as a single codex along with Skafinskinna. There is, however, little to support the theory that they originally belonged together. More likely, someone combined fragmentary manuscripts in order to make a more complete *Njáls saga* text. This would probably have been done at the same time as the addition of a replacement leaf in Skafinskinna in the seventeenth century. As Sveinsbók's fol. 11 is in some ways quite different from the other ten leaves, most notably in being seemingly younger,

it is possible that it is what remains of a completely different manuscript which was, at some point, added to this agglomeration of *Njáls saga* parts. This hybrid manuscript from the seventeenth century would suggest that there was at that time a continued interest in *Njáls saga*, not only from an antiquarian standpoint but also as an artifact for reading. Someone took it upon himself to collect various fragments of *Njáls saga* and to copy at least one leaf to add to the mix, creating a more complete text—a text that was later split up, obscuring the way in which readers in the seventeenth century approached the text.

In his stemma of *Njáls saga* manuscripts, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson split Sveinsbók into two classes, placing the first ten leaves (Sv1) in the x_2 -class and, at first, the last leaf (Sv2) in the Y-class. Later, he revised his findings and placed Sv2 in the Z-class. This conclusion was, however, based on the faulty readings of Eiríkur Jónsson in the 1875 edition of the saga. Einar Ólafur's original classification was correct: Sv2 is a Y-class manuscript, closest to Gráskinnuauki 2. With the relocation of Sv2, only two manuscripts remain in the Z-class, Skafinskinna and Gráskinna.

As quoted above, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson noted that the redactor of Sveinsbók had a “curiously deep understanding of the refined irony of the narrative of Kári and Björn.”⁸² This statement could well be expanded to cover many of the changes we find in Sveinsbók; it does indeed seem that whoever was responsible for them had a deep understanding of some of the main themes of the saga. A particularly interesting group of changes found in Sveinsbók is the amplification of Christian elements in the text. Two interesting changes seem to indicate a redactor interested in repentance. He wanted to emphasize more clearly that even the worst of sinners could repent and receive absolution should they seek it, but he also had ideas about the actions of repenting men, finding it inappropriate for them to be happy or jovial.

Sveinsbók also shows interesting abridgments, such as the shortening of legal passages. Because of the very fragmentary state of the manuscripts of the x_2 -class, it is often impossible to say if a change was made in a specific manuscript or its immediate exemplar, and not in $*x_2$ itself. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson believed that the instances of abridgment in Sveinsbók were young; the work of the scribe of Sveinsbók or its exemplar.⁸³ But as abridgment is a common trait in the x_2 -class of manuscripts—as is witnessed by the common abridgment of a passage in Óssbók, Þormóðsbók, and Skafinskinna, which also happens to involve legal formulae—it begs the question as to whether these instances of abridgment do not in fact all stem

from the parent manuscript $*x_2$. The only instance of a large-scale abridgment in Sveinsbók that can be directly compared with another x_2 -class manuscript does show a similar, although not identical, abridgment.

Whereas the abridgments may indeed derive from $*x_2$, additions and changes to the text where Christian themes are made more prominent do not seem to originate from $*x_2$. The aforementioned fragmentary state of manuscripts derived from $*x_2$ does complicate matters as there is often only one witness to the text of the x_2 -class at any given point. This goes for the passages containing *heiftarblóð* and *hokuskegg* in Þormóðsbók (see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume, pp. 13–14), and *guðréttligr* and *góðlátr* in Sveinsbók. However, the passage where Sveinsbók adds that Skarphedinn's body was "hvítr sem snjór" can be compared with the reading of Gráskinnuauki, which does not have this addition. The fact that Sveinsbók and Þormóðsbók share this particular trait of amplifying the Christian character of the saga might suggest that they are more closely related than the other x_2 -class manuscripts. A more detailed analysis of the connection of these two manuscripts, as well as a comparative reexamination of the whole x_2 -class of manuscripts, will likely reveal more, but that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

A detailed examination of a single manuscript such as the one presented here provides us with valuable insight into the ever-changing *Njáls saga* tradition of the Middle Ages and early modern era, but it can also reveal patterns common to manuscripts—even if their texts cannot be compared directly. In the case of Sveinsbók, variance should without a doubt be celebrated, as it shows a new side to the reception of *Njáls saga*: a side which reveals redactors with a deep understanding of the main themes of the saga, an increased interest in its Christian elements, but less so in legal matters.

NOTES

¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 72.

² Kálund, *Katalog*, xli, xliii.

³ This is excluding the seventeenth-century parchment manuscript GKS 1003 fol., given to the king in 1692, which includes a whole *Njáls saga* along with many other sagas. See Slay, "On the Origin of Two Icelandic Manuscripts."

⁴ Gráskinna, including its binding, is discussed in Emily Lethbridge's chapter in the present volume.

⁵ Arne Magnussons i AM. 435 A-B, 4to indeholdte håndskriftfortegnelser, 69.

⁶ Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, "Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to," 15–18.

⁷ Már Jónsson, “Skrifarinn Ásgeir Jónsson,” 290.

⁸ Text derived from Sveinsbók is found in AM 135 fol. at 145r, line 6–146v, line 14, 155r, lines 9–14, and on the margin of 167r, see KG 135.14–154, 141.70–76, 145.246–248; GKS 2869 4to, 2v44–3v11, 4v9–12, 7r37–38. It should be mentioned that Ásgeir seems to have had access to one further manuscript of *Njáls saga*, or at least a manuscript containing *Darraðarljóð*, as its fourth stanza, which is not present in either Gráskinna or Sveinsbók, is copied in AM 135 fol., 185r. See Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 16–18.

⁹ Jón Johnsonius, “Ad lectorem,” xxiii.

¹⁰ John Erichsen, *Udsigt over den gamle Manuscript-Samling*, 114–15.

¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 11, says: “skrifat’ here must mean: copied.” Einar seems to think this note refers directly to the *Njáls saga* text, but since it is impossible to know which book is being referred to, the meaning is unclear. The fact that the note is inverted in regard to the saga text makes it less likely that the note refers to Sveinsbók itself.

¹² <http://islandingabok.is>; Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 12–14.

¹³ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 695. Jón does not state on which leaf the inscription is to be found but says that it is partly covered by an earlier repair to the manuscript. I was unable to locate the inscription using black-and-white photographs. The name Jón Ormsson is not as rare a combination of given name and patronym as Sveinn Ormsson: eight men, born in the first half of the seventeenth century, bore the name Jón Ormsson, according to Íslendingabók.is.

¹⁴ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Seytjándá öld*, 293.

¹⁵ Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 428. See also Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 15.

¹⁶ Jón Johnsonius, “Ad lectorem,” xxiii.

¹⁷ Stefán Karlsson, *Icelandic Language*, 14; “Uppruni og ferill Helga-staðabókar,” 55. Examples of “voru,” found in all hands, are excluded here as they are part of an earlier change than the general orthographic change *vá* > *vo/vó*, see Hreinn Benediktsson, “Relational Sound Change,” 232, 237–39.

¹⁸ Stefán Karlsson, “Development,” 834, 835; *Icelandic Language*, 44, 45–46.

¹⁹ Kjartan G. Ottósson, *The Icelandic Middle Voice*, 121–23. A more detailed survey of the differences between the scribal hands in Sveinsbók is in Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 30–50.

²⁰ While it is unlikely that a scribe would change exemplars with only three or four folios left to write, it is possible that his exemplar was missing its last few folios, making it necessary to find another exemplar for the conclusion of the saga. For a more thorough description of the codicology of Sveinsbók, see Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 19–30.

²¹ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 696; Kålund, *Katalog*, 54; Finnur Jónsson, “Einleitung,” xli; *ONP*, 472.

²² For the argumentation for this dating, see Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 45–50.

²³ See readings marked “Fragm. e.” or “Fr. e.” in *Njals-saga*, 500–6. Leaves from Reykjabók, Oddabók, and Kálfalækjarbók got lost at around the same time, presumably thrown away by a “heedless worker,” see Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xix.

²⁴ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 783. See also Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 56–59.

²⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 781. For some reason, Jón does not seem to have compared the texts of Sveinsbók and Oddabók.

²⁶ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 779.

²⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 117.

²⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 117.

²⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 109.

³⁰ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 109, 171.

³¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 170–71, n. 2.

³² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Um handrit Njálssögu,” 128–29.

³³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Formáli,” cliii.

³⁴ Polygenetic variants or polygenetic errors are variants which several scribes could make independently of one another. They are usually deemed useless for the construction of a stemma and only create “noise,” affecting the accuracy of the classification. See, e.g., Trovato, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lachmann’s Method*, 109–16. Einar Ólafur himself advised against using word order and particles as evidence for or against affiliation, see Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 17.

³⁵ Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson, “Forord,” xv.

³⁶ GKS 2869 4to, 11v2–3. The word “kvask” was probably abbreviated in the same way as at 11r37, a “k” followed by a period, but the period is illegible here.

³⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 17.

³⁸ Other examples of Sv2 sharing a nonessential word with R4 and O3 occur at KG 156.52 “sitt” and KG 157.16 “honum.”

³⁹ See note 34 above.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of Sv2 and Ga2’s relationship, including examples, see Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í GKS 2869 4to,” 70–72.

⁴¹ Other examples of this kind of abridgment occur at KG 135.65–114, 142.327–37, 143.18–24, and 144.70–89.

⁴² Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” vii.

⁴³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 62–63.

⁴⁴ As this reading was incorporated into Konráð’s edition and subsequently found its way into other editions and translations, such as Valdimar Ásmundarson’s popular edition (1894) and the Svart á hvítu edition (1987), it has become an indispensable part of *Njáls saga* to many. It is, for example, an integral part of Sigurður Nordal’s analysis of Björn in his article “Björn úr Mörk,” 143.

⁴⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 69.

⁴⁶ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 63–69.

⁴⁷ While the other manuscripts refer to both Þórhallr's hair and skin as dark, *Sveinsbók* does not relate the darkness of his skin.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Ármann Jakobsson, "Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls saga*," 199–200.

⁴⁹ The word *afkárr* is composed of the intensifying prefix *af* and the adjective *kárr*. Its meaning has been explained in various ways, most relating to a troublesome temperament. In later Icelandic, the word and its derivatives have taken on the meaning "strange" or "absurd." See, e.g., Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. "afkárr"; Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, s.v. "afkárr"; Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 2nd ed., s.v. "afkárr"; Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk orðsifjabók*, s.v. "afkárr."

⁵⁰ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 69.

⁵¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 69.

⁵² See further in Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge's chapter in the present volume.

⁵³ See, e.g., Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction*, 104–64; Hamer, *Njáls saga and Its Christian Background*.

⁵⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Njáls saga: A Literary Masterpiece*, 14–15.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Njáls saga: A Literary Masterpiece*, 155; Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction*, 122, 129; Cormack, "Saints and Sinners," 190; Hamer, *Njáls saga and Its Christian Background*, 223–32.

⁵⁶ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 343–44.

⁵⁷ See, for example, *Njal's saga*, 230; Cormack, "Saints and Sinners," 195 n. 47.

⁵⁸ Hamer, *Njáls saga and Its Christian Background*, 232, has interpreted this scene as suggesting that Skarpheðinn has been led into Paradise. He does not mention that the appearance of Skarpheðinn suggests that he is at peace, an interpretation which would have strengthened his argument.

⁵⁹ See *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson 343.

⁶⁰ Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction*, 122.

⁶¹ *Plácidus saga*, 71.

⁶² *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, 361.

⁶³ Lurker, *Wörterbuch biblischer Bilder und Symbole*, 412.

⁶⁴ *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, 33. See also Ps. 51.9, Isa. 1:18, and the miracles of *Mariu saga*, where a sinner's soul is turned "huitari enn snior" when he repents, *Mariu saga*, 419.

⁶⁵ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 419.

⁶⁶ GKS 2869 4to, 8v3. The reading in KG 146.111, "goðlatnazti," is incorrect.

⁶⁷ *Íslendzk æventýri*, 213.

⁶⁸ *Jóns saga Hólabykups ens helga*, 91.

- ⁶⁹ Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction*, 175–76.
- ⁷⁰ Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Crititcal Introduction*, 177.
- ⁷¹ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 421. In Cook's *Njal's Saga* translation, 282: "he explained it all in pleasing and well-meant language."
- ⁷² "Helgisaga Ólafs konungs Haraldssonar," 249.
- ⁷³ *Jóns saga byskups ens helga*, 80.
- ⁷⁴ Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. "guðréttligr."
- ⁷⁵ Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. "góðgjarnligr."
- ⁷⁶ Hamer, *Njáls saga and Its Christian Background*, 112–13.
- ⁷⁷ With slight variations. This sentence is also to be found in *Oddabók*, but there the word under discussion is omitted. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 419.
- ⁷⁸ Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Ludger Zeevaert, "Við upptök Njálu," 165–66. See also Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge's chapter in the present volume, p. 14.
- ⁷⁹ "Helgisaga Ólafs konungs Haraldssonar," 260.
- ⁸⁰ Finlay and Faulkes, "Introduction," x.
- ⁸¹ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, "Formáli," ix.
- ⁸² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 69.
- ⁸³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 69.

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Copying *Njáls saga* into One's Own Dialect Linguistic Variation in Six Fourteenth-Century Manuscripts

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Introduction

All surviving manuscripts of *Njáls saga* are, as far as we know, copies of still older manuscripts. They are the work of scribes who labored copying this longest of the Sagas of Icelanders, admittedly with somewhat varying degrees of faithfulness to their exemplars, changing a word or two once in a while, sometimes accidentally but sometimes also, no doubt, deliberately. Occasionally, a scribe may have indulged in replacing a word or a phrase with something which he thought was more accurate or more plausible for the narrative, or simply sounded better. The scribes all shared the same goal, namely to reproduce a written version of the story that was intended to be read aloud. A variety of reasons may have compelled a scribe to make changes which, in his judgment, made the text sound better to the intended audience. The manuscript that he was copying may, for instance, have contained linguistic features that did not conform to his own language or that of the intended audience. Such incongruous linguistic features could potentially diminish the quality of the text and divert attention from the storyline. Linguistic differences between the exemplar and the copyist (and his intended audience) could occur, for instance, when the copyist was working with an old exemplar containing obsolete linguistic features or when the exemplar was written in a different variety of the language, perhaps from a different region.

This chapter will concern itself with the following six fourteenth-century manuscript copies of *Njáls saga*:

Þormóðsbók (AM 162 B 8 fol.)

Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to)

Reykjabók (AM 468 4to)

Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.)

Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.)

Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to)

The fourteenth century is a particularly interesting period in the history of the Icelandic language due not only to the wealth of manuscripts surviving from that time, but also because of the many ongoing language changes that can be observed in texts written in the period.¹ These changes did not, of course, happen overnight. Instead, they spread through the community at a differing pace: some may have become universal within several decades while others progressed very slowly, taking centuries to establish themselves in the language. A fourteenth-century Icelandic scribe copying an old manuscript, or a manuscript written in a different region, may, therefore, have been forced to make some linguistic choices. These linguistic choices are the focus of the present chapter which aims to answer the question, to what extent did the fourteenth-century scribes adapt the language of *Njáls saga* to their own contemporary (regional) language? A few selected language changes and their manifestation in the six fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* listed above will be examined. Needless to say, only a small selection of linguistic features can be discussed within the parameters of a short chapter. Consequently, the results presented here must be considered preliminary.

Following a discussion of language change and scribal practice, as well as of the *Njáls saga* manuscripts under examination, an account of four language changes and their manifestation in the six manuscripts will be presented, along with concluding remarks.

Language Change and Medieval Scribal Practice

For every instance of a language change where a new feature replaced an earlier one—a new pronunciation (sound change), word form or ending (morphological change), or new word order (syntactic change)—there is bound to have been some linguistic variation while some speakers still had the old feature in their language but for others it was normal to use the new feature. Such variation typically manifests itself in linguistic differences between speakers in different places (regional dialects) or young speakers versus old speakers (social variation).

Not much is known about the process by which the typical medieval Icelandic scribe copied a manuscript text. In some instances, the scribe may have written from dictation, but it seems probable, not least for reasons

of economy, that copying from an exemplar was the most common method.² A medieval Icelandic scribe copying an exemplar in his native language probably did not proceed letter by letter or word by word but rather read and internalized a phrase or a full sentence which he then reproduced in the manuscript he was writing. As he was working with his native language (rather than copying a Latin text, for instance), he subconsciously applied his own linguistic competence while reading, internalizing, and reproducing the text. Any linguistic features conflicting with the scribe's own mental grammar would thus have caused him to pause, allowing him to consider whether to amend the text or not.

Linguistic difference between the exemplar and the copyist and his intended audience could arise for two reasons in particular:

- The exemplar was old, and the text contained linguistic features that had become obsolete.
- The exemplar was contemporary but written in a variety of the language (dialect) that was different from that of the copyist and his intended audience.

If we assume, as is commonly accepted, that *Njáls saga* was written around or perhaps shortly before 1280,³ how did the text of the saga change linguistically as it was being copied in the course of the fourteenth century? To what extent did the language changes ongoing at the time manifest themselves in the manuscript copies of the saga produced in the fourteenth century? If, for instance, an early exemplar of *Njáls saga* had the adverb *mjök* 'much', but in the language of a later scribe it had become *mjög* with a fricative *g*, did this later scribe faithfully copy the archaic *mjök* or did he replace it with an orthographic form that better corresponded to his own pronunciation? Or if his exemplar had *sjá maðr* 'this man', but for the scribe it was natural to say *þessi maðr* with a younger form of the nominative singular masculine of the demonstrative pronoun, what did he do?

In instances of this sort, the language of the text in the manuscript the scribe was copying was at odds with his own language, and a choice had to be made. Should the scribe retain the somewhat archaic features of the language of the saga text in the exemplar or should he alter it to better accord with his own language and that of his expected audience? Linguistic differences of this kind did almost certainly not obstruct the understanding of the text in the fourteenth century; this was more a question of what was current and what sounded archaic or perhaps a bit peculiar.⁴

Six Fourteenth-Century *Njáls saga* Manuscripts

Njáls saga is preserved in a little over sixty manuscripts, dating from around 1300 down to the nineteenth century (see pp. 283–91 in this volume). A detailed description of all the most important manuscripts is found in Jón Þorkelsson's work, which was part of the excellent two-volume edition of *Njáls saga* by Konráð Gíslason, Eiríkur Jónsson, and their collaborators in 1875–89.⁵ Karl Lehmann and Hans Schnorr von Carolsfeld also presented a classification of the manuscripts in their 1883 work,⁶ and Finnur Jónsson gave an overview of the manuscripts in his 1908 edition for Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek.⁷ The most thorough examination to date of the manuscripts and the textual transmission is found in the studies by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and his edition for the Íslenzk fornrit series, which has long become the standard edition of *Njáls saga*.⁸ The manuscripts in focus in the present study are the following.⁹

Pormóðsbók, from around 1300 (henceforth δ), consists of twenty-four parchment leaves in its current form. It is in fact four fragments from the same book, all written in the same hand in a two-column layout. A single leaf in AM 162 B β fol. may originally have been part of this manuscript, but it has not been included in the present study. Paleographic similarities in five late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century manuscripts have been identified: AM 39 fol. (*Heimskringla*); AM 221 fol. (*Jóns saga helga A*, *Ágústínuss saga*); AM 232 fol. (the first part, *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats*); AM 383 II 4to (*Þorláks saga helga*); and AM 49 8vo (*Kristinréttr Árna biskups Þorlákssonar*), suggesting they may all have originated in the same scribal milieu.¹⁰

Gráskinna, from around 1300 (henceforth Gr), contains a total of 121 leaves, but twenty-six leaves (88–89, 95–96, and 99–120; fol. 121 is blank) are later inserts in an early sixteenth-century hand; these later additions, referred to as Gráskinnuauki (or Ga for short), have not been included in the present study. The remaining ninety-four leaves, dated to around 1300, are written mostly in a single hand, Gr2, with three other hands writing short sections: Gr1 fols. 1r–10v16, Gr3 fols. 58v19–59r11, and Gr4 fols. 74v13–76r (see further Emily Lethbridge in this volume pp. 66–70). Several leaves have been repaired by sewing parchment laps on the outer corners, and the missing text has been added by the early sixteenth-century hand of Gráskinnuauki; these additions have not been included in the present study.¹¹

Reykjabók, from around 1300–1325 (henceforth R), presently consists of ninety-two leaves (and two flyleaves). Only two leaves have been lost (one after fol. 6 and another after fol. 33), which makes R the most complete of the fourteenth-century manuscripts. R is all written in a single hand. It is accessible in a facsimile edition with an introduction by Jón Helgason.¹² The text of R has most recently been made available in an edition by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson.¹³

Möðruvallabók, from around 1330–1370 (henceforth M), is a large manuscript containing eleven Sagas of Icelanders. *Njáls saga*, which is the first saga in the manuscript (1ra–61rb), has three lacunae in it which have been filled with text in a seventeenth-century hand, fols. 1–10, 18v–20r, and 29rb–29va.¹⁴ These additions have not been included in the present study. Apart from these later additions, *Njáls saga* in M is written in a single hand (although a second fourteenth-century hand appears later in the manuscript). Six other manuscripts or manuscript fragments have been attributed to this same hand: AM 642 a Ið 4to (*Nikuláss saga erkibiskups*); AM 325 XI 2b 4to (*Óláfs saga helga*); AM 240 V fol. (*Mariujarteinir*); AM 573 4to (fols. 46–63, *Breta sögur* and *Valvens þáttr*); AM 220 I fol. + Lbs fragm. 5 (*Guðmundar saga biskups*); and AM 173 c 4to (*Grágás* and *Kristinréttir Árna biskups Þorlákssonar*).¹⁵ M is available in a facsimile edition with an introduction by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson; a diplomatic transcription, a lemmatized concordance, and a detailed grammar of the entire text was produced by Andrea van Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen.¹⁶

Kálfalækjarbók, from around 1350 (henceforth K), consists of ninety-five leaves, all written in one hand, but in its present state the text has seven lacunae. K is written in a large and beautiful script, and it includes several illuminated initials (a rarity for a saga manuscript), but the parchment is in poor condition which has caused some loss of text.

Skafinskinna, from around 1350–1400 (henceforth S), currently consists of forty-five leaves (some of which may be palimpsest; hence the name Skafinskinna, ‘scraped vellum’).¹⁷ There are three lacunae, one of which is filled with a leaf in a seventeenth-century hand (fol. 31); this insert has not been included in the present study. The remainder of the manuscript is written in one hand, except 2v9–20 which are in a different hand; this additional hand has some Norwegian orthographic characteristics.¹⁸

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson concluded that the manuscripts of *Njáls saga* could be divided into three classes which he labeled X, Y, and Z; furthermore, he maintained that there was a close affinity between Y and Z

as opposed to X and assumed that Y and Z descended from a common ancestor (which he labeled V). Three of the six manuscripts examined in this study belong to the X-class, δ , R, and K, while M is of the Y-class and Gr of the Z-class. S, on the other hand, contains a hybrid text: the first part, labeled S1, down to chapter 66 belongs to the Z-class, while the rest of the saga in S, labeled S2, is of the X-class, suggesting that the scribe of S—or of a manuscript from which S is derived—changed exemplars in chapter 66.¹⁹ An overview of the interrelationship of the six manuscripts under examination is presented in figure 5.1 which is a simplified version of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s 1953 *stemma codicum*.²⁰

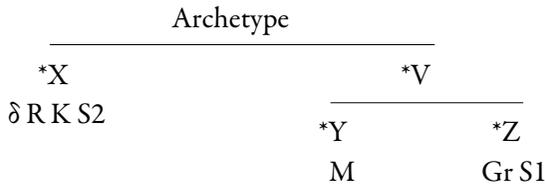


Figure 5.1 A simplified version of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s 1953 *stemma codicum* showing the interrelationship of the six *Njáls saga* manuscripts examined in the present study.

The dates presented above for the manuscripts, which are the dates used by the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*,²¹ should not be taken literally; these are rough estimates based on different criteria, including the script, orthography, and language. An estimated date of writing like ca. 1300 is, in fact, to be understood to include a margin of ± 25 years; it thus refers to a (roughly) fifty-year period: 1275–1325.²² It is, therefore, in principle, very hard to differentiate in terms of age between δ (ca. 1300), Gr (ca. 1300), and R (ca. 1300–1325); they could all three have been written in the same year—or approximately seventy-five years could have passed from the writing of the oldest to the youngest (1275–1350). Similarly, the difference in age between M (ca. 1330–1370) and K (ca. 1350) could either be none or around seventy years. Manuscript S (ca. 1350–1400), too, could, strictly speaking, be of exactly the same age as M and K or even a century younger. Thus the difference in age between the two manuscripts considered to be the earliest, δ and Gr (both ca. 1300), and S, which may be the youngest of the six (ca. 1350–1400), could, strictly speaking, be as much as 150 years (ca. 1275–1425). If true, the earliest and the youngest manuscripts would represent a language that was several generations apart, even if all were descended from the same archetype of *Njáls saga*.

Conversely, all six manuscripts could, in theory, have been written at roughly the same time, around 1325. In that case, these six manuscripts would present a cross-section of the language written to be presented to an audience of the same generation of speakers of fourteenth-century Icelandic.

These are, of course, speculations of limited value. The exact dates of writing are, regrettably, beyond recovery, and we will have to make do with estimated dates.

This chapter focuses primarily on the work of six scribes: the scribes of δ , M, and K, and the main scribes of Gr (Gr2) and S. In Gr, hand Gr1 is included where possible; the material available in hands Gr3 and Gr4 in Gr is too limited to be included. The additional hand in S was left out of consideration for the same reason. The scribes are anonymous, and, in fact, nothing is known about them or the place of writing. It is, for instance, not known if the scribes were all born and raised in roughly the same area or if they came from different parts of Iceland—or perhaps lived abroad for an extended period of time. It may seem somewhat presumptuous to embark on a study of linguistic variation in fourteenth-century Icelandic with this material. This is, however, a situation that is quite typical for research in the early history of Icelandic and not at all uncommon in historical sociolinguistics in general. The challenge, then, is to make the best use of the limited data available to us.

Selected Language Changes

In this section, four language changes will be discussed and their manifestation in the six fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts examined. The changes are:

- The demonstrative pronoun *sjá* ‘this’ and the change *sjá* → *þessi* in the nominative singular masculine and feminine.
- The strong verbs *stíga* ‘step, walk’ of class 1 and *fljúga* ‘fly’ of class 2 and the changes *sté* → *steig* and *fló* → *flaug*, respectively, in the preterite singular.
- The feminine substantive *øx* ‘axe’ and the derounding of the short, front rounded vowel ø : *øx* > *ex*.
- The indefinite pronoun *engi* ‘no one’ and its younger alternative stem *ong(v)*- created on the analogy of the *wa/wō*-stem inflection of adjectives.

These changes have been selected somewhat arbitrarily. There are, of course, a variety of other changes that manifest themselves in different ways in the manuscripts. The six manuscripts under examination are also all incomplete to some degree, as described above. The discussion will, therefore, largely concentrate on the sections where all six manuscripts can be compared.

In the lists of examples below, R will be used as the text of reference, since it is the most complete of the six manuscripts under examination. References will be made to leaf and line number in the manuscripts and to chapter and line number in Konráð Gíslason's and Eiríkur Jónsson's edition, abbreviated KG.²³ The examples will be presented in normalized fourteenth-century orthography which deviates slightly from the orthography typically used in Íslenzk fornrit.

Sjá maðr hafði spjót í hendi

The inflection of the demonstrative pronoun *sjá* 'this' has undergone several changes in the course of the recorded history of Icelandic, as recently examined in detail by Katrín Axelsdóttir.²⁴ One of these changes was the analogical replacement of the form *sjá* with *þessi*, as described in (1) and the paradigm in table 5.1.

1a. Nom. sing. masculine *sjá* → *þessi*.

1b. Nom. sing. feminine *sjá* → *þessi*.

Table 5.1 The inflection of the demonstrative pronoun *sjá* 'this' in thirteenth-century Icelandic and the change in nominative singular masculine and feminine.

		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Sg.	Nom.	sjá → þessi	sjá → þessi	þetta
	Acc.	þenna	þessa	þetta
	Dat.	þessum, þeima	þessi	þessu, þvísa
	Gen.	þessa	þessar	þessa
Pl.	Nom.	þessir	þessar	þessi
	Acc.	þessa	þessar	þessi
	Dat.	þessum, þeima	þessum, þeima	þessum, þeima
	Gen.	þessa	þessa	þessa

The new form *þessi* first appears in the thirteenth century, but in texts, *sjá* and *þessi* appear side by side for quite a while. The use of *sjá* decreased steadily in the course of the fourteenth century, but the change seems not to have been fully completed until the sixteenth century.²⁵

The sources available do not allow any conjecturing about the geographical progression of the change, but they do suggest that for quite some time speakers of Icelandic had both old and new forms in their language. This seems to be the case with the scribes of the six fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* under examination. All six show a mix of old and new forms.

As the manuscripts are all incomplete to varying degrees, there are not very many instances where the forms of the nominative singular masculine and nominative singular feminine of the pronoun can actually be compared in all six. If we also consider instances where five out of six manuscripts have a surviving text (and lacuna in one of six manuscripts, identified with \emptyset), seven examples have been recorded where all six or five manuscripts have the earlier form *sjá*, as seen in (2).²⁶

- 2a. R En þann sama dag verðr sá atburðr, þá er Bergþóra er úti, at hon sér mann ríða svörtum hesti. Hon nam staðar ok gekk eigi inn. **Sjá maðr** hafði spjót í hendi ok gyrðr saxi (20r12; cf. KG 36.90–94; nom. sing. masc.)

ð Sjá maðr (1va33)

Gr Sjá maðr (21v23)

M Sjá maðr (14ra7)

K Sjá maðr (17r11)

S Sjá maðr (16r1)

- 2b. R “Eigi skal þat,” segir Kolskeggr, “hvárki skal ek á þessu níðast ok á öngu öðru því, er mér er til trúat, ok man **sjá einn hlutr** svá vera at skilja man með okkr (38r15, cf. KG 75.42–46; nom. sing. masc.)

ð sjá er einn hlutr (17vb19)

Gr sjá einn hlutr (47v15)

M sjá einn hlutr (27ra35)

K sjá einn hlutr (41v24)

S sjá einn hlutr er (29v33)

- 2c. R Njáll kom heim ok synir hans ok spurði Bergþóru, hvat manna **sjá** væri. “Hann er húskarl þinn,” segir hon (20r23, cf. KG 36.115–17; nom. sing. masc.)
 ð (hvat manna hann væri, 1vb25)
 Gr hvat manna sjá væri (22r8)
 M hvat manna sjá væri (14ra24)
 K hvat manna sjá væri (17r24)
 S hvat manna sjá væri (16r9)
- 2d. R Er þetta in torvelligsta för, því at **víkingr sjá** er harðr ok illr viðr-eignar (41r17, cf. KG 82.36–37; nom. sing. masc.)
 ð [Ø]
 Gr víkingr sjá (51v12)
 M víkingr sjá (29ra4)²⁷
 K víkingr sjá (46r3)
 S víkingr sjá (32v9)
- 2e. R Hon kvaðst vera kona skapstór—ok veit ek eigi, hversu mér er hent við þat, er þar eru svá menn fyrir, en þat þó eigi síðr, at **sjá maðr** hefir ekki mannaforráð (50r12, cf. KG 97.28–31; nom. sing. masc.)
 ð sjá maðr (23va6)
 Gr sjá maðr (64r1)
 M sjá maðr (35va4)
 K [Ø]
 S sjá maðr (39v22)
- 2f. R **Sjá einn hlutr** var svá, at Njáli fell svá nær, at hann mátti aldri óklökkvandi um tala (56v7, cf. KG 111.39–41; nom. sing. masc.)
 ð [Ø]
 Gr Sjá einn hlutr (73r23)
 M Sjá einn hlutr (39va22)
 K Sjá einn hlutr (64v2)
 S Sjá einn hlutr (45r7)
- 2g. R “Óvarliga liggid þér,” segir hann, “eða til hvers skal **för sjá** ger hafa verit?” (35v21, cf. KG 69.40–41; nom. sing. fem.)
 ð för sjá (15ra13)
 Gr för sjá (44r24)

M för sjá (25va35)

K för sjá (38v13)

S för sjá (28r8)

If we use the same criterion, considering instances where comparable data can be found in five or more manuscripts, six instances can be found where all the manuscripts have the younger form *þessi*, as shown in (3).

- 3a. R Hann mun ok líf á leggja at vera þér trúr. **Þessi hundr** heitir Sámr (36r23, cf. KG 70.51–52; nom. sing. masc.)

ð (hundrinn heitir Sámr, 15vb5)

Gr þessi hundr (45r6)

M þessi hundr (26ra6)

K þessi hundr (39r24)

S þessi hundr (28v2)

- 3b. R ... ok kom í höfuðit ok klauf ofan í jaxlana, svá að þeir fellu niðr á ísinn. **Þessi atburðr** varð með svá skjótri svipan, at engi kom höggvi á hann (48v28, cf. KG 92.112–15; nom. sing. masc.)

ð [Ø]

Gr Þessi atburðr (61v23)

M Þessi atburðr (34va30)

K Þessi atburðr (56r10)

S Þessi atburðr (38v17)

- 3c. R Njáll mun vera á þingi ok synir hans ok svá Gunnarr. En þér skuluð þá drepa Þórð. Peir játtu, at **þessi ráðagerð** skyldi fram koma (22v28, cf. KG 41.73–75; nom. sing. fem.)

ð [Ø]

Gr þessi ráðagerð (25v15)

M þessi ráðagerð (15va22)

K þessi ráðag[erð] (20v14)

S þessi ráðagerð (18r2)

- 3d. R Þorgeirr mælti til Hildigunnar: “**Þessi** ⟨hönd⟩²⁸ skal þér sýna Gunnar dauðan í kveld” (32r20, cf. KG 61.23–24; nom. sing. fem.)

ð (Þessar hendr skulu, 11ra16)

Gr Þessi hönd (39v11)

M Þessi höndin (23va1)

K Þessi hönd (33v26)

S Þessi hönd (25v29)

- 3e. R Hrappr mælti: “Þetta hefir þú mikit nauðsynjaverk unnit, því at **þessi hönd** hefir mörgum manni mein gert ok bana” (49r3, cf. KG 92.142–44 p. 234; nom. sing. fem.)

ð [Ø]

Gr þessi hönd (62r1)

M þessi hönd (34va39)

K þessi hönd (56r21)

S þessi hönd (38v26)

- 3f. R “Telim vér ekki á föður várn,” segir Skarpheðinn. Nú er at segja frá því, at **þessi sætt** helzt með þeim síðan (52r23, cf. KG 99.86–88; nom. sing. fem.)

ð [Ø]

Gr þessi sætt (67r10)

M þessi sætt (36vb36)

K þessi sætt (59v21)

S þessi sætt (41v4)

In twelfth-century Icelandic, the examples in (2) and (3) would all have been *sjá*; *þessi* would have been unknown. This mixed usage of the old form *sjá*, as in (2), and the new form *þessi*, in (3), is indicative of a language change in progress: the new form *þessi* has been introduced, but it has not yet ousted the earlier form *sjá*. It appears that the scribes of the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* found both forms acceptable, at least as part of the written register, and it seems not at all improbable that both forms were used side by side also in the colloquial language at the time, even if the use of *sjá* must have been receding.

The fact that all the manuscripts under examination share the pattern presented by the examples in (2) and (3) suggests that this pattern originates in the earliest written version of *Njáls saga*; the change from *sjá* to *þessi* had already begun in the language of the earliest written version of *Njáls saga*. This accords well with the generally assumed date of composition of *Njáls saga* around 1280.²⁹

A total of thirteen instances were identified where all five or six manuscripts had the same form; seven instances of *sjá* and six of *þessi*, compare the examples in (2) and (3) above. These are, of course, too few to permit any major statistical inferences, but it is an interesting fact that six out of the seven instances of the earlier *sjá* are of the masculine form; only one of them is feminine. Conversely, four out of the six instances of the younger *þessi* are feminine; only two are masculine. The change from *sjá* to *þessi* may thus have been more advanced in the feminine than in the masculine in the language of the earliest written version of *Njáls saga*. The earliest *Njáls saga* was thus probably written in a variety of Icelandic where both *sjá* and *þessi* were current, but one was more likely to hear *sjá maðr* than *þessi maðr*, and *þessi kona* was probably more common than *sjá kona*. This accords well with Katrín Axelsdóttir's findings on this change.³⁰

In addition to the examples in (2) and (3) above where the available readings in five or six manuscripts were in agreement, there were also six instances where the five or six manuscripts were not in agreement; some had *sjá* while others had *þessi*, as shown in (4) below.

- 4a. R Skarpheðinn mælti: “**Sjá maðr** hefir þó helzt verit feigr,” segir hann, “er látizt hefir fyrir fóstura várurum, er aldri hefir sét mannsblóð” (22r14, cf. KG 40.3–6; nom. sing. masc.)

ð *Sjá maðr* (3vb25)

Gr *Sjá maðr* (24v18)

M *Sjá maðr* (15ra34)

K *Þessi maðr* (19v17)

S *Sjá maðr* (17v2)

- 4b. R Kolr mælti, er þeir riðu hjá fram: “Skal nú renna, Gunnarr?” Kolskeggr mælti: “Seg þú svá fremi frá því, er **þessi dagr** er allr” (32v25, cf. KG 62.53–55; nom. sing. masc.)

ð *sjá dagr* (11vb7)

Gr *sjá dagr* (40r29)

M *þessi dagr* (23vb18)

K *þessi dagr* (34v18)

S [Ø]

- 4c. R Sömdu þeir nú þessa ráðagerð með sér, at **sjá** skyldi fram koma
(36v4, cf. KG 71.12–13; nom. sing. fem.)
ð sjá (15vb30)
Gr þessi (45r21)
M sjá (26ra25)
K sjá (39v9)
S þessi (28v12)
- 4d. R Þráinn mælti: “Aldri vissa ek, at þit bræðr mynduð gera drengskap
ykkarn til fjár eða hversu lengi skal **fjárþón sjá** yfir standa?” (47v22,
cf. KG 91.96–99; nom. sing. fem.)
ð fjárþón sjá (21ra34)
Gr fjárheimta þessi eða þón (60r15)
M fjárþón þessi (33vb42)
K fjárþón sjá (54v12)
S fjárþón sjá (37v18)
- 4e. R Þá mælti Njáll til Gunnars: “Gerðu svá vel, félagi, at þú halt sætt
þessa ok mun hvat vit höfum við mælt, ok svá sem þér varð in fyrri
ferð mikil til sæmðar, þá man þér verða **þessi**³¹ miklu meir til sæmðar
(37v18, cf. KG 74.26–31; nom. sing. fem.)
ð sjá (17rb15)
Gr sjá (47r8)
M sjá (26vb33)
K sjá (41r21)
S sjá (29v10)
- 4f. R Gunnarr mælti: “Hvat bíðr sinnar stundar, en ekki mun þeim **för sjá**
til sæmðar verða” (27v8, cf. KG 50.49–50; nom. sing. fem.)
ð ferð þessi (8va7)
Gr ferð sjá (33r5)
M [Ø]
K för sjá (27v1)
S ferð sjá (21v28)

As the language was gradually changing from *sjá* to *þessi*, starting in the thirteenth century, it seems *a priori* more likely that in the process of copying *Njáls saga*, a fourteenth-century scribe would replace the earlier

sjá with the new *þessi* than replacing *þessi* with *sjá*, even if the latter scenario cannot be ruled out. Thus, *sjá* may be considered a *lectio difficilior* compared to *þessi*. It seems likely, therefore, that in the examples in (4) above, the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* had *sjá*, but one or more of the fourteenth-century scribes decided to replace it with the more recent *þessi*. This is particularly clear in cases like (4a), (4e), and (4f) where all but one of the manuscripts have *sjá*.

Out of the six examples where the manuscripts have mixed readings, two are of the masculine form, but four are feminine. This could be taken to indicate that the feminine was more prone to change than the masculine, which is consistent with the findings above.

The examples in (4) do not reveal a significant difference between the six manuscripts in terms of linguistic preference. R, Gr, M, and K have two new forms each; δ and S one each. Interestingly, S, which is probably the youngest of the six manuscripts, thus patterns with δ , which is among the oldest manuscripts.

To summarize: the morphological change whereby *sjá* was replaced by *þessi* in nominative singular masculine and feminine—see table 5.1—was underway in the variety of Icelandic in which *Njáls saga* was written. The change appears to have been more advanced in the feminine than in the masculine. The change was probably still further advanced in the language of the fourteenth-century scribes copying the saga, and this manifests itself in them occasionally replacing *sjá* with *þessi*. There is, however, only an insignificant difference between the six manuscripts in this regard, suggesting that all the scribes found both *sjá* and *þessi* acceptable, at least in the written register.

Hann sté af baki; spjótit fló yfir hann fram

Already in Proto-Norse, strong verbs of class 1 and class 2 containing a root-final velar fricative, such as *stíga* ‘step, walk’ (class 1) and *fljúga* ‘fly’ (class 2), underwent word-final devoicing ($*y > *x$) and ultimately loss of the velar and the monophthongization of an immediately preceding diphthong ($*ei > é$ and $*au > ó$, respectively). Thus the third-person singular preterite indicative active of *stíga* and *fljúga* had become *sté* and *fló*, respectively, by the time of the earliest attested Icelandic.³² This development can be sketched thus:

PrN $*steiy >$ PrN $*steix >$ OIcel. *sté*

PrN $*flauy >$ PrN $*flaux >$ OIcel. *fló*

This phonological development only affected verbs with root-final velar fricative, namely the strong class 1 verbs *hníga* ‘bow down, sink’, *míga* ‘urinate’, *síga* ‘sink down’, and *stíga* ‘step, walk’ and the strong class 2 verbs *fljúga* ‘fly’, *ljúga* ‘lie’, *s(j)úga* ‘suck’, and *smjúga* ‘creep through (an opening)’. The majority of verbs of class 1 and 2 had a different root-final consonant and thus remained unchanged. It comes therefore as no surprise that, ultimately, the verbs that underwent this change were felt to be anomalous by children acquiring the language who tended to adapt them to the prevalent pattern of strong class 1 and 2 verbs. Thus *sté* tended to be replaced by *steig*, analogous to *beit* and many other verbs of class 1, and *fló* tended to become *flaug* parallel to *rauk* and many other verbs of class 2, as shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Analogical extension in strong class 1 and class 2 verbs.

	Class 1		Class 2	
infinitive	bíta	stíga	rjúka	fljúga
3rd sing. pres. ind.	bítr	stígr	rýkr	flýgr
3rd sing. pret. ind.	beit	sté → steig	rauk	fló → flaug
3rd plur. pret. ind.	bitu	stigu	ruku	flugu
preterite participle	bitinn	stiginn	rokinn	floginn

The new analogical forms *steig* and *flaug* replacing the earlier *sté* and *fló*, respectively, are not found in the earliest Icelandic manuscripts analyzed by Ludvig Larsson, nor are there any signs visible of a similar change in other verbs.³³ The earliest recorded indications of this change appear in AM 325 II 4to, *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*, dated to ca. 1225: “hnéig” (51.16), “Séig” (7.7), “fteig” (7.8), “fteig” (29.20), “fteig” (51.21) as well as “flæg” (16.8), “flæg” (75.19), but “fló” (16.10).³⁴

The new analogical form *steig* appears in the *Njáls saga* manuscripts alongside the earlier *sté*, as shown in (5) below; see also the overview in table 5.3.

- 5a. R Hann [Þjóstólfur] söðlaði hest, er hon átti, ok **steig** á bak ok reið norðr til Bjarnarfjarðar á Svanshól (8r3, cf. KG 12.23–25; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 ð [Ø]
 Gr steig (7r2)

M [Ø]

K sté (9v25)

S sté (7r11)

- 5b. R Hann [Þráinn Sigfússon] **steig** þegar fram yfir borðit ok sagði skilit við Þórhildi (18v20, cf. KG 34.46–48; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

ð [Ø]

Gr steig (19v29)

M sté (13rb5)

K [Ø]

S steig (15r5)

- 5c. R Hann [Gunnarr] spratt upp ok **steig**³⁵ fram yfir borðit ok mælti: “Heim mun ek fara (19r18, cf. KG 35.22–23; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

ð [Ø]

Gr steig (20v10)

M sté (13va8)

K sté (16r9)

S steig (15r27)

- 5d. R Hann [Kolr] **steig** þar af baki ok beið í skóginum þar til, er þeir höfðu borit ofan viðinn (19v16, cf. KG 36.42–44; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

ð sté (1rb8)

Gr steig (21r17)

M steig (13vb9)

K sté (16v11)

S sté (15v15)

- 5e. R Litlu síðar reið maðr at dyrum ok **sté** af baki ok gekk inn, ok var þar sauðamaðr þeira Þórhildar (35r11, cf. KG 69.18–20; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

ð sté (14vb20)

Gr steig (44r9)

M sté (25va16)

K sté (38r26)

S sté (27v36)

- 5f. R ... heimull er matr þeim, er hafa þurfu. Flosi **gengr** undir borðit ok allir menn hans (72r29, cf. KG 136.32–33; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 δ [Ø]
 Gr steig (93v25)
 M sté (49rb3)
 K sté (84v17)
 S [Ø]
- 5g. R ... það skjóta utan báti, “því at ek vil finna Óspak.” **Steig**³⁶ hann þá ⟨i⟩ bátinn ok nokkurir menn með honum (90v11, cf. KG 156.21–23; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 að [Ø]
 Gr [Ø]
 M Sté (59vb38)
 K Sté (95v23)
 S [Ø]
- 5h. R Flosi sagði vera ærit gott gömlum ok feigum ok **sté** á skip ok lét í haf (93r10, cf. KG 159.34–36; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 δ [Ø]
 Gr [Ø]
 M sté (61rb2)
 K [Ø]
 S [Ø]

Four out of the six manuscripts—all except δ and K—have examples of *steig*, indicating that the development *sté* → *steig* was a change in progress by the time of their writing. In the process of copying *Njáls saga*, scribes were thus more likely to replace *sté* with *steig* than the other way around. In relation to *steig*, the form *sté* can therefore be regarded as the *lectio difficilior*. The fact that there are no instances where all the six manuscripts agree on *steig*, suggests that the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* did not have any occurrence of *steig*, but rather only *sté*; the change *sté* → *steig* had not begun in the language of the earliest *Njáls saga*. The highest concentration of the younger form *steig* is found in Gr and R which belong to two different classes of manuscripts, the Z-class and X-class, respectively, see figure 5.1. Assuming that these younger forms in Gr and R stem from the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* is not very attractive, as it would

require the supposition that many other scribes reversed the change by replacing the younger *steig* with the earlier *sté*.

Table 5.3 Overview of the examples presented in 5a–h.

	R	δ	Gr	M	K	S
a	steig	[Ø]	steig	[Ø]	sté	sté
b	steig	[Ø]	steig	sté	[Ø]	steig
c	steig	[Ø]	steig	sté	sté	steig
d	steig	sté	steig	steig	sté	sté
e	sté	sté	steig	sté	sté	sté
f	(gengr)	[Ø]	steig	sté	sté	[Ø]
g	steig	[Ø]	[Ø]	sté	sté	[Ø]
h	sté	[Ø]	[Ø]	sté	[Ø]	[Ø]

The fragmentary δ has only two of the relevant examples, but these are both the earlier *sté*; K, too, only has *sté* and M has only one *steig* against six *sté*. The younger S has two *steig* against three *sté*, but Gr consistently has the younger form *steig* in all six instances. In this respect, Gr has the most innovative language, followed by R.

The earlier *fló* and the later *flaug* also appear in the *Njáls saga* manuscripts, as shown in (6).

- 6a. R Brynjólfur kastaði sér niðr við vellingum, en spjótit **fló** yfir hann fram
(21r29, cf. KG 38.50–51; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

δ fló (3ra26)

Gr flaug (23v17)

M fló (14vb8)

K fló (18v19)

S fló (16v32)

- 6b. R Gunnarr tók á lofti spjótit ok skaut aftr þegar, ok **fló** í gegnum skjöldinn (29r19, cf. KG 54.69–71; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)

δ [Ø]

Gr flaug (35v3)

M fló (21va35)

K fló (29v18)

S fló (23r27)

- 6c. R Kári hljóp í loft upp, ok **flaug** spjótít fyrir neðan fætr Kára (49r6, cf. KG 92.147–49; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 δ fló (22rb29)
 Gr flaug (62r5)
 M fló (34vb1)
 K flaug (56r24)
 S fló (38v28)
- 6d. R Hopar hann [Flosi] þá hestinum undan, en spjótít **fló** fyrir framan hestinn Flosa ok missti hans (67v22, cf. KG 130.142–43; 3rd sing. pret. ind. act.)
 δ [Ø]
 Gr (fló 88r25 Ga)
 M fló (46va5)
 K fló → flaug (79r2)
 S [Ø]

In no instance are all the six manuscripts united in presenting the younger form *flaug*, which may be indicative of the absence of *flaug* in the earliest written *Njáls saga*. The earlier form *fló* predominates in the six manuscripts: δ, M, and S only have *fló*, but R and K have each have one instance of *flaug* against two or three instances of the earlier *fló*. The scribe of K appears to have written “fló” in 79r2, to which he later added the letter *g* (filling an ordinary word space between *ó* and the first letter of the following word) and a loop on top of the *o* (on top of what seems to have been an acute accent). The result was “flög” which in the scribe’s orthography could represent *flaug*, since he sometimes denotes the diphthong *au* with *ó*.³⁷ As with the pair of the earlier *sté* versus the later *steig*, Gr consistently uses the younger form *flaug*. An interesting contrast between the main Gr scribe writing around 1300 and the sixteenth-century scribe of the Gráskinnuauki insert is presented by the earlier form *fló* (88r25 Ga) used by the latter.

Table 5.4 Overview of the examples presented in 6a–d.

	R	δ	Gr	M	K	S
a	fló	fló	flaug	fló	fló	fló
b	fló	[Ø]	flaug	fló	fló	fló
c	flaug	fló	flaug	fló	fló	fló
d	fló	[Ø]	[Ø]	fló	fló → flaug	[Ø]

To summarize: the changes *sté* → *steig* and *fló* → *flaug* were underway in fourteenth-century Icelandic and manifest themselves in some (but not all) of the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* under examination. The change *sté* → *steig* appears to have been more advanced than the change *fló* → *flaug*. Unlike the change *sjá* → *þessi*, the six manuscripts never concur on the younger form (*steig* and *flaug*), which indicates that the younger forms were not present in the earliest written version of *Njáls saga*. The change *sjá* → *þessi* discussed above was present in all the fourteenth-century manuscripts, but now a significant difference between the manuscripts emerges. The fragmentary δ and K only had the old *sté* and M and S only had the old *fló*. At the other end of the spectrum are R and, in particular, Gr with their preference for the younger forms. Especially Gr is linguistically innovative in that it has the younger form, *steig* and *flaug*, in every instance.

Hví er blóðug ex þín?

The short, front, rounded vowel \emptyset had already in the earliest attested Icelandic a tendency to get derounded to *e*. Evidently, this was not a sound change that was ever carried out to its fullest extent, derounding every instance of \emptyset , but rather applied sporadically, creating pairs like *góra/gera* ‘do’, *kómur/kemr* of *koma* ‘come’, *söfr/sefr* of *sofa* ‘sleep’, *trøðr/treðr* of *troða* ‘tread’, *frörinn/frerinn* ‘frozen’, and several others.³⁸ This derounding of \emptyset may have been more prominent in some varieties of Icelandic than others, but unfortunately the sources available do not present a clear picture of the distribution of these forms. It seems also quite likely that there was some intraspeaker variation, namely that each speaker could actively use both a form with a rounded vowel as well as a form with an unrounded vowel.

The feminine substantive *øx* ‘axe’ was one of the words affected by the derounding of \emptyset to *e*, as shown in table 5.5. In thirteenth-century sources, forms with \emptyset (or its successor \ddot{o}) seem to predominate, but forms with *e* appear sporadically, such as the accusative plural “exar” (42r18) in *Atlamál* 41 in Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, GKS 2365 4to, dated to around 1270.³⁹

Table 5.5 The inflection (in the singular) of the feminine substantive *øx* ‘axe’ and the derounding $\emptyset > e$.

Sg.	Nom.	$\emptyset x$	> ex
	Acc.	$\emptyset xi$	> exi
	Dat.	$\emptyset xi$	> exi
	Gen.	$\emptyset xar$	> exar

The six fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts vary considerably with regard to their use of *öx* or the derounded *ex*, as shown with ten representative examples in (7):⁴⁰

- 7a. R Kolr sveiflaði til hans **öxi** ok missti hans ok fell af baki ok dó þegar
(20v13, cf. KG 37.31–33; dat. sing.)
 ð öxinni (2rb8)
 Gr öxinni (22v7)
 M exinni (14rb15)
 K öxinni (17v18)
 S öxinni (16r25)
- 7b. R Brynjólfr hjó í höfuð honum með **öxi** (21r28; cf. KG 38.47–48;
 dat. sing.)
 ð öxinni (3ra21)
 Gr öxi (23v14)
 M exi (14vb5)
 K öxi (18v17)
 S öxinni (16v31)
- 7c. R Hann brást við svá fast, at Brynjólfr lét lausa **öxina**, ok þreif Atli
 spjótit (21r28, cf. KG 38.48–49; acc. sing.)
 ð at honum varð laus öxin (3ra24)
 Gr öxina (23v15)
 M exina (14vb6)
 K öxina (18v18)
 S öxina (16v31)
- 7d. R Skarpheðinn lýstr í sundr spjótskaftit ok færir upp **öxina** ok höggr
 til Sigmundar (24v13, cf. KG 45.26–28; acc. sing.)
 ð öxina (4vb21)
 Gr spjótskaftit með exinni ok færir upp exina (28r17)
 M spjótskaftit með exinni ok færir upp exina (16vb2)
 K öxina (23r21)
 S spjótskaftit með öxinni ok færir upp öxina (19r27)

- 7e. R Skarphedðinn höggur til Sigmundar með **öxinni** Rimmugýgi (24v16, cf. KG 45.33–34; dat. sing.)
 ð öxinni (4vb28)
 Gr exinni (28r21)
 M exinni (16vb8)
 K öxinni (23r24)
 S öxinni (19r31)
- 7f. R **Öxin** kom á öxlina (24v16, cf. KG 45.34–35; nom. sing.)
 ð öxin (4vb29)
 Gr exin (28r22)
 M exin (16vb9)
 K öxin (23r25)
 S öxin (19r32)
- 7g. R Grímr sér, at þar liggr **öx** ein, ok horfði upp egginn (46r27, cf. KG 89.47–48; nom. sing.)
 ð öx (19vb4)
 Gr öx (58r21)
 M ex (33ra21)
 K öx (52v16)
 S ex (36v7)
- 7h. R ... þá vaknaði Njáll snemma ok heyrði, at **öx** Skarphedðins kom við þilit (48r30, cf. KG 92.51–53; nom. sing.)
 ð öx (21vb16)
 Gr öx (61r11)
 M ex (34rb24)
 K öx (55v4)
 S ex (38r24)
- 7i. R Hann var í blám stakki ok hafði törguskjöld ok **öxi** sína reidda um öxl (48v2, cf. KG 92.55–57; acc. sing.)
 ð öxi (21vb20)
 Gr öxi (61r13)
 M exi (34rb27)
 K öxi (55v6)
 S exi (38r27)

7j. R Skarphedðinn spratt upp þegar, er hann var búinn, ok hafði uppi
öxina Rimmugýgi (48v22, cf. KG 92.100–102; acc. sing.)

ð öxina (22ra28)

Gr öxina (61v13–14)

M exina (34va19)

K öxina (56r4)

S exina (38v11)

The six fourteenth-century manuscripts fall into three groups with regard to the derounding of the root vowel in *öx*:

- Only *öx*: δ, R, and K.
- Only *ex*: M
- A mixture of *öx* and *ex*: Gr and S.

No instances of *ex* were found in δ, R, and K; they all consistently use *öx*, as a simplex, as well as in compounds and derivatives such as *Öxará* and *Öxfirðingar*.⁴¹ These are all manuscripts from the X-class, see figure 5.1. By contrast, M, a Y-class manuscript, consistently has *ex*, both as a simplex and also in compounds and derivatives such as *Exará* (49vb35, 54vb21, 54vb30) and *Exfirðingar* (51vb1, 54va37).

In Gr, a Z-class manuscript, *öx* predominates, with around 87 percent of the occurrences. The relatively few instances of *ex* (around 13 percent) appear in chapters 39, 38, 45, and 87, along with instances of *öx*. It is possible that the scribe used both forms to some extent in his language and that this is a manifestation of intraspeaker variation, but the relatively few examples of *ex* could also be attributed to the influence of an exemplar.

S presents an interesting picture: in the first part, through chapter 54, only *öx* appears, but in the second part, from chapter 76 onwards, *ex* is almost universal. What could have brought about this change from *öx* to *ex*? It is, of course, conceivable that the scribe had both *öx* and *ex* in his language and for some reason he decided to shift from *öx* to *ex* while copying the text. Such a shift could have been triggered by the change of exemplars.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's research indicated that the first part of S (S1), down to chapter 66, was closely related to Gr and thus belonged to the Z-class of *Njáls saga* manuscripts. The second part of S (S2), from chapter

66 onwards, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson concluded, was clearly of the X-class of manuscripts, including, among others, δ , R, and K, see figure 5.1.⁴² The shift from $\ddot{o}x$ to ex seems to correlate with this shift from a Z-text to an X-text: $\ddot{o}x$ appears through chapter 54, but the next instance of the word appears in chapter 76 and from then onwards it is almost exclusively ex .

This, of course, seems to suggest that a change of exemplar occurred in chapter 66, either in the writing of S or an earlier manuscript from which S may be derived. Moreover, this could also indicate that the shift from $\ddot{o}x$ to ex in S was caused by the change of exemplar from the Z-class to the X-class. The shift from $\ddot{o}x$ to ex is, however, not supported by the manuscripts under examination: it is true that Gr, which is the other Z-class manuscript, has both ex and $\ddot{o}x$, but the $\ddot{o}x$ is dominant. Moreover, the X-class manuscripts, δ , R, and K, never have ex ; they only use $\ddot{o}x$.

Even if not much is known about the distribution of the variants $\ddot{o}x$ and ex in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Icelandic, it seems clear that ex is the younger form, originating through the derounding of the vowel in $\ddot{o}x$. Given that $\ddot{o}x$ (from earlier $\ddot{o}x$) predominates in the six fourteenth-century manuscripts under examination, with three manuscripts having only $\ddot{o}x$, and $\ddot{o}x$ predominating both in the X-class manuscripts δ , R, and K, as well as the Z-class manuscript Gr and the first part of S, it seems probable that the earliest written *Njáls saga* had $\ddot{o}x$. It is possible that the younger form ex was more prominent in some regions of Iceland than others, but it is also possible that $\ddot{o}x$ and ex coexisted in the language of the same speakers, much as in modern Icelandic where their descendants $\ddot{o}xi$ and exi are used almost interchangeably.

To summarize: the feminine substantive $\ddot{o}x$ 'axe' underwent derounding of its root vowel, presumably sometime in the thirteenth century, resulting in the form ex . The two forms have been used side by side down to modern times. Three of the fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts under examination, δ , R, and K, use only the older form $\ddot{o}x$. The younger form ex is found in the other three in very different quantities. In Gr, it only appears sporadically, S shifts from $\ddot{o}x$ to ex between chapters 54 and 76, and M uses only ex . In this respect, M is perhaps the most innovative of the six manuscripts.

Dat mun þik skipta öngu, mannfýlan

The indefinite pronoun *engi* 'no one', originating as a contraction of **ne ... einn-gi* 'not one at all', has a rich morphological history in Icelandic.

Some of the most prominent forms of Old Icelandic around 1200 and in the early thirteenth century are shown in table 5.6.⁴³ One of many interesting aspects of the morphological development of *engi* is the influence exerted on it by the *wa/wō*-stem inflection of adjectives (the type *fǫlr* m. ‘pale,’ masc. acc. sing. *fǫlván*) whereby *engi* obtained in many of its forms an alternative stem with a rounded vowel, and a stem-final *v*, *öngv-*, as seen in table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Some of the most prominent forms of *engi* ‘no one’ in Old Icelandic around 1200 and in the early thirteenth century.

		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Sg.	Nom.	engi	engi	ekki (etki)
	Acc.	engi, engan, öngvan	enga, öngva	ekki (etki)
	Dat.	engum, öngum	engri, öngri	engu, öngu
	Gen.	einskis, enskis	engrar, öngrar	einskis, enskis
Pl.	Nom.	engir, öngvir	engar, öngvar	engi
	Acc.	enga, öngva	engar, öngvar	engi
	Dat.	engum, öngum	engum, öngum	engum, öngum
	Gen.	engra, öngra	engra, öngra	engra, öngra

The two different stems were used side by side down to the twentieth century by which time the stem *eng-* had become predominant. After the early thirteenth-century merger of the short vowels *ø* and *ɔ* to a vowel traditionally denoted *ö* (in normalized orthography), the stem with the rounded vowel appeared as *öngv-*. As in the *wa/wō*-inflection of the adjectives, the stem-final *v* typically disappeared in word-final position, before a consonant and before the round vowel *u*. The stem alternation *öngv-* vs. *öng-* was subjected to paradigmatic leveling. On the one hand, there was a tendency to generalize the *v*-less stem as seen in forms like masculine accusative singular *öngan* appearing beside *öngvan* and feminine nominative plural *öngar* beside *öngvar*. On the other hand, the stem-final *v* could be extended to the position before an ending beginning with *u*, resulting in forms like masculine dative singular *öngvum* and neuter dative singular *öngvu* beside the earlier *öngum* and *öngu*, respectively.

The six fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* show variation between the two stems *eng-* and *öng(v)-*, as shown with representative examples in (8).⁴⁴

- 8a. R “Gengr vel klyfjabandit?” segir Atli. “Þat man þik skipta **öngu**, mannfýlan,” segir Kolr (20v11; cf. KG 37.26–28; neut. dat. sing.)
 ð engu (2rb4–5)
 Gr engu (22v4)
 M engu (14rb11)
 K öngu (17v16)
 S önga [*sic*] (16r23)
- 8b. R ... “ok **öngan** þann, er þaðan er” (20v12; cf. KG 37.28–29; masc. acc. sing.)
 ð engan (2rb5)
 Gr engan (22v4)
 M engan (14rb12)
 K öngvan (17v17)
 S öngan (16r24)
- 8c. R Hann svaraði honum **öngu** ok tók öxina eigi fyrr en hann var dauðr (21v3; cf. KG 38.56–59; neut. dat. sing.)
 ð öngu (3ra34)
 Gr engu (23v21)
 M engu (14vb12)
 K öngu (18v22–23)
 S öngu (17r2)
- 8d. R Gekk þá Gunnarr í braut. Hann lét ekki búa til vígsmálit ok **engan** hlut at hafa (25r4; cf. KG 45.77–78; masc. acc. sing.)
 ð öngan (5rb7)
 Gr engan (28v19)
 M engan (16v40)
 K öngvan (23v21)
 S öngan (19v13)
- 8e. R ... vil ek þess beiða yðr ... at vér gerim öðrum gaman, en oss verði engi vandræði ok þér gerið mér **öngva** skömm (31r14, cf. KG 58.55–58; fem. acc. sing.)
 ð önga (9vb14)
 Gr engu (38r6)

M engu (22vb13)

K öngva (32r21)

S önga (24v29)

- 8f. R Egill bað Austmenn sína fara. Þeir kváðust **öngvar** sakir eiga við Gunnar (32r26; cf. KG 61.35–36; fem. acc. plur.)

ð engar (11ra31)

Gr engar (39v19)

M engar (23va10)

K öngvar (34r8)

S öngar (25v35)

- 8g. R “Eigi skal þat,” segir Kolskeggr, “hvárki skal ek á þessu níðast ok á **öngu** öðru því, er mér er til trúat (38r15, cf. KG 75.42–44; neut. dat. sing.)

ð öngu (17vb19)

Gr öngu (47v14)

M öngu (27ra34)

K öngu (41v24)

S (né á öðru því 29v33)

- 8h. R “Nefnduð þér nökkura vátta at orðunum?” segir Njáll. “**Önga**,” sagði Skarpheðinn (48r3, cf. KG 91.21–22; masc. acc. plur.)

ð Önga (21rb23)

Gr Enga (60v1)

M Enga (34ra19)

K Önga (54v24)

S Önga (37v31)

- 8i. R “Þat er ærit eitt til,” segir Flosi, “ef þú vill eigi giftast, at þá mun ek **öngan** kost á gera (50r14; cf. KG 97.33–35; masc. acc. sing.)

ð öngan (23va10)

Gr engan (64r4)

M engan (35va7)

K öngan (57r2)

S öngan (39v24)

- 8j. R Höskuldr kvaðst mörgum vel trúa, “en **öngum** jafnvel sem fóstra mínum” (50r17–18; cf. KG 97.43–44; masc. dat. sing.)
 δ öngum (23va18)
 Gr engum (64r8)
 M engum (36va13)
 K öngum (57r6)
 S öngum (39v27)

The two stem variants *eng-* and *öng(v)-* appear in all six manuscripts, but the distribution presents an interesting picture. In the parts examined, the stem with the round vowel, *öng(v)-*, predominates in four out of six manuscripts, namely δ, R, K, and S, both parts S1 and S2. By contrast, Gr and M show a strong preference for the *eng-* stem, only very rarely using *öng(v)-*. The example in (8g) is one of few where Gr and M use the stem with the round vowel in *öngu*, but the immediately following word *öðru* may have contributed to the choice.

The *öng(v)-* manuscripts δ, R, K, and S2 all belong to the X-class of *Njáls saga* manuscripts, while the *eng-* manuscripts Gr and M belong to the Z-class and Y-class, respectively, which are closely related *vis-à-vis* the X-class, see figure 5.1. The *eng-* forms cannot, however, be traced without hesitation back to a supposed common ancestor of the Z- and Y-class, *V in figure 5.1, since the first part of S, S1, which has almost exclusively *öng(v)-*, is closely related to Gr and thus belongs to the Z-class, too. Yet, a linguistic characteristic found in two out of three descendants of *V, namely Gr and M, each from a different subclass descending from *V, namely Z and Y, respectively, is more likely to accurately reflect *V than S1 alone. It is *a priori* more likely that the scribe of S showed linguistic freedom with regard to his exemplar than both the scribes of Gr and M did so independently. Moreover, the isolated example in (8g), where Gr and M agree on *öng-*, but S has a different wording, supports the assumption that Gr and M go hand in hand in this regard.

This seems to suggest, then, that already at an early stage, the *Njáls saga* manuscripts were divided linguistically between the earlier *eng-* stem and the younger *öng(v)-* stem. *V and its descendants Gr in the Z-class and M of the Y-class preferred *eng-* while the X-class favored *öng(v)-*; the scribe of S1, however, working with a Z-class exemplar, broke rank and replaced *eng-* with *öng(v)-*. The question remains, however, as to whether

the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* had *eng-* or *öng(v)-*, and which scribes, beside the scribe of S, modified the language of the saga to match their own language. If we assume, with Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, that *X and *V are on equal footing, see figure 5.1 above, then the data presented now does not suffice to bring about a satisfying answer. These results are, it must be emphasized, preliminary. Further research, including examination of these features in additional *Njáls saga* manuscripts, will hopefully yield a clearer picture.

The conclusion so far may be summarized as follows. The six *Njáls saga* manuscripts under examination show two different linguistic varieties with regard to the indefinite pronoun *engi*: one with a strong preference for the earlier stem *eng-*, and another with a strong preference for the younger stem *öng(v)-*. These, then, probably represent two distinct varieties of Icelandic spoken, at least, in the fourteenth century. The scribes of Gr and M—and perhaps also the lost *V—probably spoke the *eng-* variety, while the scribes of δ, R, K, and S spoke the *öng(v)-* variety. It is not unreasonable to assume that these two varieties may have belonged to different geographical areas in Iceland, although the sources do not seem to provide any reliable information in that regard.

Conclusion

This study has focused on the manifestation of four language changes in six fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga*. The results can be summarized as follows:

- The change *sjá* → *þessi* in nominative singular masculine and feminine of the demonstrative pronoun *sjá* ‘this’ is present in all six manuscripts; it was probably more advanced in the feminine than in the masculine. The distribution of *sjá* versus *þessi* is in part shared by all six manuscripts, indicating that the pattern was inherited from the earliest written version of *Njáls saga*. The scribes occasionally appear to have replaced the earlier *sjá* with the younger *þessi*, but there is not a significant difference between the six manuscripts in terms of the ratio of old forms versus new forms.
- The changes *sté* → *steig* and *fló* → *flaug* in the preterite singular of the strong verbs *stíga* ‘step, walk’ of class 1 and *fljúga* ‘fly’ of class 2, respectively, manifest themselves in some (but not all) of the fourteenth-century manuscripts; the change *sté* → *steig* appears

to have been the more advanced of the two changes. The younger forms never coincide in all six manuscripts, which indicates that the younger forms were not present in the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* but rather were inserted by the scribes independently. Here, a difference between the manuscripts emerges: δ and K only have the old *sté* and M and S only have the old *fló*. The younger forms were preferred in R and Gr. In this respect, Gr stands out in that it has the younger form, *steig* and *flaug*, in every instance.

- The derounding of the short, front rounded vowel θ in the feminine substantive *øx* 'axe' ($\theta x > ex$) reveals a significant difference between the manuscripts. Three of them, δ , R, and K, use only the older form *øx*. The other three manuscripts have the younger form *ex* but in different numbers. In Gr, it only appears sporadically, S shifts from *øx* to *ex* between chapters 54 and 76, and M uses only *ex*. In this respect, M is perhaps the most innovative of the six manuscripts. This suggests that the younger form *ex* probably was not found in the earliest written *Njáls saga*, but rather inserted by the scribes.
- The indefinite pronoun *engi* 'no one' and its younger stem variant *öng(v)*- was examined. The younger stem with the round vowel, *öng(v)*-, was predominant in four out of six manuscripts, δ , R, K, and S, while the scribes of Gr and M had a strong preference for the *eng*-stem, only very rarely using *öng(v)*-. Apart from the first part of S, this division seems to coincide with the classification of δ , R, and K as X-class manuscripts and Gr and M (Z- and Y-class manuscripts, respectively) descending from a common ancestor, *V. The scribe of S1, belonging in the Z-class with Gr, appears to have replaced the *eng*- forms in his exemplar with *öng(v)*-. The *Njáls saga* manuscripts thus appear to have been divided linguistically already at an early stage into *eng*- manuscripts and *öng(v)*- manuscripts, presumably representing two distinct varieties of Icelandic.

The question presented at the beginning of this article was, to what extent did the fourteenth-century scribes adapt the language of *Njáls saga* to their own contemporary (regional) language? The four language changes examined above have, in fact, presented three different pictures.

First, the change *sjá* \rightarrow *þessi* was manifest in all six manuscripts, without there being a significant difference between them. There was, moreover, a shared pattern of old and new forms which probably is inherited

from a common original. This seems to show a language change that had already begun in the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* and was still ongoing in the language of the scribes copying the saga in the fourteenth century.

Secondly, the changes *sté* → *steig*, *fló* → *flaug* and *øx* > *ex* were probably not in the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* but rather inserted by some of the scribes. These, then, show linguistic features that some, but not all, of the scribes felt compelled to modify. The motivation was, presumably, that they wanted to adapt these features to match their own language. Furthermore, this revealed a difference between the manuscripts which, then, may reflect a genuine linguistic difference between the scribes.

Thirdly, there was the case of the two stems of the indefinite pronoun *engi*: *eng-* and *öng(v)-*. Here, too, the *Njáls saga* manuscripts could be divided into two groups which seemed to indicate that there were two distinct varieties of Icelandic in the fourteenth century, one preferring *eng-* and another preferring *öng(v)-*. Even if one can safely assume that *eng-* is the older stem and *öng(v)-* the innovation, it is not clear if the earliest written version of *Njáls saga* contained the younger stem. In other words, it is not clear which scribes had modified the language and which had simply stuck with their exemplars.

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that the fourteenth-century scribes of *Njáls saga* adapted the language of the saga to their own language in certain respects. Also, more broadly, this study sheds some light on the relationship of individual manuscripts, as well as the copying practices of medieval Icelandic scribes.

NOTES

¹ On the language changes and the sources, see Haraldur Bernharðsson, “Skrifandi bændur og íslensk málsaga.” On the number of surviving manuscripts, see Már Jónsson, *Arnas Magnæus Philologus*, 9–13.

² For indications of an Icelandic scribe copying from dictation, see Louis-Jensen, “Afskrift efter diktat?”

³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Formáli,” lxxxiv.

⁴ For a recent study of the variation of selected linguistic features in the different manuscripts of a particular text, see Haukur Þorgeirsson, “Snorri versus the Copyists.” See also Louis-Jensen, “Dating the Archetype.”

⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne.”

⁶ Karl Lehmann and Hans Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Die Njálsage*, 145–60.

⁷ Finnur Jónsson, “Einleitung,” xxxix–xliii.

⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Um handrit Njálssögu”; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Formáli,” cxlix–clx. See also most recently Lethbridge, “Hvorki glansar gull á mér.”

⁹ In what follows, the manuscripts will frequently be referred to by the abbreviations listed here, which are the same as those used by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his works.

¹⁰ Stefán Karlsson, “Introduction,” 56; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök Njálu.”

¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7–8, 12–13, 58–60.

¹² *Njáls Saga, the Arna-Magnæan Manuscript 468, 4^o (Reykjabók)*, edited by Jón Helgason.

¹³ *Brennu-Njálssaga. Texti Reykjabókar*, edited by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson.

¹⁴ de Leeuw van Weenen, *Grammar*, 17–19.

¹⁵ Stefán Karlsson, “Introduction,” 26–27.

¹⁶ *Möðruvallabók (Codex Möðruvallensis) MS. No. 132 in the Arnarnagæan Collection in the University Library of Copenhagen*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson; *Möðruvallabók AM 132 Fol. 1–2*, edited by Andrea van Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen; de Leeuw van Weenen, *Grammar*.

¹⁷ Kålund, *Katalog*, 54.

¹⁸ These lines are identified as Norwegian in *ONP*.

¹⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*.

²⁰ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 171.

²¹ See “Håndskriftregister” or “Medieval manuscripts” on the website of *ONP*, <http://onp.ku.dk/>

²² Stefán Karlsson pointed out that “a dating based solely on a codex’s script and spelling cannot reasonably be more accurate than to a period of at least fifty years.” Stefán Karlsson, “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts,” 146.

²³ *Njála udgivet efter gamle håndskrifter*. Edited by Eiríkur Jónsson and Konráð Gíslason.

²⁴ Katrín Axelsdóttir, *Sögur af orðum*, especially 165–239; see also Kjeldsen, “Bemærkninger til pronomenet *sjá* og dets middelalderlige historie.”

²⁵ Katrín Axelsdóttir, *Sögur af orðum*, 186–92.

²⁶ Note that this is not an exhaustive list of forms for each of the six manuscripts. The text of R is used for reference; the other manuscripts may have variant readings in the text surrounding the highlighted form.

²⁷ This part of fol. 29ra is badly faded and “fia” is only partly visible, sufficiently though, it seems, to make it more plausible than the reading “fi.”

²⁸ In R, the text reads “Þessi skal þér sýna” (32r20). As the demonstrative *þessi* appears as a determiner with the feminine substantive *hönd* in all the other manuscripts (nom. sing. in three, nom. plur. in one), it seems not unreasonable to assume that the scribe of R left *hönd* out by accident.

²⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Formáli,” lxxxiv.

³⁰ Katrín Axelsdóttir, *Sögur af orðum*, 186–92.

³¹ The scribe of R has added “þessi” above the line (37v18). Presumably he left it out accidentally and therefore added it above the line.

³² Noreen, *Altnordische Grammatik*, 163 (§223.2), 167–68 (§230.2).

³³ Larsson, *Ordförrådet i de äldsta isländska handskrifterna*.

³⁴ Hallgrímur J. Ámundason, ed., “AM 325 II 4°. Ágrip af Noregskonungasögum”.

³⁵ This entire line is very hard to read due to wear and the reading “f̄ceig” rather than “f̄ce” cannot be considered certain.

³⁶ Spelled “f̄ceg.”

³⁷ See, for example, *dauðr* spelled “döðr” 62r14.

³⁸ Noreen, *Altnordische Grammatik*, 107 (§119); Kristján Árnason, “Um örlög \emptyset í íslensku.”

³⁹ *Konungsbók Eddukvæða. Codex Regius*, edited by Vésteinn Ólason and Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson.

⁴⁰ The round vowel is denoted in different ways in the manuscripts, with symbols such as “o”, “ö”, “au”, “av”, and “æ”. These have all been rendered with “ö” in the normalized orthography.

⁴¹ R also has the genitive singular *axar* in “Hann var son Eiríks blóðaxar Haraldssonar hárfagra” (2r19), an analogical formation on the model of the numerous feminine *ō*-stem substantives like *gröf*, gen. sing. *grafar* ‘grave’. The root vowel *ō* in *ōx* is a prerequisite for such analogical formation.

⁴² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 40–45.

⁴³ Noreen, *Altnordische Grammatik*, 322–23 [§476]. Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Um íslenskar orðmyndir á 14. og 15. öld og breytingar þeirra úr forn málinu*, 50–51; Katrín Axelsdóttir, “Myndir af engi.”

⁴⁴ The scribes use several different symbols to denote the round vowel *ö*, including “o”, “ö”, “au”, “av”, and “æ”. These have all been rendered with “ö” in the normalized orthography.

The Historical Present Tense in the Earliest Textual Transmission of *Njáls saga* An Example of Synchronic Linguistic Variation in Fourteenth-Century Icelandic *Njáls saga* Manuscripts

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Introduction

The following chapter presents results from the part of the project “The Variance of *Njáls saga*” (see introduction to this volume, p. xiv) that was concerned with synchronic linguistic variation in the earliest manuscripts of the saga (from the fourteenth century) and adds findings from a project that is concerned with variation in postmedieval *Njáls saga* manuscripts.¹ Linguistic variation in Old Icelandic texts is mainly analyzed in the framework of historical linguistics, that is to say, research on phonological, morphological, and syntactical change over a longer period of time. Variation in the use of certain linguistic constructions, however, can also be found between contemporaneous manuscripts, for example between the five parchment codices and eight fragments that constitute the oldest text witnesses of *Njáls saga*. In the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, variation can be detected on all linguistic levels, but the part of the “Variance of *Njáls saga*” project that is concerned with synchronic variation in the oldest manuscripts focuses mainly on grammatical variation above the lexical and morphological level. It does not consider phonological and morphological variation (which is investigated by Haraldur Bernharðsson in this volume), nor does it consider the type of lexical variation that derives from copying mistakes. Such scribal errors are of vital interest for the part of the project concerned with stemmatological questions (see Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume). However, for an overall explanation of systematic, synchronic linguistic variation, the incidental, unsystematic deviations of a scribe from her/his exemplar are of little interest.

Synchronic Linguistic Variation: Stylistic Variation?

Several of the typical constructions that could be identified as linguistic variables by a comparison of parts of the text in different fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts also play an important part in descriptions of typical Icelandic saga style.² This is especially the case with narrative inversion and the historical present tense, and from a linguistic point of view, it seems to be appropriate to treat variation in the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* that does not involve differences in meaning as stylistic variation. Varieties of a language are usually classified as either historical (language periods), geographical (regional dialects), social (social dialects), or as dependent on certain circumstances (styles).³ For manuscripts produced in fourteenth-century Iceland, a language community without a pronounced dialectal or social differentiation, linguistic change or geographical or social dialects would be expected to play only a minor role.

In our case, however, the application of the concept of style (in the linguistic sense) also meets with some obstacles. The choice of a certain stylistic variety is usually described as being dependent on differences in speaker, addressee, subject matter, and situation.⁴ Even here, we would not expect many differences between manuscripts reproducing the same text and involving scribes and commissioners with comparable backgrounds. However, we do find variation in the usage of certain constructions between different manuscripts that originally go back to one archetype and otherwise follow their exemplars very closely, which means that some scribe/scribes, at some time, must have changed certain grammatical characteristics that are usually described as being typical of a certain style.

The Historical Present Tense

What is the Historical Present Tense?

Nondiachronic linguistic variation between manuscripts is not a subject that has been studied extensively in research on Old Icelandic texts, which was for a long time mainly occupied with the reconstruction of a “best” text that comes as close to the original archetype as possible and could be the basis for further literary or linguistic research. Only recently, and mainly initiated by the so-called “New Philology” proclaimed in the 1990 edition of *Speculum*, has a reorientation in Old Norse philology taken

place that assigns single manuscripts a value as independent literary (and linguistic) witnesses.⁵ New developments in the field of digital humanities provide the means to meet the technical and methodological requirements of this approach.⁶

For a number of reasons, the use of the historical present tense in the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* seemed an appropriate area for a practical test of the methods developed in the project “The Variance of *Njáls saga*,” on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a valid means of verifying the basic hypotheses of the project concerning synchronic linguistic variation in Old Norse manuscripts:

- a. In a comparison of two fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) and Þormóðsbók (AM 162 B δ fol.), differences in the use of the historical present tense could be identified.
- b. The XML transcriptions and the system of grammatical mark-up used in the project constitute a good basis for a systematic and quantitative analysis of this grammatical feature.
- c. Previous research treats the historical present tense as a typical stylistic feature of the Icelandic sagas but was not able to give a conclusive explanation of the phenomenon, which means that further research might be of more general interest.

One of the aims of the project “The Variance of *Njáls saga*” was to explain the linguistic differences we find in the earliest transmission of the saga in witnesses from the fourteenth century. It is known from previous research that some of the earliest manuscripts exhibit more archaic features than others, and it is tempting to assume that those stylistic differences have to do with different literary environments, different audiences, or different purposes of the text.⁷ In this context, the use of tenses seems to be a rather interesting field of research. Differences in the tense system that can be found between closely related Germanic languages like Icelandic, Swedish, and German, but also between German dialects (for example the use of certain grammatical forms to express aspectuality or differences in tense agreement), may have their origins in stylistic differences that ended up as different grammatical standards. Differences in the frequency of the usage of a certain grammatical form might then be interpreted as the conscious or unconscious modification of a stylistic variable by a scribe.

The term *historical present tense* usually denotes instances of present tense in narrative texts which can be replaced by the simple past tense without a change in meaning.⁸ As it is common in the analysis of historical language stages, this definition goes out from modern language use which is then contrasted with the language use in the historical language stage. In other words, we describe the historical present tense as the use of the present tense in cases where native speakers of contemporary English, German, Swedish, Icelandic, and so on would use the past tense.⁹ This definition excludes the use of the present tense in direct speech but also in descriptions that are still valid at the time of the composition of the narrative.¹⁰ The following example from chapter 7 (KG 7.83–84) illustrates the differences in the use of the historic present tense that can be found between different fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga*:

AM 162 B β fol. (1ra29–30): Nv riðr (ride-PRS.3SG) *hun* heim af þingi. *Rutr var* (be-PST.3SG) *heimcomin* oc *fagnar* (welcome-PRS.3SG) *henne* vel.

Reykjabók (5v18): Nv riðr (ride-PRS.3SG) *hvn* heim af þingi. ok *var* (be-PST.3SG) *hrutr* heim *kominn* ok *fagnaði* (welcome-PST.3SG) *henmi* vel.

Gráskinna (6r15): Nv reið (ride-PST.3SG) *hon* heim af þingi. *oc var* (be-PST.3SG) *Rutr* heim *cominn* oc *fagnaðe* (welcome-PST.3SG) *henne* vel.

[She rides/rode home from the Thing; Hrut had already come home and he welcomes/welcome her warmly.]¹¹

The use of the historical present tense is known from several other (Indo-European) languages; examples from Ancient Greek, Latin, Middle High German, Old English, and Old Irish texts (among others) are discussed in the scholarship.¹² In addition to this, it is described as a typical feature of oral narratives.¹³ Its usage in Old Icelandic texts has been the subject of several studies that will be discussed in the following paragraph.

Previous Research on the Historical Present Tense in Old Icelandic

Grammatical Approaches

Wood bases his account of the historical present tense on the use of the present tense to express what he calls *nonterminal aspect*, that is to

say the description of actions, circumstances, or conditions that, in the consciousness of the narrator, are not yet terminated.¹⁴ He assumes generally an aspectual significance of the use of the historical present tense—it is used to mark the boundary of an indirect quotation.¹⁵ Wood gives an English translation of an example where a present participle of a verb of saying is followed by a past-tense verb to indicate indirect speech that he characterizes as resembling sequences of simultaneous aspect.¹⁶ He posits a contrast between past-tense verbs used for terminal statements and present-tense verbs used for nonterminal, continuous aspect and gives as a typical example a sequence from *Egils saga*: “Þórólfi þótti þat fýsilegt, ok fá þeir til þess orlof af konungi; búaz síðan—hǫfðu skip gott ok fǫruneyti; fóru þeir leið sínar [*sic*], er þeir váru búnir. En er þeir koma í Torgar, þá senda þeir Sigurði menn ok láta segja, at ...”¹⁷

Torgilstveit, too, assumes verbal aspect to be the explanation for the use of the historical present tense in Old Icelandic but comes to the exact opposite of Wood’s conclusion.¹⁸ In a corpus containing material from *Morkinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók*, he finds a preference for the use of the historical present tense for verbs with nondurative (punctual) aspect.¹⁹ In his analysis of a text sample from *Hulda*, however, he finds only five occurrences of the historical present tense (all with nonpunctual verbs) and excludes the material from his analysis because it does not support his findings.²⁰

Kiparsky assumes that the historical present tense in modern European languages has a dramatic function as it is described for oral narratives where its usage indicates that the narrator becomes closely involved in the story and makes the listener feel like an eyewitness to the events.²¹ For the earlier stages of Indo-European languages (including Old Icelandic), however, he rejects this function and presumes that here, the present tense has inherited the function of the early Indo-European injunctive and is used as an unmarked tense form. Kiparsky discusses examples from Greek, Latin, Old Irish, and Old Norse texts, and explains the historical present tense as a result of conjunction reduction. In conjoined structures, repeated occurrences of the same tense become subject to “an optional rule of conjunction reduction which deletes recurrent instances of identical constituents, generally in a direction from left to right,”²² and they appear in the form unmarked for tense, which is the present tense. The fact that modern European languages do not exhibit this reduction is explained by a difference in deep structure: in older Indo-European deep structure, tense (in contrast to verbal categories like person, number, or

voice), was expressed by adverbs, that is to say constituents, whereas in the deep structure of the modern daughter languages, they are represented as syntactic features on verbs.

Kossuth, in “The Linguistic Basis of Saga Structure,” starts her analysis of the historical present tense in Old Icelandic, which is part of a “syntax of narrative,” with a reference to Kiparsky’s work. Unfortunately, the text on which her own analysis is built, a chapter from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla*, is, according to Kossuth, rather untypical for what she assumes to be the usual pattern of tense usage in Old Icelandic, that is, an inconsistent change between present and past tense or, as she calls it, “Kiparskian tense shifts.”²³ In the text sample analyzed by Kossuth, Snorri uses the present tense for the introduction of the paragraph, switches then to the past tense in the narrative part, and ends the paragraph with a rather frequent change of tenses. Kossuth is obviously aware of the fact that different manuscripts of the same text show variation in the use of tenses and assumes that later scribes might have changed Snorri’s original style in the direction of either a more rule-based or a more irregular use of tenses, but she does not draw any conclusions from this finding. In a second text sample, the *Heimskringla*-prologue, Snorri, according to Kossuth, uses in the introductory part “almost an aspect system,” with activity and experiencer sentences in the perfect tense, stative sentences in the present tense, and agentive-perfective sentences in the past tense.²⁴ In the rest of the paragraph, as is typical for Snorri, the past tense is used.

What remains a bit confusing is that the treatment of tenses which Kossuth described as typical for Snorri;²⁵ that is, a change of tenses from section to section rather than within the same section, is, according to Kiparsky, typical for Classical Latin (Caesar), but not for Old Icelandic.²⁶ Caesar, according to Kiparsky, is representative of the latest stage in a development where conjunction reduction of inflectional categories is lost and “the historical present does not always count as a past tense in sequence of tenses, but already optionally counts as a true present,”²⁷ whereas Old Icelandic is said to be still at the second stage where the present tense is used as an unmarked tense in conjunction reduction.

Discourse-Functional Approaches

Earlier approaches to the historical present tense in Old Icelandic literature favor a discourse-functional explanation for the use of the historical

present tense. According to Lehmann, it is mainly used for a scenic and visual presentation of events in a narrative.²⁸ It is used to frame the story, mark important episodes, and to convey sensual impressions to the hearer/reader, but it is also typical for transitions between different episodes. Lehmann sees a connection with an oral narrative style for which the historical present tense is typical and explains the decline of its usage with a stronger orientation towards a written style. Sprenger comes to exactly the opposite conclusion.²⁹ She assumes that the present tense is the unmarked form of oral narratives, and thus of the earlier family sagas, where the past tense is used to emphasize important statements and actions. For the later sagas, however, she states a change of style influenced by clerical written language use, where the unmarked tense form was the past tense and thus the present tense had to be used for emphasis.

It should be mentioned that profound experts on the language of the sagas such as Andreas Heusler do not try to find explanations but treat the historical present tense—or rather the rapid change between present and past tense—as a very popular but completely random stylistic device: “Das Präsens historicum ist im aisl. Erzählstile ungemein beliebt, ohne doch je durch längere Strecken durchzugehen. Auch ein neuer Abschnitt kann im Präsens einsetzen. Oft geht es zwischen Präs. und Prät. rasch hin und her [...]”³⁰ Visser, in his *Historical Syntax of the English Language*, expresses a similar view: “In the Old Norse sagas the present tense is so frequently used that one gets the impression that it was felt as entirely on a par with the preterite,”³¹ and Hollander suspects “that the authors are guided, not so much by a delicate and unerring sense of tense values as by the conscious or unconscious endeavor to avoid the monotony of a long string of presents or preterits.”³²

Quantitative Approaches

One reason for the inconsistent, contrary, and very often mutually exclusive explanations given in previous research on the use of the historical present tense in the Sagas of Icelanders seems to be that the analyses referred to above are often based on single examples from only a few sagas that are able to support a certain hypothesis, whereas contradictory data is excluded from the analysis. Quantitative approaches show huge differences in the frequency of the historical present tense in Sagas of Icelanders between different texts. Sprenger found 60 percent use of the historical present tense in *Heiðarvíga saga* but a considerably lower percentage in

younger sagas (although she does not quantify the difference).³³ Hallberg found between 3.2 percent and 78 percent instances of the historical present tense in forty Sagas of Icelanders.³⁴ Torgilstveit, who examines three manuscripts of the sagas of Norwegian kings, found between 3 percent and 50 percent usage of the historical present tense in the same part of the text in the different manuscripts.³⁵

Sprenger and Torgilstveit explain the huge differences in their material with a development of saga style over time. Hallberg's results do not show a correlation between estimated age of a text and the use of tenses; he thus assumes that the individual style of the authors has to account for the observed variation. Both Sprenger and Hallberg use normalized editions for their analysis which, for two reasons, is highly problematic in itself: frequent verbs are very often truncated in the manuscripts and do then not allow for a determination of tense: f. G. = *segir* (say-3PRS) *Gunnarr* or *sagði* (say-3PST) *Gunnarr*. In the normalized editions used by Sprenger and Hallberg, abbreviations are silently expanded. In chapter 75 (KG 75.41–2), for example, *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.) reads: *hvergi mun ek fara .f. G. ok fua villda ek at þv gerðer* (27ra32–33). In Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's edition this is rendered: "Hvergi mun ek fara," **segir** *Gunnarr*, "ok svá vilda ek, at þú gerðir." ["I will not leave," says Gunnar, "and I wish you wouldn't either"].³⁶

In addition to this, a considerable amount of variation in the use of tenses can be found between manuscripts from the same time:

Pormóðsbók (11vb8): NU eggjar (egg on-3PRS) *Starkaðr* fína menn

Gráskinna (40r30): (S)ip̄an egiaði (egg on-3PST) *starkaðr* menn
fína

[Starkad then urged his men on.]

This means that the use of tenses as found in a normalized edition is neither representative for the language of a certain period in language history nor for the individual style of a certain author or scribe but is heavily influenced by the stylistic preferences of the twentieth-century editors. With a corpus consisting of (strictly) diplomatic transcriptions of different manuscripts, these problems can be avoided. Unfortunately, the compilation and analysis of electronic manuscript corpora is a very time-consuming enterprise, and so the following analysis of selected chapters of the thirteen earliest manuscript witnesses of *Njáls saga* can only be a first step in this direction.

The use of the historical present tense as it is found in the Sagas of Icelanders deviates from the use of tenses in modern texts in a way that obviously makes it necessary to come up with an explanation for the deviation. The grammars of modern European languages describe the use of tenses in written texts as governed by grammatical rules, and such a grammatical explanation was also proposed for the historical present tense in Old Icelandic (see above pp. 152–54). In my view those explanations are not satisfactory, however, and it is especially problematic that different approaches built on the same hypothesis and the same text corpus come to diametrically opposite conclusions.³⁷ Very often, these explanations are based on single examples that are generalized, and counterexamples are either not considered or are treated as exceptions that have to be explained in a different way. Torgilsteit, in “Historisk presens på norrønt,” the only corpus-based approach, is not really an exception to this because he excludes a part of his corpus that is not in accordance with his explanation from his results.³⁸

These surveys do nevertheless give interesting insights that may be useful for an analysis of variation in the use of tenses in different manuscripts of *Njáls saga*: in some cases dramatic differences in the use of tenses can be observed between different texts, certain verbs/types of verbs occur with an extraordinarily high number of instances of the historical present tense, and the frequency of the historical present tense diminishes obviously over time.

Methodological Approach

The following analysis of the use of the historical present tense in the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* does not primarily intend to explain the use of this stylistic device in Old Icelandic texts. The main focus lies on the examination of stylistic variation, in this case the use of the historical present tense or past tense, in the narrative parts of different *Njáls saga* manuscripts from the fourteenth century.

A major problem of conducting a representative analysis of the use of tense in all fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts lies in the fact that none of the manuscripts covers the complete text, and the distribution of the lacunae in the different text witnesses reduces the number of chapters present in a larger number of manuscripts.³⁹ Single chapters from different parts of the saga were chosen for the analysis in such a way that every fourteenth-century manuscript is represented in the corpus with at

least one chapter. The chapters chosen were analyzed in all manuscripts preserving this chapter. This means that the total amount of analyzed text differs substantially from manuscript to manuscript, and, for the smaller fragments, the text stems from different parts of the saga which most likely behave stylistically differently (due to different contents, a different amount of direct speech etc.).

The analysis includes all thirteen extant *Njáls saga* manuscripts from the fourteenth century (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Preservation of the chapters analyzed for this study in the different manuscript witnesses (it is likely that fragment β and Þormóðsbók were originally part of the same book).

Chapter	7	8	37	44	45	60	86	134	135
<i>AM 162 B β fol.</i>									
<i>Þormóðsbók</i>									
<i>AM 162 B ζ fol.</i>									
<i>Óssbók</i>									
<i>AM 162 B ϑ fol.</i>									
<i>AM 162 B \varkappa fol.</i>									
<i>AM 162 B η fol.</i>									
<i>Hítardalsbók</i>									
<i>Skafinskinna</i>									
<i>Gráskinna</i>									
<i>Reykjabók</i>									
<i>Möðruvallabók</i>									
<i>Kálfalækjarbók</i>									

Note: The white squares represent lacunae in the manuscripts.

The analyses were performed on XML-transcriptions that by and large follow the conventions used for the MENOTA-archive for Medieval Scandinavian texts (www.menota.org).⁴⁰ One part of the corpus consisted of diplomatic transcriptions of five of the fragments that were, for the most part, automatically supplemented with a normalized (modern Icelandic) text, the identification of shorter text entities (“sentences”) common to all manuscripts, a morphosyntactic annotation, and tags for clause boundaries and direct speech.

A second part of the corpus was based on transcriptions that were done by students at the University of Iceland,⁴¹ produced for BA or MA theses, for example. These transcriptions were originally not thought of as sources for linguistic research and did not contain segmentation or linguistic annotation, which I therefore added by hand.

Three manuscripts were not existent or only partly existent as XML-transcriptions. For Möðruvallabók, I compiled a normalized, segmented, and annotated transcription based on Andrea van Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen's printed type-facsimile edition (1987). Parts of Reykjabók and Gráskinna were available in transcriptions done by Beeke Stegmann and Emily Lethbridge; I added a segmentation and grammatical annotation to the chapters already transcribed from these two manuscripts. For the remaining chapters from Reykjabók, I prepared normalized, linguistically annotated versions based on photographs of the manuscripts in a similar way as for Möðruvallabók. For the remaining chapters from Gráskinna, I produced diplomatic and normalized, segmented and grammatically annotated transcriptions.

Analysis

Differences in the Frequency of the Historical Present Tense between Manuscripts

As a first step in the analysis, I counted all instances of present-tense finite verbs in the chapters in question with the help of XSLT stylesheets based on suitable XPath-expression. Direct speech was excluded from the counting.⁴² Figure 6.1 shows the results for chapter 37, which is contained in seven of the thirteen manuscripts.

Given the large differences in the frequency of the present tense between the single manuscripts (2.22 percent for Möðruvallabók, 9.68 percent for Gráskinna) it seems rather unlikely that the use of the historical present tense in the analyzed manuscripts of *Njáls saga* can be attributed to grammatical rules of the type suggested by Wood, Torgilsteit, Kiparsky, and Kossuth (as outlined above) that were universally valid for fourteenth-century Icelandic. It is hard to think of a reasonable explanation as to why scribes who produced copies at about the same time that otherwise show no signs of grammatical deviations from what has to be assumed normal for fourteenth-century Icelandic, in some cases would follow those rules and in other cases not. It should be pointed out that, at this stage, a differentiation between clear cases of the historical present

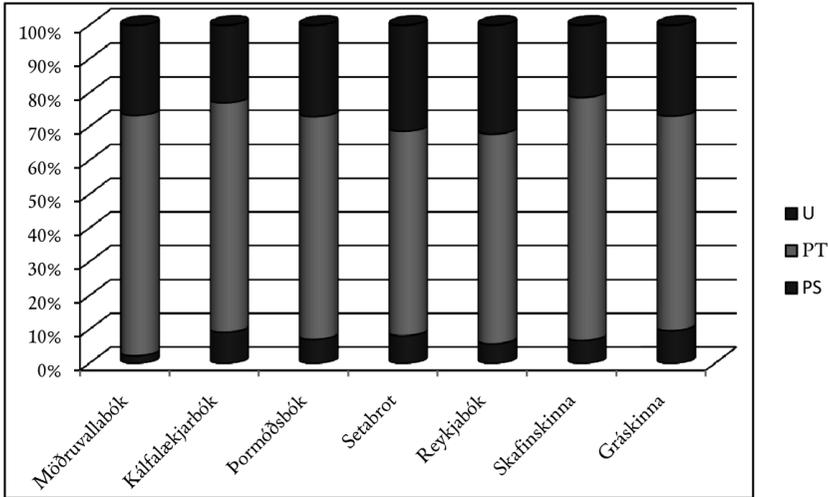


Figure 6.1 Frequency of the historical present tense (PS) in chapter 37 in different manuscripts.

Note: U: unknown (illegible in the manuscript or word abbreviated so that the tense is not clear), PT: past tense.

tense and other instances of the present tense outside of direct speech (narratorial comments, topographical descriptions etc.) was not made. It was assumed, though, that the amount of such uses of present tense was similar in all manuscripts so that the deviations in the use of present tense had to be attributed to different frequencies of the historical present tense.

Possible explanations for those differences would be differences in the exemplars, unconscious changes during the copying according to a scribe's language use that is different from the exemplar or deliberate changes due to a certain stylistic ideal or to grammatical/prescriptive rules. It is also possible that certain scribes, in general, were more faithful to their exemplar than others, and it is possible too that the degree of faithfulness changes during the copying of a manuscript, which would explain differences in the frequency between different chapters of the same manuscript (see figure 6.3).

Tendencies Common to All Manuscripts

To allow for a detailed analysis, all instances of the present tense outside of direct speech in the different transcriptions were identified and

exported to a text file with the help of XSLTstyle sheets and XPathqueries. The single examples were transferred to a table and labeled according to their category (“genuine” historical present tense, narratorial comments, topographical descriptions, etc.), and gaps caused by deviations in the use of tenses (use of past tense in manuscripts where at least one other manuscript uses present tense) were filled by adding the corresponding verb forms which were identified with the help of unified chapter and sentence numbers (see table 6.2).

Seventy-six passages in the text that contained a verb in the historical present tense in at least one manuscript could be identified, but only in ten (13.16 percent) of those cases did all manuscripts agree with regard to the use of present tense. Present-tense forms of *vera* in examples such as “... og er nú lokið þætti/þrætum þeirra Marðar”⁴³ (KG 8.62–63; “and here ends the episode of Hrut and Mord”),⁴⁴ “Nú er að taka til heima að ...” (KG 37.1; “Now to what was happening at home ...”), “Nú er þar til máls að taka er smalamaður...” (KG 45.63–64; “To return to the shepherd: he ...”), and instances where the narrator comments on the narration (“now I come to the following point in my story ...”), where all manuscripts use the present tense, were excluded from the analysis.

For seven verbs, passages in the text could be found where all manuscripts agree on the use of the present tense. The verbs are: *ríða* [to ride] (twice), *snúa* [to turn around] (twice), *liða* [to pass], *leggja* [to lay], *ferja* [to carry/to bring], *höggva* [to hew], and *sjá* [to see].

The fact that no chapter from the saga is extant in all fourteenth-century manuscripts makes it impossible to compare parts of text with the same content in all manuscripts. To allow, at least, for the determination of a mean value for the use of the historical present tense in fourteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts, all chapters that were chosen for the analysis from the thirteen manuscripts were copied into one XML file for a quantitative analysis.

In total, 223 examples of the historical present tense (5.9 percent of all verbs outside of direct speech) were counted in the sample, fifty examples (1.3 percent) of regular (nonhistorical) present tense, and 2920 examples (76.9 percent) of the past tense. In 605 cases (15.9 percent), tense could not be designated, either because the verbs in question were abbreviated in a way that did not allow for a clear identification of tense or because of damage to the parchment.

Detailed comparison (see table 6.2) shows, on the one hand, differences in the use of the historical present tense between single manuscripts,

but, on the other hand, it is possible to identify a limited number of verbs where the manuscripts show considerable agreement. I assume that these verbs constitute a core area for the use of the historical present tense that is either common to the language use of all scribes or at least was kept unchanged during copying.

Table 6.2 All present-tense verb forms in chapter 60 and corresponding verb forms from all manuscripts.

Chapter, sentence	60,2	60,4	60,5	60,10	60,18
<i>Möðruvallabók</i>	var	hafa	mælti	reið	líður (ek)
<i>Kálfalækjarbók</i>	um*	höfðu	mælti	ríður	líður (ek)
<i>AM 162 B β fol.</i>					
<i>Dormóðsbók</i>	var	höfðu	m.	ríður	líður (ek)
<i>Hítardalsbók</i>					
<i>AM 162 B η fol.</i>					
<i>Óssbók</i>	var	höfðu	m.	reið	líður (ek)
<i>AM 162 B χ fol.</i>					
<i>AM 162 B ϑ fol.</i>					
<i>AM 162 B ζ fol.</i>					
<i>Reykjabók</i>	er	hafa*	mlti	ríður	líður (ek)
<i>Skafinskinna</i>	var	hafa	segir	reið	líður (ek)
<i>Gráskinna</i>	var	hafa	mælti	reið	líður (ek)

Note: Present-tense forms in bold, narrator's comments (ek) in gray, problematic forms (possible transcription errors, difficult readings) marked with an asterisk.

To gain an overview of differences in the use of the historical present tense with regard to different verbs, a frequency list was produced for occurrences of verbs with the historical present tense in the sample (table 6.3).

The list was based on a Word document containing all examples of present-tense verb forms outside of direct speech. The examples were extracted with XPath-expressions from an XML file containing lemmatized and morphosyntactically annotated, normalized transcriptions of the ten sample chapters in all manuscripts (provided that the chapter in question was extant in the manuscript in question) and the total number

Table 6.3 Frequency of present-tense forms in the sample.

riða	31	fagna	6	hnykkja	2	hætta	1
vera	31	heita	6	keyra	2	kasta	1
snúa	26	fara	5	leita	2	kveða	1
segja	16	hafa	5	ljósta	2	láta	1
höggva	14	kveðast	4	mæta	2	senda	1
koma	11	stefna	4	snara	2	skulu	1
sjá	11	verða	4	svara	2	sýnast	1
líða	10	kljúfa	3	ansa	1	tala	1
færa	7	þakka	3	dveljast	1	þykja	1
leggja	7	finna	2	fésta	1	vilja	1
berjast	6	hitta	2	hlaupa	1	vægja	1

of occurrences of each lemma were added up. With thirty-one occurrences in the sample, the historical present tense is most frequent for the verb *riða*. This can partly be explained by the high overall frequency of *riða* in the text, but this explanation alone is not sufficient. In a frequency list (table 6.4) containing all verbs, regardless of tense form, which was derived from a normalized and lemmatized version of the narrative parts of the ten sample chapters under scrutiny,⁴⁵ the verbs *hafa*, *koma*, and *fara* are clearly more frequent than *riða*. Moreover, semantic aspects do not appear to be causal for the high frequency of historical present tense for *riða*. In *Historisk presens i et utvalg*, the only detailed quantitative, semantically based analysis of the historical present tense in the sagas, Torgilstveit comes to the conclusion that for durative verbs (verbs of motion like *riða*, *fara*, or *ganga* are typical representatives of this verb class), the use of the historical present tense is rather untypical.⁴⁶

Obviously, in the case of *riða*, the connection between semantics and tense is indirect. The historical present tense is found especially frequently at the beginning of chapters.⁴⁷ Its function seems here to be what is described by Kossuth as “scene setting,”⁴⁸ and the protagonists usually cover the distance between frequently changing locations on horseback, which triggers the frequent use of *riða* at the beginning of chapters. Sprenger gives several examples of present-tense forms of *riða* at the beginning of chapters from different sagas.⁴⁹ For *fara* (five examples), the

Table 6.4 Frequency of verbs (present tense, past tense, and tense not identifiable) in the sample.

vera	337	sjá	33	vilja	13
mæla	223	kveðast	32	heita	12
koma	167	berjast	31	ráða	12
hafa	156	þakka	29	skilja	12
fara	131	lýsa	27	þora	12
ríða	92	fá	25	glotta	11
ganga	89	finna	25	kippa	11
taka	88	bregða	23	senda	11
segja	86	búa	23	tala	11
kveða	60	leggja	23	heyra	10
snúa	50	ljósta	22	ljúka	10
eiga	45	fagna	18	mæta	10

Note: The list was compiled from a lemmatized list of verbs (present tense, past tense, and tense not identifiable) in the sample.

same function can be assumed. *Líða* (at the beginning of chapter 7 and in chapter 135) has a comparable function (not a spatial but a temporal connection between episodes).

A second group of verbs that are used with the historical present tense in all manuscripts can, in fact, be characterized as punctual verbs, the verb class that was identified as typical for the historical present tense by Torgilstveit in *Historisk presens i et utvalg*. The verbs are *snúa* (twice), *leggja*, *færa*, *höggva*. But here, too, it is probably not the semantic category that is decisive for the use of the present tense. These verbs are part of the description of two fights (KG 45.24–27, Skarpheðinn against Sigmundur; KG 86.14–16, Kári and the Njálssons against the Earls), and in these two episodes, half of the examples of the historical present tense in the complete sample are found (eighty-five in chapter 45, and thirty in chapter 86).

Fights are usually closely associated with the dramatic structure and narrative climax of Sagas of Icelanders,⁵⁰ and research into oral narratives has shown that the use of the historical present tense (Vannebo calls it *dramatisk presens* [dramatic present]⁵¹) is typical for oral narratives,⁵² having

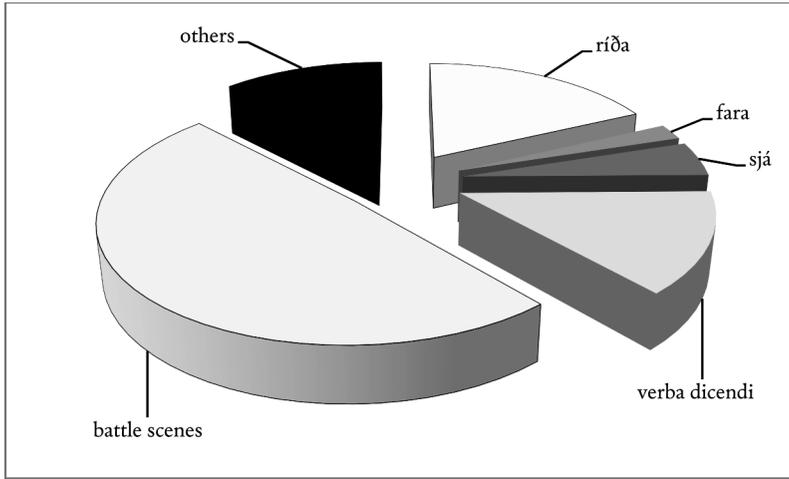


Figure 6.2 Frequency of verbs with the historical present tense

the function of a *Vergegenwärtigung*,⁵³ or to “make present” especially dramatic episodes in a story. It is either used as a consciously applied stylistic device that aims to include the listener directly in the events, or the narrator switches to the present tense because he unconsciously transfers himself mentally to the narrative situation, which is then mentally visualized in the form of a movie. Oral narratives of course played a part in the development of the Icelandic saga tradition,⁵⁴ but, for a written text like *Njáls saga*, it is more plausible to see the historical present tense as the conscious application of an originally typical oral stylistic device in a written text, in the sense of *konzeptionelle Mündlichkeit* [conceptual orality].⁵⁵

This mental visualization might be an explanation for the high frequency of the use of the present tense with *sjá* [see] in the sample (eleven examples). In this context, it is interesting that Adelswärd, in her analysis of forty-three oral narratives of moose hunts, finds the historical present tense mainly in connection with the climaxes of her stories—that is, the appearance of the moose and the shot—with verbs of perception (the hunter seeing or hearing the moose) playing an especially important role.⁵⁶

According to Wood, verbs of saying display the highest frequency of occurrences of the historical present tense of all Old Norse verbs.⁵⁷ In Torgilstveit’s *Morkinskinna* corpus, too, *segja* is the verb with the highest percentage of present-tense use. Previous research has only explained this fact rather vaguely. Wood cites examples of the twofold use of verbs

of saying in constructions such as “Kveldúlfr svarar, sagði at hann var þá gamall...” [Kveldúlfr answers, said that he was old then], where he assumes simultaneous aspect to be an explanation for the use of present tense (that is, the answering and the saying happening simultaneously).⁵⁸ Generally, however, he assumes free variation in the use of tenses with verbs standing for “to say.” An example of this is the change between past and present tense for *segja* introducing the direct-speech utterances of different speakers in dialogues.

Vannebo, in contrast, characterizes this change as typically oral and interprets it as an uncertainty on the part of the narrator with regard to simultaneity versus anteriority of (verbal) citations, or alternatively, as self-correction, to clarify temporal reference.⁵⁹ An explanation for this assumed insecurity is not given by Vannebo, but Visser states that verbs of saying introducing quotations from “eminent men living in the past” in Old English texts often stand in the present tense to emphasize the timeless value of the utterances.⁶⁰ Visser also discusses the influence of colloquial speech on present-tense verbs of saying where they introduce direct speech, but he rejects this idea as not convincing, at least for the older stages of English.

Results

Functions of the Historical Present Tense

In the manuscripts analyzed for the present study, present-tense forms are comparably frequent, but certainly not to the same degree as in Torgilsteit's *Morkinskinna* corpus, where present tense is more frequent than past tense for the verbs *kveðast*, *svara*, and *segja*. In the *Njáls saga* corpus, all verbs of saying occur more frequently with past tense than with present tense, and no example of a verb of saying could be found where all manuscripts agree on the use of the present tense. One problem is, of course, that verbs of saying are abbreviated more often than other verbs in a way that does not allow for an identification of tense.⁶¹ This is true for 64 percent of the occurrences of verbs of saying in the corpus; only 3 percent occur in the present tense.

To summarize the results: a comparison of the use of tenses in the thirteen earliest manuscripts of *Njáls saga* showed two main functions of the historical present tense that could be found in all manuscripts, firstly, the framing of chapters, that is to say the connection of different episodes, and, secondly, the visualization of particularly dramatic episodes.

Table 6.5 Tense used with verbs of saying in the sample.

	tense not identifiable	present tense	past tense
segja	381 (89%)	16 (4%)	32 (7%)
mæla	76 (34%)	0	147 (66%)
kveða/kveðast	48 (52%)	5 (5.5%)	39 (42.5%)
svara	26 (60%)	2 (5%)	15 (35%)
spyrja	9 (21%)	0	34 (79%)
ansa	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
tala	0	1 (9%)	10 (91%)

Present Tense as Unmarked Tense?

This result is definitely interesting, but it does not give an explanation for the fact that beyond those two functions, the manuscripts exhibit a rather high proportion of variation in the use of tenses. An observation made by Kari Tenfjord might possibly lead to a clearer picture. On the basis of a comparison of the system of anaphora in Norwegian and Vietnamese, Tenfjord (in “Historisk presens” and in “Utfordringer i møtet”) concludes that Old Icelandic, just like modern Vietnamese, allows for a much more extensive dropping of anaphoric pronouns—for example in coordinating constructions (main clauses connected with “and”)—than modern Norwegian (or modern English).⁶² In the following example, the object pronoun *it* can be left out in Vietnamese but not in English (or Norwegian):

Bà để cuốn sách ấy ở đâu?
 she put piece book the be where
 [Where did she put the book?]

Bà để trên bàn.
 she put surface table
 [She put (it) on the table.]⁶³

In Old Icelandic, examples for the omission of the object pronoun comparable to the Vietnamese example can be found:

honum var fengin leynilega harpa, ok sló hann [-] með tánum
 [A harp was secretly brought to him, and he played (it) with his toes.]⁶⁴

In Vietnamese, in contrast to English (or Norwegian), the verb does not have to be marked for tense because the temporal reference is established by the adverbial, as is seen in the following example:

hôm qua tôi về
yesterday I come back
[Yesterday I came back.]⁶⁵

Tenfjord, departing from Kiparsky, assumes that the historical present tense in modern Norwegian, characterized as vividly reporting present, works differently to Old Icelandic, where it can be described as the use of an unmarked tense in contexts where a precise marking of tenses is not necessary (*tom anafori* or “zero anaphora”), just as in Vietnamese.

On the basis of the data from the project “The Variance of *Njáls saga*,” Tenfjord’s assumption that the use of historical present tense as well as anaphoric reference in Icelandic are discourse conditioned seems to be plausible.⁶⁶ The characterization of the present tense as an unmarked form in the sense of markedness theory is also acceptable:⁶⁷ morphologically, the past tense can be described as an extension of the present tense involving the addition of a suffix or the application of *ablaut*, which means that the past tense is morphologically marked in a way comparable to a masculine noun that is derived from a feminine noun by adding a masculine suffix or head (Ger. *Gans*, Icel. *gæs*, Norw. *gås* [goose] versus Germ. *Gänserich/Ganter*, Icel. *gæsarsteggur*, Norw. *gasse* [gander]), where the feminine form includes the male gender but not vice versa.⁶⁸ In a similar way, the present tense can be used to describe past events, whereas the use of the past tense to describe present events is not possible. Thus, the present tense has a more general significance than the past tense, and the past-tense form contains “more precise, specific, and additional information than the unmarked term provides. For example, in languages containing an opposition between the two grammatical tenses of past and present, the former is always marked and the later unmarked. The general meaning of the past lies in the fact that the narrated event precedes the speech event in time, while the general meaning of the present does not establish a temporal relation between the two events.”⁶⁹

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that there is a quantitative difference in the use of nouns unmarked for gender and verbs unmarked for past tense. In a corpus of contemporary German (www.deutschestextarchiv.de) the unmarked forms *Gans* [goose] and *Löwe* [lion] were used in 96.2 percent and 97.1 percent of the cases, the marked forms *Gänserich* [gander]

and *Löwin* [lioness] only in 3.8 percent and 2.9 percent; whereas, at least in the *Njáls saga* corpus, it is the marked past tense (marked in the Jakobsonian sense) which is used in 97.7 percent of the cases and the unmarked (historical) present tense only in 2.3 percent. It seems that in the case of a lion, the gender is less important (male and female lions are equally dangerous) whereas, in the case of actions, it usually matters whether they happened in the past or are happening in the present. In the case of narratives, though, it is not necessary to point out that events described occurred in the past. Narratives are built on a mutual agreement between reader and narrator that the narration takes place in a temporal and spatial frame outside of the narrative situation or the act of reading or listening.⁷⁰ The narrative situation is established by certain linguistic and extra-linguistic characteristics that include, among others, tense. Icelandic narratives use *þátíð*, English narratives past tense, German narratives *Präteritum/Imperfekt* (in contrast to the *Perfekt* that in colloquial speech is used to describe concluded actions in the past).

On the basis of the narrative, the reader/hearer constructs a mental representation of the narrative. For the process of reading, it is of little importance whether the actions described in the narrative really took place in the past or whether they are fictional. Also, fictional actions thought to take place in the future are usually narrated in the past tense. However, once the temporal relation between the act of narrating and the contents of the narrative is established, the past tense, which is the neutral or stylistically unmarked tense form in a narrative, can, in single cases, be exchanged with the present tense without running the risk of the narrated events being interpreted as in fact happening in the present. This can be used as a stylistic device for a complete narrative or in single instances in a story.

Scribal Economy?

Aside from the use as dramatic present or as a scene-setting/framing device, however, it is difficult to identify clear patterns for the use of the historical present tense in the *Njáls saga* manuscripts analyzed for this article. The idea that methodological aspects play a role here cannot be excluded. Due to the fragmentary transmission of the earliest manuscripts, only about 5 percent of the text of the saga could be analyzed, and the chapters transmitted in the fragments come from different parts of the text and are thus not directly comparable with each other.

An additional difficulty for a quantitative approach to the use of the historical present tense in the different manuscripts is the fact that

they differ with regard to the proportion of examples of verbs whose tense cannot be determined. This is partly due to some manuscripts being more difficult to read than others because of damage or wear but, first and foremost, due to the fact that some scribes made more use of abbreviations than others. Generally, differences in the quantity of abbreviated verb forms can also be found between different chapters because the number of verbs of saying (which show an especially high frequency of abbreviated forms), varies from chapter to chapter, depending on whether the chapter focuses on the narration of actions or on utterances of the characters. This has an influence on the overall frequency of the historical present tense in the shorter fragments because of the randomness of the chapters surviving in the different fragments.

In chapters with a large amount of dialogue (where most finite verbs are to be found in the direct-speech passages that were excluded from the analysis and where the majority of finite verbs outside of direct speech are verbs of saying that are very often abbreviated), a low number of instances of the historical present tense does not necessarily correlate with a high number of past-tense forms. In extreme cases (for example, in chapter 60), the two manuscripts with the smallest amount of historical present tense (*Óssbók* and *Þormóðsbók*) show, at the same time, the lowest number of past-tense forms. The low absolute number of verb forms that can be considered for an analysis of tense usage in this chapter means that making clear statements about differences between manuscripts is rather difficult.

Table 6.6 Use of tenses in finite verbs outside of direct speech in chapter 60.

	PS	PT	U	VBf	PS%	PT%	U%	VBf%
Möðruvallabók	2	23	6	31	6.45	74.19	19.35	100
Kálfalækjarbók	2	17	4	23	8.7	73.91	17.39	100
Óssbók	1	19	10	30	3.33	63.33	33.33	100
Þormóðsbók	1	19	10	30	3.33	63.33	33.33	100
Reykjabók	4	20	4	28	14.29	71.43	14.29	100
Skafinskinna	3	25	4	32	9.38	78.13	12.5	100
Gráskinna	2	26	6	24	5.88	76.47	17.65	100

Note: PS: present-tense verbs (absolute numbers), PT: past-tense verbs (absolute numbers), U: tense unidentifiable, VBf: finite verbs (absolute numbers), PS%: present-tense verbs (percentage), PT% past-tense verbs (percentage), U% tense unidentifiable (percentage), VBf% finite verbs (percentage).

chapter	manuscript	present %	past %	tense un-identifiable	total	rank present	rank past	average un-identifiable
37 AM 132 fol.		2,22	71,11	26,67	100,00	7	2	26,93
37 AM 133 fol.		9,20	67,82	22,99	100,00	2	3	
37 AM 162 B fol. δ		7,06	65,88	27,06	100,00	4	4	
37 AM 162 B fol. ζ		8,14	60,47	31,40	100,00	3	7	
37 AM 468 4to		5,75	62,07	32,18	100,00	6	6	
37 GKS 2868 4to		6,74	71,91	21,35	100,00	5	1	
37 GKS 2870 4to		9,68	63,44	26,88	100,00	1	5	
60 AM 132 fol.		6,45	74,19	19,35	100,00	4	3	21,12
60 AM 133 fol.		8,70	73,91	17,39	100,00	3	4	
60 AM 162 B fol. γ		3,33	63,33	33,33	100,00	6	6	
60 AM 162 B fol. δ		3,33	63,33	33,33	100,00	6	6	
60 AM 468 4to		14,29	71,43	14,29	100,00	1	5	
60 GKS 2868 4to		9,38	78,13	12,50	100,00	2	1	
60 GKS 2870 4to		5,88	76,47	17,65	100,00	5	2	
86 AM 132 fol.		13,11	85,25	1,64	100,00	1	7	6,81
86 AM 133 fol.		4,92	91,80	3,28	100,00	8	2	
86 AM 162 B fol. ε		5,17	89,66	5,17	100,00	7	4	
86 AM 162 B fol. η		10,00	86,67	3,33	100,00	3	6	
86 AM 162 B fol. θ		10,20	87,76	2,04	100,00	2	5	
86 AM 468 4to		9,84	85,25	4,92	100,00	4	7	
86 GKS 2868 4to		5,56	92,59	1,85	100,00	6	1	
86 GKS 2870 4to		8,33	86,67	5,00	100,00	5	3	

Figure 6.3 Frequency of historical present tense in different chapters in the fourteenth-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* (detail).

For similar reasons, consistency in the frequency of the historical present tense is very often not found in different chapters of the same manuscript. It can happen that a certain manuscript might have the highest frequency of historical present tense compared to the other manuscripts in one chapter but the lowest in another. For example, *Möðruvallabók* shows the least amount of historical present tense in chapter 37 of seven manuscripts but the highest amount in chapter 86 of eight manuscripts (see figure 6.3). Figures for mean values of historical present tense in different manuscripts (between 3 percent in *Össbók* and 11 percent in AM 162 B η fol.) thus only have a limited significance.

The comparison of the use of tenses in ten chapters of *Njáls saga* in all fourteenth-century manuscripts is not able to support the hypothesis that certain manuscripts show a certain deviating language use, or systematic changes that can be described as a stylistic ideal, or a set of grammatical rules typical for the language of a certain scribe. It remains to be seen whether a more detailed statistical analysis of the complete textual transmission would make visible interrelations that cannot be detected with the methods applied here. On the basis of the available data, however, the

assumption seems more plausible that, in the corpus analyzed for this publication, not only stylistic but also practical reasons are behind the use of the present instead of past tense in certain manuscripts, that is to say, reasons that are first of all connected to the process of manuscript copying as outlined below.

A direct relation between a high number of verbs indeterminable for tense and a low amount of historical present tense cannot be shown.⁷¹ The η fragment, which has the highest overall amount of historical present tense (11 percent), at the same time displays the highest number of forms not determinable for tense. Nevertheless, at least in cases of variation of tense between manuscripts where the present tense does not have an obvious function in discourse (dramatic or scenic present), abbreviations do play a role, although less direct. In many cases, medieval Icelandic writing practice allows for the abbreviation of a present-tense form of a verb but not of the past-tense form. This relates to the fact that the system of abbreviations used in Old Icelandic texts is based on the (late) antique Latin system that was, of course, designed to fit the morphological system of Latin. This system contains abbreviations for the combination vowel + $\langle r \rangle$ that could be transferred to the present-tense endings of Icelandic weak verbs, *-ar* and *-er/-ir*, but not abbreviations for the past-tense endings of weak verbs with a dental suffix, which are a peculiarity of Germanic languages. As a consequence, Icelandic scribes did not have an abbreviation for the dental suffix at their disposal, but, by using the abbreviated present-tense form of weak \bar{o} -verbs, a substantial amount of space and parchment could be saved: for example, *fagn̄* (*fagnar*) for *fagnaði* (KG 7.84, Kálfalækjarbók 7r16, AM 162 B β fol. 1ra30, KG 37.63–64, AM 162 B ζ fol. 1v9); *þakk̄* (*þakkar*) for *þakkaði* (KG 37.39, Kálfalækjarbók 17v22, Þormóðsbók 2rb17); *svā* (*svarar*) for *svaraði* (KG 37.54, Kálfalækjarbók 18r4); *snā* (*snarar*) for *snaraði* (KG 45.31, Þormóðsbók 4vb25); *kā* (*kastar*) for *kastaði* (KG 45.55, Reykjabók 24v22). At first sight, it may seem rather unlikely that a scribe would change the tense of verbs for such purely practical reasons, but a comparable case from another Germanic language is described by Visser: in Middle English, the historical present tense is exclusively used in poetry in cases where the present-tense forms fit better with rhyme and/or meter than the past-tense forms.⁷²

Especially frequent words, among them verbs of saying (*segja*, *svara*), are often abbreviated as suspensions, that is to say only the first letter is written and the suspension is indicated with a dot. As tense in Icelandic verbs is either marked with a suffix or with *ablaut*, suspended

verbs are not marked for tense. A scribe copying a manuscript would read the text he wanted to copy (this action presupposing a mental phonological realization of the text and the expansion of abbreviated forms) and store the words in his short-term memory in order to be able to write them down again (scribes did not copy single letters but short semantic units or phrases). This might have led to the fact that different scribes expanded different suspended verb forms differently (*s.* → *segir* or *sagði*, *sv.* → *svarar* or *svaraði* etc.). The same is true for finite forms of *kveðast* which are often abbreviated as contractions, that is to say the vowels are left out and only the consonantal frame remains ($\bar{q}z \rightarrow kveðst$ or $\rightarrow kvaðst$). In contrast, the past-tense form of *mæla*, *mælti*, is clearly recognizable in the contracted form (*mli*) as a past-tense form because of the final *-i*, and for *mæla* no cases of variation of tense between manuscripts were found.⁷³

The reconstruction of the mental processes of scribes in the fourteenth century remains highly speculative, of course, and the direction of a change of tense from one manuscript to another, together with clear reasons for it, can be determined only in rare cases. In the following example from chapter 60 (KG 60.6), it seems probable that the past-tense form *höfðu* was changed by the scribe of *Reykjabók* to *h^a* (*hafá*) because there was not enough space on the page for the unabbreviated past-tense form (“|” indicates a line-shift in the manuscript).

Reykjabók (31v28–29): *nv hafa | þeir þetta til varna*
Þormóðsbók (10va24): *oc hófdo þeir þessa vornina*
Óssbók (2rb28): *oc hófðo þeir þessa vornina.*

A comparison with other manuscripts shows, however, that besides the two fragments, *Þormóðsbók* and *Óssbók* (which probably are closely related manuscripts⁷⁴), only *Oddabók* has the supposedly original past-tense form, whereas all other manuscripts use the present-tense form.

Reykjabók (31v28–29): *nv hafa | þeir þetta til varna*
Möðruvallabók (23rb39): *Nu hafa þeir þetta til varna.*
Þormóðsbók (10va24): *oc hófdo þeir þessa vornina*
Óssbók (2rb28): *oc hófðo þeir þessa vornina.*
Skafinskinna (25v5): *nu hafa þeir þetta til uarna.*
Gráskinna (39r7–8): *Nv hafa þeir þetta til varna*
Oddabók (20v1): *oc hófðu þeir þat til uarna*
AM 136 fol. (34v33–34): *haffa þeir nu þessa vörn*
AM 555 a 4to (24v10): *ok hafa þeir nu þessa vörn*

Conclusion

In this article, differences in the use of the historical present tense in different manuscripts from the same time were analyzed as an example of synchronic linguistic variation in the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*. The analysis was based on the working hypothesis that different scribes made use of different styles which were probably connected to different functions or contexts of reception for different manuscripts. Irrespective of whether such different functions of manuscripts really can be shown (this question is treated in Susanne M. Arthur's chapter in this volume), this hypothesis could not be confirmed on the basis of the available data. The manuscripts analyzed show a common stock of forms of the historical present tense that can be explained discourse functionally but, in addition to this, forms that can be found only in part of the manuscripts and cannot be explained systematically.

In my opinion, the most probable explanation of this type of variation is that the use of the present tense instead of the past tense is not generally ungrammatical in narratives but is determined by rules at the discourse level. When copying manuscripts, however, the focus of the scribe is directed at shorter semantic units (clauses, phrases) so that mechanisms working at the discourse level may be out of the scribe's sight. This may lead to the scribe expanding abbreviated verb forms that are grammatically ambiguous, not on the basis of the discourse context but subconsciously on the basis of grammatical correctness within a shorter semantic unit. Different scribes can come to different conclusions about how to expand certain abbreviations, which then leads to variation between manuscripts.

NOTES

¹ "Gullskinna. Postmedieval transmission and reception of a lost medieval parchment codex." Funded by the Icelandic Research Fund, grant number 152342-051.

² See Zeevaert, "Mörkum Njálu!"; cf., e.g., Þorleifur Hauksson/Þórir Óskarsson, *Íslensk stílfraði*, 273–93.

³ For a detailed description, see, for example, Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz*.

⁴ Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz*, 59 and 75.

⁵ Nichols, "Philology in a Manuscript Culture"; Wenzel, "Reflections on (New) Philology"; Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*; Driscoll, "The Words on the Page."

⁶ See, for example, the electronic edition of the *Codex Regius* of the Poetic Edda (http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/vefutgafa_eddukvaeda); the digital edition of selected *fornaldarsögur* manuscripts in the project *Stories for All Time* (<http://nfi.ku.dk/fornaldarsogur/>); Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google*; Kondrup, *Editionsfilologi*, 421–88; Sahle, *Digitale Editionsformen*; Zeevaert, “Mörkum Njálu!”; Zeevaert, “IceTagging the ‘Golden Codex’”; Zeevaert, “Easy Tools.”

⁷ See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök Njálu,” 164.

⁸ Thoma, “The Function of the Historical Present Tense,” 2374.

⁹ This is what Tenfjord, in her investigation of the historical present tense in Old Icelandic, calls “translatørgrammatik” [translator’s grammar], “Historisk presens,” 213.

¹⁰ Geographical descriptions, descriptions of customs, cf. Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107–8.

¹¹ The English translations in the examples from *Njáls saga* are based on Cook’s (*Njáls Saga*) translation. The morphological annotation follows the Leipzig glossing rules (<https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>), “PRS” stands for present tense, “PST” for past tense.

¹² von Fritz, “The So-Called Historical Present”; Emery, *The Historical Present*; Herchenbach, *Das Präsens historicum*; Visser, *An Historical Syntax*; and Kiparsky, “Tense and Mood.”

¹³ Adelswärd, “Plötsligt”; Fludernik, “The Historical Present Tense”; Wolfson, “The Conversational Historical Present.”

¹⁴ Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107.

¹⁵ Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107: “bað hann fara heim í Skotland’ en Aðalsteinn vill fá honum at vingjof skilling silfrs ...” [(he) asked him to go home to Scotland, “but Aðalsteinn wants to give him a shilling of silver as a friend’s present.”]

¹⁶ “He asked him to go home to Scotland saying Athalstein would give him ...,” Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107.

¹⁷ Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present,” 108: “Þóroldur found that desirable, and they obtain the kings leave; [they] prepare themselves—[they] had a good ship and [good] crew; [they] went their way, when they were ready. But when they come to Torgar, they send men to Sigurd and let [them] tell [him], that ...”

¹⁸ Torgilstveit, “Historisk presens på norrønt.”

¹⁹ Torgilstveit, “Historisk presens på norrønt,” 35–36, 38, and 44.

²⁰ Torgilstveit, “Historisk presens på norrønt,” 39.

²¹ Kiparsky, “Tense and Mood,” 30.

²² Kiparsky, “Tense and Mood,” 43.

²³ Kossuth, “The Linguistic Basis,” 138.

²⁴ Kossuth, “The Linguistic Basis,” 139.

²⁵ “There is a nice example at the beginning of chapter 27 of *Óláfs Saga Trygvasonar*, in which Snorri uses the present tense to introduce the section,

switches to the past for a narrative section, then switches back and forth,” Kosuth, “The Linguistic Basis,” 136. It has been pointed out that Snorri’s authorship is not universally accepted (see for example the critical discussion in van Nahl, *Snorri Sturlusons Mythologie*, 47), but to replace Snorri’s name with an anonymous author would not resolve the obvious contradictions in Kossuth’s and Kiparsky’s argumentation.

²⁶ Kiparsky, “Tense and Mood,” 38.

²⁷ Kiparsky, “Tense and Mood,” 38.

²⁸ Lehmann, *Das Präsens*.

²⁹ Sprenger, *Praesens historicum*.

³⁰ “In Old Icelandic narrative style the historical present tense is extraordinarily popular but is not contained over longer stretches of text. Also new paragraphs may start with the present tense. Often there is a rapid change between present and past tense,” Heusler, *Altisländisches Elementarbuch*, 128.

³¹ Visser, *An Historical Syntax*, 706.

³² Hollander, “Das Präsens historicum,” 75–76.

³³ Sprenger, *Praesens historicum*, 48.

³⁴ Hallberg, *Stilsignalement*, 207.

³⁵ Torgilstveit, *Historisk presens i et utvalg*, 78–79.

³⁶ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 183.

³⁷ Lehmann, *Das Präsens*: present tense is used for emphasis; Sprenger, *Praesens historicum*: past tense is used for emphasis; Wood, “The So-Called Historical Present”: present tense is used for durative aspect; Torgilstveit, *Historisk presens i et utvalg*: present tense is used for punctual, nondurative aspect.

³⁸ Torgilstveit, “Historisk presens på norrønt,” 35f., 38, and 44.

³⁹ The most complete text, Reykjabók (AM 468 4to), covers about 95 percent of the saga, the fragment AM 162 B β fol. only ca. 5 percent.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed description and discussion of the method, see Zeevaert, “Mörkum Njálu!”

⁴¹ Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, Liv Mostad-Jensen, Beeke Stegmann, Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir.

⁴² For a description of this approach, see Zeevaert, “Mörkum Njálu!”

⁴³ Reykjabók has *þretum* (DAT.PL of *þreta* [quarrel]) for *þetti* (DAT.SG of *þáttur* [episode]) in the other manuscripts.

⁴⁴ The English translations are taken from Robert Cook’s (*Njáls’ Saga*) translation.

⁴⁵ For details on this approach, see Zeevaert, “Mörkum Njálu!”

⁴⁶ In Torgilstveit’s corpus, *riða* is used only twice; one of his examples has past-tense form, the second occurrence is an example for the historical present tense, see Torgilstveit, *Historisk presens på norrønt*, 46, 49.

⁴⁷ See Sprenger, *Praesens historicum*, 12.

⁴⁸ Kossuth, “The Linguistic Basis,” 126.

⁴⁹ “Praesens historicum,” 12–13.

⁵⁰ “As Theodore Andersson has shown, the climax almost invariably is a major battle in which at least one major character is killed,” Lönnroth, *Njáls saga. A Critical Introduction*, 78.

⁵¹ Vannebo, *Tempus og tidsreferanse*, 160–165.

⁵² See also Adelswärd, “Plötsligt.”

⁵³ Vannebo, *Tempus og tidsreferanse*, 162.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, 38–41.

⁵⁵ See Koch and Oesterreicher, “Schriftlichkeit und Sprache,” 587.

⁵⁶ Adelswärd, “Plötsligt,” 8.

⁵⁷ “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107.

⁵⁸ “The So-Called Historical Present,” 107.

⁵⁹ Vannebo, *Tempus og tidsreferanse*, 163, 165.

⁶⁰ Visser, *An Historical Syntax*, 728.

⁶¹ In Hreinn Benediktsson’s list of typically suspended words (suspensions are abbreviations that contain only the first letter of a word followed by a dot which makes it, in the case of verbs, impossible to determine the tense) the only examples for verbs are *segja* [say], *svara* [answer], and *mæla* [speak], *Early Icelandic Script*, 87.

⁶² Thoma and Zeevaert, *Klitische Pronomina im Griechischen und Schwedischen*, 41, describe a comparable difference between Old and modern Swedish in the use of anaphoric pronouns. In Old Swedish clitic object pronouns can be used instead of the full forms of the pronouns to mark continuity of reference. Such weak pronouns are a typical feature of the spoken language, and they are no longer used in the modern written standard of Swedish.

⁶³ Tenfjord, “Utfordringer i møtet,” 31. The English translations are based on Tenfjord’s Norwegian translations.

⁶⁴ Tenfjord, “Historisk presens,” 212.

⁶⁵ Tenfjord, “Utfordringer i møtet,” 31.

⁶⁶ A comprehensive and systematic analysis of anaphoric reference has not yet been performed in the project, but preliminary observations show differences between the different manuscripts in this area (noun, pronoun, zero).

⁶⁷ See, for example, Jakobson, “The Concept of Mark.”

⁶⁸ Jakobson, “The Concept of Mark,” 138, describes this issue using an example likewise taken from the animal kingdom where the unmarked form is a masculine substantive which implies no sexual specification whereas the feminine form is marked for sex.

⁶⁹ Jakobson, “The Concept of Mark,” 138.

⁷⁰ According to Bühler, *Sprachtheorie*, 102, 107, the reference point (*origo*) of the deictic system, the *Zeigfeld der menschlichen Sprache*, is defined by location, time and person (*hier, jetzt, und ich*), and from this *origo* the speaker refers to other points in space and time.

⁷¹ This assumption seems to lie behind a rule of thumb often applied by editors of Old Icelandic texts and communicated by teachers of Old Icelandic to

expand the abbreviation *f.* as present tense of the verb *segja* [say] but the abbreviation *mli* as the past tense of *mæla* [speak].

⁷² Visser, *An Historical Syntax*, 711–18.

⁷³ The problem was already addressed in Jakob Benediktsson's review of Ulrike Sprenger's book *Praesens historicum*, 240.

⁷⁴ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 89–90.

Njáls saga Stemmas, Old and New

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Introduction¹

In his introduction to what has become the standard work on the manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga*, and a landmark in Old Norse stemmatology, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson wrote: “in the present work I intend to examine the text of the parchment manuscripts of the Saga. Besides these, there are many paper copies, which have been studied only in part. Most of them will presumably not contribute much to the understanding of the problems, though there is always the possibility that some of them might fill gaps in the textual history of the Saga, but that task awaits another investigator.”²

A large number of the paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* were surveyed by Jón Þorkelsson in his contribution to the monumental 1875–89 edition of the saga by Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson, and Jón made some tentative suggestions as to possible filiations. But Jón made no attempt at a comprehensive stemma, and other manuscripts have in any case since come to light.³ Although there has been some progress on manuscripts not addressed by Einar Ólafur, the paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* have still not received a systematic survey.⁴ Einar Ólafur wrote rather dismissively of them: as was usual at the time, his principal concern was to reconstruct the lost archetype of the surviving *Njáls saga* manuscripts rather than to understand the process of their transmission. Our findings confirm that although a good number seem to be independent witnesses to the archetype of *Njáls saga*, they will seldom provide insights into its wording that earlier manuscripts do not. But in recent years interest in the transmission of sagas, both during the Middle Ages and beyond, has been growing, and it is increasingly recognized that understanding manuscript transmission is an important route into understanding the history of Icelandic literary culture, the Icelandic language, early modern Scandinavian humanism, and a range of other issues besides.⁵ Our findings are summarized as the stemma in plate 12.

The medium of print has always struggled to accommodate dendrograms, despite their manifest usefulness in efficiently visualizing complex data: even today, when the reproduction of images is simple, stemmas of any size or complexity tend to defy the constraints of the monochrome, quarto pages of academic books. For the results of stemmatic research to be replicable and expandable, moreover, it is now important to publish not only the findings of the research, but also any electronic data gathered in arriving at those findings.⁶ Unfortunately, books designed primarily for print publication are not a good medium for open-data approaches; accordingly, we have published our data, full visualizations of both Einar Ólafur's 1953 stemma and our own, a discussion of our methods, and a fuller justification of our findings as an online companion article to this one.⁷ This includes stemmas not only visualized as dendrograms, but also as nested HTML lists, in which an annotated version of the sample text can be consulted by the user. Readers may find it useful to refer to these visualizations when reading the present chapter. Occasionally in this chapter, we also make reference by column number to the spreadsheet of variant readings published there. Here, we summarize key elements of the methodology but focus on providing a deeper investigation into two themes which arise from our research: (1) emphasizing the finding that most postmedieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* are (at least for chapter 86) descended from a lost medieval manuscript known as *Gullskinna, which therefore has special importance for understanding *Njáls saga's* reception; and (2) reassessing Einar Ólafur's stemma of the *Y branch of the *Njáls saga* tradition. By focusing in this way, we are able to demonstrate a more vibrant and complex culture of scribal transmission of *Njáls saga* in seveneenth- and eighteenth-century Iceland than has hitherto been possible.

Methods

Einar Ólafur assumed that the examination of the paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* would be the work of one investigator. We have, however, made this a collaborative endeavor as part of "The Variance of *Njáls saga*" project, and the tenth, eleventh, and thirteenth International Arnarnagæan Summer Schools in Manuscript Studies, partly inspired by recent work on crowdsourcing manuscript transcriptions and stemmatic data.⁸ While eventually we might hope to make stemmas for *Njáls saga* by analyzing complete digital transcriptions of all *Njáls saga* manuscripts, as is steadily being done for the *Canterbury Tales* and the New Testament,

for example, this is still a far distant hope.⁹ To begin to assemble a stemma of all *Njáls saga* manuscripts, a series of rigorous and targeted studies is needed, in which many hands make light work, and which gathers, preserves, and shares data in a way that enables later researchers to build on that data.

Despite the fact that sampling is normal practice in making stemmas, there has been too little study of how it should be used.¹⁰ In practice, few researchers consider all kinds of variants, all variants of their chosen kind, or even all manuscripts of their chosen text—but they also seldom offer transparent accounts of these processes of selection.¹¹ We chose chapter 86 as our first (and, for this study, principal) sample for two key reasons. Firstly, it is witnessed by the early fourteenth-century fragment AM 162 B 0 fol., a fragment which is important because of its close relationship with the lost but (as past research led us to suspect) widely copied medieval manuscript *Gullskinna.¹² Secondly, it was of a length similar to a sample that had produced promising results in the study of the stemma of *Konráðs saga keisarasonar* by Alaric Hall and Katelin Parsons—392 words in the Íslenzk fornrit edition, somewhat longer than the 317-word sample used by Hall and Parsons.¹³ This length also proved manageable for the crowdsourcing-inspired approach we took to making the transcriptions: the transcriptions which provided the initial basis for our findings were made by students and staff at the Tenth International Arnarnagæan Summer School in Manuscript Studies in 2013. Aiming for transcriptions normalized into modern Icelandic spelling, we sought to capture all lexical, morphological, and syntactic variation, but no orthographic variation.¹⁴

One advantage of sampling is that it is liable to provide some results which are fairly straightforward, while also making apparent areas of particular doubt or interest, which can then be addressed by more targeted follow-up research. For example, at the 2014 summer school, we addressed problems raised by the previous research by sampling a four-hundred word section of chapter 142, which we believed would help us better understand questions about the circulation of the *Y branch of *Njáls saga* raised by both our own research on chapter 86 and by past scholarship, since our findings from chapter 86 were inconsistent with past work.

As Einar Ólafur emphasized, the stemma of *Njáls saga* involves an unusually large number of manuscripts with multiple exemplars, no doubt partly because of the saga's great length and the consequent difficulty of borrowing a manuscript for long enough to copy it in its entirety, and

partly because it was perceived as a historical text, encouraging early scholars to collate different witnesses in search of the most truthful account.¹⁵ Drawing a stemma is also complicated by the fact that none of our unusually numerous medieval manuscripts is complete, and many are short fragments: obviously fragments can only be filiated on the basis of sections of the saga to which they are witnesses, and there is no section of the saga to which all witnesses attest.

This chapter is, then, necessarily only one of what needs to be a series of studies. (And, indeed, Már Jónsson's 2017 study of AM 162 B θ fol., published too late to be considered here, provides one such study.¹⁶) Some manuscripts are too similar to one another for precise filiation, and future research extending the samples is necessary to resolve this. A case in point is the three copies of Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) made by Árni Magnússon's brother Jón Magnússon—KB Add 565 4to, AM 467 4to, and ÍB 421 4to—along with the copy of Reykjabók held in Reykjavík's Landakotskirkja and known as Landakotsbók.¹⁷ For chapter 86 the text of Reykjabók, KB Add 565 4to, and AM 467 4to is identical; ÍB 421 4to has a scattering of innovations; and Landakotsbók has one small omission.¹⁸ Jón Helgason assumed that only KB Add 565 4to was copied directly from Reykjabók, but since in chapter 86 Jón Magnússon's copies are so similar, there is no way rationally to filiate them through textual criticism.¹⁹ Meanwhile, many of the manuscripts analyzed will have multiple exemplars, but only draw on one exemplar for the chapters sampled. Thus, while our stemma of *Njáls saga* will not be wrong on this account, it will be incomplete.

A key component of "The Variance of *Njáls saga*" project has been Susanne M. Arthur's doctoral thesis on the codicology of *Njáls saga*-manuscripts. At the time of our research, this afforded the most up-to-date survey of the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, which we have taken as our guide in the present study (see also Susanne M. Arthur and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, pp. 283–91).²⁰ We also included the first printed edition of the saga, published by Ólafur Ólafsson (under his Latinised name Ólafur Olavius) in Copenhagen in 1772,²¹ as well as the reprint of a few chapters (including chapter 86) which appeared in *Antiquitates Celto-Scandicæ* (1786), on the expectation (which proved correct) that these would be necessary to understand the manuscript tradition. The following manuscripts and fragments include neither chapters 44, 86, nor 142 so are excluded from this article:

AM 162 B α fol.
 Óssbók (AM 162 B γ fol.)
 AM 162 B β fol.²²
 AM 162 B ζ fol.
 AM 162 B ι fol.
 AM 162 B κ fol.
 AM 576 a 4to
 SÁM 33
 Þj fragm. II

Lbs fragm. 2, JS fragm. 4, AM 921 I 4to, and Þj fragm. I, all thought to derive from the same manuscript, which Arthur has dubbed the “Lost Codex,” do not include chapter 86, but were represented through the inclusion of AM 921 I 4to in our sample of chapter 142.²³

Fundamentally, our stemma is constructed through the human implementation of Lachmannian method, with the important conceptual difference that we are not seeking to identify “errors” but rather “variants,” and we are not seeking to reconstruct a putative lost archetype of *Njáls saga* but rather to map its transmission as a historical process.²⁴ We reduced our burden by first using software analysis with the programs Pars and Drawgram in the Phylip suite of phylogenetic analytical software to make a digital stemma; we then analyzed the relationships of all the manuscripts ourselves, checking Pars’s analysis. For heuristic purposes, inferable lost common ancestors of the sample texts were reconstructed, with recursive human checking as more reconstructions were completed. For the manuscripts surveyed by Einar Ólafur, our stemma largely agrees with his, verifying his work and emphasizing that small samples are not necessarily any worse than whatever (unstated) sample Einar Ólafur used, the results from which scholars have relied on since. Since chapter 86 is short, and the number of variants distinguishing different manuscripts sometimes small, it was not self-evident that it would be possible to reliably create a stemma from chapter 86 alone. At the same time, however, our research has allowed us not only to dramatically extend Einar Ólafur’s work, but in a few respects also to correct it.

Manuscripts Descended from *Gullskinna

The most striking finding of our 2013 research on chapter 86 was a large group of manuscripts which form a distinct branch of their own with no surviving medieval manuscript source. External evidence shows that these must be related to a lost medieval manuscript, *Gullskinna, most closely studied prior to the publication of this volume by Jón Þorkelsson and Már Jónsson.²⁵ By contrast with most of the (other) parchment manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, then, *Gullskinna was enormously popular: our sample found twenty-seven manuscripts descended in whole or in part from *Gullskinna; our stemma demands the reconstruction of numerous lost copies besides; and it is further believed that the fragment Þj II, which does not contain chapter 86, also descends from *Gullskinna.²⁶ Understanding how *Gullskinna circulated, and why (at least for our samples) this manuscript's version of *Njáls saga* became the dominant one in Iceland from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, therefore emerges as an important new question for understanding Icelandic scribal networks and literary culture in this period. We cannot address this in detail in this chapter: what we do here is situate our findings in relation to past work on *Njáls saga*'s stemma, discuss questions and problems that arise from the stemmatic analysis, and make some preliminary observations that can underpin future investigations.

*Gullskinna must have been closely related to the fragment AM 162 B θ fol., which was copied in the first half of the fourteenth century and is of unknown provenance, and of which no copies survive.²⁷ The fact that this fragment witnesses chapter 86 is what led us to choose that chapter as our sample. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson tentatively filiated θ as a descendant of *X, in which case the parent of *Gullskinna would also be from *X. Jón Helgason went further and found that *Gullskinna must be the niece of Reykjabók at this point, making it an independent (if innovative) witness to the lost archetype of *Njáls saga*, and our findings independently confirm this.²⁸ On the evidence of chapter 86 alone, it is difficult to filiate the common ancestor of θ and *Gullskinna, as the chapter is significantly abbreviated and quite extensively rephrased, leaving few clear bases for comparison with other manuscripts—a problem which Einar Ólafur also had with the relatively short fragment θ. For now, we have tentatively followed Einar Ólafur in making the shared ancestor of θ and *Gullskinna a descendant of *X (thus labeling it *x4); our data for chapter 142 is consistent with this, whereas the data for chapter 44, at the present point in our

analyses, looks likely to be copied from Reykjabók itself. More work is required here to be sure of *Gullskinna's filiation.

Jón Þorkelsson identified four manuscripts as deriving directly from *Gullskinna: AM 136 fol., Vigfúsarbók (AM 137 fol.), Hvammsbók (AM 470 4to, subsequently corrected by the scribe with the addition of readings from Kálfalækjarbók, AM 133 fol.), and Hofsbók (AM 134 fol.).²⁹ In chapter 86, Hofsbók is (as Jón knew) copied from Bæjarbók (AM 309 4to); the manuscript does contain eight marginal references to *Gullskinna; one does occur in chapter 86 but is not informative for the present discussion. Still, if Jón was right, then the agreement of any two of Hvammsbók, AM 136 fol., and Vigfúsarbók should be enough to confirm the reading of *Gullskinna. However, Már Jónsson provided clear evidence that Vigfúsarbók is a direct copy of AM 136 fol., and not an independent witness to *Gullskinna.³⁰ Our findings are in line with Már's. Rather than being an independent copy of *Gullskinna, Vigfúsarbók is indeed on present evidence a somewhat innovative copy of AM 136 fol.

On almost all of the seventeen occasions in chapter 86 when there is a disagreement between AM 136 fol. and Hvammsbók, Hvammsbók agrees with the much older fragment AM 162 B θ fol., suggesting that it is the more conservative representative of *Gullskinna. The exceptions to this are presented in table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Innovative looking readings in Hvammsbók.

Reading	1	2	3
AM 162 B θ fol.	Mærhæfi	sem fundurinn var	og skaut spjóti í gegnum hann
AM 136 fol.	Munæffe	sem fundurinn varð	og skaut spjóti í gegnum hann
Hvammsbók	Minæfi	er fundurinn varð	og skaut spjóti í gegnum jarl

In the case of column 1, no manuscript agrees with θ, so the column is not diagnostic. (*Gullskinna was perhaps unclearly written here. We might note that Ketill Jörundarson, the scribe of Hvammsbók, never wrote the letter *y*, always preferring *i*, so his form *Minæfi* might reflect an exemplar which he believed contained an insular *y*, reading *Mynæfi*. Jón Gissursson, the scribe of AM 136 fol., might plausibly have interpreted the same letter as *v*, reproducing it as *u* in *Munæffe*.) In the case of columns 2 and 3, Hvammsbók does appear to be innovative (and in the case of giving *jarl* for *hann* could well show a misreading of an abbreviation, as the abbreviations for *hann* and *jarl* can look similar). It is thus clear that of

the manuscripts on Jón Þorkelsson's list we have only two substantial witnesses to *Gullskinna for chapter 86, of which Hvammsbók is extremely faithful, but AM 136 fol. occasionally offers a more conservative reading.

AM 136 fol. has no descendants apart from Vigfúsarbók. Since Hvammsbók is so similar to *Gullskinna, however, it is hard to judge whether other similar manuscripts are copies of *Gullskinna itself or whether they are copies of Hvammsbók. Of the other *Gullskinna-type manuscripts, there is great variation in column 1, the place-name rendered in Einar Ólafur's edition as *Mýræfi* (i.e., Moray, in northeast Scotland). All the readings listed in table 7.1 and more appear (among them *Markevi* in SÁM 137 and *Mýræfar* in Lbs 3505 4to). It seems clear that scribes often introduced new readings here, whether from misreadings, other manuscripts, memories of hearing other versions, their own geographical knowledge, or invention. The agreement of AM 162 B θ fol. and AM 136 fol. on *sem* in column 2 would suggest that this was the reading of *Gullskinna. Almost all the other *Gullskinna descendants have *er*, so this could suggest that they were copied from Hvammsbók. On the other hand, the other X-class manuscripts have *er*, so it is just as likely that AM 162 B θ fol. and AM 136 fol. independently innovated *sem* here and that *Gullskinna read *er*. This leaves only column 3 as a basis for choosing between Hvammsbók and *Gullskinna as an exemplar of other manuscripts. Both variants in this column are found. As mentioned above, the abbreviated forms of *hann* and *jarl* look quite similar, but Hvammsbók writes the word out in full (at page 147, line 23), clearly, so a copyist of that manuscript should not have had difficulty; and this manuscript was at some point not too long after its copying thoroughly corrected with reference to Kálfalækjarbók, to the extent that it would take an effort to copy it without incorporating Kálfalækjarbók readings, but none of the other *Gullskinna-type manuscripts exhibit these. This suggests that at least some of our other *Gullskinna-type manuscripts are indeed direct copies of *Gullskinna, but only a larger sample will reveal this. The additional data afforded by chapters 44 and 142 does help and is reflected in the stemma presented in this article, but more work is required, not least because these chapters lack a corresponding passage in AM 162 B θ fol.

Már Jónsson had the same problem, the main difference between his quandary and ours being that he discussed only five manuscripts which might be direct copies of *Gullskinna: AM 136 fol., Fagureyjarbók (AM 469 4to), Hvammsbók, AM 555 a 4to, and Breiðabólstaðarbók (AM 555 c 4to), whereas, including reconstructed lost manuscripts, we have identi-

fied many more. For example, Jón Þorkelsson found that the text in AM 555 a 4to “synes i alt væsentligt at stemme overens med den i Hvammsbók” [seems in all significant respects to match that in Hvammsbók], noting moreover that it was copied by the son of Ketill Jörundarson, who also copied Hvammsbók.³¹ Már Jónsson was inclined to agree, while admitting that “frávik eru hverfandi” [variation is negligible].³² Our sample does not resolve this certainly, but in column 3, AM 555 a 4to has the more conservative *hann* (at 31v line 9) instead of Hvammsbók’s *Jarl* (at page 147, line 23). This hints that AM 555 a 4to is an independent witness to *Gullskinna. Likewise, Jón Þorkelsson found that the text of Fagureyjarbók “er af Gullskinna-klassen og ligner snarest Hvammsbók” [is of the Gullskinna-class, and is most similar to Hvammsbók], but our data suggests that while Fagureyjarbók has numerous unique readings, it does not share Hvammsbók’s divergences from *Gullskinna.³³ Our small samples and concomitant attention to detail, then, have helped us to refine our understanding of possible *Gullskinna copies, but at the same time the limitations to our conclusions emphasize the constraints of small samples when handling very conservative copies. Further research into the manuscripts which we have identified as witnesses to *Gullskinna, particularly expanding the sample from passages corresponding to AM 162 B θ fol., would resolve these questions, assuming they can indeed be resolved. For now, we have assumed that *Gullskinna had many descendants, many of which seem to be direct descendants (but might, given a larger sample, resolve into parent–child or sibling relationships).

Despite their limitations, these findings already give us a valuable basis for insights into postmedieval Icelandic saga transmission. This is made more interesting again by the fact that the *Gullskinna text was subject to a high rate of correction and conflation with other manuscript versions. This suggests that seventeenth-century copyists tended to find its version deficient—though more research into the backgrounds and motivations of the scribes would be required to determine why.

- As we mentioned above, the *Gullskinna text of Hvammsbók was carefully corrected by Hvammsbók’s scribe Ketill Jörundarson with reference to Kálfalækjarbók, which Ketill seems clearly to have viewed as higher status.³⁴
- AM 465 4to, Holm. papp. 9 fol., and Lbs 1415 4to all seem in one or more samples to descend from a lost manuscript that drew on both

*Gullskinna's text and Möðruvallabók's (AM 132 fol.) and conflated them in chapter 86 at least.

- As discussed below, Vigursbók (NKS 1220 fol.) and Lbs 3505 4to both derive in chapter 86 from a manuscript which conflated a *Gullskinna text with the text in AM 396 fol. (or a close relative).

Meanwhile, even in our limited samples, many manuscripts, while not conflating exemplars, switch exemplar part way through. Perhaps most importantly for understanding the *Gullskinna tradition, Hofsbók was reckoned by Jón Þorkelsson to be an indirect copy of *Gullskinna, with marginal corrections from *Gullskinna itself and from Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to).³⁵ Neither claim can be true for chapter 86, which is a copy of Bæjarbók, with just one marginal collation with *Gullskinna. Our sample from chapter 142, however, *is* from *Gullskinna, and shows that Hofsbók is potentially a direct copy, with just a few minor innovations. This manuscript, then, was copied from at least two exemplars, one of them of the *Gullskinna class.

Needless to say, the list of manuscripts with multiple exemplars would grow with fuller sampling: for example, Jón Þorkelsson thought that Thott 984 fol. III was a direct copy of Oddabók (AM 466 4to).³⁶ This cannot be true for our samples, which are of the *Gullskinna class, but it is perfectly possible that Jón's conclusion holds true for other parts of the manuscript. AM 464 4to was mostly copied from Kálfalækjarbók by the scholar, poet, and churchman Jón Halldórsson, but fills in lacunae in that manuscript by using the *Gullskinna-class manuscript Vigfúsarbók (and contains marginal references to other manuscripts again). Both ÍB 421 4to and KB Add 565 4to had gaps left by the scribe, Jón Magnússon, when faced with lacunae in his exemplar (Reykjabók), which were later filled in from other sources.³⁷ Indeed, a large number of manuscripts have marginal annotations containing variant readings or verses from other manuscripts.³⁸ It is clear, then, that a fuller survey of the stemma of the postmedieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* would reveal in yet more detail a complex culture in which scribes regularly got access to multiple copies of *Njáls saga*, either concurrently or at different times, and in which it was not unusual for them to conflate different versions (see Margrét Eggertsdóttir's chapter in this volume). While recent work on scribal cultures in Iceland has made exciting use of detailed codicological data, it has tended not to integrate stemmatic approaches, and this finding helps to show how stemmatic data would enrich existing work.³⁹ A fuller survey would

also help to tease out how far these scribes were scholars working in the nascent philological tradition of Renaissance humanism (like Jón Magnússon and Jón Halldórsson) and how far the use of multiple exemplars was also characteristic of the production of reading copies for domestic consumption.

As Margrét Eggertsdóttir emphasizes in her contribution to this volume, reconstructing *Gullskinna proves important in two ways: for understanding the early transmission of *Njáls saga* and for understanding its postmedieval circulation. *Gullskinna and θ emerge as witnesses to a lost, relatively innovative, but early version of *Njáls saga*, which, on the evidence of chapter 86, tended to shorten the saga, making for a slightly brisker and less detailed narrative. Thus, in Einar Ólafur's edition (as modernized by us), which offers a good idea of how the lost archetype of *Njáls saga* must have run, the first seventy-seven words of chapter 86 are:

Síðan fór jarl suður með herinn, og var Kári í för með honum og svo Njálssynir. Þeir komu suður við Katanes. Jarl átti þessi ríki í Skotlandi: Ros og Mýræfi, Syðrilönd og Dali. Komu þar í móti þeim Skotar af þeim ríkjum og segja, að jarlar væri þaðan skammt í braut með mikinn her. Þá snýr Sigurður jarl þangað herinum og heitir þar Dungals gnípa, er fundurinn var fyrir ofan, og laust í bardaga með þeim mikinn.⁴⁰

[Afterwards, the Earl went south with the army, and Kári was on the journey with him, as well as the sons of Njáll. They arrived in the south at Caithness. The Earl owned these dominions in Scotland: Ross and Moray, Sutherland, and Argyll. Scots from these dominions came against them there and say that the earls were just a little way off, with a large force. Then Earl Sigurður turns his army that way, and the place above which the clash happened is called Duncansby Head, and a great battle took place between them.]

We can reconstruct *Gullskinna's corresponding text to have been very similar to θ here, giving this fifty-four-word opening:

Síðan fór hann suður með herinn, og var Kári þar og Njálssynir. Þeir komu við Katanes. Jarl átti þessi ríki í Skotlandi: Ros og Mýnæfi, Suðurlönd og Dali. Sigurður jarl spurði þá til jarlanna og snýr til móts við þá, og heitir þar Dungals gnípa, sem/er fundurinn varð. Sló þegar í bardaga með þeim.

[Afterwards, he went south with the army, and Kári and the sons of Njáll were there. They came to Caithness. The Earl owned these

dominions in Scotland: Ross and *Mýnæfi*, Sutherland, and Argyll. Then Earl Sigurður heard about the earls and turns to meet them, and the place where the clash happened is called Duncansby Head. They went straight into battle.]

On the whole, the version represented by *Gullskinna rewords more concisely, without losing much by way of detail. It is also a little more dramatic, pitching us into the battle scene that follows with a short, punchy statement, whereas the archetype favored a longer and slightly more considered preamble. Of course, much fuller study would be needed before drawing grand conclusions about this version as a whole. But our sample offers a counterweight to Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's conclusion that "the author of *Njálssaga* is no doubt one of the greatest masters of Icelandic prose style, of all ages, and certainly the scribes felt his excellence. Their way of treating the text seems to show more respect for it than is generally the case with our scribes in those times."⁴¹ True though this may generally have been, someone begged to differ. The lost parent of θ and *Gullskinna seems to have been an independent witness to the lost archetype of our *Njáls saga* manuscripts. It will admittedly seldom be important to reconstructing the archetype, but it has an interest of its own. It is not yet known whether the manuscript *Gullskinna was complete when the surviving copies were made, and whether it, like so many medieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, drew on multiple exemplars. But it is possible that further research would establish that *Gullskinna was a complete, single-redaction manuscript, which would, if so, have its own unique interest for understanding the medieval circulation of *Njáls saga*. And whatever the precise filiation of *Gullskinna, there is no question that, directly or indirectly, the manuscript is at least one of the ancestors of most of the surviving *Njáls saga* manuscripts which were copied and circulated in the seventeenth and, even more so, the eighteenth centuries. Far from being dominated by the Reykjabók and Möðruvallabók versions which tend to define the *Njáls saga* familiar to us from modern editions, the *Njáls saga* known to early modern Icelanders was overwhelmingly the rather innovative *Gullskinna version. When we study the vibrant literary responses to the saga in the poetry of eighteenth-century Icelandic *literati* like the Svarfaðardalur coterie of Magnús Einarsson (1734–94), who according to Andrew Wawn copied Urðabók (ÍB 270 4to) for his friend Jón bóndi Sigurðsson of Urðir; Magnús's friend Sveinn Sölvason (1722–82); or séra Gunnar Pálsson (1714–91), we are probably studying, at least in part, responses to the *Gullskinna recension of *Njáls saga*.⁴²

Revising the *Y Branch of the *Njáls saga* Stemma

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, studying only vellum manuscripts, reconstructed an important branch of the *Njáls saga* tradition descending from the lost manuscript which he labeled *Y. His work regarding the relationships between Sveinsbók (GKS 2869 4to) and *Y is helpfully abetted by Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in this volume. This branch is also one of the few whose postmedieval transmission has received any detailed attention. Despite notionally surveying all the vellum manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, Einar Ólafur demurred to analyze the late vellum manuscript GKS 1003 fol., simply saying that it must “belong to the paper manuscripts of the Saga and ought to be studied with these.”⁴³ This manuscript attracted the interest of Desmond Slay and Ólafur Halldórsson, who reported on their stemmatic work relating to it without explaining their methods or giving examples.⁴⁴ They suggested that GKS 1003 fol. and two other manuscripts are descended from Oddabók. Susanne M. Arthur agreed that AM 396 fol. and Ferjubók (AM 163 d fol.) were in a parent–child relationship but equivocated as to which was actually the parent.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, AM 135 fol., a manuscript made by Ásgeir Jónsson between 1690 and 1697 in Norway for the eminent saga-scholar Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus), was viewed by Árni Magnússon as a copy of Gráskinna. Jón Þorkelsson agreed but added that parts were from another manuscript, which he did not identify.⁴⁶ Appending Slay and Ólafur Halldórsson’s stemma to Einar Ólafur’s, and integrating these other observations, we get figure 7.1.⁴⁷

We were able to refine these past findings, with interesting results, visualized in figure 7.2, which may conveniently be compared with figure 7.1.

The specific problems that inspired the investigation into chapter 142 arose from Einar Ólafur’s equivocation about the place of the parchment fragments of *Njáls saga* in this part of the stemma. He described the fragment Þj I as almost identical to Oddabók but noted that a few features in the fragment actually looked more conservative than the corresponding parts of Oddabók and asked “do these differences preclude the possibility of ÞjI being a copy of O?”⁴⁸ This implies that Einar Ólafur was tending to think of Þj I as a child of Oddabók, so in figure 7.1 we represent it as a child of Oddabók, indicating Einar Ólafur’s vagueness using a dotted line. Meanwhile, he positioned the fragment AM 921 I 4to as a sister of Oddabók.⁴⁹ Susanne M. Arthur has since shown that the parchment

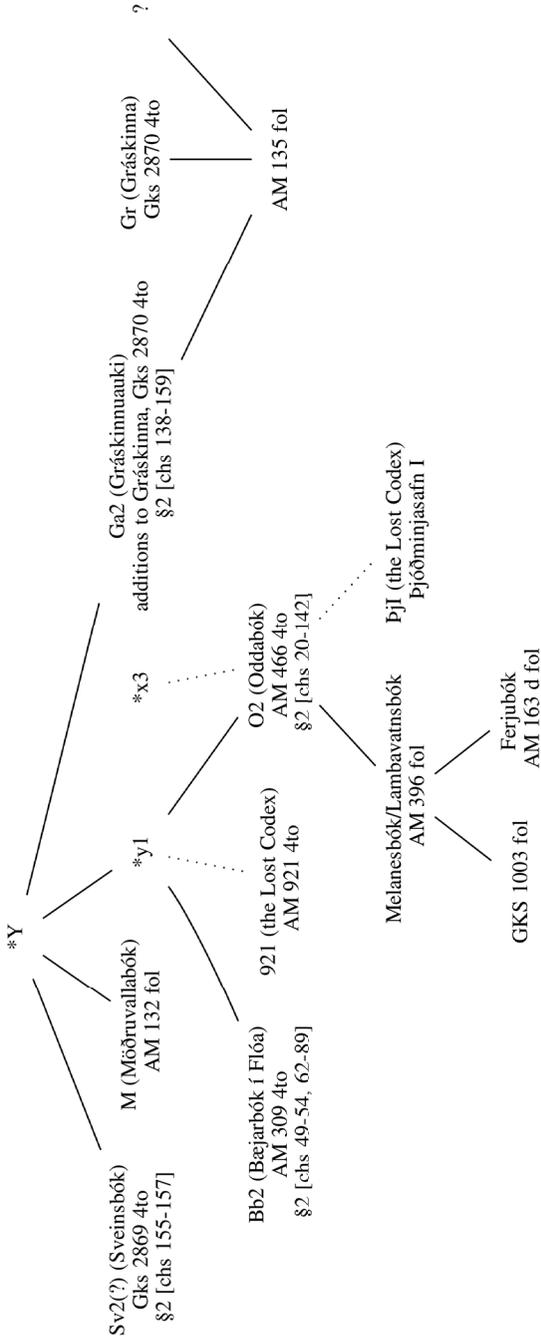


Figure 7.1 *Stand der Forschung* of the *Y branch of *Njáls saga*. Dotted lines represent manuscripts which Einar Ólafur classified (sometimes vaguely) but did not include in his dendrogram.

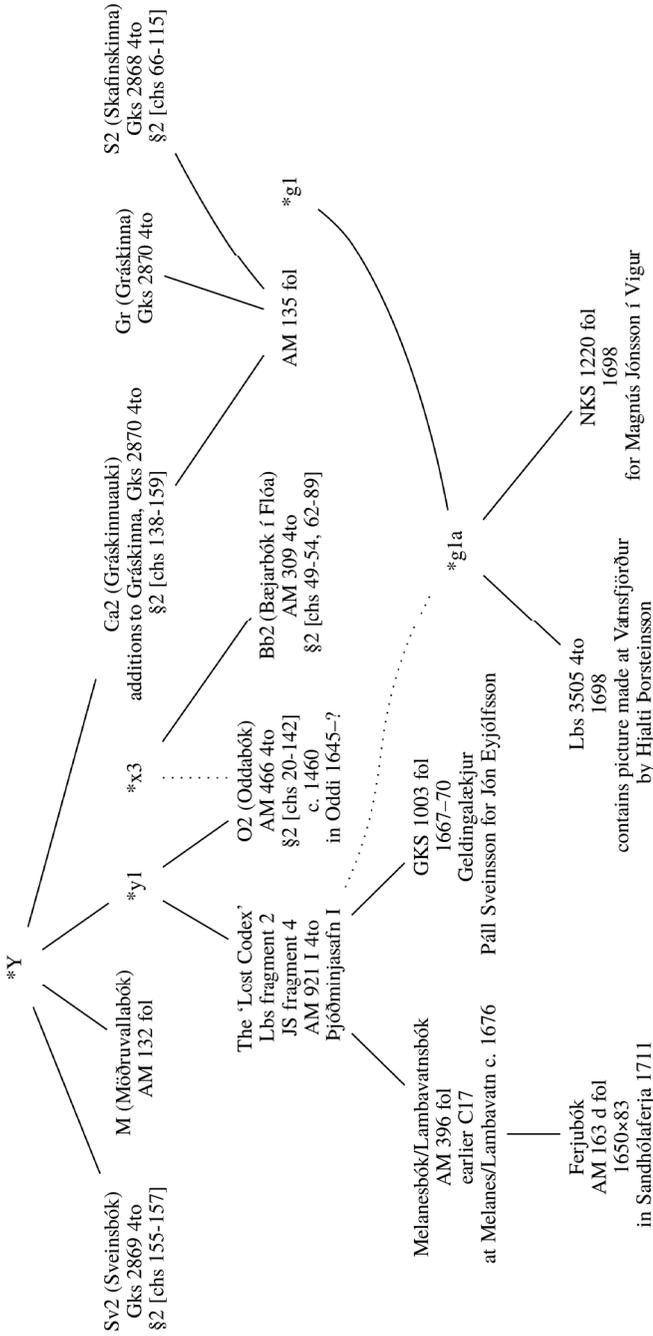


Figure 7.2 Revised stemma of Einar Ólafur's *Y branch of *Njáls saga's* stemma.

fragments Lbs fragm. 2, JS fragm. 4, AM 921 I 4to, and Þj fragm. I are actually almost certainly fragments of the same “Lost Codex.”⁵⁰ While this by no means necessitates that all the fragments have the same exemplar, it suggests that Einar Ólafur might indeed have been wrong to place AM 921 I 4to and Þj I fragm. at different points in the stemma. Moreover, our data from chapter 86, while generally consistent with Slay and Ólafur Halldórsson’s interpretation, presented a few conservative features in the supposed descendants of Oddabók which, though conceivably caused by convergent evolution, provoked the suspicion that Slay and Ólafur Halldórsson had not been quite right. We set out to test this by sampling a passage which falls in AM 921 I 4to, focusing on manuscripts which our earlier survey of chapter 86 (and other past work) had identified as being descendants of *y1.

Assessing how all these manuscripts relate on the basis of our sample is tricky, but there is no question that not only GKS 1003 fol., AM 396 fol., and Ferjubók but also AM 921 I 4to share major innovations, necessitating a revision to figure 7.1. Nor is it plausible that GKS 1003 fol. descends from AM 396 fol. A bigger sample is needed to be sure of the relationships between these manuscripts: each contains at least minor unique innovations, but it is possible that scribes successfully reverted the text back to a more conservative-looking form as they copied. The fragmentary state of AM 921 I 4to does not make assessment easier. Figure 7.2 offers a revised version of figure 7.1, presenting the most parsimonious relationship of the Lost Codex group that we can countenance. For now, we have agreed with Einar Ólafur in filiating AM 921 I 4to as a sister of Oddabók: there are a few details where its readings are more conservative than Oddabók although once again it is possible that AM 921 I 4to was copied from Oddabók but the scribe successfully corrected the text.

Meanwhile, Einar Ólafur filiated Bæjarbók chapters 49–54 and 62–89 (Bb2 in his system of sigla) as descendants of *y1. But he filiated chapters 38–42 and 118–20 of Bæjarbók (Bb1 and Bb3) as descendants of *x3 (and he did notice “some correspondences” with *x3 in chapter 82). It is clear from our data that chapter 86 was copied from *x3 rather than *y1. We must reckon on a slightly more complex relationship between Bæjarbók and its two exemplars than Einar Ólafur realized. This could be the subject of future targeted research (unfortunately, Bæjarbók does not include chapter 142).

Examining AM 135 fol., we found the second half of chapter 86 and the sample of chapter 142 indeed to be from Gráskinna (or rather, in the case of chapter 142, the postmedieval additions made to Gráskinna to fill in

lacunae, known as Gráskinnuauki).⁵¹ But we were also able to identify the exemplar for the first half of chapter 86 as Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to).

We can add, finally, that a text for the most part descended from *Gullskinna, which we have labeled *g1a, also incorporated readings from the Lost Codex family. This lost manuscript must have been made sometime before 1698, when our two surviving copies (Vigursbók and Lbs 3505 4to) were made. Unfortunately, our sample does not offer unequivocal evidence for which manuscript *g1a used; for the purposes of figure 7.2, we have guessed that the Lost Codex itself was the source. Whatever the precise situation, this kind of conflation is unusual and interesting. It seems to us that the most likely context for this conflation is that *g1a contained a text based on the *Gullskinna class *g1, but with later alterations from the Lost Codex or a relative, of a kind attested in, for example, Hvammsbók and Hofsbók. This then led to the surviving copies of *g1a presenting a seamlessly conflated text.

It is possible to combine these findings with the meticulous research into the history of these manuscripts by Arthur to produce a case study of the late- and postmedieval transmission of *Njáls saga*.⁵² Several of the descendants of *y1 have links with the region where *Njáls saga* itself is set. We do not know where Oddabók was originally copied, but in 1645 Þorleifur Jónsson (1619–90), a member of the powerful Svalbarð family, brought it southwards with him when he became schoolmaster at one of the preeminent churches in Iceland, Oddi, in the midst of the region where most of *Njáls saga* is set.⁵³ Þorleifur later became priest at Oddi from 1651 to his death. He must have passed the manuscript on to his son, Björn Þorleifsson (1663–1710), who was himself priest at Oddi, at first as assistant to his father, from 1687 until he became Bishop of Hólar in 1697.⁵⁴ This puts it in the same place as the likely place of copying of several of the other descendants of *y1, and it was once readily assumed that Oddabók had been their exemplar:

- In 1667–70 the wealthy if rather obscure farmer Jón Eyjólfsson of Eyvindarmúli, thirty kilometers west of Oddi, had one Páll Sveinsson copy for him two huge, beautiful, vellum folio volumes—among the very last parchments to be made in Iceland—containing, among other things, *Njáls saga*. Páll is no better-known a figure than Jón Eyjólfsson but was certainly a prolific scribe of prestigious manuscripts, associated with Geldingalækur, about fifteen kilometers north of Oddi.⁵⁵ By 1692, GKS 1002–3 fol. had come into the

hands of Björn Þorleifsson, the owner of Oddabók. Björn rebound GKS 1002–3 fol. and gave the two volumes to King Christian V of Denmark in 1692 and, at some point, gave the less imposing Oddabók to Árni Magnússon.

- Meanwhile, AM 163 d fol., now known as Ferjubók, can also be linked to the area around Oddi. It is another enormous saga collection, now dismembered and surviving as AM 110 fol., AM 163 d fol., AM 125 fol., AM 163 c fol., AM 163 a fol., AM 163 b fol., and AM 202 g II fol., produced between around 1650 and 1683. We do not know where this copy was made, but Árni Magnússon acquired it in 1711 from “Sigurð[ur] á Ferju,” also known as Sigurður Magnússon of Sandhólaferja, about twenty kilometers west of Oddi.⁵⁶
- Oddabók even has a marginal annotation in the hand of the scribe who copied the Lost Codex (AM 921 I 4to etc.) and AM 396 fol., making it easy to assume that both these sagas were copied from Oddabók. (Slay even argued that this scribe was Páll Sveinsson, the scribe of GKS 1003 fol., but Arthur has shown this to be mistaken.)⁵⁷

We have found, however, that the Lost Codex group may descend not from Oddabók but from a sibling. It is also clear that the history of this group has links not only to the region where *Njáls saga* is set, but also to the West Fjords. AM 396 fol. has been known as Melanesbók/Lambvatnsbók because it contains two sagas whose colophons place their copying at Melanes and the nearby Lambavatn in the West Fjords. The name is unhelpful for our purposes, however, as the manuscript in its present form is a 1731 compilation of earlier manuscripts of disparate origins. The *Njáls saga* portion of AM 396 fol. seems to be from the early or mid-seventeenth century. Whether AM 396 fol. was produced in the West Fjords or came there later is unclear, but a marginal annotation suggests that it was available to Jón Ólafsson when he was copying other sagas at Melanes and Lambavatn in 1676–77.⁵⁸ This, the fact that the fragments of the Lost Codex have turned up in contexts associated with northern Iceland, and other contextual hints led Arthur to venture that “it seems probable” that both the Lost Codex and AM 396 fol. were copied in north or northwest Iceland.⁵⁹ In addition, it now seems that a further copy of a Lost Codex-type manuscript was made, and that this copy conflated the text with a descendant of *Gullskinna, to create a now-lost manuscript which we have called *g1a, sometime before 1698, when our two surviving copies (Vigursbók and Lbs 3505 4to) were made. Of these two surviving

copies, we only have a clear provenance for Vigursbók, which was once part of AM 426 fol., copied in and around Vigur for the magnate and manuscript collector Magnús Jónsson (1637–1702).⁶⁰ AM 426 fol. was copied around 1670–82 and the *Njáls saga* section of that manuscript, which is now Vigursbók, was copied in 1698. AM 426 fol. famously contains three full-page illustrations by Hjalti Þorsteinsson (1665–1754); none is present in the Vigursbók *Njáls saga*. However, a corresponding illustration is preserved in Lbs 3505 4to, where it was folded to fit into the smaller manuscript. Hjalti lived and worked at various ecclesiastical institutions in Iceland as well as in Copenhagen, but from 1692 to his death lived within five kilometers of Vigur, in Vatnsfjörður. Given that a picture evidently intended for AM 426 fol. ended up in Lbs 3505 4to, the fact that Lbs 3505 4to has the same exemplar as AM 426 fol., and the fact that the manuscripts were both copied in 1698, the two must arise from a closely connected context, presumably both produced around Vigur, perhaps while *g1a was on loan there. The closest localizable relative of *g1a on the *Gullskinna side is from the West Fjords (Kall 612 4to), so it is fairly likely that the *g1a conflation was itself made in the northwest.

Reassessing the descendants of Einar Ólafur's *y1, then, the main conclusion must be that *Njáls saga* scribes were markedly busier in the seventeenth century than has been realized and that, while Oddabók went uncopied, a close relative seems to have been circulating, its descendants appearing both in *Njáls saga* country—the Rangárvellir—and in the West Fjords. It may be characteristic, moreover, that Oddabók, which survived to come into the hands of Árni Magnússon, was seldom, if ever, copied, whereas the medieval ancestor of our seventeenth-century *y1 *Njáls saga* manuscripts—a manuscript that must have been circulating for copying—is lost.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This study, in conjunction with its companion piece, represents a major step forward in our understanding of the manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga*. It largely confirms the findings of past scholarship, while making a few small corrections, and it also filiates for the first time all but six of the saga's postmedieval manuscripts. It shows that whereas current editions of *Njáls saga* are usually based primarily on Reykjabók and Möðruvallabók, the recension of the saga known to most Icelanders in the seventeenth and, overwhelmingly, in the eighteenth centuries derived from the lost

medieval manuscript *Gullskinna. It also reveals a more complex and lively textual tradition lying behind the descendants of the lost manuscript *y1. These findings were made possible by a collaborative approach to constructing a stemma through sampling, followed up by targeted research inspired by work on the initial sample. Our circa four-hundred-word sample of chapter 86 mostly proved an adequate basis for establishing a stemma, except insofar as many *Njáls saga* manuscripts switch exemplar part way through, meaning that fuller sampling was necessary to capture more such switches. Because the copying of *Njáls saga* has been very conservative, unlike with the romance-saga studied by Hall and Parsons, the four-hundred-word sample did not give us as fine-grained resolution as we might have wished. It is too seldom emphasized that all stemmas are contingent: stemmatology is inherently a probabilistic undertaking, and our stemma is no exception. Our small sample will also have increased the likelihood of mistakenly finding manuscripts to be in a parent–child relationship where fuller sampling could reveal variants showing that they are both descended from a lost common ancestor.⁶¹ However, the study has still taken our understanding of the transmission of *Njáls saga* to a new level and provided a sound basis for targeted future research.

Further research on the *Gullskinna branch of *Njáls saga* would therefore be worthwhile. At the moment we have had to filiate a large number of very similar manuscripts as direct descendants of *Gullskinna. However, larger samples would presumably reveal shared innovations which would enable us to identify some of these manuscripts as exemplars of the others. Even so, with at least three and probably more direct copies (AM 136 fol., Hvammsbók, and Hofsbók), *Gullskinna itself clearly has a special prominence in the early modern copying of Icelandic manuscripts. We do not yet know whether it was a complete or single-exemplar manuscript, but this possibility is worth exploring for the insights it may give into the medieval circulation of *Njáls saga*. Further research could also help us to guess why *Gullskinna was so popular and how long the manuscript itself remained in circulation. Particular areas for future research that we have identified are:

- studying the fragments and manuscripts not covered here;
- working out more precisely the relationships of the *Gullskinna-class manuscripts, with the internal filiations of the possible immediate descendants of *Gullskinna as a priority;

- establishing whether *Gullskinna was a complete manuscript when copied, and whether the version it contains combined multiple versions;
- checking the sources of other chapters of the possible *Gullskinna-class manuscript Thott 984 fol. III;
- exploring the precise relationship of Bæjarbók to its two exemplars;
- establishing the precise relationship of Reykjabók to its (near-) identical copies;
- checking the sources of other chapters of Hofsbók.

Perhaps the most noteworthy general observation arising from the stemmatic research in this paper is how little copied were the medieval manuscripts that survive to the present: we owe the copies of Reykjabók largely to Árni Magnússon's antiquarianism; Möðruvallabók and Bæjarbók were each copied only once (in conflation and collation with *Gullskinna) and Gráskinna and Skafinskinna only in an antiquarian copy made in Norway. It is perhaps characteristic that Oddabók itself, contrary to earlier beliefs, does not seem to have been copied. By contrast, *Gullskinna was certainly the exemplar of multiple early modern manuscripts. One starts to get the impression that medieval manuscripts that circulated for copying (and presumably reading) have not tended to survive into the present. All told, our stemma contains only sixteen manuscripts (and one reconstructed one) descended, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, from surviving medieval manuscripts. Fuller sampling of the manuscripts will doubtless complicate this picture, but it remains striking. It is hard to know how far these patterns reflect patterns of manuscript production and how far they reflect patterns of manuscript collection and survival; either way, the opportunities, choices, and social networks of a fairly small number of powerful and mostly closely related seventeenth-century literati will have been important in determining which medieval manuscripts were mediated into wider circulation.⁶²

NOTES

¹ The research for this publication was funded by the Icelandic Research Fund (grants number: 110610-021 and 152342-053).

² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 3–4.

³ The seventeen manuscripts not discussed by Jón are: ÍB 421 4to, JS fragm.

4, Lbs 1415 4to, Lbs 222 fol, Lbs 3505 4to, Lbs 437 4to, Lbs 4855 8vo, Lbs 747 fol., Lbs fragm. 2, Landakotsbók, SÁM 33, SÁM 137, AM Acc. 50, KB Add 565 4to, Thott 1776 4to III, NB 313 4to, NB 372 4to.

⁴ Slay, “On the Origin of Two Icelandic Manuscripts”; Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi–xiv; Már Jónsson, “Var þar mokað af miklum usla”; Arthur, “The Devil in Disguise?”; Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*”; Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “Njáls saga í AM 162 B ε fol.,” 38–43.

⁵ For a survey, see Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” section 1.1 and, on *Njáls saga* in particular, the chapters in this volume and the discussion in Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 36–38. Other particularly substantial and recent studies of saga transmission include Davíð Ólafsson, “Wordmongers”; Hufnagel, “*Sörla saga sterka*. Studies in the Transmission of a Fornaldarsaga”; Lansing, “Post-Medieval Production, Dissemination and Reception of *Hrólfs saga kraka*”; Love, *The Reception of “Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks”*; and McDonald Werronen, *Popular Romance in Iceland*.

⁶ Cf. Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” sections 1.2, 2.1. For the open-data movement more generally, see Borgman, *Big Data, Little Data, No Data*, esp. 205–40.

⁷ Zeevaert et al., “A New Stemma of *Njáls saga*.”

⁸ On the summer school, see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “To the Letter.” On the project, see for example Zeevaert, “Easy Tools.” On crowdsourcing see, for example, Causer and Wallace, “Building a Volunteer Community”; Kawrykow et al., “Phylo.”

⁹ Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament*; Robinson, “The History, Discoveries, and Aims of the Canterbury Tales Project.”

¹⁰ Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” esp. section 2.2.

¹¹ For Einar Ól. Sveinsson’s comments touching on this see *Studies*, 3–4, 15–17, 38–39.

¹² Már Jónsson, “Var þar mokað af miklum usla.” See more recently Már Jónsson, “Þetabrot Njálu og Gullskinna.”

¹³ Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” §30; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 206–8.

¹⁴ Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” sections 2.2, 2.5.

¹⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 27–29, 38–39.

¹⁶ Már Jónsson, “Þetabrot Njálu og Gullskinna.”

¹⁷ On whose provenance see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 229–34.

¹⁸ Zeevaert et al., “A New Stemma of *Njáls saga*.”

¹⁹ Cf. Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 79–81.

²⁰ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 40–96.

²¹ *Sagan af Niáli Þórgeirssyni*, edited by Ólafur Olavius.

²² Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök Njálu,” 164.

²³ Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 57–58, 152, 224–29.

²⁴ For the method, see Trovato, *Everything you Always Wanted to Know about Lachmann's Method*; on thinking in terms of "variants" rather than "errors" see Hall and Parsons, "Making Stemmas with Small Samples," section 1.1.

²⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 723–30; Már Jónsson, "Var þar mokað af miklum usla."

²⁶ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xiv n. 9.

²⁷ Már Jónsson, "Var þar mokað af miklum usla"; Stegmann, "Two Early Fragments of *Njáls saga*," xvii–xx.

²⁸ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xii–xiii.

²⁹ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 723–30; cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 116 n. 1.

³⁰ Már Jónsson, "Var þar mokað af miklum usla."

³¹ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 740.

³² Már Jónsson, "Var þar mokað af miklum usla," 53.

³³ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 737.

³⁴ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 739; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 7.

³⁵ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 719–20.

³⁶ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 746.

³⁷ Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 72, 289.

³⁸ Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 287–93, and in this volume.

³⁹ See references in endnote 4.

⁴⁰ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 206.

⁴¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 16.

⁴² Wawn, "Saintliness and Sorcery in Svarfaðardalur," 10.

⁴³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 14.

⁴⁴ Slay, "On the Origin of Two Icelandic Manuscripts," 147–48; some examples are, however, provided by Arthur, "The Devil in Disguise?" 4–5.

⁴⁵ Arthur, "The Devil in Disguise?" 5.

⁴⁶ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 720–21.

⁴⁷ Drawn from Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, esp. 171, with the addition of findings of Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 720–21, and Slay, "On the Origin of Two Icelandic Manuscripts."

⁴⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 84.

⁴⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Studies*, 85.

⁵⁰ Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 224–29.

⁵¹ There were a few details on which AM 135 fol. was more conservative than Gráskinnuauki (columns FI, FR, HC and HJ in the spreadsheet published by Zeevaert et al., "A New Stemma of *Njáls saga*"), but these seemed trivial enough to be explained as obvious corrections or caused by the highly formulaic language.

⁵² Arthur, “The Devil in Disguise?”; Arthur, “The Importance of Marital and Maternal Ties”; Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*.”

⁵³ Since some of the places mentioned in this section can be hard to identify on a map, it is worth noting their coordinates. Oddi: 63.777205, -20.386548; Eyvindarmúli: 63.717989, -19.84354; Geldingalækur: 63.883546, -20.261343; Sandhólaferja: 63.827289, -20.673738; Melanes: 65.446743, -23.950152; Lambavatn 65.49378, -24.092503; Vatnsfjörður: 65.960811, -22.469444; Flatey: 65.37391, -22.919583.

⁵⁴ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 53.

⁵⁵ Lansing, “Post-Medieval Production, Dissemination and Reception of *Hrólfs saga kraka*,” 34.

⁵⁶ See Arthur, “The Importance of Marital and Maternal Ties,” 220–21, and Margrét Eggertsdóttir in this volume, pp. 206, 212, 215.

⁵⁷ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 226.

⁵⁸ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 63–64.

⁵⁹ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 226–27.

⁶⁰ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 745; Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 92–95; <https://handrit.is>.

⁶¹ Hall and Parsons, “Making Stemmas with Small Samples,” §§48–50.

⁶² Cf. Arthur, “The Importance of Marital and Maternal Ties”; Springborg, “Antiqvæ historiae leporis.”

The Postmedieval Production and Dissemination of *Njáls saga* Manuscripts

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THE NEW INTEREST IN Icelandic saga literature that Renaissance humanism brought with it, especially in Scandinavia in the seventeenth century, is demonstrated by the increasing number of manuscript copies containing sagas that were produced by Icelanders in that period. Whereas the transmission of *Njáls saga* in medieval parchment manuscripts has been investigated quite thoroughly, not least by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (1952, 1953) and by members of “The Variance of *Njáls saga*” project, a systematic treatment of the postmedieval paper manuscripts that takes into account their origins, provenance, and relationship to each other, is still lacking.¹ This paper is a first step towards filling this gap, being a survey of the postmedieval transmission of *Njáls saga* with particular attention directed towards both scribes and owners of the saga manuscripts, taking into account their cultural and social background and environment. An attempt is made at classifying a large part of the extant paper manuscripts into three groups by comparing the variant readings with regard to two sentences, one in chapter 17 (KG 17.32–33) and one in chapter 132 (KG 132.10–11).

Of the sixty to seventy manuscripts of *Njáls saga* still extant, just under forty were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² In this paper, twenty-four of these will be analyzed and discussed. A large number of these manuscripts have been shown to be copies of a now-lost vellum manuscript that was given the name *Gullskinna*.³ Accordingly, attention will be drawn to some of the characteristic features of the *Gullskinna* manuscripts, among other things the stanzas they preserve, which are largely the same as those preserved in *Reykjabók* (AM 468 4to), one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the saga. Most of these stanzas are not found in other medieval *Njáls saga* manuscripts.⁴

The Lost Gullskinna Manuscript and Seventeenth-Century Copies Derived from It

What do we know about Gullskinna? Why was it called Gullskinna and what happened to it? Jón Helgason says in his introduction to the facsimile edition of Reykjabók, published in 1962, that “[i]n AM 134, fol., written by Jón Erlendsson (d. 1672), some marginal variants have been added by him from two manuscripts which are called Gráskinna and Gullskinna. Gráskinna can be identified as the parchment manuscript Gl. kgl. sml. 2870 4to; Gullskinna, which was undoubtedly also a parchment manuscript, does not exist any more.”⁵ Gullskinna must have been a parchment manuscript, still in existence around and after 1640, but after this it was destroyed—though when and how is unknown. It is not unlikely that the codex was sent off to Denmark (as was the case with large numbers of Icelandic manuscripts) but that the ship went down.⁶ In his introduction, Jón Helgason confirmed Jón Þorkelsson’s earlier opinion that Gullskinna had been a vellum manuscript, probably copied from a sister manuscript of Reykjabók. Jón Helgason furthermore drew attention to a close connection between Gullskinna and the θ -fragment (AM 162 B fol. θ , only two folios), which indicated that the Gullskinna version was copied in the early fourteenth century. Jón Helgason actually stated that the Gullskinna text in some instances is better than the text of Reykjabók.⁷ Jón Helgason’s main argument for the close relationship between the Gullskinna version and Reykjabók turned on the verses: “Gullskinna was particularly close to 468, for instance in having had only nos. 1–10 of the secondary verses.”⁸

Már Jónsson, in a short article published in 1996, contributed some important observations on the Gullskinna manuscripts.⁹ He came to the conclusion that AM 136 fol., Jón Gissursson’s copy of *Njáls saga*, is closest to Gullskinna and that at least four other seventeenth-century manuscripts preserve another branch of the text. Judging from the copies preserved, Gullskinna was most likely located in the western part of Iceland in the early seventeenth century. In his article, Már provides several readings that distinguish between manuscripts derived from Gullskinna and other *Njáls saga* manuscripts. In the present chapter, these readings have been used as test cases for assigning manuscripts to different groups (see table 8.1 at the end of the chapter).

Jón Gissursson (1590–1648) was a key figure with regard to scribal culture in the seventeenth century, as Peter Springborg has noted: “den mand hvis afskrifter rangerer mellem dem betydeligste i første del af

1600-tallet, ikke blot inden for det vestfjordske område, men på Island i det hele taget.”¹⁰ Jón was half-brother of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson. It is possible that Jón’s antiquarian interest and scribal activity might have originated independently, early on in his life, but he was certainly encouraged by Brynjólfur, with whom he probably collaborated on manuscript-copying and collecting projects. In his younger years, Jón Gissursson spent some years in Hamburg, where he trained as a goldsmith: he is said to have been a very dexterous man (“hann var manna hagastur”).¹¹ After this, he lived out the rest of his life in the West Fjords as a wealthy farmer and a *lögréttumaður* [law-court member].¹² It is not unlikely that Jón Gissursson was the owner of Gullskinna and, given his metal-working skills, it might even have been him who decorated the manuscript with the golden clasps that gave rise to the manuscript’s nickname.

Jón Gissursson’s copy of *Njáls saga* is now a stand-alone manuscript with its own call number, but it was originally a part of a larger book that Árni Magnússon acquired from Sveinn Torfason, Jón Gissursson’s grandson, in 1704. According to Árni (information is provided in Árni’s hand on a slip accompanying the manuscript), this book was produced before 1643.¹³ In addition to *Njáls saga*, it originally contained *Laxdæla saga*, *Kappakvæði*, a poem on saga heroes composed by Þórður Magnússon as well as two other stanzas by him on the *Laxdæla saga* characters Kjartan and Bolli (all of these texts are now catalogued as AM 126 fol.); *Eyrbyggja* and *Vatnsdæla saga* (now AM 138 fol.); and *Hensa-Þóris saga* (now AM 165 f fol.), but Árni Magnússon took the book apart, as he often did.¹⁴ Árni suspected that *Vatnsdæla saga* was copied from a certain exemplar, and therefore wanted to compare the two texts of the saga in order to establish their textual relationship.¹⁵

Commissioners and Owners

The commissioners of *Njáls saga* manuscripts in the seventeenth century can be shown to belong to the learned upper class and are well-known figures in the history of Iceland, including, for example, the Bishops of Skálholt and Hólar, and the literary magnate Magnús Jónsson of Vigur (1637–1702). There is extant one manuscript in the hand of Halldór Guðmundsson, who worked for Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason at Hólar; two manuscripts by Jón Erlendsson, who worked for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson; three manuscripts written by scribes who worked for Magnús Jónsson of Vigur; and two manuscripts written by Ketill Jörundsson,

Árni Magnússon's grandfather. These figures will be discussed below. A few lesser-known characters also commissioned these seventeenth-century copies of *Njáls saga*, one of these being Daði Jónsson (d. 1682), who was a *sýslumaður* [sheriff] and had *Saurbæjarbók* (AM 163 i fol.) written for him in 1668 (see plate 13). He was the son of the Reverend Jón Jónsson at Melar, to whom the most important poet of the seventeenth century, Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–74) sent the first exemplar of his Passion hymns; Jón, in turn, was the son of the Reverend Jón Þorsteinsson, priest and poet in Vestmannaeyjar, who was killed by North-African pirates in 1627.¹⁶ Daði spent some time abroad when he was young, receiving training as a carpenter, and came back to Iceland in 1651. He was in the service of the sheriff at Bessastaðir, then became a sheriff himself in Kjósar- and Gullbringusýsla from 1663 and a wealthy landowner.¹⁷ The scribe who wrote the manuscript of *Njáls saga* that Daði commissioned was Hinrik Magnússon (1633–1706), a farmer and a *lögréttumaður* at Saurbær on Kjalarnes. Springborg has pointed out that people connected to the Church—that is, with theological education, or children of such people—were most likely to have manuscripts written or to write them themselves.¹⁸

Later owners of *Njáls saga* manuscripts were, in some cases, the descendants and relatives of scribes or commissioners. It is worthy of note that both scribes and owners were people connected to the legal system: *lögréttumenn*, other administrative officials, or people that were connected to the Church. This class of people was the cultural elite in Iceland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The owner of *Ferjubók* (AM 163 d fol.) was, for instance, Sigurður Magnússon, *lögréttumaður* and wealthy farmer at Sandhólaferja in Rangárvallasýsla. The aforementioned scribe Hinrik Magnússon was *lögréttumaður*, and the same goes for Jón Gissursson.

The Dissemination of Njáls saga in the Seventeenth Century

The amount of information we have about scribes in the seventeenth century is variable. Jón Erlendsson was a prolific scribe, and in a contemporary source (*Kjósarannáll*) he is said to have been a great *antiquarius*—that is, more than just a mere copyist.¹⁹ Two copies of *Njáls saga* are preserved in Jón Erlendsson's hand, *Hofsþók* (AM 134 fol.) and *Vigfúsarbók* (AM 137 fol.). Most of the sixty or so extant manuscripts written by him are, today, held in the Arnarnagæan collection in Reykjavík and Copenhagen, but there are

also several in the National Library of Iceland, and in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Jón mainly copied sagas and historical literature, producing large folio volumes in a regal *fraktur* hand (or upright chancery script). For all that he was a prolific copyist, though, we know little about his education. He was a priest at Villingaholt, in the south of Iceland, which probably meant that he studied at the cathedral school in Skálholt, but he does not seem to have studied or worked abroad (for example in Copenhagen, as was the case for other Icelanders). He was married and had ten children.²⁰ It is not unlikely that copying manuscripts was a means for him to increase his income and that his reputation as a learned and knowledgeable man was due to his relationship with Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson, who, in many cases, was the commissioner of the manuscripts Jón produced. Már Jónsson has shown that Vigfúsarbók is a copy of Jón Gissursson's manuscript, AM 136 fol.²¹ Árni Magnússon has written on a slip that Hofsbók was once part of a larger codex which he received from the Reverend Ólafur Gíslason at Hof in Vopnafjörður, in the east of Iceland.

Jón Erlendsson's copies, Hofsbók (p. 34) and Vigfúsarbók (p. 41), have the same readings at KG 17.32–33 and KG 132.10–11 as Jón Gissursson's copy (e.g., “eigi ertu einn í leikum” and “var þar mokað af miklum usla,” see table 8.1). This group of Gullskinna manuscripts is here designated group A. Nine manuscripts from the eighteenth century also belong to this group, which are discussed below.

Ketill Jörundsson (1603–1670) was a contemporary of Jón Erlendsson but received more education and was appointed to higher positions over the course of his career. Ketill studied theology at the University of Copenhagen from 1622 to 1623 and spent some years first as a teacher, and then as rector of the cathedral school at Skálholt (1632–1638). Later, he became minister and then provost at Hvammur in Dalir, western Iceland. He was a famous teacher and also a very prolific scribe.²² The so-called Hvammsbók copy of *Njáls saga* (AM 470 4to) was written by Ketill. Unfortunately, we have no information about who his commissioners were; we know only that his son also copied manuscripts, and that his grandson, Árni Magnússon, of course became Iceland's greatest manuscript collector.²³ Ketill's son, Páll Ketilsson (1644–1720), made a copy of *Njáls saga* probably while studying in Copenhagen from 1663 to 1665.²⁴ This copy is now AM 555 a 4to. Árni Magnússon received it from Frederik Rostgaard, as he stated on a slip: “Ex Bibliotheca Septimio-Rostgardiana. Sed mea nunc est ex Dono Domini Rostgardi” [From the

Septimius-Rostgaard library. But now mine, a gift from Rostgaard]. Páll most likely made the copy using his father's manuscript, Hvammsbók, as an exemplar.²⁵ Páll Ketilsson was a priest (minister), and later provost, and seems to have been a rather ordinary Icelandic official who was educated at Skálholt and in Copenhagen. Most likely, he was influenced by his father's and nephew's enthusiasm and interest in Old Icelandic literature. Árni Magnússon has written on a slip:

Sr Pall Ketilsson skrifade mier til 1699. Eg heldd, ad ecke mune merkilegt þad Nialu-Exemplar, sem þier sied hafed med minne hende utanlandz. (in Bibliotheca P. Septinaii). Enn qnnur var uppskrifud i Hvamme af minum goda fõdur, epter pergaments bok (ef mig rett minner) fra Þorde Steindorssyne. Jdem Sr Páll Ketelsson 1700. Niala, sem i Hvamme var skrifud, var sidan samanlesen vid pergaments bok Þordar Steindorssonar hverrar fragmenta kannske sieu til ydar komin.

[Rev. Páll Ketilsson wrote to me in 1699: I do not think the copy of *Njáls saga* which you have seen abroad in my hand is remarkable (in Bibliotheca P. Septinaii). Another one was copied in Hvammur by my dear father, from a parchment codex which came from Þórður Steindórsson (if I remember correctly). The same Rev. Páll Ketilsson [wrote] in 1700: The *Njáls saga*, which was copied at Hvammur, was then collated with Þórður Steindórsson's parchment codex [Kálfalækjarbók], fragments of which perhaps are now with you.]²⁶

Matthew Driscoll has pointed out that “the majority of seventeenth-century copyists, those whose names are known, were not members of the clergy although many of them had spent time at the schools in Hólar or Skálholt or were the sons of clergymen.”²⁷ Halldór Guðmundsson seems to have had less formal education than both Jón Erlendsson and Ketill Jörundsson received, but has been identified as one of five scribes known to have worked for Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason at Hólar.²⁸ Halldór was a farmer at Sílastaðir in Kræklingahlíð, not far from the Hólar see. Because of Halldór's position and lower social class, we have less information about him. According to Stefán Karlsson, several manuscripts from the middle of the seventeenth century are preserved in Halldór's hand, among them four law codices and three other legal documents, but also *Sturlunga saga* (two copies), *Árna saga biskups*, *Njáls saga*, chivalric sagas (*riðdarasögur*), *rimur*, and contemporary poetry. It seems that some of the manuscripts that Halldór wrote were commissioned by the Bishop but others he copied and

kept for himself, such as one of the manuscripts in his hand now preserved in the Royal Library in Stockholm. This manuscript, Holm. papp. 8 4to, seems to have got to Sweden in the hands of his nephew, Jón Jónsson Rúgmann.²⁹

Halldór Guðmundsson's copy, Breiðabólstaðarbók (AM 555 c 4to), has the readings: "hun hloo ad og m(ælti) Eygi ertu *einginn* i leýkum" (9v) and "Var þar mokad af miklum *usla*" (55r) which are the same as readings in Ketill Jörundsson's and Páll Ketilsson's copies. Hinrik Magnússon's copy, Saurbæjarbók, has: "hun glotti ad og m(ælti): eigie ertu einginn J leiknum" (7v17). The sentence about *usla* or *ösku* is missing in the manuscript. It has instead "Hiallj spurde: huar Niall mundj vnder vera: Karj vjjsade honum til" (48v3–4). These manuscripts are here classified as group B.

The prolific book production connected to and conducted by Magnús Jónsson of Vigur is particularly remarkable.³⁰ It has to be seen in the context of the renewed interest in the earlier saga literature that was prompted by humanism (and the competition between Denmark and Sweden over their Gothic origins), but Magnús obviously had a passionate interest in literature in general, and he assembled manuscripts of all types and genres: chapbook material, for example, and other types of texts that were in fashion, some of which would have been considered trivial by his contemporaries.³¹ In an article published in 1967, Agnete Loth wrote about manuscripts written by or for Magnús Jónsson of Vigur, mainly those containing Sagas of Icelanders and other medieval Icelandic literature. It is not surprising to find *Njáls saga* together with the other literary works that were copied in this context. One manuscript that once belonged to Magnús but which found its way to London in the hands of Sir Joseph Banks, BL Add 4867 fol., was written by Jón Þórðarson in the years 1690 to 1692 and includes *Njáls saga*.³² Another of the manuscripts commissioned by Magnús is AM 426 fol., which contains thirty-one Sagas of Icelanders, written in 1682 by three scribes: Þórður Jónsson, Jón Þórðarson, and a third copyist, who (according to Jón Helgason) must have been Magnús Þórólfsson.³³ *Njáls saga* is not now among the sagas in AM 426 fol. but Agnete Loth has shown that originally, *Njáls saga* was part of the manuscript, though it was later removed and now is bound in with other material in Vigursbók (NKS 1220 fol.). A picture of Njáll that was also originally part of AM 426 fol. is now found in the manuscript Lbs 3505 4to, a fact that Agnete Loth was unable to explain.³⁴ *Njáls saga* in Vigursbók has a colophon: "Skrifuth, og enþuþt apt Wigr æ Jsafiarþar diwpe af Magnuse Ketilssýne, Anno 1698" [Written and finished at Vigur in Ísafjarðardjúp by Magnús Ketilsson in the year 1698].

Magnús Ketilsson (ca. 1675–1709) was the son of a priest, Ketill Eiríksson, who died when Magnús was only fifteen years old. After that, he was fostered by Magnús of Vigur, due to a family relationship.³⁵ He studied at the cathedral school in Skálholt and then became a priest in the east of Iceland (at Desjarmýri in Borgarfjörður) in 1700, where he lived until he passed away nine years later, at only thirty-seven years of age. In the period 1696 to 1700, he stayed with Magnús at Vigur and worked there as his scribe.³⁶ Agnete Loth has identified fourteen manuscripts in Magnús's hand, thereof two signed by himself. As Loth points out, these two manuscripts are in two different scripts (*fraktur* and cursive) that are so unlike each other that one would never guess they were written by the same scribe.³⁷ Most of the manuscripts in Magnús's hand contain sagas or related material—that is, medieval works; one of the manuscripts, JS 583 4to, contains (contemporary) religious poetry.³⁸ In some cases, Magnús has only written the title pages of manuscripts.

The Production of *Njáls saga* in the Eighteenth Century

The cultural context in which *Njáls saga* manuscripts were produced in the eighteenth century is notably different to that of the seventeenth century. In many cases, the scribes are unknown, which confirms that they neither belonged to, nor worked for, the upper class. Most of the commissioners of these eighteenth-century manuscripts in Iceland (if there were commissioners in the first place) are unknown. In this period, copies of the saga were also being commissioned abroad, mainly in Copenhagen.

The manuscript AM 469 4to was written on the island of Fagurey in Breiðafjörður (hence the manuscript's name, Fagureyjarbók) in the spring of 1705, as stated in the colophon, from March 13 to April 19. The name of the scribe is not given but he was probably Einar Eiríksson (born ca. 1668), a *húsmaður* [farmhand] on another island in Breiðafjörður, Bjarneyjar, in 1703.³⁹ Apart from *Njáls saga* itself, the manuscript (which comprises 150 folios) contains a number of verses about the saga's heroes. In addition to five verses about Gunnarr, Njáll, Skarphedinn, Kári, and Flosi that are found copied out directly following the saga, the scribe also added a verse about Hqskuldr Hvítanessgoði in the margin of folio 86v. It is unknown whether the manuscript was commissioned.⁴⁰

Lágafellsbók (ÍB 261 4to) contains *Njáls saga* and was written by a certain Jón Jónsson in 1740. Two slips belonging to the manuscript indicate that, like Fagureyjarbók, it has its origins in Snæfellsnes or the Breiðafjörður

area. The beginning and the end of the saga, as well as a few stanzas at the end, are written in a younger hand than that of the main scribe.⁴¹ A woman called Ragnhildur Jónsdóttir has signed her name as the owner of the manuscript.⁴² It belongs to the B-group as confirmed by the readings “ei ertú einginn i leikum” (16v20) and “var þar mokad af miklum usla” (98r22–23). As with the other Gullskinna manuscripts, it has the additional stanzas—for example, three stanzas recited by Unnr Marðardóttir (“Vijst seige eg godt af geistum,” 9v; “Víst hefur hringa hrister,” 9v; “Þö veit eg hitt ad hreiter,” 10r)—at the beginning of the saga (chapters 6 and 7).

Thott 1776 4to (ca. 1742–1800) is a collection of manuscripts and fragments of various sagas that did not originally belong together.⁴³ The third section, Thott 1776 4to III, contains *Njáls saga* on eighty-six folios along with a detailed index on fols. 82v–85v. This part of the manuscript was written by an unknown scribe. According to Susanne M. Arthur there is no indication that *Njáls saga* here was initially part of a larger compilation of texts.⁴⁴ The manuscript belongs to the B-group, having the readings “eigi ertu einginn I leikum” and “var þar mokad af ufla miklum.”

AM Acc. 50 contains only *Njáls saga* (and does not seem to have been altered from its original state) and was written by Jakob Sigurðsson (1727–1779) from Vopnafjörður, a prolific scribe and illustrator. The National and University Library of Iceland has fourteen acquisition numbers for Jakob’s manuscripts; two more of his manuscripts are preserved in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík, but AM Acc. 50 belongs to the Arnamagnæan collection in Copenhagen. Jakob grew up under the protection of the Reverend Ólafur Stefánsson at Kirkjubær in Hróarstunga (east Iceland). He began farming with his wife at Jórvík in Breiðdalur, “after which they moved from one croft in Vopnafjörður to the next until he died [...] just over fifty and the father of at least seven children.”⁴⁵ According to Zeevaert et al., based on comparison of chapter 86 of *Njáls saga*, AM Acc. 50 is a sibling of AM 162 b fol. θ. This “would be remarkable if true, making it an almost unique witness to a lost early manuscript.”⁴⁶ The problem is that AM Acc. 50 is “highly innovative,” which makes it difficult to filiate it correctly.⁴⁷ Zeevaert et al. consider it equally possible that the manuscript belongs to the Gullskinna class and suggest that further research is necessary.⁴⁸ The readings “Ey ertu Eynginn i Leykum” and “Var þar mokad af miklumm Úßla” point to the Gullskinna class, group B. The scribe of AM Acc. 50, Jakob Sigurðsson, added a poem of four verses following the saga on fol. 140r, focusing first on Njáll, but also mentioning Gunnarr, Kári, and commenting on the saga as a whole.⁴⁹

Urðabók (ÍB 270 4to), written by an unknown scribe in the eighteenth century, is divided into two parts in its present state.⁵⁰ The first part preserves *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* and the latter part has *Njáls saga*. This copy of *Njáls saga* contains the additional stanzas which, atypically, are written separately from the main text so they are visually prominent (22v–23r). It has the variant readings “ei ertu barn i leikum” (30v12–13) and “var þar mikelle ósku af ad moka” (111v3). Ferjubók is the oldest extant manuscript that has the reading “hun hlö at og m(ælti): eigi ertu barn i leikum.” The manuscripts that have this variant are here classified as group C. At the end of the saga in ÍB 270 4to, there is another poem on *Njáls saga*, written in the hexameter variant, leonine meter (rhymed hexameter), possibly under influence from Hallgrímur Pétursson’s well-known poem, *Aldarháttur*.⁵¹

Lbs 3505 4to was written in 1698 by an unknown scribe whose hand has also been identified in the manuscript BL Add 4865 fol. at 289r–338v.⁵² *Njáls saga* is found at the beginning of this manuscript, followed by sagas of bishops and name registers. The manuscript contains a picture of Njáll and seems to be connected to AM 426 fol., on the basis of similar pictures of Egill Skallagrímsson, Grettir Ásmundarson, and Guðmundr ríki Eyjólfsson that are preserved in this latter manuscript. All of these pictures were probably made by Hjalti Þorsteinsson in Vatnsfjörður (1665–1754).⁵³ The title page has the following text:

Fróðlig sagnabók innihaldandi eftirtektaverðar historiur nokkra nafnfrægra íslenskra manna, hvörjar forðum tíð þessa lands innbyggjarar hafa uppteiknað og eftir sig látið. Nú að nýju uppskrifaðar anno 1698 eftir þeim orðréttustu gömlu bókum er menn meina fyllstar og sannferðugastar vera. Fróðleiksgjörnum lesara til iðkunar og íhugunar en þeim til lærdóms og lystisemi sem þesskonar skemmtun hlýða nenna.

[A learned book of stories containing noteworthy histories about some Icelandic men of renown, which the inhabitants of this country in olden days composed and left for others to read. Now copied anew, in the year 1698, from the most accurate old books which men consider to be the fullest and truest. For the reader who is eager for knowledge, for study and contemplation, and for the enlightenment and delectation of those who deign to pursue such entertainment.]

Lbs 3505 4to has the readings “Hün hlö ad og mæ(lte) eige ertu barn i leikum” (19v24–25) and “Var þar mokad af mikillre ósku” (133v24)

which, alongside other details, shows a relationship to Magnús Ketilsson's manuscript *Vigursbók*, also written in 1698. Both manuscripts thus belong to the C-group. The title page of Lbs 3505 4to might also suggest a connection with manuscript production at Vigur.⁵⁴

Also belonging to the C-group is Lbs 437 4to, written by an unknown scribe in the late eighteenth century, as the colophon at the end of the manuscript (at 239r) confirms: "Pann 27da Martii 1773." The saga is here in a rather unusual context, as the contents of the manuscript otherwise is poetry, prosody, and onomastics, and no other sagas are preserved in the manuscript.

The rest of the eighteenth-century manuscripts belong to the A-group. They may have been copied on the basis of the *Njáls saga* manuscripts in Árni Magnússon's collection in Copenhagen. One of these A-group manuscripts is Thott 984 fol. (1755), a large, three-volume collection of sagas on 2232 folios. *Njáls saga* is preserved in Volume III, written by Jón Ólafsson *yngr*i (1738–75), presumably for the Danish Count and Minister of State Otto Thott (1703–1785) in Copenhagen, Denmark.⁵⁵ While Jón Þorkelsson assumed the manuscript to be a direct copy of *Oddabók*,⁵⁶ Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert (see p. 188) state that chapter 86 in Thott 984 fol. III belongs to the Gullskinna class.⁵⁷ It has the readings "egi ertto einn i leicom" and "var þar mocat af micllom uzlla."

Thott 1765 4to belongs to the same class, with the readings "eigi ertu eirn ad leyknum" and "Var þar mokad af myklum Ufla." It contains *Njáls saga* on 138 folios and is mainly written by an unknown scribe. This manuscript seems to be more closely related to NKS 1219 fol. than other manuscripts, as they both have the reading "ad leyknum," and they only have two of Unnr's three stanzas.

The scribe and provenance of the manuscript NKS 1219 fol., written in the late eighteenth century, are unknown. The manuscript was previously part of Peter Frederick Suhm's collection and contains *Njáls saga* on 243 folios.⁵⁸ It also belongs to the A-class with the readings "ei ertu eirn ad leiknum" and "var þar ufla mikill." A title page, which is decorated with black ink, bears the title "Niaala." As Susanne M. Arthur has pointed out, the dating of the manuscript (to the mid-eighteenth century, a time when many copies of Icelandic manuscripts were produced in Copenhagen), its current location, and its connection to Suhm's collection, make it quite possible that it was produced in Copenhagen, probably for a wealthy commissioner.⁵⁹ Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir has detected signs of interest in religious matters in NKS 1219 fol.⁶⁰

Kall 612 4to was written around 1753 in the West Fjords of Iceland by an unknown scribe. Apart from *Njáls saga*, it contains sagas belonging to the *fornaldarsögur*/*riddarasögur* genres, *Egils saga einhenda*, *Sturlaug's saga starfsama*, and *Ectors saga ins sterka*. It belongs to the A-group with the readings “Ecke ertu þó eirn að leyke” and “Þar [w]ar mokad af miklum Ufla.” The manuscript preserves six verses written by the main scribe on 214r–v.⁶¹ These verses mention Kári, Njáll, Mqrðr, Hqskuldr, Skarpheðinn, Flosi, Björn, Gunnarr, “Þjóf-Hallka” (= Hallgerðr), Gizurr, and “Gerða” (= Hallgerðr). The scribe follows the saga with the words “Þeir hafe þóck sem skrifudu enn hiner óngvar er ej Riett Läsú” [Thanks to those who wrote, but none to those who did not read correctly].⁶² There is a possible connection between Kall 612 4to and the father of Ólafur Olavius (editor of the first edition of *Njáls saga*, published in 1772, see further Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume, p. 2), and it is therefore possible that Olavius brought the manuscript to Copenhagen, where the historian Abraham Kall obtained it.⁶³

ÍB 322 4to contains *Njáls saga* and was written by the priest Jón Helgason (1699–1784) at Bjarnastaðagerði in Skagafjörður, northern Iceland, in 1770.⁶⁴ According to sources the scribe was mentally ill: “Átti við mikil geðræn vandamál að stríða. Hann stundaði mikið fræðistörf og allmikið af handritum er til eftir hann, en mjög varlegt er að treysta þeim vegna geðveilu hans” [Contended with severe mental health problems. He produced a lot of scholarship and there are many manuscripts preserved in his hand, but they can hardly be relied upon because of his insanity].⁶⁵ The title page and the beginning of the saga is lost; the saga begins in chapter 10. The manuscript has the Gullskinna-class variant “var þar mokat af usla miklom” (103vb9–10).

Bjarnastaðabók (NKS 1788 4to) was written by the same scribe, Jón Helgason. According to the colophon on 207r, Jón finished the copy on March 14, 1760, at Bjarnastaðagerði. It contains *Njáls saga* and has the readings “Eigi ertu einn at leikum” and “var þar mokat af miklom ufla,” and is thus an A-class manuscript. A dedication on 207v, dated September 20, 1762, states that Jón gave the manuscript as a gift to Sören Pens, a Danish merchant at Hofsó, who may also have been the commissioner. This seems quite unusual as there are few known examples of merchants commissioning manuscripts. According to Susanne M. Arthur, the two-column design of the two manuscripts ÍB 322 4to and Bjarnastaðabók “may suggest that the scribe had a more prestigious intent for his copies. The manuscripts are, however, overall very plain and quite sloppily designed.”⁶⁶

Different Types of Manuscripts

In the last few years, a growing interest in postmedieval manuscript production and dissemination has manifested itself in scholarly articles and doctoral dissertations, for example Tereza Lansing (2011), Silvia Hufnagel (2012), Philip Lavender (2014), Susanne M. Arthur (2015), Beeke Stegmann (2016), Sheryl MacDonald Werronen (2016), and Sofie Vanherpen (forthcoming). As the starting point for their research, each of these scholars takes the new ideas and approaches to manuscript production that characterize research in material philology and the sociology of texts, where emphasis is laid on the physical form of the text as an integral part of its meaning.⁶⁷

In her PhD dissertation, Tereza Lansing argued that the fifty extant manuscripts of *Hrólfs saga kraka* can be divided into four types of manuscript based on measurement of text density, marginal space, and surrounding texts, for example. These four types are the learned, the literary, the decorative, and the plain manuscript types. Susanne Arthur has come to similar conclusions regarding manuscripts containing *Njáls saga*—that is, that they mainly fall into two categories: scholarly and private manuscripts (see p. 232 in the present volume). The main difference is between manuscripts intended for ordinary readers and those which were made for learned figures, scholars, or intellectuals. In the case of some *Njáls saga* manuscripts, the scribes obviously knew the saga well and drew attention to important events and comments in the saga; some manuscripts only comprise textual commentary—that is, no comment on the saga itself, only different variants and readings.

Examples of the former type (scholarly) are the manuscripts described above written by Jón Gissursson, Halldór Guðmundsson, Jón Þórðarson (in the West Fjords), and Ferjubók. A professional scribe like Halldór Guðmundsson has marked proverbs and sayings in the margins of *Breiðabólstaðarbók*: we find “mälzh. Med kýmne” [a proverb with humor], “gott ordtak” [a good saying], “v” in the margin denotes the presence of a *vísa* or stanza, and “v velkuedinn” means a well composed stanza. The scribe also added comments that describe the action such as “fundur gunnars og hallgierdar” [the meeting of Gunnar and Hallgerður], “suika vnderbünungur Niäls brennu” [the deceitful preparation of the fire], “klædnadur skarphiedenns aa alþingje” [Skarphedinn’s clothing/outfit at Alþingi], and “jllur daude” [a bad death]. When Skapti Þóroddsson says “en það ætlaði eg að eg einn myndi þetta kunna síðan

Njall var dauður” [I thought that only I knew this detail of the law now that Njáll is dead], the scribe has written “siálfhælné” [self-praise] in the margin (62r).

Jón Gissursson has a few marginal notes such as “v” for *vísa* and “víg” for slaying (of one and another), “betre er sokn en vörn” [attack is the best defense]; “Sigling Flosa” [Flosi’s voyage], and so on. When Unnr explains to her father why she and Hrútr cannot consummate their marriage, a marginal note (5v) reads: “galldur ad nyttkast ecke vid konu” [magic spell: how not to be of use to a woman]. On the last page of the saga (89v), the sentence “sættust þeir þá heylum sáttum” [they made a full reconciliation] is written in bigger and bolder letters than the previous text. At the end of the saga, the lines are also indented from both sides. The final sentence is “og liukum vier þar Brennu Nialz sógu. FINIS” (as a cross) probably to mark the tailing off of the narrative, and for aesthetic reasons.⁶⁸

Examples of the latter type (private) are manuscripts written by Jón Erlendsson, Jón Halldórsson in Hítardalur, and Ketill Jörundsson. It is interesting to compare a stanza on the saga at the end of Hvammsbók, written by Ketill Jörundsson, with Rauðskinna (Lbs 222 fol.), written by Jón Þórðarson (see plate 14). Ketill Jörundsson wrote Hvammsbók between 1640 and 1670 and it came into the possession of Árni Magnússon in 1704 at the Alþingi. Variants in the margin written by Ketill are taken from the medieval codex Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.). Hvammsbók contains a stanza at the end that is not in Ketill’s hand and begins “Käre hefur vered mætur mann, mitt það álit er vmm hann ...” [Kári was a distinguished man, that’s my opinion of him ...]. The stanza has been crossed out very decisively, probably by a later owner, perhaps by Árni Magnússon himself. The content of the stanza is rather predictable; what is more interesting is why someone (Árni, or someone else) found it necessary to delete it. Between Ketill and Árni, the manuscript was in the possession of two or three other owners, among them Árni’s brother Jón Magnússon—who may have composed and written the stanza.

Jón Þórðarson wrote Rauðskinna in the period 1695 to 1698 (presumably on commission from Magnús Jónsson of Vigur). The manuscript contains chapbook material, prose romances, kings’ sagas, *fornaldarsögur* and so on. A few initials have been decorated with images of faces (e.g., on fols. 335 and 336r). The manuscript has the reading “hun hlö ad oc mælltti. ei ertu ejnginn i leikum” (254r16–17) but “ejnginn” has been changed above the line to “barn,” probably by another scribe. About fifty years

later, in 1746, according to the manuscript, someone composed about thirty stanzas on the saga, which are written out at the end of it. In the early nineteenth century, the owner, a woman called Þuríður Gísladóttir, wrote her name in the manuscript. According to the census (*Manntal*) of Ísafjarðarsýsla in 1816, Þuríður Gísladóttir (then sixteen years old) was the daughter of the farmer Gísli Jónsson at Tröð. Other names occur as well, in inscriptions such as the following:

Hier stendur Guðmundur Ólafsson a hofdinu gratandi jnan um
sogurnar.

Mad Þurijdur Gisla Dotter a Bokina med Riettu vitnar Biarni Jons
son a Gélte

Madame Þuridur Gisladottir a bokena seiger sä sem klorad hefur
Guðmundur a Brecku.

[Here Guðmundur Ólafsson stands on his head, crying amid the
sagas.

Madame Þuríður Gísladóttir owns the book, Bjarni Jónsson at
Göltur confirms (this).

Madame Þuríður Gísladóttir owns the book, says the one who
scrawled (this), Guðmundur at Brekka.]

According to the 1816 census, Bjarni Jónsson (then twenty years old) was a stepson of the farmer at Göltur; Guðmundur Guðmundsson was a single farm laborer at Stóra-Brekka; and Guðmundur Ólafsson was a twenty-three-year-old shepherd at Meiribakki. These are thus the names of young men who lived in the neighborhood at that time and who also seem to have read the manuscript. In the late nineteenth century, the manuscript was sold to the National Library of Iceland, but, prior to that, it had clearly been read and enjoyed by one generation after another in the West Fjords. Árni Magnússon's manuscript, on the other hand, was in circulation only for fifty years and bears little trace of having been used by ordinary people. This does not mean, however, that Árni did not know the saga or appreciate it. The opposite, in fact, seems to be true, as in the beautifully decorated manuscript GKS 1003 fol. (written in the seventeenth century by Páll Sveinsson), he has written (on a note) a short description of the saga in Danish that reads: "En smuck Historie angaaende een deel folk vesten oc sónden paa Jisland, af hvilke den fornemste heed Nial" [A beautiful story about some people from the western and southern parts of Iceland, of whom the most noble one was called Nial].

Characteristic Features of the Gullskinna Class of *Njáls saga* Manuscripts

One important research question that arises from the study of these postmedieval *Njáls saga* manuscripts is to what extent the scribes of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries copied the text of Gullskinna thus preserving its medieval shape, or where and how they adapted the Gullskinna text to suit altered literary tastes and contemporary language use, or whether, indeed, other tendencies (archaism, conservatism) can be seen in these copies.

As Jón Karl Helgason has pointed out, the dissemination of *Njáls saga* in the period after the Reformation (1593 to 1772) is “characterised by the fact that the saga corpus was being brought to the attention of readers outside of Iceland, most significantly Scandinavian antiquarians.”⁶⁹ Most of the preserved vellum manuscripts of *Njáls saga* ended up in libraries in Denmark and Sweden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where some of them were copied, translated, or paraphrased, as noted above. Back in Iceland, with the majority of the vellum manuscripts being exported, numerous new copies of the saga were produced. Some of these manuscripts are enriched by contemporary poetry, generally verses (sometimes composed by the scribe of the manuscript in question), which are a kind of commentary on the personality of individual saga characters.⁷⁰

How different is the text of the Gullskinna manuscripts from other preserved texts of *Njáls saga*? How great is the variance of *Njáls saga*? The immediate answer seems to be not much, at least, not explicitly. This suggests that there was a great respect for the text, that it was considered important, even sacred, and perhaps also that rewriting could not improve it. The rewriting took place more in a paratextual way, as has been demonstrated above.

On the other hand, it is an important fact that most, if not all, the postmedieval manuscripts of the Gullskinna version, preserve the so-called “additional verses” in *dróttkvætt*. Guðrún Nordal has discussed the function of skaldic verse in the Sagas of Icelanders and among other things pointed out that the characters are given “a unique voice through their poetic utterances. The stanzas assume the status of direct speech while representing a different mode of expression altogether, far removed from everyday speech and the prose text, susceptible to ambiguous and subtle interpretation.”⁷¹

The opening chapters of *Njáls saga* explain the marital problems of Gunnarr Hámundarson's cousin, Unnr Marðardóttir; in certain manuscripts, three stanzas are attributed to her. The other additional stanzas are attributed to Sigmundur Lambason (three verses); Gunnarr Hámundarson (thirteen verses), Skarpheðinn Njálsson (ten verses), and Þormóður Ólafsson (one verse). These verses are found in the medieval manuscripts Reykjabók (see Beeke Stegmann in this volume), Kálfalækjarbók, Skafinskinna, two fragments, and in the postmedieval manuscripts that derive from Gullskinna. The medieval manuscript Möðruvallabók, on the other hand, preserves none of these stanzas. How far this applies to the other medieval texts of the saga is difficult to tell because in many cases, the texts of *Njáls saga* are fragmentary and the passages where verses would be cited are defective.

It is interesting to note that in the age of Lutheran orthodoxy and religious strictness, there seems to have been little tendency to change the text of *Njáls saga* or tamper with it. Whether this is the case with all Sagas of Icelanders or only *Njáls saga* is difficult to say. The fact that the additional poetry is preserved in the postmedieval tradition also indicates that people did not find it very hard, or at least not impossible, to understand stanzas in the *dróttkvætt* meter. Haukur Þorgeirsson has recently suggested that the *dróttkvætt* tradition "still had some vitality on the eve of the Reformation."⁷² It seems that the *dróttkvæði* genre had a much higher status in the post-Reformation period than has generally been noticed, both as a treasure from a glorious past and as a model for contemporary poets. We should not forget that learned authors in the seventeenth century were very interested in the *dróttkvætt* meter and regarded it as a distinctive and important feature of Icelandic poetry, as can be seen in both treatises on poetry and language (such as by Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás and Þorlákur Skúlason⁷³), and also in the poetry itself. Baroque delight in periphrasis and metrical complexity ensured a favorable reception for the renewed interest in the *dróttkvætt* measure, with its aurally intriguing rhymes and complex kennings. Magnús Ólafsson and Stefán Ólafsson both composed occasional poems in *dróttkvætt*. Hallgrímur Pétursson used this same meter in his satirical, occasional, and religious compositions, and especially in individual verses, and its influence is also evident in the rhymes used in his works in other genres.⁷⁴ *Dróttkvætt* came to be highly thought of by scholars in seventeenth-century Iceland, and Icelandic poets of the period may well have regarded it as a source of creative stimulus, comparable

in some respects to the ancient classical meters that European baroque poets sought to emulate.

The editions of *Njáls saga* made by Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson in 1875 and Finnur Jónsson in 1908 were based on the oldest and most complete preserved manuscript of the saga, Reykjabók, but Einar Ólafur Sveinsson on the other hand, in his influential Íslenzk fornrit edition from 1954, chose Möðruvallabók as his main text (see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume, pp. 2–5). The most striking difference between the editions is that the additional poetry was omitted in the main text of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's edition although it was printed in an appendix. Most readers who are able to read the saga in Icelandic use the Íslenzk fornrit edition and they will therefore get the picture of Unnr describing her problems in prose. The same is true, generally, of readers who read the saga in translation, whether English, Danish, or German. It should be mentioned that Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson printed the Reykjabók text (with the additional verses) in a modern Icelandic edition in 2003.

To conclude this chapter, the scene in which Unnr talks with her father Mörður will be presented, as preserved in Reykjabók and two Gullskinna manuscripts, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in English, Danish, and German translations of the saga. It is striking that the postmedieval manuscripts are almost identical with the medieval text, while the modern editions and translations are not.

Reykjabók, chapter 7 (cf. KG 7.11–25):

Mörður mælti: “Hvað segir þú mér frá Hrúti félaga þínum?”
Hún kvað vísu:

Víst segi eg gott frá geystum
geirhvessanda þessum,
það er sjálfráðlegt silfra
sundurhreyti er fundið.
Verð eg, því er álmur er orðinn
eggþings fyrir gjörningum,
satt er að eg ség við spotti,
segja margt eða þegja.⁷⁵

Mörður varð hljóður við og mælti: “Það býr þér nú í skapi, dóttir, að þú vilt að engi viti nema eg og munt þú trúá mér best til úrráða um þitt mál.”⁷⁶

AM 136 fol. (5r31–38); Jón Gissursson, Gullskinna version:

Mörður mælti: Hvað segir þú frá Rúti féлага þínum?
Hún kvað vísu:

Víst segi eg gott frá geystum
geyr hvesandi þessum,
það er sjálfráðligt silfri
sundur hreyti es fundið,
verð eg því álmur er orðinn
eggþings fyrir gjörningum
satt er að eg segg við spotti
segja margt eða þegja.

Mörður varð hljóður við og mælti: “Það býr þér nú í skapi, dóttir,
að þú vilt að engi viti nema eg og munt þú trúá mér best til úrráða
um þitt mál.”

AM 470 4to (8v2–9); Ketill Jörundsson, Gullskinna version with variants
from Kálfalækjarbók:

Mörður mælti: Hvað segir þú frá Rúti féлага þínum?
Hún kvað vísu:

Víst segi eg gott frá geystum
geir hvesanda þessum
það er sjálfráðlegt *silfra* < *silfri*
sundur hreyti *er* < *ef* fundið
verð eg því *at* < *er* álmur er orðinn
eggþings fyrir gjörningum
satt er að *se* *eg* < *segg* við spotti
segja margt eða þegja.

The translations:

Mord spoke: “What have you to tell me about your partner Hrut?”
She answered, “I can say only good things about him in the matters
over which he has control.” Mord took this silently.⁷⁷

Maard sagde: “Nu, hvad siger du mig om din Husbonde Hrut?”
Hun svarede: “Kun godt har jeg at fortælle om ham, for saa vidt
det angaar Ting, han selv kan gøre for.” Maard blev tavs derved ...⁷⁸

Mörð fragte sie: “Was hast du mir von deinem Mann Hrut zu
berichten?” “Nur Gutes kann ich über ihn sagen, zumindest was das
betrifft, was in seiner Macht steht” antwortete sie. Darüber wurde
Mörð still.⁷⁹

What is lacking in the text of all the translations is Unnr's opinion that Hrútr is under the influence of witchcraft and her own fear of being made a laughing stock—of mockery.⁸⁰ As Guðrún Nordal has pointed out, the additional stanzas “offer valuable insights into the perception of the saga characters, such as Unnr, Sigmundur, Gunnarr and Skarpheðinn. Unnr's unusually graphic description of her sexual relationship with Hrútr in the first three stanzas anticipates the importance of sexual themes in the saga. The stanzas give her a chance to speak her mind; without them she is a silent victim.”⁸¹

There is a great difference between Unnr describing her problems in a plain, everyday style in prose and Unnr reciting her own stanzas, which are metrically and stylistically complicated. The stanzas demand the concentrated intelligence of the listener and are increasingly exciting in content, with a progression in the description from the first stanza to the third. It should be mentioned that in the newest Danish translation (2014), the text of *Njáls saga* as translated by Kim Lembek is based on Reykjabók, with a convincing translation of the additional verse that seems very faithful to the original text.⁸²

Conclusions

The investigation of the postmedieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* has revealed that with regard to mode of narration, the Gullskinna version is much closer to the medieval texts than the standard edition (Íslenzk fornrit) and recent translations of *Njáls saga*. Of the twenty-four postmedieval manuscripts discussed in this paper, half were written in the seventeenth century and half in the eighteenth century. The cultural context of manuscript production changed markedly from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, but *Njáls saga* remained highly influential in postmedieval Icelandic literary culture, a fact confirmed by, among other things, the stanzas and other additional poetry composed by these later scribes and readers of the saga.

It has been possible to divide the manuscripts into three groups based on the comparison of two variant readings from two different points in the text of the saga. Further investigation into the twenty-five or so manuscripts in the Gullskinna class will enable a more detailed study of the kinds of change that occurred at the hands of a variety of postmedieval audiences over the five hundred years of the transmission of this medieval text.

Table 8.1 Manuscript variants from Reykjabók and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *Njála* manuscripts.

Manuscript	Scribe	Date	Provenance	Unnr st.	Hallgerður's reply	After the fire	Group
Reykjabók		1300– 1324		x	Hún hló að og mælti: “Eigi ertu <i>engi</i> í leikinum?”	var þar mikilli ósku af að moka	
AM 136 fol.	Jón Gissursson	Before 1648	West Fjords	x	Eigi ertu einn í leikum	Var þar mokað af miklum usla	A
Hofsbók	Jón Erlendsson	Before 1672	S-Iceland	x	hún hló að og mæltre Eige ertu eirn j leikum	Var þar miked [moked?] af myklum vsla	A
Vígfúsarbók	Jón Erlendsson	Before 1672	S-Iceland	x	hún hlo að og mæltre Eigi ertu einn í leikum	Var þar mokað af miklymm vsla	A
Hvamsbók	Ketill Jörundsson	Before 1670	W-Iceland	x	Eige ertu <i>einginn</i> í leikum	Var þar mokað af miclum usla > `mikille ósku´	B
AM 555a 4to	Páll Ketilsson	(1644– 1720)	W-Iceland	x	Eigi ertu <i>enginn</i> í leikum	Var þar mokað af miklum usla	B
Breiðabólstaðarbók	Halldór Guðmundsson	17th century	N-Iceland	x	hún hloo að og m(ælti) Eysi ertu <i>einginn</i> í leykum	Var þar mokað af miklum vsla	B
Saurbæjarbók	Himrik Magnússon	(1633– 1706)	S-Iceland	x	hún glotti að og m(ælti): Eigie ertu <i>einginn</i>] leikum	The sentence is missing	B

Manuscript	Scribe	Date	Provenance	Unnr st.	Hallgröður's reply	After the fire	Group
BL Add 4867 fol.	Jón Þórðarson	1690– 1692	West Fjords	x	Hún hló ad og mælti eige ertu <i>einginn</i> i leikum	Var þar mokad af miklumm vsla	B
Rauðskinna	Jón Þórðarson	1695– 1698	West Fjords	x	Ei ertu <i>ejnginn</i> > <i>barn</i> <i>m.a.b.</i> i leikum	Var þar mokad af miklumm usla	B/C
Ferjubók	Unknown	Before 1683	S-Iceland	x	Eigi ertu <i>barn</i> i leikum	Var mikellj <i>ösku</i> af mökad	C
Vigursbók	Magnús Ketilsson	1698	West Fjords	x	eige erto <i>barn</i> i leikum	var þar þaa mokat af mikille <i>avfko</i>	C
Lbs 3505 4to	Unknown	1698		x	Hún hló ad og mæ(ite) eige ertu <i>barn</i> i leikum	Var þar mokad af mikillre <i>ösku</i>	C
Fagureyjartbók	Einar Eiríksson	1705	Breiðafjörður	x	Eigi ertu <i>enginn</i> i leikum	Var þar mokad af miklum vsla	B
Lágafellsbók	Jón Jónsson	1740	Breiðafjörður	x	ei ertú <i>einginn</i> i leikum	Var þar mokad af miklum usla	B
Thott 1776 4to III	Unknown	18th century		x	eigi ertu <i>einginn</i> i leikum	var þar mokad af ufla miklum	B
AM Acc. 50	Jakob Sigurðsson	(1727– 1779)	E-Iceland	x	Ey ertu <i>Eynginn</i> i Leykum	Var þar mokad af miklumm <i>Úßla</i>	B

Urðabók	Unknown	18th century	x	ei ertu <u>barn</u> i leikum	var þar mikelle ósku af ad moka	C
Lbs 437 4to	Unknown	1773	x	Hun hló at og mæ(iti). Ecki ertu <u>barn</u> i leikum	Var þar mokat af ausku mikilli	C
Thott 984 fol. III	Jón Ólafsson the Younger	18th century	x	eggi ertu einn i leicom	var þar mocat af micllom uzlla	A
Thott 1765 4to	Unknown	ca. 1750	Stanzas 1 and 2	eigi ertu eirn ad leyknum	Var þar mokad af myklum Ufla	A
NKS 1219 fol.	Unknown	ca. 1760–1780	Stanzas 1 and 2	ei ertu eirn ad leiknum	var þar ufle mikill	A
Kall 612 4to	Unknown	1753	x	Ecke ertu þó eirn ad leyke	Þar [w]ar mokad af miklum Ufla	A
Þjarnastaðabók	Jón Helgason	1760	x	Eigi ertu einn at leikum	var þar mokat af miklom ufla	A
ÍB 322 4to	Jón Helgason	1770	The beginning is missing	The sentence is missing	var þar mokat af usla miklom	A

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Note: *Unnr. st.* = Additional stanzas, at least three, spoken by Unnr Marðardóttir

Hon hló at ok mælti:
„Eigi ert þú *engi* í leiknum.“

It is an interesting fact that only six of the extant manuscripts are preserved in the National and University Library of Iceland, while two-thirds of them (eighteen) ended up in libraries abroad (ten in Árni Magnússon's collection, which was kept in Copenhagen for a long time, and eight in other foreign collections). Recently, it has been suggested by Már Jónsson (in unpublished papers) that very few people in Iceland in the seventeenth to the nineteenth century had access to Sagas of Icelanders such as *Njáls saga*. This theory is based on an investigation of *dánarbú* (inventories of personal property owned by individuals at their death) in Iceland at the time. But *Njáls saga* does not seem to have ever disappeared as an important part of Icelandic culture and heritage; the fact that manuscripts circulated and were lent from one farm to another may explain why. In some of the manuscripts discussed in this article, the title of the saga is given as *Njaala edur Jslendijnga saga* (e.g., *Ferjubók*), suggesting that the saga was not only seen as the history of particular areas in Iceland but also as the history of Icelanders, which may explain why it has always been so central to the literary history of Iceland.⁸³

NOTES

¹ For an overview of all extant manuscripts containing *Njáls saga* see Susanne M. Arthur and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume.

² According to Susanne M. Arthur there are seventeen extant manuscripts of *Njáls saga* from the seventeenth century and twenty-one from the eighteenth century, see Arthur, "Reading, Writing, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 184, and pp. 286–91 in this volume.

³ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 703–6 and 721–27; Már Jónsson, "Var þar mokað af miklum usla," 52–55.

⁴ See Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites" and "Dialogue" on the stanzas found in *Njáls saga* manuscripts, and Beeke Stegmann in this volume.

⁵ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xii–xiii.

⁶ "[...] har været en membran, kan man vistnok omtrent anse for givet [...] Det er sikkert at Gullskinna har været til omkring 1640 og senere, men hvor når den er gået til grunde, er en hemmelighed ... Muligvis er begge disse bøger [Íslendingabók] blevne sendte afsted ned til Danmark, men forliste," Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 727–28.

⁷ "[...] in several places Gullskinna had a better text than 468, so that it cannot possibly be derived from it," Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xiii; arguments for this statement are given by Jón Helgason in footnote number 9.

⁸ Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xiii.

⁹ See also Már Jónsson, “Petabrot Njálu og Gullskinna.”

¹⁰ “the person whose copies are among the most valuable in the first part of the seventeenth century, not only in the West Fjords area, but generally in Iceland,” Springborg, “Antiqvæ historiæ lepores,” 78.

¹¹ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* III, 119. Már Jónsson, in an article published in 2018, claims that Jón spent time in Copenhagen rather than Hamburg, and trained to be a silversmith rather than a goldsmith, see “Hvar lærði Jón Gissurarson,” 70–71.

¹² Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* III, 118–19.

¹³ “Nials Saga med hendi Jons Gissurssonar. Ur bok i folio (elldre enn 1643) er eg feck af Sveine Torfasyne 1704.”

¹⁴ See Beeke Stegmann’s recent PhD dissertation, “Árni Magnússon’s Re-arrangement of Paper Manuscripts.”

¹⁵ According to a slip in AM 138 fol. written by Árni Magnússon, a manuscript in Jón Erlendsson’s hand was at the time in the possession of Jón Hákonarson at Vatnshorn in western Iceland.

¹⁶ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* III, 320–21.

¹⁷ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* I, 302.

¹⁸ Springborg, “Antiqvæ historiæ lepores,” 56–57.

¹⁹ *Annálar 1400–1800* vol. 2, 451.

²⁰ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* III, 106.

²¹ Már Jónsson, “Var þar mokað af miklum usla,” 52. See also Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, p. 185.

²² Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* III, 356.

²³ See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “Manuscripts on the Brain,” 9–37.

²⁴ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár* IV, 129.

²⁵ Már Jónsson, “Var þar mokað af miklum usla,” 55, but cf. Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, p. 187.

²⁶ Parentheses in original. Square brackets editorial.

²⁷ Driscoll, “The Long and Winding Road,” 53.

²⁸ Stefán Karlsson, “Skrifaraf Þorláks biskups,” 399–401.

²⁹ Stefán Karlsson, “Skrifaraf Þorláks biskups,” 401.

³⁰ On Magnús Jónsson of Vigur and his manuscripts, see Jón Helgason, “Inngangur”; Jóhann Gunnar Ólafsson, “Magnús Jónsson í Vigur,” 107–26; Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 92–100; Driscoll, “The Long and Winding Road,” 53–54.

³¹ Seelow, *Die isländischen Übersetzungen*, 260–66.

³² This manuscript is now part of the British Library’s collection, having been donated by Banks to the British Museum along with other objects that Banks collected during his visit to Iceland in 1771, see Jón Helgason, “Inngangur,” 8–12. Another Gullskinna manuscript, Lbs 222 fol., is also written by the same Jón Þórðarson.

³³ Jón Helgason, “Inngangur,” 9.

³⁴ Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 92–94. See also Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, p. 197.

³⁵ Magnús Jónsson and Magnús Ketilsson were both descendants from and equally related to the priest and the poet Einar Sigurðsson at Eydalir, see Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 95–96.

³⁶ Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 96.

³⁷ Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 97.

³⁸ Cf. Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Constructing Cultural Competence.”

³⁹ Cf. Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*.”

⁴⁰ See Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*.”

⁴¹ The stanzas discuss the persons of the saga and their fate, e.g., “Væn Unnr raun vann að reyna.”

⁴² “Þessa bók a eg med óllum rietti, Ragnhildur Jónsdóttur [*sic*].” (fol. 2r; “I am the rightful owner of this book. Ragnhildur Jónsdóttir”).

⁴³ Kålund, *Katalog*, 345. I want to thank Ludger Zeevaert especially for providing me with information on variant readings in the manuscripts preserved in Copenhagen.

⁴⁴ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 162.

⁴⁵ Gísli Sigurðsson, “Melsted’s Edda,” 180.

⁴⁶ Zeevaert et al., “A New Stemma of *Njáls saga* [Working paper],” 16.

⁴⁷ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 88.

⁴⁸ Zeevaert et al., “A New Stemma of *Njáls saga* [Working paper],” 16.

⁴⁹ See Wawn, “Poets and Poetry,” 8–10.

⁵⁰ Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson at Upsir acquired the manuscript in 1871.

⁵¹ Hallgrímur Pétursson, *Ljóðmáli* 1, 24–41; Margrét Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 286.

⁵² See <https://handrit.is>

⁵³ Cf. Loth, “Om håndskrifter fra Vigur,” 94–95.

⁵⁴ Cf. Springborg, “Antiquæ historiae lepores,” 76; Driscoll, “The Long and Winding Road,” 53–54.

⁵⁵ *Dansk biografisk leksikon* XXIV, 55–59.

⁵⁶ Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 746.

⁵⁷ See plate 12 in the present volume.

⁵⁸ See Kålund, *Katalog*, 139. On Suhm see *Dansk biografisk leksikon* XXIII, 114–24.

⁵⁹ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 87.

⁶⁰ By changing the style of script, the scribe emphasizes, e.g., the trinity and the importance of salvation. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “Flettu upp á taðskegglungunum.”

⁶¹ See Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 276; Jón Þorkelsson, “Om håndskrifterne,” 748–49.

⁶² Fol. 115v, cf. Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 292–93.

⁶³ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 85. On Abraham Kall (1743–1821), see *Dansk biografisk leksikon* XII, 312–14.

⁶⁴ <http://islandingabok.is>

⁶⁵ *Ættartölubækur Jóns Espólins*, 746.

⁶⁶ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 176.

⁶⁷ See Driscoll, “The Words on the Page,” 90–95.

⁶⁸ See Lethbridge, “Njálulok,” 131–33.

⁶⁹ Jón Karl Helgason, *The Rewriting of Njáls saga*, 24.

⁷⁰ Jón Karl Helgason, *The Rewriting of Njáls saga*, 27.

⁷¹ Guðrún Nordal, “Attraction of Opposites,” 217.

⁷² Haukur Þorgeirsson, “Dróttkvæður Heimsósómi,” 161.

⁷³ “Magni Olavii de Poesi nostra discursu”; text and English translation in Faulkes, *Edda Magnúsar Ólafssonar*, 408–15. An essay by Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason was first printed in the Appendix to *Literarum Runicarum*, see Margrét Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 99–100.

⁷⁴ Margrét Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 511.

⁷⁵ “Víst segi ég gott frá þessum framgjarna hermanni (þeim sem hvekkir spjót), allt það sem honum (silfra sundurhreytir er sá sem hreytir silfri sundur, þ.e. örlátur maður) má telja sjálfrátt. Ég verð annaðhvort að gera, að segja margt eða þegja, því að viður orustunnar (hermaðurinn, Hrutur) er orðinn fyrir gjörningum; það er satt að ég óttast spott.”

⁷⁶ *Brennu-Njálssaga; texti Reykjabókar*, edited by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, 16. The spelling of the text in the manuscripts compared to the text in Reykjabók is normalized accordingly.

⁷⁷ *Njal's Saga*, translated by Cook, 15.

⁷⁸ *Nials saga*, translated by Petersen, 53.

⁷⁹ *Isländersagas I*, 471.

⁸⁰ See Hamer, *Njáls saga and Its Christian Background*, 77–83.

⁸¹ Guðrún Nordal, “Attraction of Opposites,” 227.

⁸² *Islendingesagaerne III*, 3–237.

⁸³ See Lethbridge, “Hvorki glansar gull á mér,” 53–89.

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“Njáls saga er þetta. Loftur hefur lesið mig”

Readership and Reception of *Njáls saga*: A Selection
of Marginal Notes and Paratextual Features

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The History of Readership and Reception:
A Brief Summary

In Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol.), a reader—at some point during the late fifteenth or sixteenth century—wrote in the margin: “Njalz saga er þetta. loftur hefur lesid mig” (fol. 46v; “This is *Njáls saga*. Loftur has read me”). It is impossible to say whether Loftur was glad or regretful to have read *Njáls saga* (although the former may be more likely) and whether he just read the text or owned the manuscript. But undoubtedly, he could not resist the urge to tell future users of the manuscript that he, Loftur, had held this magnificent fourteenth-century codex in his hands and read its content (see plate 15).

Like Kálfalækjarbók, most manuscripts have been written in by readers. William Schipper points out that marginal notes are an important part of the history of a manuscript, for “margins are the place where dialogue between readers and text takes place.”¹ Marginalia and other paratextual features have previously been valued by scholars mainly because they can provide information about the dating of a manuscript, its scribes, or provenance. Since the late 1980s, however, an increasing number of scholars have shifted their focus toward the history of reading, and scholarly research has attempted to give readers’ comments the credit they deserve and to bring what is written in the margins to the center of attention.² With regard to Icelandic manuscripts, hitherto, this kind of research has been limited. One usually finds discussion about marginalia in facsimile editions of Icelandic manuscripts, but editors tend to be selective and to restrict their commentary to personal names, place-names, or dates, which may provide information about the provenance of the manuscript or its users. Matthew James Driscoll gives an overview of different types of marginalia in Icelandic manuscripts with a number of specific

examples,³ and Christine Schott discusses marginalia in three medieval codices (Rask 72 a, AM 604 4to, AM 433 a 12mo) in her MA thesis.⁴ Driscoll's article and Schott's MA thesis are, however—to my knowledge—the only detailed discussions of marginalia in the Icelandic context; the latter being restricted to a small number of manuscripts, the former providing a more general introduction.

Readers' notes can provide information about how a manuscript was used by different readers, who the readers were, and how the text of a codex was received by specific readers. Paratextual features are also useful for establishing or confirming different types of manuscripts. Very generally, postmedieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* can be divided into manuscripts that exhibit a scholarly interest by the scribe or commissioner—referred to as scholarly manuscripts (S) or private-scholarly hybrids (H)—and private, reading manuscripts primarily written for entertainment purposes. These private, reading manuscripts can be divided further into decorative (D), moderate (M), or plain (P) manuscripts, primarily based on the generosity of the layout, text density, and degree of decoration.⁵

The present chapter offers a glimpse at the potential of a more detailed study of marginalia and paratextual features with regard to the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*.⁶

Paratextual Features

Marginal notes and other paratextual features can be divided into two major categories: comments that relate in some way to the main text of the manuscript, on the one hand, and those that do not, on the other.⁷ Both types of commentary can either have been added by the scribe or author of the primary text or—like Loftur's comment in *Kálfalækjarbók*—by later readers.

While both main groups of paratextual features can be divided into a multitude of subcategories, this chapter focuses on features relating to or commenting on *Njáls saga* and its narrative characters. Such paratextual features come in the form of verbal commentary on the main text as well as nonverbal commentary, such as highlighted and underlined passages. Verbal commentary includes words or signs which can be interpreted as a positive or negative reaction by the reader, whereas nonverbal commentary remains somewhat silent about the reader's thoughts but, nonetheless, indicates that the marked passage engaged the reader.⁸

Sixty-one manuscripts of *Njáls saga* were studied for this analysis.⁹ Seventeen vellum codices and all paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* have paratextual features related to the main text. The manuscripts without such features are all small fragments.¹⁰

Verbal Commentary

Verbal commentary on the main text includes summaries of text passages (including rubrics or chapter titles), comments or added verses about the text or its characters, as well as historical or geographical information—the latter occasionally with references to other texts. Since this category is fairly broadly defined, it is not surprising that the majority of manuscripts contain at least one of these features.

Aside from the aforementioned fragments that do not contain any paratextual features related to the main text, only three manuscripts contain no verbal commentary of any kind on the main text.¹¹ Consequently, seventeen vellum and thirty paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* contain verbal comments.¹²

Among the medieval vellum manuscripts (fourteenth and fifteenth century), rubrics are the most common and are present in fourteen codices.¹³ The medieval manuscripts that do not have rubrics either leave empty spaces where rubrics could have been added later or are so heavily fragmented that it cannot be determined whether the original manuscript contained rubrics. While rubrics do not appear in paper manuscripts, eight paper manuscripts contain chapter titles,¹⁴ which serve the same function as the medieval rubrics. In Lbs 747 fol. (M), the chapter titles are taken from the 1772 edition of *Njáls saga*, of which the manuscript is a copy. Most rubrics and chapter titles offer neutral descriptions of the chapters to which they belong. Some, however, indicate a positive or negative judgment by the scribe. Rubrics in *Kálfalækjarbók*, for example, and corresponding chapter titles in its copy AM 464 4to (H), written by Jón Halldórsson (1665–1736), such as “fra uviksamligum slægðum marðar” (*Kálfalækjarbók*, fol. 62v; AM 464 4to, fol. 93r; “about Mǫrðr’s deceitful craftiness”) and “fra lvygi marðar valgarðsvsonar” (*Kálfalækjarbók*, fol. 63r; AM 464 4to, fol. 93v; “about the lie of Mǫrðr Valgarðsson”) imply a dislike for Mǫrðr Valgarðsson. In Thott 1776 4to III (M), the chapter describing the death of Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi is introduced with the title “ágjæt vǫrn og fall Gunnars” (fol. 39r; “Gunnarr’s excellent defense and his defeat”) indicating the scribe’s admiration for Gunnarr’s heroic last stand. The chapter titles

in Lbs 437 4to (P) are later additions, for the most part taken from the 1772 edition of *Njáls saga*.¹⁵ However, when Flosi and the *brennumenn* [burners] ride to Bergþórshváll, the chapter title in the manuscript states that “Fiandmenn koma til Bergþórshvols” (fol. 182v; “The enemies arrive at Bergþórshváll”), a more judgmental statement than the neutral “Heimsókn til Bergþórshvols” [Visit to Bergþórshváll] in the 1772 edition.¹⁶

Some manuscripts have titles for each chapter, while the remaining manuscripts only add titles for certain chapters. In some cases, particularly in presumed direct copies of medieval codices (such as the scholarly copy Landakotsbók or the private-scholarly hybrid AM 464 4to), the reason for a restricted use of chapter titles may be dependent upon the exemplars, which themselves may not contain rubrics for all chapters or may have rubrics that have become illegible due to fading red ink. In other cases, scribes may have added titles only to chapters that they considered to be particularly important for the plot. These include, for example, the introductions of Gunnarr and Njáll, Gunnarr’s death, the Christianization of Iceland, the burning at Bergþórshváll, and Flosi’s dream sequence.

That some chapters were considered of higher importance than others is also evident from the use of more elaborately decorated initials, as Lars Lönnroth has illustrated in his article “Structural Divisions in the *Njála* Manuscripts” (1975). He points out that “practically all [medieval] *Njála* manuscripts have an extra large initial at the beginning of the chapter where Gunnarr is first introduced.”¹⁷ Lönnroth’s analysis, furthermore, shows that other chapters of the saga are highlighted by enlarged initials as well, most frequently in *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.).¹⁸ These include the beginning of the saga, Njáll’s introduction, Gunnarr’s death, Flosi’s introduction, the beginning of the Conversion episode, or the burning at Bergþórshváll, to name a few examples. In *Kálfalækjarbók*, three initials, each one signaling the beginning of the chapters introducing Gunnarr and Njáll, as well as the Conversion episode, are particularly highly decorated.¹⁹ No detailed study of the initials in the postmedieval *Njáls saga* manuscripts has been undertaken at this point. It can be observed, however, that at least some of these younger manuscripts also highlight certain chapters more overtly, such as Gunnarr’s, Njáll’s, and Flosi’s introductions. A rather humorous example can be found in *Fagureyjarbók* (AM 469 4to, fol. 16v; M), where the scribe, Einar Eiríksson (b. ca. 1668²⁰) begins the chapter introducing Njáll with an enlarged and decorated initial depicting a bearded figure: this seems unusual considering Njáll’s most prominent physical feature is his beardlessness (see plate 16).²¹

Comments on the text and summaries of text passages, similar to rubrics and chapter titles but written in the margins, not usually at the beginning of a chapter, and often not in the same hand as the main text, occur in five vellum manuscripts as well as in seventeen paper manuscripts.²² These summaries and comments allude to sections that were of particular interest to scribes and readers. Occasionally, they also allow for an interpretation of how certain scenes or characters were perceived by scribes or readers.

Like rubrics and chapter titles, some of the summaries are neutral descriptions of events within the main text. Other summaries, though neutral in wording, nonetheless indicate how the scribe or reader interpreted a scene or what he considered significant. The scribe of *Ferjubók* (AM 163 d fol., P), for example, appears to have had a particular interest in Hallgerðr's role in the death of two of her husbands. On fol. 9v, the scribe writes: "Þiostolfur drepur Þorv(alld). Bonda hallgerðar at hentar äeggian" [Þjóstólfr kills Þorvaldr, Hallgerðr's husband, at her urging]. Later, during Gunnarr's last stand, he writes: "hallg(erdur) vill ei hærít liá. Hier Deý<r> G(unnar) aa hlýðarenda" (fol. 19r; "Hallgerðr does not want to give the hair. Here dies Gunnarr of Hlíðarenda"). In both cases, the scribe implies that Hallgerðr is to blame for her husbands' deaths. The section in which Hrútr's premonition that Hallgerðr has the eyes of a thief becomes a reality when she tells Melkólfr to go to Kirkjubær to steal food, and this is highlighted in two manuscripts: in AM 465 4to (P), two marginal notes on fol. 32v read "hier sannast vel ræða Hrúts" [Here Hrútr's words are well proven = Here Ruutr's words prove to be entirely true], and "Þioófur er hallgerdur" [Hallgerðr is a thief], and in *Lambavatnsbók* (AM 396 fol., M), a later reader adds a comment about the scene as well. The marginal note here (at fol. 112r) can only partially be deciphered, but it clearly identifies Hallgerðr as the person instigating the theft.²³ While fairly neutral in their description and true in their statements, the fact that both readers specifically call Hallgerðr a thief or instigator of the theft thus draws attention to Hrútr's prediction and Hallgerðr's imperfect character (see plate 17).

Other summaries and comments show positive or negative judgments of scenes or characters. A later reader of *Gráskinna* (GKS 2870 4to) adds a positive comment on Gunnarr, stating "hier deyr gunnarr hamundarson med heidur" (fol. 49v; "Here dies Gunnarr Hámundarson with honor").²⁴ Most positive comments, however, occur in the form of added paratextual verses about the saga and its characters. These appear either in the margins

or are added following the end of the saga. Skafinskinna (GKS 2868 4to) is the only medieval manuscript that clearly preserves a paratextual verse about one of the saga's characters, Grímr Njálsson (fol. 26v). Verses about the saga heroes are more frequent in the paper manuscripts and occur in ten codices.²⁵ They show which characters particularly fascinated the scribes and readers of *Njáls saga*; these characters are most notably—and not really surprisingly—Njáll, Gunnarr, Njáll's sons (particularly Skarpheðinn, but also Grímr and Helgi), Kári, Flosi, and Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði, but also some of the saga's antagonists, such as Hallgerðr and Mǫrðr.

Not taking these verses into consideration and focusing solely on other commentary (either within the text or in the margins), it can be observed that judgmental comments, particularly on the actions of Hallgerðr, Valgarðr inn grái,²⁶ and Mǫrðr Valgarðsson, as well as the *brennumenn*, are more frequent than positive comments on other characters, or the story in general.

Mǫrðr's malevolent character and behavior appear to have particularly enraged and engaged the scribes and readers of *Njáls saga*, likely due to his involvement in the killing of Gunnarr, Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði, Njáll, and his family. When Mǫrðr's birth is noted in the saga, Páll Sveinsson (b. 1633?²⁷), scribe of GKS 1003 fol. (D), adds in the margin: "Jllur vættur kemur hier vid søgu" (fol. 71r; "An evil supernatural being comes here into the story"). At the same point in the story, the scribe of Ferjubók (P) adds in the margin: "[Hi]er Kiemur Lyga [M]ordur f[æ] hann [s]kamm" (fol. 11v; "Here appears Mǫrðr the Liar. Shame on him"). Jón Þórðarson (1676–1755), scribe of the two moderate reading manuscripts, BL Add 4867 fol. and Rauðskinna (Lbs 222 fol.), also gives Mǫrðr negative bynames, calling him "falsarinn Mørdur" (BL Add 4867 fol., fol. 58v; Rauðskinna, fol. 303v; "Mǫrðr the Phony") and "Svika mørdur" (BL Add 4867 fol., fol. 40r, 59r; Rauðskinna, 304r; "Mǫrðr the Traitor").²⁸ Moreover, in BL Add 4867 fol., Jón Þórðarson adds the marginal note "Marger kunna marðarlega ad Lata, ei sydur enn Mærdarlega" (see below for discussion of the translation), when people want to seize the farms of the *brennumenn* after the burning at Bergþórshváll, and Mǫrðr advises against it with the words "ef Bv þeirra standa kyrr, þa munu þeir skiött vitia þeirra, og quenna sinna, Og mun þar þa mega veida þæ er stunder Lyda. Skulud þier nu eckj efa ydur ad eg sie Kæra Trur J øllum rædum þviat eg æ fyrer sialfann mig ad svara" (fol. 71v; "If their farms are untouched, they will come to visit them and their women, and they can be hunted down in due course. Have no doubt that I will be loyal to Kari in every

way, for I must look out for myself”).²⁹ *Mærdarlega* [like Mǫrðr] certainly refers to Mǫrðr, although a wordplay on “marten-like” cannot be ruled out. Based on Jón Þórðarson’s evident dislike of Mǫrðr, the word likely conveys deceitfulness. *Mærdarlegur* is related to *mærd* [verbosity, flattery]. The comment implies that Mǫrðr has evil on his mind when he speaks, saying one thing while thinking something different: many a man speaks not only fulsomely but cunningly.

The judgment of Mǫrðr’s character is also supported by a comment preserved in Lambavatnsbók (M), Ferjubók (P), and GKS 1003 fol. (D). After Valgarðr convinces his son Mǫrðr to goad Njáll’s sons into killing Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði and, by extension, causes Njáll’s and his sons’ deaths, the three manuscripts incorporate the phrase “fæci þeir skamm bader” (Lambavatnsbók, 127r; Ferjubók, 24v; GKS 1003 fol., fol. 92r; “Shame on both of them”) in parentheses into the main text. The three manuscripts are textually very closely related, and it thus seems likely that the comment originated as a variant or a marginal comment from a lost exemplar. The unknown scribe of Lambavatnsbók writes the phrase in a script that differs noticeably from the one he utilizes for the remainder of the saga. This implies awareness by the scribe of incorporating a variant into the text that was not originally part of the saga but that he possibly considered a rightful addition or comment on Mǫrðr and Valgarðr. Moreover, the aforementioned rubrics in Kálfalækjarbók and the corresponding chapter titles in its copy AM 464 4to (H) also imply a dislike for Mǫrðr, due to his instigation of Hǫskuldr’s death. That the killing of Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði was considered by some readers as cruel and senseless is exemplified by another marginal annotation by Jón Þórðarson (1676–1755) in BL Add 4867 fol. (M), who writes “Drepinn Hǫskuldr Drepinn Hǫsk(uldr) Hvytan(es) Godi. Illt verk” (fol. 59v; “Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði is killed. An evil deed”).

While the above-described paratextual features and examples of marginalia focus on the saga text and its characters, other marginal notes draw connections between the saga, its characters, and Icelandic and Scandinavian history.

Historical, biographical, or geographical information added in the margins is found in three medieval and fifteen paper manuscripts.³⁰ On fol. 14r in Gráskinna, the scribe adds a slightly different genealogy for Haraldr hilditǫnn in the margin. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson explains that in *Landnámabók* and most manuscripts, Haraldr hilditǫnn is named as the son of Hrærekr slǫngvanbaugi.³¹ The scribe of Gráskinna, however, gives

an alternative genealogy, tracing Haraldr's lineage back to "Hrærekr hnögvanbauga, Hálfðanarsonar, Fróðasonar, Hrærekssonar slöngvanbauga"³² [Hrærekr hnögvanbaugi, son of Hálfðan, son of Fróði, son of Hrærekr slöngvanbaugi]. Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) contains chronological and genealogical information in a seventeenth-century hand about the saga's main protagonists on the flyleaf (recto).³³ Oddabók (AM 466 4to) contains a marginal note in a younger hand—possibly from the seventeenth century—explaining the location of Hvítanes (in south Iceland). On fol. 53v, this later reader underlined the name as part of the phrase "vig skarph(edins) skyllði jafnt vigi hoskollss hvita ness g(oda)" [The slaying of Skarphedin was weighed equally against the slaying of Hoskuld the Godi of Hvítanes³⁴] and then adds in the margin "[A] milli freisteins hollts og Þyngskæla ness wt undan vykingz LæK og J wt sudur af þyngskæla nese" [Between Freysteinholt and Þyngskálanes, due west of Víkingslækur and southwest of Þyngskálanes]. The exact location of Hvítanes is unknown, although attempts have been made to reconstruct it.³⁵ The marginal note in Oddabók can, therefore, be seen as an early witness to an attempt to preserve or reconstruct the geographical location of the place.³⁶ Moreover, this marginal note has been incorporated in four paper manuscripts. The quotation appears in the same spot in the saga, but in parentheses as part of the main text in Lambavatnsbók (M) (fol. 141r) and Ferjubók (P) (fol. 34v), which are both textually very closely related to Oddabók. In these two cases, the marginal note may have found its way into both manuscripts from Oddabók. In Vigursbók (NKS 1220 fol., D) (fol. 59r, margin) and Lbs 3505 4to (M) (fol. 98r, in text), however, the same quotation is added to a completely different text passage, namely when Høskuldr Hvítanessgoði receives his byname. This is the more natural place for adding an explanatory note regarding the location of Hvítanes since the passage marks the first mention of the place-name. Vigursbók and Lbs 3505 4to appear to be rather innovative manuscripts, possibly combining the Oddabók branch with the Gullskinna branch (a textual branch related to a lost medieval codex).³⁷ They are likely based on the same (lost) exemplar. It is unclear, however, whether the scribe of the exemplar of Vigursbók and Lbs 3505 4to took the quotation regarding Hvítanes from Oddabók (or a manuscript closely related to Oddabók) and moved it from the later point of the saga to its more logical position or whether this possible lost exemplar may have been the source for the annotation in Oddabók.³⁸ Marginal additions in the form of dates are common. Some scribes and readers are quite thorough, adding historical and biographical information about

numerous events and characters, while others are rather selective. Sometimes, dates are added without any further commentary. Other scribes and readers try to keep track of the saga's time line by mentioning when certain people were born, died, or held a certain office. Scribes and readers also often provide the dates (although maybe not always historically accurate) of important events such as Gunnarr's death, the conversion of Iceland to Christianity, and obviously the burning at Bergþórshváll. In AM Acc. 50 (M), the scribe, Jakob Sigurðsson (1727–1779), identifies the year of the burning at Bergþórshváll and also, in this context, the year in which the manuscript was written (1770): “Þetta skiedi Anno Xj 1010. eru ný Sýdann 760 aar.” (fol. 97r; “This happened in the year 1010 A.D. Now it has been 760 years since then”).³⁹ The most detailed attempt to reconstruct the exact date of the burning can be found in Ferjubók, where, in the margin on fol. 28v, the scribe adds: “Niallz Brenna stod 1011 þann 21. Avgúst æ mannudagz qvold af þuj Atta Vikur lifdu fumarz þann Sunnudag sem flofi Reid heimann fræ til Brennunnar. Sem Sagan votar” [The burning of Njáll happened on August 21, 1011 on a Monday evening, because eight weeks of summer had passed on the Sunday that Flosi rode away from home to the burning; as the saga attests].

The examples discussed above all provide historical, biographical, or geographical facts without indicating a possible source for this information, implying that these annotators possibly considered the details to be common knowledge. Six paper manuscripts, however, include genealogical information about saga characters along with a specific mention of their source, offering a glimpse at the literary and educational background of the scribes and readers. *Landnámabók* is referenced in Breiðabólstaðarbók (AM 555 c 4to, fol. 46v; M), Hvammsbók (AM 470 4to, fol. 20r; H), BL Add 4867 fol. (fols. 41v, 42r; M), AM 464 4to (fols. 2r, 22r, 40r, 52r; H), Bjarnastaðabók (NKS 1788 4to, fol. 64r; P), and Urðabók (ÍB 270 4to, fol. 95v; P). It is, therefore, the most-referenced work within the corpus of *Njáls saga* manuscripts and generally used to confirm or contradict genealogies.⁴⁰ In Hvammsbók (H), for example, the scribe Ketill Jörundsson (1603–1670) argues on fol. 20r that Njáll was more likely Ásgerð's grandson, even though she is called his mother in the text. He bases his argument on *Landnámabók*: “NB Þorgeir gollner helld eg, epter land-namu, son Öfeigs, og Ásgjerdar, og föstr son þörölfis, mödr brödr síns, því hann ölst upp hjá honum i þörölfis felle. þä hefr Njáll verit Sonar son Ásgjerdar. þö hun nefnizt hjer möder hans” [NB: I believe, according to *Landnáma*, Þorgeirr gollnir to be the son of Ófeigr and Ásgerðr, and the foster son of

Þórólfr, his maternal uncle, because he grew up with him at Þórólfsfell. So Njáll was Ásgerðr's grandson, though she is called his mother here]. (See plates 18 and 19.)

Nonverbal Paratextual Features

Nonverbal commentary refers to paratextual features in which the scribe or reader highlights a passage or phrase in the saga.⁴¹ Unlike some of the examples of verbal commentary mentioned above, nonverbal markings indicate that a reader engaged with a certain passage without necessarily revealing whether the reaction to the passage was positive or negative. Moreover, nonverbal markings are even more difficult to date than verbal commentary, where paleography can usually be used to give at least a rough timeframe for the dating. Nonetheless, certain patterns of interest can be observed in some cases.

Eight vellum and thirty-three paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* contain nonverbal paratextual commentary.⁴² Among the vellum manuscripts, the most common manifestation of nonverbal commentary is highlighting passages by means of underlining. In Reykjabók, for example, the entire passage of Flosi's dream sequence (fols. 69v–70v) has been underlined by scratching. Similarly, in Skafinskinna (fol. 11r), part of the passage in which Njáll advises Gunnarr how to reclaim Unnr's property from Hrútr after her divorce has been underlined by scratching. Overall, however, few underlined passages appear in the vellum manuscripts.

In the paper manuscripts, passages are commonly highlighted by underlining or by marginal and intertextual markings such as brackets, crosses, vertical lines, or numbering. Some paper codices have underlined and marked passages throughout the entire saga. Others have only a limited number of marked passages; these are generally later users marking verses or perceived copying errors by the main scribe. In many cases, it is impossible to tell whether these markings are by the scribe or a later user of the respective manuscript, although the latter seems more likely.

In Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), a seemingly later reader has underlined several passages, including, for example, passages that concern law procedures, geographical locations, offices held (e.g., lawspeakers), clothing, and weapons. In Hofsbók (AM 134 fol., S), marked passages generally indicate mistakes by the scribe, or they highlight important passages in the text. On fol. 43r, for example, a reader marks the passage in which Hallgerðr orders Melkólfr to steal food from Kirkjubær. On fol. 121r, scratched

vertical lines highlight certain law passages in the prosecution of the burning at Bergþórshváll in chapter 141. In Vigfúsbók (AM 137 fol., S), proverbs and idioms are frequently underlined in red. A reader of Holm. papp. 9 fol. (S) shows an interest in place-names (particularly Swedish ones), clothing, jewelry, and weapons, as well as verses, proverbs, and idioms. In BL Add 4867 fol. (M), proverbs and idioms are most commonly marked. Moreover, on fols. 84v–85r, the numbers one to ten (with either four or five missing) appear in the margin, indicating the nine individual summons put forth by “sa ... er søkin*n* haf*di* verid hofde fram*m* sø” (BL Add 4867 fol., fol. 84v)⁴³ [the man in whose presence the suits had been presented⁴⁴]. In AM 135 fol. (S), attention seems to be paid in particular to names, as well as to the chronology of events (e.g., by marking seasonal indicators like *sumar* [summer] or phrases indicating how much time has passed between two events).

In Saurbæjarbók (AM 163 i fol., M), a later user adds marginal markings, occasionally accompanied by *nota bene* signs in places where the scribe Hinrik Magnússon (1633–1706⁴⁵) had added something which the reader identified as not belonging to the original saga text, such as verses by an unknown poet, “Björn S.S. a. Sk.a.” (see, e.g., fols. 56v and 57v).⁴⁶ The same method is used to highlight certain scenes and sentences in the saga, presumably those considered of particular significance to the plot. These include, for example, Hallbjörn’s reaction when Otkell sends Skammkell to ask for advice from Gizurr hvíti and Geirr goði, as well as the assumption by Gizurr hvíti and Geirr goði that even though Skammkell recounted their advice for Otkell correctly, they are unsure whether he will actually convey the message truthfully, since they have seen him to be “Illmannlegastann *mann*” (fol. 21r; “the most wicked man”).⁴⁷ The scribe, Hinrik Magnússon, occasionally highlights things himself by putting them in brackets within the text, such as the quotation “troll haefi þina vine” (fol. 14r; “The trolls take your friends”)⁴⁸ spoken by Hallgerðr to Gunnarr. In Rauðskinna (M), a later user marks phrases which he determines did not originally belong to the saga, such as, for example, the above-mentioned “falsarin*n* Maurdur” (fol. 303v) about Mqrðr Valgarðsson. Einar Eiríksson, scribe of Fagureyjarbók (M), puts the beginning of Gunnarr’s famous quotation “Fögur er nu hlydin*n*” (fol. 59r; “Lovely is the hillside”⁴⁹) in parentheses. Moreover, small vertical lines in the margin occasionally mark certain passages, such as the names of the arbitrators chosen by Flosi and Njáll during the prosecution of Hqskuldr’s death (fol. 96r), and a few lines during the battle at the assembly following the prosecution of the

burning (fols. 127v–128r). Jakob Sigurðsson occasionally adds parentheses or other markings to phrases within his text in AM Acc. 50 (M), presumably to mark additions to the text by himself. This can be seen as a conflation of verbal and nonverbal commentary. He marks an addition during the scene describing Valgarðr’s death with a vertical line and colon (|: ... :|),⁵⁰ and on fol. 81r, immediately following Þorgeirr’s speech about accepting Christianity and which heathen practices could be continued in secret, Jakob adds “(enn þvi öllu kom af Sydann Olafir Kongr Haralldz Son)” [(but all of this was then abolished by King Óláfr Haraldsson)].

Aside from these very general markings (underlined passages, marginal lines, crosses, and so forth), some manuscripts contain *nota bene* signs and manicules.⁵¹ *Nota bene* signs are found in four vellum and twenty paper manuscripts;⁵² manicules appear in two vellum and three paper manuscripts.⁵³ *Nota bene* signs are occasionally utilized to highlight words or phrases in the main text that a later reader recognized as not belonging to the saga, such as mistakes or additions by the scribe. Like other marginal markings, *nota bene* signs are also used to highlight important phrases and passages. In Oddabók, *nota bene* signs occur, for example, when Hallgerðr sends Melkólfr to Kirkjubær to steal food (fol. 16r), next to Njáll’s famous quotation “þviat med logum skal land vort byggia en ei med ologum eiya”⁵⁴ (fol. 23; “because with law our land shall rise, but it will perish with lawlessness”),⁵⁵ and at the beginning of the Conversion episode (fol. 36r).⁵⁶ In Fagureyjarbók (M), *nota bene* signs mark the genealogy of Valgarðr inn grái (fol. 20v), and two passages containing the word *ginnigarfiþfl* [a fool/a puppet] (fols. 81v “NB+++”; and 114v “NB-”⁵⁷). The only *nota bene* sign in AM 467 4to (S) appears on fol. 72r next to a quotation by Bergþóra in which the word *rekið* (spelling in manuscript: “rekkit”) is underlined. The significance of the word *rekið* (from the verb *reka* ‘to take vengeance’) is unclear, although it is possible that the *nota bene* sign either brings attention to the unusual spelling of the word or refers to the entire quotation: “Reiðiz G(unnar) fyrir yðra hond .segir hon. ok þikkir hann skapgoðr. ok ef þer rekkit eigi þessa rettar þa munv þer ongra skamma reka.” [“But Gunnar became furious, on your behalf,” she said, “and he is said to be gentle. If you don’t avenge this, you’ll never avenge any shame”⁵⁸]. Two *nota bene* signs are found in the *Njáls saga* section of SÁM 137 (P).⁵⁹ On fol. 182v the phrase “eda land annad at Loglegri Virdingo” [or another piece of land, at a legally determined value⁶⁰] is underlined and a marginal *nota bene* is added; the same occurs on fol. 183v, where a *nota bene* sign is added in the margin next to the

underlined passage “Ecki er þat sattrof þó hvor haf log Vid annan” [It’s not breaking a settlement ... if a man deals lawfully with another⁶¹], which is immediately followed by Njáll’s famous quotation “með lögum skal land vart byggja, en með ólögum eyða”⁶² [with law our land shall rise, but it will perish with lawlessness⁶³]. A single *nota bene* sign, as well as a manicule, were noticed in Bjarnastaðabók (P) on the inside margin on fol. 65v, next to the genealogy of Starkaðr Barkarson, or more specifically, the mention of his children.⁶⁴ Since the manuscript is very tightly bound and cannot be opened wide enough to reveal all marginal markings and notes written on the inside margins clearly, it is possible that the manuscript contained additional *nota bene* signs or manicules that could not be detected.

Aside from Bjarnastaðabók, manicules are also found in Gráskinna, Bæjarbók, AM 136 fol. (M), and Hvammsbók (H). Unlike *nota bene* signs, which can be in the hand of the scribe, but were more frequently added by later users, the manicules detected in the *Njál's saga* manuscripts are all drawn by the main scribe. In Gráskinna (fol. 68v), a hand is drawn around a catchword (“Barðastrandar”⁶⁵). The manicule could be a mere decoration or a way to highlight the place-name Barðaströnd (in the West Fjords). In Bæjarbók, the scribe uses a pointing hand, as well as a verbal note to indicate that a missing verse⁶⁶ should be added at a certain point in the main writing block.⁶⁷ Four manicules appear in AM 136 fol. (M), all highlighting significant passages in the saga text. The manicule on fol. 39r appears next to Njáll’s previously-mentioned quotation “með lögum skal land vart byggja ...”. Another important idiom, part of the Conversion episode, is also highlighted with a manicule on fol. 55r.⁶⁸ On fol. 58r, a manicule appears next to the proverb “ad Jllu korni er säd enda mä Jllt aff gröa”⁶⁹ [But when evil seed has been sown, evil will grow⁷⁰]. Lastly, the scribe Jón Gissursson (1590–1648) adds a manicule on fol. 61r, next to Skarpheðinn’s insult of Þorkell.⁷¹ In Hvammsbók (H), the scribe Ketill Jörundsson adds manicules to several important passages, namely when Njáll advises Gunnarr how to retrieve Unnr’s property from Hrútr (fol. 21v), when Bergþóra asks Hallgerðr to make room for Þórhalla (fol. 34r), when Eyjólfur Þolverksson takes over Flosi’s case (fol. 124r), when Gizurr hvíti and Ásgrímur Elliða-Grímsson ask Skapti Þóroddsson for support and he refuses (fol. 125v), when Þórhallr Ásgrímsson points out that Eyjólfur Þolverksson has overlooked something in presenting his case (fol. 131r), when Mqrðr—advised by Þórhallr Ásgrímsson—ensures that the case continues even though Eyjólfur tried to dismiss two men from the panel (fol. 132v), when Eyjólfur points out that Mqrðr brought up the case at

the wrong court and the lawsuit becomes invalid (fol. 134r), and when Þorgeirr and Flosi make a settlement (fol. 145r, see plate 20).⁷²

As demonstrated above, scribes and readers show a particular interest in proverbs, idioms, and other significant quotations. Aside from the ways of highlighting these phrases described already, two manuscripts, Ferjubók (P) and Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), mark proverbs and idioms in the margins through the addition of the word *málsháttur* [proverb] or the letter *m* (both manuscripts) or the word *orðtak* [idiom] (only Breiðabólstaðarbók). Additionally, a significant number of scribes use a change in script to highlight these phrases, as well as personal names, bynames and place-names.⁷³

Jón Gissursson, scribe of AM 136 fol. (M), for example, writes the phrase “sættust þeir þá heylum sätum” (fol. 89v; “They made a full reconciliation”⁷⁴), referring to Flosi and Kári, in a different script. In AM Acc. 50 (M), the scribe, Jakob Sigurðsson, highlights several phrases and paragraphs relating to the burning at Bergþórshváll in this way. On fol. 95r, for example, he changes the script for the utterance “(Ugger mig ad Arfa Sæta. Illa mune hün Brenna)” [(I fear the chickweed. It will burn badly)] by Sæunn after Skarpheðinn refuses to remove the chickweed pile that was used to start the fire. The quotation, which is followed by “Enn eynginn gaf gaum ad þeðu” [But nobody paid attention to this] does not appear in the main text or variant apparatus in Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson’s edition of *Njáls saga*,⁷⁵ nor in Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s edition,⁷⁶ or AM 136 fol. (M), a presumed direct copy of the lost *Gullskinna. It may thus be an innovation by Jakob Sigurðsson himself or have been taken from an unknown exemplar. Guðlaugur Magnússon (1848–1917), scribe of Lbs 747 fol. (M), highlights, for example, Gunnarr’s famous exclamation “Fögr er hliðin ...” (fol. 33r; “Lovely is the hillside ...”⁷⁷), Flosi’s entire dream sequence (fol. 63r), and several passages of the law procedures following the burning in chapter 142 (fols. 71r–73r) by using a different script.

Although Njáll’s “með lögum skal land vart byggja, en með ólögum eyða”⁷⁸ and Gunnarr’s “Fögur er hliðin ...”⁷⁹ are very popular among the postmedieval scribes and readers, two other quotations were seemingly considered even more significant. When Þorgeirr Tjörvason announces that all of Iceland should accept the Christian faith and everyone should believe “á einn guð, fǫður ok son ok anda helgan”⁸⁰ [in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit⁸¹], fourteen postmedieval manuscripts containing the passage highlight this phrase, particularly the nouns, either through

a change of script or by writing the words larger,⁸² while two manuscripts highlight the passage by other means (AM 136 fol. = M, fol. 55r: manicule; Holm. papp. 9 fol. = S, fol. 227v: underlining). Accordingly, 43 percent of the complete extant postmedieval manuscripts of *Njáls saga* (vellum and paper) highlight the invocation of the Trinity. Moreover, the scribes of seventeen manuscripts (46 percent) highlight Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði's exclamation at his death that "Guð hjálpi mér, en fyrirgefi yðr!"⁸³ [May God help me and forgive you⁸⁴] through a change or enlargement of the script.⁸⁵ Ten manuscripts highlight both phrases,⁸⁶ while those remaining highlight one or the other. None of the medieval manuscripts that preserve these two sections highlight the two phrases. Most of the manuscripts that highlight both phrases are not necessarily textually closely related. It would seem, therefore, that the scribes of these manuscripts, as well as those of the manuscripts that only highlight one or the other of these two quotations, for the most part do not simply copy something they have noticed in their exemplar but emphasize these phrases themselves due to their significance or, possibly, at the request of their commissioner. It is not surprising that the invocation of God in a text that preserves the story of the conversion of Iceland would have been considered particularly important to a Christian, and presumably pious, postmedieval scribe or commissioner (see plate 21).

Summary and Conclusion

Although the medieval vellum manuscripts of *Njáls saga* show ample signs of use (paratextual features not related to the main text such as pen trials, signatures, and so forth), they contain comparably few paratextual features showing interaction between reader and text or reader and manuscript. The most common verbal paratextual feature in the medieval manuscripts is the use of rubrics, often executed at the same time as the main text and possibly by the same scribe.⁸⁷ Summaries of text passages are very limited in the medieval manuscripts and were all added by later readers. The only detected "true" comment on the text in the medieval manuscripts comes in the form of scribal remarks on Valgarðr inn grái, Mǫrðr Valgarðsson, and the *brennumenn* in Oddabók.⁸⁸ Nonverbal features are also quite few in number.

The medieval manuscripts were undoubtedly used for reading and entertainment purposes, but the manuscript evidence suggests that the act of reading with pen in hand, of marking, commenting on, and study-

ing the text, was far more common in the postmedieval era. William H. Sherman notes that “Renaissance readers were not only *allowed* to write notes in and on their books, they were *taught* to so in school.”⁸⁹ Heather J. Jackson points out that the tradition of adding marginalia expanded from a mainly scholarly field into the secular sphere and that the practice was “exercised by a wider and wider range of readers” as time progressed.⁹⁰ In Iceland and Scandinavia more widely, interest in medieval Icelandic manuscripts and literature began during the sixteenth century and continued during the seventeenth century, due to an increased interest by humanists in the sagas as historical sources and literature. Additionally, the ideas of the Enlightenment reached Iceland during the eighteenth century, reviving an interest in the sagas.⁹¹ The practice of annotating texts was common during these time periods. This explains why paratextual features concerning the main text are far more common in the corpus of postmedieval manuscripts and why the few paratextual features from this category in the medieval manuscripts generally stem from postmedieval users. In the postmedieval manuscripts, it can be observed that paratextual features related to the text differ among the different types of manuscripts, as briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter, that is, scholarly manuscripts, private-scholarly hybrids, as well as private decorative, moderate, and plain reading manuscripts.

Concerning verbal paratextual features, it is the scholarly manuscripts of *Njáls saga* that contain such features mainly in the form of chapter titles or biographical, historical, or geographical information in the margins. While some private manuscripts contain dates and other historical information, this type of manuscript also preserves summaries of text passages, comments on the text, and added verses about the saga. While decorative manuscripts have comparably few verbal comments, the moderate private manuscripts, in particular, are rich in verbal paratextual features such as comments, or added paratextual verses. Plain manuscripts, in contrast, contain mainly summaries of text passages or chapter titles, which both serve a similar purpose.

The frequency and type of nonverbal commentary also vary among the different types of manuscripts and manuscripts from different periods. Among the scholarly manuscripts, the seventeenth-century copies are marked more heavily, containing underlined passages and *nota bene* signs. Likewise, ÍB 421 4to, a scholarly copy from the eighteenth century, preserves many underlined passages. AM 467 4to only has one underlined word with an added *nota bene*, while the remaining scholarly copies have

no nonverbal features. The decorative private manuscripts are relatively unmarked. In two of these (Vigursbók and NKS 1219 fol.), the only nonverbal features are in the form of proverbs written in a different or larger script within the text. These features were, therefore, part of the writing process and not a sign of readership. In another decorative, postmedieval vellum manuscript, GKS 1003 fol., one verse is highlighted in red, presumably by a later user. The moderate manuscripts show the highest frequency of nonverbal features, preserving underlined and marked passages by later readers, as well as occasionally proverbs and quotes written in a different script by the scribe. While some plain manuscripts contain changes in script as well as marked passages by later users, these features are less extensive than in the moderate manuscripts.

Although it is important to bear in mind that the analysis of paratextual features can determine the reaction of only one particular reader or scribe to one particular section of the text, it is impossible to ignore certain general tendencies. As the discussion of paratextual features demonstrates, highlighted passages and commentary reveal an interest by scribes and readers of *Njáls saga* in geography and place-names, clothing and weapons, law procedures, history, chronology, and genealogies, proverbs, idioms, or certain significant passages within the saga, such as Gunnarr's death, Hǫskuldr's death, the Christianization, the burning at Bergþórshváll, and Flosi's dream sequence. Some comments, which make specific reference to historical events or secondary literature, allude to the educational and literary background of the readership of *Njáls saga*.

Daniel Ferrer points out that every reader chooses him- or herself to annotate one passage over another and that often the reason behind an annotated section is that we either "particularly love it—or, very often, because it irritates us particularly."⁹² This phenomenon can also be observed within the corpus of *Njáls saga* manuscripts. Comments added in the margins or integrated into the saga text, as well as verses about the saga and its characters, indicate that, unsurprisingly, Gunnarr, Njáll, Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði, Kári, Flosi, and Skarpheðinn, are among the favorites of scribes and readers, whereas Hallgerðr, Mǫrðr, and Valgarðr are considered villains.

While Loftur in *Kálfalækjarbók* did not leave us with more than his name and the fact that he read *Njáls saga*, the remaining examples of scribal remarks and readers' comments in this article show that paratextual features offer a glimpse into the readership and reception of Iceland's most famous saga. Most of the verbal and nonverbal paratextual features

convey an interaction between the users of the manuscripts and the saga. The scribes and readers comment on their favorite and most despised characters and scenes, they comment on the saga as a whole, attempt to organize it, clarify it, understand it, or even correct it.

NOTES

¹ Schipper, "Textual Varieties in Manuscript Margins," 43.

² See, for example, Darnton, "First Steps Toward a History of Reading"; Jardine and Grafton, "Studied for Action"; Barney, ed., *Annotation and Its Texts*; Camille, *Image on the Edge*; Tribble, *Margins and Marginality*; Greetham, ed., *The Margins of the Text*; Bray, Handley, and Henry, eds., *Ma(r)king the Text*; Jackson, *Marginalia*, and *Romantic Readers*; van Hulle and van Mierlo, eds., *Reading Notes*; Myers, Harris, and Mandelbrote, eds., *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*; Larratt Keefer and Bremmer, eds., *Signs on the Edge*; Sherman, *Used Books*.

³ Driscoll, "Postcards from the Edge."

⁴ Schott, "Footnotes on Life."

⁵ The following is a brief summary of the definitions of the different types of manuscripts that I propose in my dissertation. For details, see Susanne M. Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*," 135–221. Scholarly manuscripts (S) were generally commissioned by manuscript scholars and collectors and are often direct copies of medieval codices. Private-scholarly hybrids (H) have been defined as manuscripts written by the scribe for personal use, but exhibiting a scholarly interest. Decorative reading manuscripts (D) were generally commissioned, have a generous and neat layout, and are often highly decorated. Moderate reading manuscripts (M) were either commissioned or written for personal use. They are overall neatly organized and initials are generally enlarged or decorated but to a lesser degree than the decorative reading manuscripts. Plain reading manuscripts (P) lack decorations of any kind. Their layout is often less orderly, and they are more likely written by the scribe for personal use. The abbreviations (S, H, D, M, P) are added in parenthesis to call numbers and nicknames of postmedieval manuscripts throughout the article, allowing the reader to detect the manuscript type easily. To a certain extent, these categories also apply to the medieval codices of *Njáls saga*. Similar categories have been established in other studies of Icelandic manuscripts, such as those by Lansing, "Post-Medieval Production, Dissemination and Reception of *Hrólf's saga kraka*," and Hufnagel, "*Sörla saga sterka*. Studies in the Transmission of a Fornaldarsaga."

⁶ This article—which is based on part of my PhD thesis—merely provides a general introduction to marginalia and paratextual features in the *Njáls saga* manuscripts. For a more detailed analysis, see Arthur, "Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*."

⁷ See, for example, Grindley, "Reading Piers Plowman C-Text Annotations";

Driscoll, “Postcards from the Edge”; Schipper, “Textual Varieties in Manuscript Margins.”

⁸ Sperl, “Die Marginalien,” 145–50. Sperl suggests dividing marginalia that refer in some way to the main text into “sprechende” and “stumme” marginal notes (145.), which Nutt-Kofoth translates as “telling” and “mute” in a summary of Sperl’s discussion (Nutt-Kofoth, “Author’s Reading—Author’s Literary Production,” 296–97). I prefer the terms *verbal* and *nonverbal commentary* since—as Sperl points out himself—nonverbal notes still allude to a passage that engaged the reader. They are, therefore, not entirely “mute” per se.

⁹ A small number of manuscripts could not be studied in person in time for this publication and had to be excluded from this study. NB 313 4to (H) and NB 372 4to (H) are discussed briefly in my dissertation (see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” particularly 79, 91, 146). Two additional manuscripts, TCD MS 1002 in Dublin, and a small paper fragment from the private collection of Willard Larsson in Seattle, USA (recently gifted to The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, now SÁM 168), were unknown to me until work on this article had been completed.

¹⁰ The fragments lacking paratextual features relating to the main text are, in chronological order: AM 162 B θ fol. from the fourteenth century, AM 162 B α fol. from the fifteenth century, and three seventeenth-century, one-leaf fragments (AM 921 4to I, Lbs fragm. 2, JS fragm. 4) that originally belonged to one manuscript, referred to as ‘The Lost Codex’ (D), see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 57–58, 224–29 for details.

¹¹ These three manuscripts are AM 555 a 4to from the seventeenth century, as well as ÍB 421 4to, and Thott 984 fol. from the eighteenth century. Of these, ÍB 421 4to and Thott 984 fol. are scholarly copies, and AM 555 a 4to is a particularly plain reading manuscript with very narrow margins, offering limited space for commentary.

¹² Twelve of these manuscripts date from the fourteenth century, four from the fifteenth century, one vellum and sixteen paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century, seventeen paper manuscripts from the eighteenth century, and one paper manuscript from the nineteenth century

¹³ These are Gráskinna, AM 162 B β fol., Þormóðsbók, Reykjabók, Óssbók, Möðruvallabók, Kálfalækjarbók, AM 162 B x fol., AM 162 B η fol., Hítardalsbók, and Skafinskinna from the fourteenth century, as well as Sveinsbók, Reykjarfjarðarbók, and Bæjarbók from the fifteenth century.

¹⁴ These are Holm. papp. fol. 9 (S) and AM 464 4to (H) from the seventeenth century, Thott 1776 4to III (M), Landakotsbók (S), SÁM 137 (P), Lbs 1415 4to (M), and Lbs 437 4to (P) from the eighteenth century, and Lbs 747 fol. (M) from the nineteenth century.

¹⁵ Zeevaert et al., “A New Stemma of *Njáls saga* [Working paper],” 8.

¹⁶ *Sagan af Niáli Þórgeirssyni*, 197.

¹⁷ Lönnroth, “Structural Divisions in the *Njála* Manuscripts,” 51.

¹⁸ Ibid., 56–65.

¹⁹ Liepe, “The Knight and the Dragon Slayer,” discusses the Kálfalækjarbók initials in detail.

²⁰ The 1703 census of Iceland lists a 35-year-old man, Einar Eiríksson, at Bjarneyjar. According to its colophon, the manuscript Kall 611 4to was written by Einar Eiríksson at Bjarneyjar in 1704. The script is identical to that in Fagureyjarbók, which was written at Fagurey in 1705. Einar’s year of death is unknown. The census was accessed through the online database <http://manntal.is> which is based on *Manntal á Íslandi árið 1703*.

²¹ For a brief discussion of the initial and other peculiarities in Fagureyjarbók, see Arthur, “What Was Einar Thinking?”

²² The vellum manuscripts are Gráskinna, AM 162 B ζ fol., and Skafinskinna from the fourteenth century, Oddabók from the fifteenth century, and GKS 1003 fol. (D) from the seventeenth century. The paper manuscripts are Lambavatnsbók (M), AM 136 fol. (M), Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), Ferjubók (P), AM 465 4to (P), Saurbæjarbók (M), BL Add 4867 fol. (M), Rauðskinna (M), and Vigursbók (D) from the seventeenth century, as well as SÁM 33 (P), Fagureyjarbók (M), Thott 1776 fol. III (M), Thott 1765 4to (P), Kall 612 4to (P), NKS 1219 fol. (D), AM Acc. 50 (M), and Lbs 437 4to (P) from the eighteenth century.

²³ The margins of Lambavatnsbók have been trimmed, thus cutting off some of the marginal note. The note possibly reads “Hallgerður rædur iofräd” (fol. 112r; “Hallgerðr abets the theft”), although it cannot be ruled out that more letters have been deleted by trimming the margins. My thanks go to Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson for brainstorming with me about the most likely reading for this marginalia.

²⁴ Paleographic evidence suggests that the marginal note in Gráskinna dates to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, thus similar in age to Loftur’s marginal note in Kálfalækjarbók.

²⁵ These manuscripts are Hvammsbók (H; the verse about Kári has been crossed out by a later user of the manuscript), AM 465 4to (P), Saurbæjarbók (M), and Rauðskinna (M) from the seventeenth century, as well as Fagureyjarbók (M), KB Add 565 4to (S), Lágafellsbók (M), Kall 612 4to (P), AM Acc. 50 (M), and Urðabók (P) from the eighteenth century. In some cases, however, the verses are clearly later additions, such as the verses in Rauðskinna, which were added in 1746. For a more detailed discussion of the paratextual verses, see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 273–77.

²⁶ For details on the reception of Valgarðr inn grái (and his son Mǫrðr) based on scribal remarks and readers’ comments, see Arthur, “The Devil in Disguise?” 1–7.

²⁷ The 1703 census mentions a 70-year-old man, Páll Sveinsson, living at Ásgautsstaðir. He is said to be “faðir Herborgar, sjóndapur og burðalasin ómagi” [Herborg’s father, weak-sighted and physically ill dependent], see Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, “Manntöl”. The comment on Páll Sveinsson’s weak vision compares

well with a note, seemingly made by Reverend Gísli Álfsson to Árni Magnússon, which states that Páll Sveinsson's handwriting changed towards the end of his life due to the fact that he was losing his vision (see Slay, "On the Origin of Two Icelandic Manuscripts," 147). Páll's year of death is unknown.

²⁸ He also refers to Skammkell as "skelmirinn vondi" [evil rogue] in Rauðskinna, at fol. 274r. These additions were particularly noticeable in Rauðskinna, where a later user of the manuscript appears to have underlined phrases that do not usually appear in the *Njáls saga* text.

²⁹ *Njal's Saga*, trans. Robert Cook, 228. As Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Robert Cook explain, Mǫrðr is forced to side with Kári due to his involvement in the killing of Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði, which makes him an enemy of the Sigfússons. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 341 n. 5; *Njal's Saga*, 334.

³⁰ The manuscripts are Gráskinna and Reykjabók from the fourteenth century, Oddabók from the fifteenth century, Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), Hofsbók (S), Hvammsbók (H), Vigfúsarbók (S), Ferjubók (P), AM 465 4to (P), Saurbæjarbók (M), Holm. 9 fol. (S), BL Add 4867 fol. (M), AM 135 fol. (S), AM 464 4to (H), Vigursbók (D), and Lbs 3505 4to (M) from the seventeenth century, as well as AM Acc. 50 from the eighteenth century.

³¹ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 69 n. 1.

³² Ibid. See also p. 75 in the present volume.

³³ Jón Þorkelsson, "Om håndskrifterne," 654–55; Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xiv–xv.

³⁴ *Njal's Saga*, 276.

³⁵ See, for example, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 247 n. 1; Brynjólfur Jónsson, "Rannsókn í Rangárþingi sumarið 1899," 1–8; Matthías Þórðarson, "Hvítanes," 3–9.

³⁶ At this point, I have made no attempts to compare previously suggested locations for Hvítanes with the geographical description in Oddabók, although this could be an interesting subject for research.

³⁷ See Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert in this volume, pp. 196–97.

³⁸ I am currently studying Vigursbók and its relationship to other manuscripts, particularly those from the Oddabók branch (Oddabók, Lambavatnsbók, Ferjubók, GKS 1003 fol.), as well as Lbs 3505 4to, in more detail as part of my postdoctoral research project "Variance in the *Gullskinna-branch of *Njáls saga*."

³⁹ Jakob Sigurðsson also specifies the year in which the manuscript was written in the colophon of the manuscript (fol. 139v).

⁴⁰ The other texts referenced by name are *Snorra Edda* (AM 465 4to, fol. 130v; P), *Eyrbyggja saga* (BL Add 4867 fol., fol. 41v and 89r; M), and *Grettis saga* (BL Add 4867 fol., fol. 89r; M). Moreover, Jón Helgason points out that marginalia in Reykjabók, (fol. 60r) says "gretter ortti vÿsu þeða' (Grettir made this stanza)," but since there is no verse on the page, the marginalia does not appear to stand in connection to the saga text ("Introduction," xiv). Jón Þórðarson adds historical commentary regarding ancient Icelandic law and heathen practices twice

in the margins of BL Add 4867 fol. (M). Even though he does not specifically identify his sources in these cases, the information is most likely based on *Grágás* (cf. Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., 83) and *Landnámabók* (cf. Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson, eds., *Hauksbók*, 96), although *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* (cf. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger, eds., *Flatayjarbók*, 249), and *Þórðar saga breðu* (cf. Jóhannes Halldórsson, ed., *Kjalnesinga saga*, 231–32) remain a possibility in one case.

⁴¹ In my dissertation, I distinguish between three types of nonverbal paratextual features: marked verses (Category II.B.1.), nonverbal commentary (II.B.2.), and depictions (II.B.3.). Only Category II.B.2. is discussed in this article. For more details on the other types of nonverbal paratextual features, see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 293–328.

⁴² The vellum manuscripts are Gráskinna, Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, Kálfalækjarbók, and Skafinskinna from the fourteenth century, Oddabók and Bæjarbók from the fifteenth century, as well as GKS 1003 fol. (D) from the seventeenth century. All seventeen paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century contain nonverbal commentary of Category II.B.2. These are Lambavatnsbók (M), AM 136 fol. (M), Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), Hofsbók (S), Hvammsbók (H), Vigfúsarbók (S), Ferjubók (P), AM 465 4to (P), AM 555 a 4to (P), Saurbæjarbók (M), Holm. papp. 9 fol. (S), BL Add 4867 fol. (M), AM 135 fol. (S), AM 464 4to (H), Rauðskinna (M), Vigursbók (D), and Lbs 3505 4to (M). Moreover, Fagureyjarbók (M), ÍB 421 4to (S), AM 467 4to (S), Lágafellsbók (M), Thott 1776 4to III (M), Thott 1765 4to (P), Kall 612 4to (P), ÍB 322 4to (P), Bjarnastaðabók (P), NKS 1219 fol. (D), SÁM 137 (P), AM Acc. 50 (M), Lbs 1415 4to (M), Urðabók (P), and Lbs 437 4to (P) from the eighteenth century, and Lbs 747 fol. (M) from the nineteenth century contain such features.

⁴³ Cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 399–400.

⁴⁴ *Njal's Saga*, 268.

⁴⁵ When the 1703 census was taken, Hinrik lived at Vellir in the Borgarfjörður district and was seventy years old. Einar Bjarnason provides slightly more biographical information (*Lögrettumannatal*, 242). See also p. 206 in the present volume.

⁴⁶ While it is tempting to assume that Hinrik Magnússon refers to Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá, the abbreviated patronymic undoubtedly reads “S.S.,” making an identification of the author of the verses problematic. For more details, see Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 274–75.

⁴⁷ *Njal's Saga*, 86.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁰ Arthur, “The Devil in Disguise?” 6.

⁵¹ The manicule, a pointing hand, is a nonverbal feature commonly used between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries that was often drawn and later even printed to mark noteworthy passages in manuscripts and printed books. See Sherman, “Toward a History of the Manicule,” 19.

⁵² The vellum manuscripts are Reykjabók, Möðruvallabók, and Kálfalækjarbók

from the fourteenth century, and Oddabók from the fifteenth century. The paper manuscripts are Lambavatnsbók (M), AM 136 fol. (M), Breiðabólstaðarbók (M), Hofsbók (S), Hvammsbók (H), Ferjubók (P), AM 465 4to (P), Saurbæjarbók (M), Holm. papp. 9 fol. (S), BL Add 4867 fol. (M), AM 135 fol. (S), AM 464 4to (H), Rauðskinna (M), and Lbs 3505 4to from the seventeenth century, as well as Fagureyjarbók (M), AM 467 4to (S), Lágafellsbók (M), Thott 1765 4to (P), Bjarnastaðabók (P), and SÁM 137 (P) from the eighteenth century.

⁵³ These manuscripts are Gráskinna from the fourteenth century, Bæjarbók from the fifteenth century, AM 136 fol. (M) and Hvammsbók (H) from the seventeenth century, as well as Bjarnastaðabók (P) from the eighteenth century.

⁵⁴ The addition of “ei” occurs also in Gráskinna and Þormóðsbók (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 172–73).

⁵⁵ *Njal's Saga*, 117.

⁵⁶ The following is a complete list of folios containing *nota bene* signs in Oddabók: fols. 10v (uncertain), 14r, 14v, 15r, 16r (very large, across at least six lines of text), 23v, 31r, 32r, 36r, 38r, 49v (twice), 50r, 50v, 51r, and 51v. The majority of these *nota bene* signs appear to be by the same reader, written in the same, slightly faint ink and in a similar style. It is, however, not certain that all *nota bene* signs stem from the same reader, as some signs differ in style, size, and ink color.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 263, 367.

⁵⁸ *Njal's Saga*, 75.

⁵⁹ This manuscript has only relatively recently received a SÁM call number. In Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls Saga*,” it is referred to as *Handrit úr safni Jóns Samsonarsonar* (Manuscript from Jón Samsonarson's collection), or *The Younger Flateyjarbók*.

⁶⁰ *Njal's Saga*, 114; cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 168.

⁶¹ *Njal's Saga*, 117.

⁶² *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 172.

⁶³ *Njal's Saga*, 117.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 146.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 478, stanza 26.

⁶⁷ *Njála* I, 377.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 272.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁷⁰ *Njal's Saga*, 192.

⁷¹ Cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 305.

⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, 61, 91, 368, 371, 385, 389, 393, 423.

⁷³ A change in script for significant phrases or words occurs in GKS 1003 fol. (D), Lambavatnsbók (M), AM 136 fol. (M), BL Add 4867 fol. (M), Rauðskinna (M), Vigursbók (D), and Lbs 3505 4to (M) from the seventeenth century, Fagureyjarbók (M), Thott 1776 4to III (M), Thott 1765 4to (P), Kall 612 4to (P), ÍB 322 4to (P), Bjarnastaðabók (P), NKS 1219 fol. (D), SÁM 137 (P), AM

Acc. 50 (M), Lbs 1415 4to (M), Urðabók (P), and Lbs 437 4to (P) from the eighteenth century, as well as Lbs 747 fol. (M) from the nineteenth century. Only *Njáls saga* manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth century highlight place-names, personal names, and bynames through a change in script. Changing the script as a visual cue is, however, a fairly common practice and not restricted to *Njáls saga* manuscripts by any means.

⁷⁴ *Njal's Saga*, 310.

⁷⁵ *Njála* I, 649–50.

⁷⁶ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 320.

⁷⁷ *Njal's Saga*, 123.

⁷⁸ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 172.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸¹ *Njal's Saga*, 181.

⁸² These manuscripts are GKS 1003 fol. (fol. 91v; D), Hofsbók (fol. 89r; S; but surprisingly not Vigfúsarbók, fol. 102v; S, written by the same scribe), Ferjubók (fol. 24v; P), Lambavatnsbók (fol. 126v; M), and Lbs 3505 4to (fol. 105v, very subtly; M) from the seventeenth century, as well as Fagureyjarbók (fol. 83v, very large; M), Lágafellsbók (fol. 78r—capital letters; M), NKS 1219 fol. (fol. 138v; D), Bjarnastaðabók (fol. 118r–v, Þorgeirr's entire speech; P), ÍB 322 4to (fol. 78r, Þorgeirr's entire speech, but more subtly; P), The Younger Flateyjarbók (fol. 199v; P), Lbs 437 4to (fol. 164v, Þorgeirr's entire speech; P), and Urðabók (fol. 92r; P) from the eighteenth century, as well as Lbs 747 fol. (fol. 47r; M) from the nineteenth century. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir has also detected signs of interest in religious matters in NKS 1219 fol., “Flettu upp á taðskeggingunum!” 62–64.

⁸³ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 281.

⁸⁴ *Njal's Saga*, 188.

⁸⁵ These manuscripts are: GKS 1003 fol. (fol. 93v; D), Hofsbók (fol. 92r, quite subtly; S; but again not in Vigfúsarbók, fol. 106r; S, written by the same scribe), BL Add 4867 fol. (fol. 59v; M), Rauðskinna (fol. 304r, but more subtly than in BL Add 4867 fol., written by the same scribe), Vigursbók (fol. 65v; D), and Lbs 3505 4to (fol. 109r; M) from the seventeenth century, Fagureyjarbók (fol. 87r, written larger and in a separate line; M), Thott 1765 4to (fol. 82v; P), NKS 1219 fol. (fol. 143v; D), Kall 612 4to (fol. 130r, subtly; P), AM Acc. 50 (fol. 84r; M), Lbs 1415 4to (fol. 134r; M), Lbs 437 4to (fol. 167v, subtly; P) and Urðabók (fol. 94v; P) from the eighteenth century, as well as Lbs 747 fol. (fol. 49r, larger and highlighted with color; M) from the nineteenth century. Somewhat less certain are the two plain reading manuscripts Bjarnastaðabók (fol. 123r) and ÍB 322 4to (fol. 81v), both written by the same scribe, although the text seems to be written slightly larger.

⁸⁶ These ten manuscripts are GKS 1003 fol. (D), Hofsbók (S) and Lbs 3505 4to (M) from the seventeenth century, Fagureyjarbók (M), NKS 1219 fol. (D),

Bjarnastaðabók (P), ÍB 322 4to (P), Lbs 437 4to (P), and Urðabók (P) from the eighteenth century, as well as Lbs 747 fol. (D) from the nineteenth century.

⁸⁷ Beeke Stegmann, however, has shown that the rubrics in Reykjabók were not produced by the main scribe but instead by the so-called second scribe, who, nonetheless, was a contemporary of the main scribe. See further her chapter in this volume.

⁸⁸ The scribe of Oddabók, for example, adds “ok fari bannsettr” (fol. 38r) to the saga text when Valgarðr inn grái dies, shortly after having destroyed holy objects. Sverrir Tómasson very colloquially translates the phrase as “fuck him” (“The Textual Problems of *Njáls saga*,” 53), though a more literal translation would be “and may he be damned.” Oddabók contains other such variants. Since these variants as well as comments regarding Valgarðr inn grái in other *Njáls saga* manuscripts have been discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Jón Karl Helgason, *The Rewriting of Njáls Saga*, 23; Sverrir Tómasson, “The Textual Problems of *Njáls saga*”; Arthur, “The Devil in Disguise?”), they have been omitted in the present discussion.

⁸⁹ Sherman, *Used Books*, 3.

⁹⁰ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 44–45.

⁹¹ Summaries and overviews of the history and literature of Iceland which touch upon this topic, as well as of the research history of manuscript studies in Scandinavia, can for example be found in Gunnar Karlsson, *The History of Iceland*; O’Donoghue, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*; Malm, “The Nordic Demand for Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts”; Haugen, ed., *Altnordische Philologie*; Neijmann, *A History of Icelandic Literature*.

⁹² Ferrer, “Towards a Marginalist Economy of Textual Genesis,” 12.

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Creating in Color: Illustrations of *Njáls saga* in a Nineteenth-Century Icelandic Paper Manuscript

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Introduction

The youngest extant manuscript that preserves *Njáls saga* was written by Guðlaugur Magnússon (1848–1917), a young farm worker at Hafursstaðir, on Fellsströnd in the west of Iceland, at the beginning of the 1870s. Guðlaugur, together with his brother Guðmundur Magnússon (1850–1915), who worked at the neighboring farm of Breiðabólstaður, copied around thirty Sagas of Icelanders. Guðmundur divided the texts of the sagas they had copied into two books, Lbs 747 fol. and Lbs 748 fol., after Guðlaugur had emigrated to Winnipeg, Canada, in 1873.¹ The approach of each brother to copying material was different: Guðlaugur mostly used manuscripts as his exemplars, while Guðmundur used printed books, and apart from being “betri skrifari þeirra bræðra” [the better scribe of the brothers],² Guðlaugur drew a great number of illustrations in color for the sagas that he copied, including twenty-one for *Njáls saga* (see table 10.2), which is the first saga in Lbs 747 fol. These illustrations give us an idea about one nineteenth-century perspective on the sagas and their characters. Guðlaugur chose to communicate this perspective through visual material: he decided to draw certain characters and scenes rather than others, and this decision and approach is rather different to that of other artists at the same time in that few of his images in the manuscript show battles and bloodshed. Most of Guðlaugur’s images are of characters having a conversation, and because of their positioning within the text, the reader is able to see, or even listen to, the characters’ dialogue.

These images thus add to the meaning of the text. While they do not replace the text, we can imagine that those who were illiterate and could not read the text might have looked at the illustrations in the manuscript and been able to follow the narrative. The language of visual images requires a different kind of reading. Interplay between text and image gives each reader the opportunity to interpret the material in a different

way through their reading; the reader's experience and knowledge have an influence on the construction of meaning too.

In this chapter, Guðlaugur's illustrations of *Njáls saga* will be discussed with the focus on the interplay between the images and the text of the saga. The ideas of certain scholars about how these two media, image and text, work together and increase the meaning of the text will be drawn on. First though, an account of the two brothers' manuscript production will be given, as well as a general presentation of the nineteenth-century Icelandic manuscript culture in which their manuscripts came into being.

The Brothers' Manuscripts: Contents and Sources

Around 200 manuscripts containing Sagas of Icelanders are preserved from the nineteenth century. The historian Davíð Ólafsson has looked at the relationship between printed material and material found in hand-copied books, and notes that, in most cases, sagas which were difficult or impossible to get hold of in print were copied by hand, whereas sagas that were printed in collections such as *Ágetar fornmannasögur* (printed at Hólar 1759–73) and *Nokkrir margfróðir sögubettir* (printed at Hólar in 1756) survive in few nineteenth-century manuscripts.³ Sagas that were printed later are found in many more copies from the nineteenth century.⁴

In the two printed collections named above, twelve Sagas of Icelanders were printed, seven of which Guðlaugur and Guðmundur copied in their manuscripts. Six of these are in Lbs 748 fol., among them *Ölkofra þáttr*, but only one of them is found in Lbs 747 fol. Table 10.1 provides information about where and when sagas that the brothers made copies of were first printed in Icelandic. If the sagas were printed abroad first, the date and place of the first printed edition in Iceland is given after those of foreign publication.

When the brothers produced Lbs 747 fol. and 748 fol., of the twenty-two Sagas of Icelanders that are not included in the manuscripts, only eight had not been published in print in Iceland (these sagas are marked with an asterisk in the table). *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* and *Flóamanna saga* were not printed before the 1890s, and *Svarfdæla saga*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, and *Ljósvetninga saga* did not appear in print for another decade or so.⁵

It is clear that at Breiðabólstaður, Guðmundur had access to the collection *Nokkrir margfróðir sögubettir* and *Ágetar fornmannasögur*, in which six of the nine sagas that he copied are found in print. A clue that

Table 10.1 Sagas in Lbs 747 fol. and Lbs 748 fol. and their first appearance in print.

Manu- script	Saga	Date of printed publication	Place or collection	Present in Lbs 1489 4to?
Lbs 747 fol.	Njáls saga	1772/1844	Copenhagen/Viðey	
	Svarfdæla saga*	1830/1898	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Valla-Ljóts saga*	1830/1898	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Víga-Glúms saga	1756	Hólar (<i>Ágetar fornmannasögur</i>)	
	Reykðæla saga*	1830/1896	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa	1847/1891	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Þorsteins saga hvíta	1848/1891	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Vopnfirðinga saga	1848/1898	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Droplaugarsona saga*	1847/1878	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Egils saga Skallagrímssonar	1782	Hrappsey	
	Gunnlaugs saga ormtungu*	1843/1880	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	
	Bandamanna saga	1756	Hólar (<i>Nokkrir margfróðir söguþettir</i>)	
	Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss	1756	Hólar (<i>Nokkrir margfróðir söguþettir</i>)	
	Gests saga Bárðarsonar	1756	Hólar (<i>Nokkrir margfróðir söguþettir</i>)	
Lbs 748 fol.	Finnboga saga ramma	1812/1860	Copenhagen / Akureyri	X
	Harðar saga	1756	Hólar (<i>Ágetar fornmannasögur</i>)	
	Vígundar saga	1756	Hólar (<i>Ágetar fornmannasögur</i>)	
	Kjalnesinga saga	1756	Hólar (<i>Ágetar fornmannasögur</i>)	
	Ljósvetninga saga*	1829/1896	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X
	Heiðarvíga saga*	1829/1891	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	
	Flóamanna saga*	1884	Reykjavík	X
	Vatnsdæla saga	1812/1858	Copenhagen / Reykjavík	X

he used *Ágætar fornmannasögur* is found after the text of *Harðar saga* that he copied, where he writes: “Skrifuð af Guðm. Magnússyni eptir bók prentaðri á Hólum í Hjaltadal árið 1756” (Lbs 748 fol., 186v; “copied by Guðmundur Magnússon following a book printed at Hólar in Hjaltadalur in 1756”). The last two sagas that Guðlaugur copied into Lbs 748 fol. were not available in printed books at that time. The same situation is found with texts he copied into Lbs 747 fol. There, nearly half of the sagas he copied had not been published in print, and of those that had, only one was included in the collection *Ágætar fornmannasögur*. The other sagas were published in different editions, at different points in time, and in different places. This suggests that Guðlaugur therefore used manuscripts rather than printed editions as his exemplars, unlike his brother Guðmundur. It seems most likely that a saga manuscript that was written by Jón Jónsson at Melar in Hrótafjörður at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Lbs 1489 4to) was Guðlaugur’s exemplar. In this manuscript, fourteen Sagas of Icelanders and five *þættir* are found; eleven of these fourteen sagas are copied in Guðlaugur’s and Guðmundur’s manuscripts, and nine of these eleven are in Guðlaugur’s hand. Guðlaugur also copied two *þættir* (*Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggis* and *Brandkrossa þáttur*) in Lbs 747 fol., and these are both in Lbs 1489 4to.

The wording found on the title page of the manuscript also supports this hypothesis. Guðlaugur wrote the title page of Lbs 747 fol. and the text there (at 1r) reads:

Nokkurar sögur og þættir af fornaldarmönnum Íslendinga. Í hjáverkum uppskrifaðar frá vordögum 1871 til vordaga 1873 af Guðlaugi Magnússyni og Guðmundi Magnússyni vinnumönnum á Hafursstöðum á Fellsströnd og Breiðabólstað á Fellströnd.

[Some sagas and tales of ancient Icelanders. Copied in spare time from spring 1871 to spring 1873 by Guðlaugur Magnússon and Guðmundur Magnússon, farmhands at Hafursstaðir on Fellsströnd and Breiðabólstaður on Fellströnd.]

In Lbs 1489 4to, Jón Jónsson’s manuscript, which is around sixty years older, the following information is presented on the title page (at 1r):

Nokkurar fróðlegar sögur og frásagnir af fornaldarmönnum Íslendinga[.] Í hjáverkum uppskrifaðar að Melum við Hrótafjörð frá veturnóttum 1810 til sumarmála 1814 af Jóni Jónssyni antiqvitatum patriæ studioso[.]

[Some informative sagas and stories of ancient Icelanders. Copied in spare time at Melar in Hrótafjörður from winter nights 1810 to summer 1814 by Jón Jónsson antiqvitatum patriæ studioso.]

The material in the manuscripts is thus similar, the number of sagas is nearly the same, and the title pages virtually echo each other. In addition to this, Ólafur Sigurðsson Sívertsen, a member of parliament who copied two sagas in Lbs 1489 4to, gave the manuscript to his daughter, Katrín Ólafsdóttir Sívertsen, who lived at Breiðabólstaður on Skógarströnd in Snæfellsnessýsla: Fellsströnd is the other side of the fjord.⁶ The manuscript is likely to have been in Katrín's possession when Guðlaugur and Guðmundur wrote their manuscripts. They probably borrowed the manuscript to use as an exemplar and returned it when Guðlaugur had finished writing *Droplaugarsaga saga*.⁷ The next owner of Lbs 1489 4to was Katrín's son, Ólafur Guðmundsson, who was a doctor.

The saga which is under consideration here, *Njáls saga*, is not found in Lbs 1489 4to, however. Guðlaugur's copy of this saga is the only complete text of *Njáls saga* that is preserved in a nineteenth-century manuscript, and, for this reason, it seems most likely that he copied it from a printed edition.⁸ The edition of *Njáls saga* that was most probably accessible to Guðlaugur was the one printed on the island of Viðey in 1844. This edition was based on that of Ólafur Olavius from 1772, and Davíð Ólafsson believes the existence of the 1844 edition (together with the first printed publication from 1772 that the 1844 edition relies on) to be the most convincing explanation for the lack of hand-copied texts of *Njáls saga* in the nineteenth century.⁹ In Ólafur's edition, the saga has the title "Sagan af Njáli Þorgeirssyni og sonum hans," which is identical to that found in Lbs 747 fol. This title is not found in other copies of the saga, whether printed or hand-copied.

What has been assumed about the working practices of the brothers suggests that they had few options with regard to the choice of printed books and manuscripts they used as exemplars, using material that already existed and was accessible on the farms where they worked. Breiðabólstaður was a large and wealthy farm, and Guðmundur had access to printed books there, while the workers at Hafursstaðir, which was not as big or wealthy, on the other hand, had access to manuscripts for exemplars. In this way, Guðlaugur got hold of the manuscript Lbs 1489 4to, which was originally made in Hrótafjörður (which is around 100 kilometers from Fellsströnd) and was subsequently housed closer to Fellsströnd after it changed ownership.

Only one kilometer separated the two farms of Hafursstaðir and Breiðabólstaður, and Guðlaugur could easily have got hold of printed material at Breiðabólstaður. It may be that he preferred to copy sagas from manuscript exemplars while Guðmundur chose rather to use printed material. And both brothers do use both forms, printed books and manuscripts, albeit to a differing degree: Guðmundur probably copied out *Finnboga saga ramma* and *Ljósvetninga saga* using Lbs 1489 4to, and, at the end of *Víglundar saga*, he writes: “Skrifuð af G. Magnússyni á Breiðabólstað eptir brotnum blöðum og sum orð varð eg að smíða” (Lbs 748 fol., 202v; “Copied by G. Magnússon at Breiðabólstaður following damaged leaves and I had to invent some words”).¹⁰ Guðlaugur probably got hold of *Ágetar fornmannasögur* from his brother in order to copy *Víga-Glúms saga*. At the end of *Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa*, he adds a text from *Óláfs saga helga* that is an addition to *Bjarnar saga*. At the top he makes a reference to the exemplar he used: “Viðbætir úr Fornmannasögum IV., bls. 109 III” (Lbs 747 fol., 196v; “Additions from Fornmannasögur IV, p. 109 III”). This collection, Fornmannasögur: eptir gömlum handritum, was a twelve-volume series published in Copenhagen between 1825 and 1837. The additions from *Landnámabók* were also sourced from a printed book, and Guðlaugur writes that he got this material from “Landnámabók bls. 238–241” (Lbs 747 fol., 216r; “*Landnámabók*, pp. 238–41”). These page references fit with the printed text of *Landnámabók* in the first volume published under the auspices of Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab in the series Íslendinga sögur: udgivne efter gamle haandskrifter, issued in four volumes in total between 1843 and 1889.¹¹ Although the last two volumes, which contained the *Njála* edition by Konráð Gíslason and Eiríkur Jónsson, were published in 1875 and 1889, after the brothers had finished copying their manuscripts, the first volume may have been at Hafursstaðir or borrowed from somewhere else. In the second volume of the collection, there are five sagas. Four of these are the same as those copied by Guðmundur in Lbs 747 fol. and Lbs 748 fol.: *Harðar saga*, *Heiðarvíga saga*, and *Kjalnesinga saga* in Lbs 748 fol., and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* in Lbs 747 fol.¹² One of them, *Gunnlaugs saga*, was neither found in *Ágetar fornmannasögur* nor in *Nokkrir margfróðir þættir*. Probably, this second volume was available at Breiðabólstaður though the titles given to the sagas are not identical.

Guðlaugur's Illustrations of *Njáls saga*

In addition to writing *Njáls saga*'s text, which covers roughly 180 pages in a folio-sized manuscript, Guðlaugur drew twenty-one images (see table 10.2). He used pencil, a black or brown ink pen, watercolor paints, and some kind of colored pens. The outlines of characters and buildings were made using pencil. After Guðlaugur colored the images using watercolor paint, he seems to have darkened certain outlines, such as eyes, and other detailed parts. Blue, purple, orange, red, and gray—which Guðlaugur used to color the characters' hair—are the most prominent colors in his illustrations. As Guðlaugur, the amateur artist, became more skilled, he started mixing different colors and discovered brown that he uses to darken characters' hair and beards. Apart from redness in the characters' cheeks, all faces are featureless and therefore quite similar in appearance.

Before drawing, Guðlaugur defined the area he believed each image required. Even though he did not produce the illustrations until after having written each chapter (or possibly even the whole saga), it is likely that he had marked out the frame and written the text concurrently. The images, each of which cover one-third, half, or all of a page, then had to fit within that frame.¹³ There are a few exceptions, however, as, for example, when spearpoints, feet, and names stretch outside the frame (see plate 22).¹⁴ When Guðlaugur had finished drawing all characters in an image, he filled the background with a reddish color.

In the beginning, Guðlaugur did not seem to be able to manage three-dimensional drawing. The first images in Lbs 747 fol. are all two-dimensional: the characters face straight forward with their feet to the side.¹⁵ Proportions are rarely in harmony; the feet below the ankle are in fact so childish that no full-grown person could keep their balance on such small feet. The execution of feet in Guðlaugur's illustrations is one feature that did not develop during the process. On the other hand, progress in representing some things in three dimensions is apparent.¹⁶ The technique is obvious in the image that shows the burning of Njáll (see plate 24). Along with a more three-dimensional appearance, proportions improved over time, and the characters become more lively and relaxed without being fully harmonized. Perspective and three-dimensional representation require the careful conjunction of light and shadow, which Guðlaugur did not fully master.

The first image (see plate 23) in this copy of *Njáls saga* stands apart from the other twenty. It shows Gunnarr with his equipment and weapons

(shield, bow, spear, and sword) floating around the figure in the frame. No other image depicts equipment or any other items in this way; Guðlaugur usually places weapons in the characters' hands or in their scabbard. The design of this first image suggests that Guðlaugur found it important that readers looked closely at Gunnarr's equipment. In this same image, and in another one of him and his horse (fol. 25r, see plate 26), Gunnarr stands on solid ground. In other images, characters stand on the frame that defines the image.

Guðlaugur places characters in the foreground of all of his images except for two. In the first one, which illustrates how Gunnarr prepares to meet Otkell and his men in combat, Gunnarr's farm covers half of the representation of Gunnarr and his horse (see plate 26). The other exception is the representation of the burning of Njáll, in chapter 129, where the farm Bergþórshváll is depicted as being on fire in the center of the frame, and characters are placed to the left and right of the building. Guðlaugur only included background or scenery in six images. These include a throne, a bench, a stall in court, and a table. These background props are in images that accompany the second part of the saga, by which time Guðlaugur had become a better illustrator and seemed to feel more secure about drawing more complex graphics (see plate 24).

Guðlaugur's Selection of Images

Guðlaugur's copy of *Njáls saga* is not the only illustrated edition of the saga.¹⁷ Numerous publications also include illustrations, among them three from the nineteenth century. In 1886, thirteen years after Guðlaugur moved to Canada, Jules Gourdault's French rewriting of *Njáls saga* was published, together with around ten illustrations by an anonymous artist.¹⁸ Most of these illustrations depict landscapes (including an image of the Icelandic hot spring Geysir, and of the Hebrides) or other details (such as an illustration of the god Óðinn) that were probably intended to help the reader locate themselves physically and culturally. None of the images depict any direct battle scenes. The scenes this anonymous artist chose to illustrate, most likely in accordance with his evaluation of what he believed would be important to the reader, are dialogues and locations rather than battles, including the famous scene in which Hallgerðr refuses Gunnarr's request for a lock of her hair to repair his broken bowstring (ch. 77).



Figure 10.1 Jenny Nyström-Stoopemdaal's depiction of the meeting of Gunnarr and Hallgerðr.

In Agnes Ekermann's 1895 summary of *Njáls saga*, four images by the Swedish artist Jenny Nyström-Stoopemdaal were printed. The images show Njáll (ch. 20); Gunnarr and Hallgerðr's first encounter (ch. 33); Kolskeggr, in full armor, asking a wise man about the dream he had (about a man who appeared to him in his dreams, ch. 81); and finally, Hildigunnr putting the slain Hǫskuldr's bloody cloak on Flosi (ch. 116). Only one scene is thus depicted by both Nyström-Stoopemdaal and Guðlaugur: that of Gunnarr and Hallgerðr meeting for the first time, which is also the most often-illustrated event in the saga (see plate 25 and figure 10.1).

The third illustrated nineteenth-century edition of *Njáls saga* is Nordahl Rolfsen's saga collection *Vore Fædres Liv: karakterer og skildringer*



Figure 10.2 Andreas Bloch's depiction of Gunnarr looking back at Fljótshlíð.

fra sagatíden, published in 1898 with eight illustrations by Andreas Bloch. These images show great heroes in full armor, and great emphasis is placed on facial expressions and expressive eyes. This is especially apparent in the illustration of Gunnarr, for example, when he looks back at the hills on which his farm stands after being sentenced to exile: “Føgr er hlíðin” are the famous words he speaks on this occasion (see figure 10.2). The hill is not shown in the illustrations, however. Rather, the reader sees the front

side of Gunnarr, looking straight ahead at the hills, which are located behind the reader. Gunnarr is the subject, and his facial expression shows his love for his countryside.

Another example of this emphasis on characters' expressions is the illustration of Skarpheðinn killing Þráinn on the Markarfljót river ice: Skarpheðinn smiles so his teeth are all very much on display. Skarpheðinn's perceived joy, here, is Bloch's interpretation of the scene since this is not mentioned in the text. Like Guðlaugur, Bloch focuses on dialogues and interaction between characters, though four of his eight illustrations do depict battles. Like Guðlaugur, Nyström-Stoopemdaal and other artists, Bloch includes an illustration of Gunnarr's and Hallgerðr's first meeting at the Alþingi.

The most impressive Icelandic edition of the saga, as far as illustrations are concerned, is Halldór Laxness's 1945 edition, *Brennunjáls saga*. In this edition, no fewer than seventy-one images, the work of three artists, are published. The artists were Þorvaldur Skúlason, Snorri Arinbjarnarson, and Gunnlaugur Scheving.¹⁹ In their illustrations, the focus is often on important events of the saga, and light is thrown on darker sides of the narrative.²⁰ As mentioned above, Guðlaugur, on the other hand, mostly illustrated dialogues and the precursors of battles. Table 10.2 shows which chapters Guðlaugur decided to highlight and to which parts of the text his illustrations refer.

Guðlaugur certainly does illustrate battles, but, proportionally—since *Njáls saga* has numerous descriptions of such events—more of Guðlaugur's images show characters that seem to stay put and are not engaged in much action at all. Of the twenty-one illustrations, only seven show a battle or the events leading up to a battle. The other fourteen show static characters that, in most cases, are having a conversation. Instead of bloody battlefields, Guðlaugur rather prefers to illustrate momentous dialogues. Only the last two images show any killing. The first of these two shows Gunnarr Lambason's head lying on a table after Kári had chopped it off “svá snart at höfuitit fauk uppá bordit fyrir konúnginn ok jarlana” (85v27–86r1; “so fast that it flew onto the table in front of the king and the earls”). The last image (89r) shows Kári in the act of killing Kolr Þorsteinsson, whose head seems to be falling off. Two other illustrations show battle but in a less grotesque way. The fifth illustration (21r) shows Skarpheðinn's sword flat on Sigmundur's breast, moments before he strikes the mortal blow; in the nineteenth illustration (82v), Grani has swung his sword back and looks to aim it towards Kári who has a spear in his left

Table 10.2 *Njáls saga* characters in Guðlaugur's illustrations and their textual context.

#	Ch.	Characters in illustration	Textual context from <i>Njáls saga</i> ²¹
1	19	Gunnarr ²²	"He was handsome and fair of skin and had a straight nose, turned up at its tip. He was blue-eyed and keen-eyed and ruddy-cheeked, with thick hair, blond and well-combed. He was very well-mannered, firm in all ways, generous and even-tempered, a true friend but a discriminating friend. He was very well off for property."
2	20	Njáll and Bergþóra	"There was a man named Njáll [...]. Bergþóra was his wife's name."
3	25	Skarphedin, Grímr, and Helgi	"The sons of Njáll must now be named."
4	33	Gunnarr and Hallgerðr	"There he saw some women coming toward him, and they were well dressed. The woman in front was the best dressed. When they met, she greeted Gunnarr at once."
5	45	Skjöldr, Helgi, Grímr, Skarphedin, and Sigmundur	"Skarphedin struck him on the helmet and then dealt the death blow."
6	54	Gunnarr and a horse	"Gunnarr took the shepherd's horse and put his saddle on it. He took his shield, girded himself with the sword he had received from Olvir, put on his helmet, and took his halberd; it rang loudly, and his mother Rannveig heard it."
7	73	Gunnarr and Njáll	"Njáll spoke to him: 'Be careful from now on. You have killed twice within the same bloodline and you must consider, for your own sake, that your life is in danger if you don't keep the settlement that will be made. [...] I'll stand by you loyally as long as I live.'"
8	79	Högni, Skarphedin, and Mjörðr	"Mord was out in the field and asked for peace and offered full reconciliation."
9	92	Njáll, Höskuldr, Grímr, Kári, Helgi, and Skarphedin	"Njal rose and went outside. He saw all his sons with their weapons, and also Kari, his son-in-law. [...] Njal called to Skarphedin: 'Where are you going, son?' 'To look for sheep,' he said."
10	95	Flosi and Steinvör	"There was a man named Flosi. [...] Flosi was married to Steinvor."
11	97	Njáll, Höskuldr, Flosi, and Hildigunnr	"The reason for our journey here is to propose a link with your family, Flosi, by asking for the hand of Hildigunn your brother's daughter. [...] On behalf of Höskuld Thrainsson, my foster-son, said Njal."

- 12 104 King Óláfr, Gizurr hvíti, and Hjalti Skeggjason
- 13 109 Flosi and Hǫskuldr
- 14 119 Þorleifr krákr, Þorgrímr inn mikli, Þrhallr, Skarphæðinn, Grímr, Kári, Helgi, and Ásgrímr
- 15 123 Skarphæðinn and Flosi
- 16 129 The burning of Njáll; about thirty anonymous characters²³
- 17 138 Bjarni, Eyjólfir, Flosi, and Hallbjörn
- 18 139 Gizurr hvíti, Hjalti, Ásgrímr, Kári, Þorgeirr skorageirr and his brothers, Þorgrímr inn mikli, and Þorleifr krákr
- 19 150 Björn, Kári, Grani, and four anonymous characters
- 20 155 Kári and eight anonymous characters
- 21 158 Kári, Kolr, and five anonymous characters
- “King Ólaf was so angry at this that he ordered all men from Iceland to be seized and put in a dungeon, and he planned to put them to death. But then Gizur the White and Hjalti came forth and offered to stand as pledges for these men and to go to Iceland and preach the faith.”
- “Hoskuld made ready to go home a few days later, and Flosi gave him a scarlet cloak trimmed with lace down to the hem.”
- “Then Asgrim jumped up and spoke to the Njalssons: ‘Let’s go and find ourselves some friends, so that we’re not overcome by force of numbers, for this is going to be a hard-fought case.’”
- “Flosi spoke: ‘If you want to know, then I’ll tell you what I think—it’s my guess that your father gave it, Old Beardless, for there are many who can’t tell by looking at him whether he’s a man or a woman.’”
- “Then they came with fire and started a great blaze in front of the doors.”
- “Flosi took a gold bracelet from his arm and spoke: ‘I want to give you this bracelet, Eyjolf, for your friendship and support and to show you that I have no wish to deceive you. You had best accept this bracelet, for there’s no man here at the Thing to whom I have given such a gift.’”
- “Gizur said, ‘Let’s go first to the booth of Skafti Thorodsson.’ Then they went to the booth of the men from Olfus.”
- “[...] and Kari’s sword ran on into Modolf’s side and between the ribs. He fell then and was dead at once. Grani Gunnarsson grabbed his spear and threw it at Kari, and Kari brought his shield down swiftly so that it struck in the ground and caught the spear in the air with his left hand and threw it back at Grani, and then picked up the shield with the same hand.”
- “Then [Kari] rushed along the hall and struck Gunnar Lambason on the neck; the head came off so fast that it flew onto the table in front of the king and the earls.”
- “That morning Kari went into town, too. He came to the place where Kol was counting the silver. Kari recognized him. He rushed at him with drawn sword and struck at his neck, but Kol was still counting silver and his head uttered the number ten as it flew from the body.”

hand that, later in the battle, becomes the cause of Grani's death. In the latter illustration, Móðólfr lies *hors de combat* after Kári's sword "hljóp [...] á síduna Móðólfr ok í millum rifjanna" [ran on into (his) side and between the ribs] (82r40–41). In these four images, no blood is shown.

Guðlaugur's unusual selection of illustrative material is also apparent in chapter 54, which relates how Gunnarr and Kolskeggr kill eight men, including Skammkell and Otkell. Guðlaugur decided to draw the prelude to that battle when "Gunnarr var úti at Hlidarenda ok sér smalamann sinn hleypa at gardi" (25r7–8; "Gunnarr was outside and saw his shepherd galloping towards the house"), and the shepherd tells him that he had seen eight men ride from above the river Markarfljót: "Gunnarr tók smalahestin ok lagdi á södul sinn. Hann tók skjöld sinn ok girti sik sverdinu Ölvirnaut setr hjalm á höfut sér ok tekr atgeirinn ok saung í hátt" (25r16–18; "Gunnarr took the shepherd's horse and put his saddle on it. He took his shield, girded himself with the sword he had received from Olvir, put on his helmet, and took his halberd; it rang loudly"; see plate 26). Only one other illustration shows the shepherd's warning and Gunnarr's preparation for battle. In the case of that image, though, Gunnarr has already mounted his horse.²⁴

As noted, the most illustrated event in *Njáls saga* is that of Gunnarr's and Hallgerðr's first meeting (see plate 25 and figure 10.1). The meeting is described in chapter 33:

þá sá hann konur ganga í móti sjer—ok váru vel búnar. sú var í fararbroddi konan, er bezt var búin. enn er þau funduz, kvaddi hón þegar gunnar. hann tók vel kveðju hennar ok spurði hvat kvenna hón væri. [...] hón mælti til hans djarfliga ok bað hann segja sjer frá ferðum sínum. enn hann kvaðz ekki varna mundu henni máls. settuz þau þá niðr ok töluðu. [...] þau töluðu lengi hátt (KG 33.11–27).

[There he saw some women coming toward him, and they were well dressed. The woman in front was the best dressed. When they met, she greeted Gunnar at once. He took pleasure at this and asked who she was. (...) She spoke boldly to him and asked him to tell her about his travels, and he said he would not refuse her. They sat down and talked. (...) They talked aloud for a long time.]

As usual, Guðlaugur's illustration is positioned in the middle of a sentence: "Hún mælti til hans djarfleg [*sic*] ok bað segja sér frá ferðum sínum, en hann kvadtz ekki [illustration] ekki mundi varna henni þess" (14v46–15r1).²⁵ At the bottom of page 15r, below the illustration that covers half

of the page and the text that covers the other half, the phrase “1) þau töludu lengi hátt” is written. At first glance, this seems to be a caption since this sentence is a common description of other illustrations of the same event. However, it transpires that, in this case, it is in fact some text that Guðlaugur had omitted when he copied out the text on the page. He marks “1)” where this sentence should have been, and then adds the words in the bottom margin of the page. While this is therefore not a caption, there is one example of such a device added by Guðlaugur in his *Njáls saga* copy. On page 59v which shows the burning of Njáll, he adds, with a rubricated font on the left margin of that same page, “Njáls Brenna” [Njáll’s Burning].

Text and Visual Language

Guðlaugur’s positioning of illustrations within the text is not random. He does not draw illustrations at the beginning or at the end of each chapter but as a continuation of the text. In other words, Guðlaugur often places the illustrations in the middle of a sentence but always close to the reference point. The illustrations never break up the text so that the line of text above the image does not reach to the right margin of the text frame.²⁶ The fact that the positioning is, in this respect, dependent on the space available does not cancel out the interplay between the words and the image.

The first illustration (see plate 23) is positioned in this way. It shows Gunnarr and his equipment (shield, bow, spear, and sword), as already described above: “manna kurteisastur var hann hardgjör í öllu fémíldr ok stilltr [illustration] vel” (9v14–15; “He was very well-mannered, firm in all ways, generous and even- [illustration] tempered”). The same goes for the next image that shows Njáll and his wife Bergþóra: “Bergþóra hjet [illustration] kona hans” (10r10–11; “Bergthora was [illustration] his wife’s name”). In chapter 73, Njáll and Gunnarr have a conversation: “þeir Njáll ok Gunnar fundust ok töludu um [illustration] bardagann” (32r20–21; “Njáll and Gunnarr met and talked about [illustration] the fight”). And the illustration of Njáll’s sons in chapter 25 (plate 22) is positioned in the same way, as well as the full-page illustration (plate 24) of the burning of Njáll in chapter 129: “en þó mun með okkr sá skilnadr verða at við munum allrei sjást síðan því at ef ek hleyp út þá mun ek ekki hafa skap at hlaupa [full-page illustration] inni eldin apr til þín” (59r43–60r1; “But our parting now will mean that we’ll never meet again. If I run out of the

fire, I won't have the courage to run [full-page illustration] back into it to join you"). The positioning here suggests an intention on the part of Guðlaugur to make sure that the illustrations were examined by the reader in the same moment that the text was read.

The positioning of these two media, words and images, is in this sense parallel. These are, though, two different symbolic systems which demand a different kind of reading. Although the two media can be considered to be equal (scholarly research assumes that visual arts has its own language, its own expressive manner that is usually called visual language or visual thought²⁷), they are, nonetheless, two different "languages" that have different laws. In the same way that we can be literate in a particular language, we can "read" imagery. This kind of reading is not necessarily from left to right, as images allow one's eyes to wander between different places within the image itself. The movement of one's eyes can therefore be vertical or horizontal; first up and then down, or down and then up; left to right or the other way around.²⁸

In Lbs 747 fol., the narrative of *Njáls saga* therefore lives within, and is presented by means of, two different but equal media. Guðlaugur "translates" the text into a figurative form or language, and the reader has to "read" the illustrations in the same way he would read the text—or would listen to someone else read it out loud. Jón Karl Helgason has put it this way:

Unnt er að líta á allar myndskreytingar við Njálu sem þýðingar á milli táknerfa þar sem verið er að þýða málsgreinar eða örnefni úr sögunni af tungumáli yfir á myndmál. Myndunum er að vísu ekki ætlað að leysa frumtextann af hólmi heldur eru þær útleggingar hans—þær fylla í eyður frásagnarinnar, draga athygli lesandans að tilteknum atburðum eða stöðum og hafa mótandi áhrif á ímyndunarafli hans. Myndskreytingar, ekki síður en stíll þýðingar eða útgáfu, getur þannig breytt upplifun okkar á einstökum persónum og jafnvel á verkinu í heild.

[One can look at all illustrations of *Njáls saga* as translations between symbolic systems where one translates sentences or place-names from the saga to a figurative language. The illustrations aren't intended to displace the text—they fill in the blanks in the text, pull the reader's attention to certain events or places and have a formative effect to his imagination. Illustrations, as well as the style of the translation or edition, can in that way change our experience of particular characters or even the whole work.]²⁹

Later in this chapter, I will talk about the reader's imagination and potential for creation, but first, more will be said about the translation between symbolic systems and the effect that this has on reading and the reading experience.

Kathryn Starkey, in *Reading the Medieval Book: Word, Image, and Performance in Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Willehalm,"* states that in the Middle Ages, little distinction was made between individual reading, recital, and figurative reading.³⁰ Numerous illustrations can be found in the *Willehalm* manuscript that Starkey focuses on in her research, and they cover roughly three-fifths of the manuscript. It is highly unusual, Starkey points out, for a manuscript written in the scribe's native language to include such a large number of illustrations. The reason, she thinks, lies in the purpose of the manuscript: it seems to have been composed with both reading and recital in mind.³¹ In Guðlaugur's manuscript, the ratio of illustration to text is not as high, but, in the context of Icelandic manuscripts, they are plentiful. And as with Starkey's manuscript, the quantity of illustrations could indicate that it may have been written both for individual reading and for recital of some sort. The verso side of the leaf that contains the illustration of the burning of Njáll may provide evidence that supports this idea. There is a black stain, possibly caused by a candle flame (see plate 27). We might imagine a situation where the reader had held the paper up against the light to illuminate the illustration. The smell of smoke would have dramatically increased the sensory impact on the audience.

Starkey claims that instead of treating imagery and text as two different media, readers should focus on the connection between the two and on how images and words overlap and cooperate in order to make the narrative more accessible for the reader or the listener.³² One of the most interesting and noteworthy attributes of the manuscript that Starkey examines is how words and images have, from the start, been intended to cooperate in that manner. The imagery does not necessarily focus on action in the narrative but rather the narrative of the poem. Illustrations of the narrator that are included in the manuscript are, Starkey claims, a good indication of the narrative focus of the imagery. The same is true of Guðlaugur's illustrations, as discussed above. This conveys the idea, Starkey says, that the images are not used as mere decoration within—or for—the poem but rather are intended to expand the meaning of it.³³ The images found in these manuscript contexts are, in the words of literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan, “the spatial extension of the text,” enlarging the

meaning of the narrative, which does not only consist of text but also the imagery that accompanies it.³⁴

This cooperation between image and text has also been fruitfully discussed with regard to comics, as this genre is based on the two systems on first principles. The scholar and comic-book author Scott McCloud divides the relationship between words and images in comics into seven subcategories with respect to which of the two systems have more weight in the reading process.³⁵ His categories are (1) The words provide all necessary information and are accompanied by an image that does not add any meaning and could not stand on its own. (2) The image provides all necessary information, but the text narrates certain parts of the story. (3) The words and the images have the same meaning. (4) The words and the images cooperate to some extent but both communicate specific information. (5) Words and images cooperate and together form a meaning that could not be communicated without recourse to both media. (6) Words and images go off in separate directions without overlapping. (7) Words and images unite in a figurative presentation.³⁶ These categories are useful in better understanding the relationship between Guðlaugur's illustrations and his text.

At first glance, Guðlaugur's illustrations appear to communicate the same meaning as the text and therefore would seem to fall into the first category. The fourth illustration (plate 25) is a good example here. The text tells of Gunnarr's and Hallgerðr's first meeting at Þingvellir where Hallgerðr "spoke boldly to him and asked him to tell her about his travels, and he said he would not refuse her" (cf. above). The illustration shows the two of them standing together; no additional visual information is apparent, besides the decorative and colorful clothing which was typical of Guðlaugur's time period rather than that of the time when *Njáls saga* is set.³⁷

Closer examination, however, reveals that some illustrations do communicate more than what is found in the text or include additional information. A few images, for example, hint at events that have not yet taken place in the narrative; this kind of anticipatory device is a stylistic feature of the Sagas of Icelanders genre.³⁸ This is not always obvious and it does not necessarily ruin the reading experience, though it could have some impact: the reader might reflect on the images and what they suggest without jumping to conclusions as to their meaning, or the reader might know the plot already, so the implication would not come as a surprise. Good examples here are the first and sixth illustrations. The first illustration, as

already described above, shows Gunnarr and his equipment. In the illustration, a spear is depicted even though the text does not mention its existence at this point. The spear appears later on in the text though, when Gunnarr throws it at Karl's ship, killing the man whom it pierced (ch. 30). In this way, the image anticipates a scene that has not taken place in the text narrative. The sixth illustration shows, as also described earlier, Gunnarr and a horse. Gunnarr holds a shield in his hand, on which the image of a hart can be seen. The text here does not mention this decoration on the shield until later in the saga (ch. 92), when Helgi Njálsson's shield is described: "hann var í raudum kirtli með hjálm á höfði ok raudan skjöld ok markadr á hjörtr" (40v51–52; "He wore a red tunic and a helmet and was carrying a red shield marked with a hart"). It seems here that Guðlaugur may have placed Helgi's shield in Gunnarr's hands. Another possible explanation for the treatment of Gunnarr's shield is that the image of the hart refers to the character Hjörtr ("hart" in Icelandic), who is Gunnarr's youngest brother. Hjörtr is killed in the battle by the Rangá river in chapter 63. It is possible that Guðlaugur added the image to the shield because he was thinking of the description of Hjörtr's death and of how Gunnarr "rode home with Hjort laid out on *his shield* after the battle" (italics mine). Again, the image depicts a detail that hints at an event that has not yet taken place in the narrative. Even though the shield is small, it is placed in the center of the illustration and therefore it is unlikely that readers would miss it.

These illustrations that indirectly refer to events that have not yet been presented in the narrative fall into McCloud's fourth category: they provide the same information as the text but add some extra information that the text does not include. Other illustrations add to the meaning of the text in a different way, affecting the reader's view or perspective on certain characters and events. The third illustration, which shows Njáll's sons (plate 28), is a good example of this.

A couple of features in this illustration are, in particular, worthy of note. Firstly, Guðlaugur does not include Hǫskuldr, Njáll's fourth son, in this illustration, even though he is mentioned in the same chapter as the other three sons; Hǫskuldr had a different mother, but his introduction begins in the same way as the other three "Höskuldr hjet hinn fjordi son Njál's" (12v9–10; "Hoskuld was the name of Njal's fourth son"). Secondly, Grímr puts his left hand on his brother Helgi's shoulder, but the text itself does not mention anything that might suggest this posture. A similar additional posture is seen in Guðlaugur's eleventh illustration, which shows Njáll and his foster son Hǫskuldr proposing marriage to Hildigunnr

Starkaðsdóttir. Njáll's love for Hǫskuldr is obvious throughout the saga and Guðlaugur emphasizes their good relationship in this image by having Njáll's hand rest on Hǫskuldr's shoulder. This physical contact is not a detail that is mentioned in either of the two chapters.

Although Guðlaugur's manuscript is not a comic in the modern sense, one could imagine that illiterate people who knew the story could have browsed through the manuscript the same way they might with a comic in their hands and would have gained some pleasure from studying the visual presentation of the narrative. One of the most important features in comics and what in fact defines them is the frame. All of Guðlaugur's illustrations are set within a frame—and one might actually consider each page that includes an image to be one big frame, as Guðlaugur defines the margins with lines of text. The text itself is then in the gutter, or the space between the frames, where the reader has to imagine what happened from one frame to another. The gutter in comics could be compared to the space between sentences in a written text where the reader, unconsciously, fills in the blank area and creates meaning in relation to the sentences before and after the “gutter.”³⁹

If Guðlaugur's illustrations were to be arranged in the same way as frames in comics—and without all text except the ones within the frame—they would fall into a category that Scott McCloud calls “scene to scene,” one of six categories that describe the changes between frames in comics.⁴⁰ In this category, McCloud includes comics that consist of frames showing different places within a story. The frames can show characters in different scenes and at various times. The reader understands the context on the basis of all of the frames. He is forced to look at two frames that are located sequentially side by side and automatically tries to determine their connection.⁴¹ No text or image is in the gutter, but experience or expectations tell us that something should be there. By combining the two frames, and “filling” in the blanks, the reader creates meaning, no matter how “long” or “big” the gap between the frames is.⁴²

Developing a similar idea, Umberto Eco has referred to Italian research where participants were shown a comic.⁴³ The first frame showed a blindfolded man standing in front of an army of men who are all pointing a gun at him. In the next frame, the same man is seen dead on the ground. When the participants in the experiment looked at the two frames, they created, in their minds, extra frames between the two existing ones. Thus, when frames are viewed in the context of other frames, the subjects of the illustrations (that is, the characters) start moving. In the viewer's mind, a

transformation happens in the gutter where the viewer merges two separate frames into one idea. Time also starts moving. In the viewer's mind, a certain process is triggered: those participating in the experiment saw the man falling down, even though in the first frame he is standing, and in the second frame he is on the ground. Nor does time only pass in the gutter where the viewer's creative interpretation or extension of the narrative takes place. Each frame in a comic seems to show a single moment, a static image, like a photograph. However, the frames (individually, and in relation to each other) are more diverse and complex since time usually passes within each frame. In fact, it is quite rare that frames have the same impact as photographs.⁴⁴ If we turn back to look at Guðlaugur's illustration of the burning of Njáll, this point becomes clear. The reader of the manuscript can hardly avoid visualizing the movement of the smoke and the fiery darts leaping from the burning farmhouse, especially if a candle is used to light up the pages. And when readers look at an image that only has characters, they imagine them speaking or having in a conversation, as they do in the text. In this way, one might say that the reader *hears* with his *eyes*.⁴⁵

The illustration of Njáll, his sons, and Kári Sölmundarson (plate 22, at 41r) is interesting to examine in this respect. At the bottom of the facing page (40v), the text "Njáll kalladi á Skarphedin ok mælti" [Njal called to Skarphedin and said] is written. When the reader picks up the text on 41v, the image (which fills the whole of 41r) disappears, but Njáll's question to Skarphedinn echoes in the reader's ears, whether he is reading by himself or listening to someone else: "Hvert skal fara frændi" (41v1; "Where are you going, son?"). The illustration showing Njáll's and Høskuldr's marriage betrothal journey has the same effect (see plate 29).

Above the image, the text reads: "þat mæli ek eigi segir hun at ek vilji eigi giptast Høskuldi ef þeir fá honum mannaforráð ella mun ek engan kost á gjöra" (43r21–22; "I'm not saying,' she said, 'that I wouldn't marry Hoskuld if they found a godord for him. But otherwise I won't consider it"). Below these words is the illustration showing Njáll, Høskuldr, Flosi and Hildigunnr, and below the image, the text reads: "Njáll mælti: þá vil ek bíða láta mín um þetta mál þrjá vetr" (43r23; "In that case,' said Njáll, 'I'd like you to let this matter wait for three years"). The illustration is thus placed in the middle of the conversation. The reader is still reading about (or listening to) the character's interaction when the image appears. In his mind, the time that passes within the frame equals the time it takes to read the conversation out loud. The time that passes becomes more obvious if we imagine a gutter that would split the image in the middle. The image would then be two

frames, and, as previously discussed, the reader creates one sequence from the two, where time passes from the first frame to the second.⁴⁶

The reader reads the words, but he also “reads” that the image shows two pairs of characters. The pairs face each other, one character is resting his arm on the shoulder of the character who stands in front because the scene is all about that character. The scene also revolves around a character that is part of the other pair. Though that character’s role in the conversation is vital, he stands behind the other character, who makes a decision on behalf of them both. The reader receives this information through the illustration as the narrative does not say anything about this physical setup or staging.

Conclusion

In his epilogue to *Njáls saga*, Halldór Laxness discusses the illustrations that are included in the edition, and states that: “Ég þykist þess fullviss, að ýmsar þær teikningar, sem hér sjá fyrst dagsins ljós, muni standa um aldur listræn afrek, jafnvirð hinum ódauðlega texta sem þau voru sköpuð til að þjóna” [I am convinced that some of the illustrations that are here published for the first time will be regarded as an artistic achievement, equivalent to the classical text that they were created to serve].⁴⁷ Two things are worth noting here. Firstly, Laxness says that the illustrations are equivalent to the text. Secondly, he considers them to be servants to the text rather than of equal weight. As discussed here, Guðlaugur’s illustrations do not only serve to reinforce the information provided in the text they accompany. Some of them refer to scenes that take place later on in the saga and provide the reader with information that is not found in the text itself. In addition to this, of course, the images make the saga more vibrant and alive: characters and scenes that readers and viewers had to imagine for themselves come to life —and in color!

The illustrations stimulate the reader’s/listener’s/viewer’s imagination in that way he mentally visualizes the characters, as Guðlaugur has depicted them, in different circumstances, and wearing different clothes and so on. When reading chapters that are not illustrated, the reader of the manuscript will still imagine the characters visually. The reader creates on the basis of what Guðlaugur created. In this way, the reader continues the creation that the “first author” of *Njáls saga* started and that Guðlaugur, among many others, took over.

NOTES

¹ Lbs 747 fol.: “Nokkurar sögur og þættir af fornaldarmönnum Íslendinga. Í hjáverkum uppskrifaðar frá vordögum 1871 til vordaga 1873 af Guðlaugi Magnússyni og Guðmundi Magnússyni vinnumönnum á Hafursstöðum á Fellsströnd og Breiðabólstað á Fellströnd.” Lbs 748 fol.: “Nokkrar sögur og þættir af fornaldarmönnum Íslendinga. Skrifaðar af Guðmundi Magnússyni Breiðabóls[s]tað vottar Jóhannes Hallsson Túngarði.” Photographs of Lbs 747 fol. can be found here: <http://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/Lbs02-0747>, and photographs of Lbs 748 fol. here: <http://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/Lbs02-0748>. With regard to the later ownership of these manuscripts, it is known that Guðmundur Magnússon passed them on to his nephew, Magnús Jónsson at Ás (by Stykkishólmur), and they were in his possession from 1915 to 1943. Magnús then gave them to his son-in-law Björn Jónsson, who lived at Kóngsbakki in Helgafellssveit, and Björn sold them to the Manuscript Department at the Landsbókasafn Íslands (National Library of Iceland) in 1965. See manuscript details at <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/Lbs02-0747>.

² Finnbogi Guðmundsson, “Nokkurar sögur,” 147.

³ Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 201–2.

⁴ Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 201–2.

⁵ Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 202.

⁶ See manuscript details at <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/Lbs04-1489>. Katrín was married to the priest and member of parliament Guðmundur Einarsson.

⁷ This saga comes just before *Egils saga* in Lbs 747 fol., the exemplar for which Guðlaugur had got elsewhere.

⁸ See Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 200. A fragment of another nineteenth-century *Njáls saga* manuscript recently came to light in Seattle, clearly copied from a printed edition, see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir’s introduction to the present volume, p. xviii.

⁹ Davíð Ólafsson, “Að æxla sér bækur með penna,” 200. See also Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge in this volume (p. 2) on Ólafur Olavius’s edition.

¹⁰ The saga is not in Lbs 1489 4to, and few nineteenth-century manuscripts contain the saga. Either Guðmundur used a manuscript copy that is now lost, or some pages in *Ágætar fornmannasögur* were in a bad condition; *Víglundar saga* is printed there.

¹¹ It might be noted, though, that Guðlaugur actually copied text from pages 138–40, and not 141, as it says in the manuscript.

¹² *Hensna-Þóris saga* is the fifth saga, but this saga is not in either of the two manuscripts.

¹³ There are two exceptions. In Lbs 748 fol., two smaller illustrations do not reach the left or right borders: one image is within a frame, as are almost all of

Guðlaugur's illustrations, but the other one is not, and so the text lies tight against the image, and the lines around it are unequal in length.

¹⁴ Guðlaugur defines the text frame in the same way but, as with the illustrations, the text sometimes reaches outside of the right border. It is obvious, though, that Guðlaugur did his best to keep the text in the frame, as some lines are clearly compressed.

¹⁵ Guðlaugur's *Njáls saga* illustrations are not his first. Six images in the other manuscript, Lbs 748 fol., were probably his first attempts at illustration.

¹⁶ The first illustration that has some sort of three-dimensional element is in chapter 45 (fol. 21r) and shows Skjöldr, Helgi, Grímr, Skarphedinn, and Sigmundr.

¹⁷ In his book *Höfundar Njálu*, Jón Karl Helgason discusses the reception history of *Njáls saga*, including illustrations. The book is accompanied by a CD that is called *Vefur Darraðar* which includes illustrations from eighteen artists that have been part of published editions of the saga, as well as translations, in the period 1885 to 1998.

¹⁸ *Gunnar et Nial*, translated by Gourdault.

¹⁹ As far as I am aware, it is the only illustrated edition of the entire saga that has appeared in Iceland. For retellings aimed at children see, e.g., Brynhildur Þórarinsdóttir, *Njála* (illustrated by Margrét E. Laxness), and Embla Ýr Bárudóttir and Ingólfur Örn Björgvinsson, *Sögur úr Njálu* series.

²⁰ See Jón Karl Helgason, *Höfundar Njálu*, 118.

²¹ Here and elsewhere, translations are from Cook's *Njal's Saga*.

²² The illustration shows Gunnarr when he is introduced in chapter 19. On *Vefur Darraðar* there is no comparable image. Jenny Nyström-Stoopendaal illustrates Njáll when he is introduced later in the saga, however.

²³ "Anonymous characters" are those who are not mentioned by name in the text next to the illustrations. In most cases they are mentioned in the saga but not named.

²⁴ That illustration is by Cleliu Ottone and was published in the book *Saga Despre Njal* from 1966.

²⁵ Guðlaugur writes *ekki* "not" before and after the illustration.

²⁶ The layout is in many ways space dependent. For example, some verses in the story are set next to the border to the right or left. The text is then parallel to the lines in the verse. The space for the verses is separated from the text in the narrative by bolding the verse, but sometimes a vertical line is inserted between the verse and the text.

²⁷ See Auður Ólafsdóttir, "Ef ég væri mynd hvernig myndirðu þá orða mig?" 10.

²⁸ Bongco, *Reading Comics*, 75–76.

²⁹ Jón Karl Helgason, *Höfundar Njálu*, 115.

³⁰ Starkey, *Reading the Medieval Book*, 104.

³¹ Starkey, *Reading the Medieval Book*, 2.

³² Starkey, *Reading the Medieval Book*, 16.

³³ Starkey, *Reading the Medieval Book*, 7.

³⁴ See Ryan, "Space."

³⁵ McCloud, *Making Comics*.

³⁶ McCloud, *Making Comics*, 130.

³⁷ In fact it could be said that all of his illustrations change the meaning in this way. All characters and their homes are more modern. Another illustration shows Njáll and his wife Bergþóra: in his right hand, Njáll holds a book that refers to how learned he is with regard to the law. The text does not mention a book though, as books were not common in Njáll's age. In this way, the illustration adds information to the text and localizes the narrative.

³⁸ See, for example, discussion on foreshadowing in Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga*, 49–54.

³⁹ See Saraceni, *The Language of Comics*, 9.

⁴⁰ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 71–72.

⁴¹ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 73.

⁴² Bongco, *Reading Comics*, 65. See also McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66–67.

⁴³ Eco, "A Reading of Steve Canyon," 20–25.

⁴⁴ Saraceni, *The Language of Comics*, 6.

⁴⁵ See Barker, *Comics*, 11.

⁴⁶ See McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 97.

⁴⁷ Halldór Kiljan Laxness, "Eftirmáli," 415.

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The Manuscripts of *Njáls saga*

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THE FOLLOWING OVERVIEW IS based on Susanne M. Arthur's 2015 PhD dissertation on the codicology of *Njáls saga*. The dating, names of scribes, and nicknames of manuscripts were adopted from the dissertation though manuscripts that were unknown when the dissertation was completed have been added. The manuscripts appear in chronological order. Fragments with different call numbers that were originally part of the same manuscript are listed together. The list is numbered consecutively; a lowercase letter has been added to fragments with different call numbers belonging to the same manuscript. The list provides the call number, nickname (where applicable), number of folios on which *Njáls saga* text is copied (leaves left blank are not counted), repository, date of writing, name of the scribe (where known), and the writing support (parchment or paper) for each manuscript. In cases where additional leaves have been added to manuscripts at a later point in time (e.g., to replace damaged or missing leaves), these later inserts are given their own entry in the list, with a cross-reference to the original manuscript. Manuscripts that are lost today, though attested in written sources, are not given a number but are labeled with the symbol (†). Likewise, summaries and translations are not numbered but are marked with (sum.) and (trans.) respectively.

Repositories

- SÁM: Manuscript department of the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum), Reykjavík, Iceland
- Lbs: Manuscript department of the National and University Library of Iceland (Landsbókasafn Íslands—Háskólabókasafn), Reykjavík, Iceland

- KBK: Manuscript collection of the Royal Library (Det Kongelige Bibliotek), Copenhagen, Denmark
- AMS: The Arnamagnæan Collection (Den Arnamagnæanske Samling), University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- KBS: Manuscript department of the Royal Library (Kungliga biblioteket), Stockholm, Sweden
- NBO: Manuscript department of the National Library (Nasjonalbiblioteket), Oslo, Norway
- TCD: Manuscripts & Archives Research Library, The Library of Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
- BL: Manuscript department of the British Library, London, United Kingdom
- UBR: Manuscript department of the University Library, Rostock (Universitätsbibliothek Rostock), Germany
- Þj: The National Museum (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands), Reykjavík, Iceland

- 1 a AM 162 B β fol. (1 fol.) SÁM ca. 1300 parch.
 b AM 162 B δ fol. (Þormóðsbók; 24 fols.) SÁM ca. 1300 parch.
 The two fragments belong to the earliest textual transmission of *Njáls saga* and were most likely originally part of the same codex.¹
- 2 GKS 2870 4to (Gráskinna; 95 fols.) SÁM ca. 1300 parch.
 For the younger part of the codex which supplies missing or illegible text see no. 20 (Gráskinnuauki).
- 3 AM 468 4to (Reykjabók; 93 fols.) AMS ca. 1300–25 parch.
 On folio 93v (the saga ends on 93r), a different but contemporary hand added additional stanzas (*vísnaauki* 13 to 15, as well as 27 and 28, see Beeke Stegmann in this volume). The additional stanzas 16 (24r), 17 (24v) 18 (29r), 19 (31v), 20 (32v), 21 (33r), 22 (37r), 23 (37r), 24 (39r), 25 (40v), 26 (47v) and 29 (52r) were added by the same hand in the margin. One folio was added during the seventeenth century; see no. 44.
- 4 AM 162 B γ fol. (Óssbók; 5 fols.) SÁM ca. 1325 parch.
- 5 AM 162 B ζ fol. (5 fols.) SÁM ca. 1325 parch.
- 6 AM 162 B θ fol. (2 fols.) SÁM ca. 1325 parch.
- 7 AM 132 fol. (Möðruvallabók; 48 fols.) SÁM 1330–70 parch.
 13 folios were added during the seventeenth century; see no. 42.

- 8 AM 133 fol. (Kálfalækjarbók; 95 fols.) SÁM ca. 1350 parch.
- 9 AM 162 B κ fol. (2 fols.) SÁM ca. 1350 parch.
- 10 AM 162 B η fol. (3 fols.) SÁM ca. 1350 parch.
- 11 AM 162 B ε fol. (Hítardalsbók; 7 fols.) SÁM ca. 1350–75 parch.
Folios 2 to 8 of the ε-fragment; the first folio was added during the early sixteenth century;² see no. 19.
- 12 GKS 2868 4to (Skafinskinna; 44 fols.) KBK 1350–1400 parch.
Folio 31 was added during the seventeenth century; see no. 22.
- 13 GKS 2869 4to (Sveinsbók; 10 fols.) KBK 1375–1400 parch.
Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson (in this volume, pp. 90–92) dates folios 1 to 10 (written by two contemporary scribes) to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Folio 11 is written in a younger hand; see no. 15.
- 14 AM 162 B α fol. (2 fols.) SÁM 1390–1440 parch.
- 15 GKS 2869 4to (Sveinsbók; 1 fol.) KBK 1400–25 parch.
Folio 11 of Sveinsbók (no. 13) written in a younger hand (see Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson in this volume, p. 92).
- 16 AM 162 B ι fol.
(Reykjarfjarðarbók; 4 fols.) SÁM 1400–25 parch.
- 17 AM 466 4to (Oddabók; 57 fols.) SÁM 1460 parch.
- 18 AM 309 4to (Bæjarbók; 10 fols.) SÁM 1498 parch.
- 19 AM 162 B ε fol. (1 fol.) SÁM ca. 1500 parch.
Folio 1 of the ε-fragment (no. 11).
- 20 GKS 2870 4to (Gráskinnuauki; 26 fols.) SÁM 1500–50 parch.
27 folios were added to Gráskinna (no. 2) in the sixteenth century to fill lacunae (see Emily Lethbridge in this volume, pp. 74–75).
- 21 The Lost Codex (3 fols. + 1 lost fol.) ca. 1600–50 parch.
The following fragments were identified as originally belonging to the same codex by Susanne Arthur.³ B_j fragm. I is lost.⁴
- a) AM 921 I 4to SÁM
- b) Lbs fragm. 2 Lbs
- c) JS fragm. 4 Lbs
- d) (†) B_j fragm. I

- 22 GKS 2868 4to (1 fol.) KBK 1600–1700 parch.
Folio 31 of Skafinskinna (no. 12) was added during the
seventeenth century. The text fits seamlessly into the remaining
text but the folio was bound front to back.
- 23 AM 396 fol. (Melanes-/
Lambavatnsbók; 46 fols.) SÁM ca. 1600–50 parch.
Scribe of the Lost Codex
- 24 AM 136 fol. (89 fols.) SÁM 1640–43 paper
Jón Gissursson
- 25 AM 134 fol. (Hofsþbók; 148 fols.) SÁM 1640–56 paper
Jón Erlendsson
- 26 AM 470 4to (Hvammsbók; 160 fols.) SÁM 1640–60 paper
Ketill Jörundsson
- 27 AM 555 c 4to
(Breiðabólstaðarbók; 75 fols.) SÁM 1640–60 paper
Halldór Guðmundsson
- 28 AM 137 fol. (Vigfúsarbók; 170 fols.) SÁM 1640–1672 paper
Jón Erlendsson
- 29 AM 163 d fol. (Ferjubók; 31 fols.) SÁM 1650–82 paper
- 30 AM 465 4to (133 fols.) SÁM 1650–99 paper
(trans.) GKS 1021 fol. (124 fols.) KBK 1660–64 paper
Danish translation written in the hand of Þormóður Torfason
(Torfæus).
- 31 GKS 1003 fol. (46 fols.) SÁM 1667–70 parch.
Páll Sveinsson
- (sum.) AM 576 a 4to (2 fols.) SÁM 1660–95 paper
Einar Eyjólfsson; summary in Icelandic
- 32 AM 555 a 4to (65 fols.) SÁM 1663–65 paper
Páll Ketilsson (with the exception of 1 and 2; see no. 43)
- 33 AM 163 i fol. (Saurbæjarbók; 57 fols.) SÁM 1668 paper
Hinrik Magnússon (with the exception of folios 1 to 3; see no.
41)

- 34 Holm. papp. fol. nr 9 (459 fols.) KBS 1684 paper
Jón Vigfússon
- 35 AM 135 fol. (188 fols.) SÁM ca. 1690–97 paper
Ásgeir Jónsson
- 36 BL Add 4867 fol. (99 fols.) BL ca. 1690 paper
Jón Þórðarson
- 37 AM 464 4to (162 fols.) SÁM 1697 paper
Jón Halldórsson; copy of Kálfalækjarbók (no. 8).
- 38 Lbs 222 fol. (Rauðskinna; 102 fols.) Lbs 1698 paper
Jón Þórðarson
- 39 Lbs 3505 4to (179 fols.) Lbs 1698 paper
- 40 NKS 1220 fol. (Vigursbók; 108 fols.) KBK 1698 paper
Magnús Ketilsson
- 41 AM 163 i fol. (3 fols.) SÁM 1600–1700 paper
Folios 1 to 3 of manuscript AM 163 i fol. (no. 33), in a different hand. On folio 4, the text of folio 3 continues seamlessly; the folios were presumably added during the seventeenth century.⁵
- 42 AM 132 fol. (13 fols.) SÁM 1600–1700 parch.
Folios 1–11, 20, and 30 of Möðruvallabók (no. 7).
- 43 AM 555 a 4to (2 fols.) SÁM 1600–1700 paper
Folios 1 and 2 of manuscript AM 555 a 4to (no. 32) in a different hand. The text on folio 3 does not continue the text of folio 2 directly but repeats part of the previous passage.
- 44 AM 468 4to (1 fol.) AMS 1600–1700? parch.
Folio 7 of Reykjabók (no. 3).
- (sum.) Holm. papp. 96 fol. (5 fols.) KBS 1700–1750 paper
Swedish summary
- 45 SÁM 33 (1 fol.) SÁM 1700–1800 paper
- 46 AM 469 4to (Fagureyjarbók; 149 fols.) SÁM 1705 paper
Einar Eiríksson
- 47 AM 467 4to (301 fols.) SÁM ca. 1707–22 paper
Jón Magnússon; copy of Reykjabók (no. 3).⁶

- 48 KB Add 565 4to (329 fols.) SÁM 1707–22 paper
Jón Magnússon; direct copy of Reykjabók (no. 3).
- 49 KB Add 565 4to (4 fols.) SÁM 1707–22 paper
Folios 22r–25r (pp. 43–49) containing the text corresponding to that of folio 7 in AM 468 4to (no. 44) are in a different hand. The inserted text continues the preceding text seamlessly but does not copy the text of folio 7 in AM 468 4to directly. On folio 25v the text copied from AM 468 4to continues seamlessly.
- 50 ÍB 421 4to (325 fols.) Lbs ca. 1707–22 paper
Jón Magnússon; copy of Reykjabók (no. 3).
- 51 NB 313 4to (157 fols.) NBO 1711 paper
Jón Halldórsson; copy of AM 464 4to (no. 37).
- († sum.) Biörner's Swedish summary ca. 1720–30 paper
Carl Julius Biörner; Swedish summary (with some Icelandic text) written for the Swedish Antikvitetskollegiet.
- (sum.) Rostock Mss. philol. 78/2 (5 fols.) UBR ca. 1730? paper
German summary of certain passages of the saga with occasional quotations in Icelandic.
- (trans.) Holm. papp. 93/96 fol. (235 fols.) KBS 1733–63 paper
Þorvaldur Brockmann; Swedish translation.
- (trans.) Holm. papp. 93 fol. (140 fols.) KBS 1733–63 paper
Carl Hagelberg; clean copy/revision of Þorvaldur Brockmann's translation; see entry above.
- 52 ÍB 261 4to (Lágafellsbók; 125 fols.) Lbs 1740 paper
Jón Jónsson
Seven folios were added in the nineteenth century; see no. 68.
- 53 Thott 1776 4to III (82 fols.) KBK ca. 1742–99 paper
- 54 Thott 984 fol. IIIa (168 fols.) KBK ca. 1750 paper
Jón Ólafsson
- 55 Thott 1765 4to (138 fols.) KBK ca. 1750 paper
- 56 ÍB 322 4to (128 fols.) Lbs ca. 1750–70 paper
Jón Helgason

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|----------|--|-----------------|-------|
| 57 | TCD MS 1002 (Dyflinnarbók;
191 fols.)
Copy of Hvammsbók (no. 26). | TCD ca. 1750? | paper |
| 58 | Kall 612 4to (214 fols.) | KBK 1753 | paper |
| 59 | NKS 1788 4to (Bjarnastaðabók;
207 fols.)
Jón Helgason | KBK 1760 | paper |
| 60 | NKS 1219 fol. (248 fols.) | KBK ca. 1760–80 | paper |
| 61 | Without call number (Landakotsbók;
240 fols.)
Copy of Reykjabók (no. 3) owned by Landakotskirkja in
Reykjavík, Iceland. | LK 1760–80 | paper |
| 62 | SÁM 137 (Flateyjarbók yngri;
87 fols.)
Markús Snæbjörnsson | SÁM 1767–69 | paper |
| 63 | AM Acc. 50 (139 fols.)
Jakob Sigurðsson | AMS 1770 | paper |
| 64 | ÍB 270 4to (Urðabók; 133 fols.)
Magnús Einarsson | Lbs ca. 1770 | paper |
| (trans.) | NKS 1221 fol. (63 fols.)
Jón Eiríksson; Danish translation of the first part of the saga. | KBK ca. 1770 | paper |
| 65 | Lbs 1415 4to (237 fols.)
Two folios were added in the nineteenth century; see no. 70. | Lbs ca. 1770 | paper |
| 66 | NB 372 4to (169 fols.)
Engilbert Jónsson; copy of NB 313 4to (no. 51). | NBO 1772 | paper |
| 67 | Lbs 437 4to (175 fols.) | Lbs 1773 | paper |
| 68 | ÍB 261 4to (7 fols.)
Folios 1–5 of Lágafellsbók (no. 52) were added, presumably
during the nineteenth century; the text that follows continues
seamlessly. Likewise, folios 134–35 were added later but are
written with a hand different from 1–5. The text overlaps with
the preceding text. It is thus possible that the folios 134–35 were
taken from a different paper manuscript. ⁷ | Lbs 1840 | paper |

- 69 Lbs 747 fol. (89 fols.) Lbs 1871–72 paper
Guðlaugur Magnússon
- (trans.) Lbs 4855 8vo Lbs 1772–1900 paper
German translation of part of the saga written into a copy of the
1772 Copenhagen edition.
- 70 Lbs 1415 4to (2 fols.) Lbs 1800–1900 paper
Folios 225–26 of Lbs 1415 4to (no. 65) were added later to
replace lost folios in the manuscript. The text fills the lacuna
seamlessly.
- 71 SÁM 168 (Seattle Fragment; 3 fols.) SÁM 1800–1900 paper
(†) Gullskinna 1300–1400? parch.
Hofsbók (no. 25) contains marginal variants from a parchment
codex designated as Gullskinna (see the chapters by Margrét
Eggertsdóttir and by Alaric Hall and Ludger Zeevaert, in this
volume).
- (†) Peder Resen’s library fol. no. 28 1600–1700? paper
- (†) Peder Resen’s library 4to no. 3 1600–1700? paper
- (†) Peder Resen’s library 4to no. 12 1600–1700? paper
The manuscripts are listed in a catalog of Peder Resen’s library
printed in 1685. The collection was given to the Copenhagen
University Library but was lost in the fire of 1728.⁸
- (†) Hannes Finnsson’s library 4to no. 40 1700–1800? paper
Manuscript ÍBR 78 4to, housed by the National and University
Library of Iceland, contains a list of manuscripts owned by
Bishop Hannes Finnsson (1739–1796). A manuscript containing
“Saga af Birni Hítðalakappa. Niála” is listed as no. 40 (see p. 19).⁹
- (†) Þj fragm. II¹⁰ 1600 parch.
- (†) Stockholm 1 1600–1700? paper
- (†) Stockholm 2 1600–1700? paper
The paper manuscripts Stockholm 1 and 2 appear on a 1693 list
of manuscripts owned by the Swedish Antikvitetskollegium from
1693; “Nials Saga Manuscript in 4:to på Papper” and “Niala M. S.
på Papper in 8:vo”. They were housed in the Royal Palace but were
lost in the fire of 1697.¹¹

NOTES

¹ See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Zeevaert, “Við upptök *Njálu*,” 164; Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 42.

² Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, “*Njáls saga* í AM 162 B ε fol.,” 35.

³ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 57.

⁴ According to Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (*Studies*, 83 and 86), the two fragments ÞjI (no. 21) and II were studied for his edition of *Njáls saga*. He says this about ÞjI: “The fragment has recently been the subject of a careful study by one of my students, Mr. Gunnar Sveinsson” (*Studies*, 83). This means that the fragments still existed around 1950; see also Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 39. However, Magnús Már Lárusson does not mention them in his 1963 overview of the parchment manuscripts in the National Museum of Iceland. A list, compiled by Björn M. Ólsen, of variants where the fragments diverge from the text in Konráð Gíslason’s and Eiríkur Jónsson’s 1875 edition is printed in Jón Þorkelsson’s survey (“Om håndskrifterne,” 712–16).

⁵ Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 69.

⁶ The additional stanzas 13, 14, 15, 27, and 28, which in the exemplar were added by a different hand than that of the main scribe on folio 93v and are very difficult to read, were added on folios 300r to 301r by Árni Magnússon.

⁷ See Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 81.

⁸ See *Arne Magnussons i AM. 435 A–B, 4to indeholdte håndskriftsfortegnelser*, 111, 113–15.

⁹ See Jónas Kristjánsson, “Skrá um íslenzk handrit í Noregi,” 76–77, and Arthur, “Writing, Reading, and Utilizing *Njáls saga*,” 233, on the possible identification of Hannes’ manuscript with either NB 313 4to (no. 51) or Landakotsbók (no. 61).

¹⁰ See note 4.

¹¹ See Gödel, “Fornnorsk-isländsk litteratur i Sverige,” 284; Schüek, *Kgl. vitterhets historie och antikvitetsakademien*, vol. 4, 100.

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A Key to the Nicknames of *Njáls saga* Manuscripts

Name	Call number	No. in mss. list
Bæjarbók	AM 309 4to	18
Bjarnastaðabók	NKS 1788 4to	59
Breiðabólstaðarbók	AM 555 c 4to	27
Dyflinnarbók	TCD MS 1002	57
Fagureyjarbók	AM 469 4to	46
Ferjubók	AM 163 d fol.	29
Flateyjarbók yngri	SÁM 137	62
Gráskinna	GKS 2870 4to	2
Gráskinnuauki	GKS 2870 4to	20
*Gullskinna	A lost parchment manuscript	
Hítardalsbók	AM 162 B ε fol.	11
Hofsþbók	AM 134 fol.	25
Hvammsbók	AM 470 4to	26
Kálfalækjarbók	AM 133 fol.	8
Lágafellsbók	ÍB 261 4to	52
Landakotsbók	owned by Landakotskirkja in Reykjavík	61
The Lost Codex	AM 921 I 4to, Lbs fragm. 2, JS fragm. 4, (†) Þj fragm. I	21
Melanesbók/ Lambavatnsbók	AM 396 fol.	23
Möðruvallabók	AM 132 fol.	7
Oddabók	AM 466 4to	17
Óssbók	AM 162 B γ fol.	4
Rauðskinna	Lbs 222 fol.	38
Reykjabók	AM 468 4to	3
Reykjarfjarðarbók	AM 162 B ι fol.	16
Saurbæjarbók	AM 163 i fol.	33
Seattle-Fragment	SÁM 168	71

Skafinskinna	GKS 2868 4to	12
Sveinsbók	GKS 2869 4to	13
Urðabók	ÍB 270 4to	64
Vigfúsarbók	AM 137 fol.	28
Vigursbók	NKS 1220 fol.	40
Þormóðsbók	AM 162 B 8 fol.	1

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