Arthurian Knights in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: *Erex Saga* and *Ívens Saga* in the World of Ormur Snorrason

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Arthurian Knights in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: *Erex Saga* and *Ívens Saga* in the World of Ormur Snorrason

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The earliest known Icelandic manuscript containing translations of Chrétien de Troyes' romances was commissioned by the rich landowner Ormur Snorrason. In this version the Arthurian knights defend the kingdom while maintaining a problematic relationship to the court. Ormur Snorrason experienced similar challenges during his career as a royal official in Iceland. (BB)

Three Arthurian romances by Chrétien de Troyes were translated into Old Norse sagas in the thirteenth century: *Parcevals saga* (*Le Conte du Graal*), *Erex saga* (*Erec et Enide*), and *Ívens saga* (*Le Chevalier au Lion*). These translations are conventionally connected to the patronage of King Håkon IV Håkonsson (1217–63). However, the three Arthurian sagas are not found in manuscripts from the time of Håkon IV. All the preserved manuscripts were produced in late medieval Iceland, and in the case of *Erex saga* the main transmission is in post-medieval paper manuscripts.[1] Although we might presume that Arthurian sagas were read in the court of Håkon IV, the fact that we do not have the original translations has made historians refrain from analyzing the changes in the Norse adaptations, leaving this to literary scholars.[2]

Still, the late medieval Icelandic manuscripts indicate that interest in the sagas of Arthurian knights continued outside the Norwegian court. In this study I will discuss the context of the earliest documented transmission of two Arthurian sagas, *Erex saga* and *Ívens saga*, in the now lost **Ormsbók,* usually dated to the second half of the fourteenth century. This manuscript is connected to the aristocrat Ormur Snorrason, who lived at the farm Skarð in the western part of Iceland in the fourteenth century. Although these two Arthurian sagas might have been introduced to Iceland earlier in a lost manuscript, **Ormsbók* gives us an opportunity to understand why an Icelandic magnate was

interested in Arthurian legends in late-medieval Iceland. To discuss Ormur Snorrason's interest in the knights of Arthur, I will focus first on the context of the Arthurian sagas within the manuscript, second on the political context of Ormur Snorrason and his book, and third on the place of **Ormsbók* within the textual communities of Iceland at the end of the fourteenth century.

Although we know quite a lot about Ormur, his interest in the Arthurian legends has never been discussed. However, such a study is in line with several recent studies that explore the new literary tastes and the worldview of the late medieval Icelandic aristocracy. After the fall of the Icelandic Free State in 1262/64, Iceland became a tributary land under the Norwegian king. This changed the rules for acquiring power and wealth. Feuds became less accepted, while serving a king and pursuing monogamy as a strategy to preserve landed property became more important. According to historian Henric Bagerius, the emergence of an Icelandic aristocracy in royal service is related to a stronger emphasis on homosocial bonds between equal knights and the subduing of strong-minded and promiscuous women in late medieval Icelandic romances.[3]

Other studies have focused on the troubled relationship between Icelanders and the Norwegian kingdom in the literature written in the fourteenth century. In a study of *Flateyjarbók* made in the late 1380s, Ólafur Halldórsson has argued that the codex was commissioned in order to show the common history of Icelanders and Norwegians to the young king of Norway, Olav Håkonsson.[4] The historians Sverrir Jakobsson and Hans Jacob Orning have discussed two Icelandic manuscripts, the early fourteenth-century *Hauksbók* and the late medieval AM 343 a 4°, respectively. They have focused particularly on the construction of space in these manuscripts, especially in relation to center and periphery.[5] Sverrir Jakobsson argues that Haukur Erlendsson (d. 1334), traditionally held as the commissioner of *Hauksbók*, situated himself as a man of the world through the encyclopedic texts in the manuscript, intent on identifying himself with the Scandinavian branch of the descendants of Troy. The legendary sagas in AM 343 a 4°, on the other hand, Orning argues, explored the heroes' relationship with the threatening periphery, filled with magic and monstrous beings. These relations are characterized by negotiations and interdependency, as well as showing the potential threat kings could be for the farmers.[6]

There have been many studies analyzing the spatial relationship between knight and wilderness, court and king, in the Arthurian sagas.[7] In this article, a full discussion of all aspects of such elements is not possible, but the focus will be on two aspects that were pressing in the

fourteenth century: the relation between the king and his knights or officials, and how the Arthurian legends related to other manuscripts commissioned by Ormur Snorrason. This might give us some clues about Ormur's interests in the stories of Arthurian knights.

EREX SAGA AND *ÍVENS SAGA* IN **ÓRMSBÓK*

There are few medieval manuscripts preserved of *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga*, and only two fragments of one medieval manuscript left containing *Erex saga*, Lbs. 1230 III 8° from ca. 1500. It contains two short pieces from the beginning of the saga, together with sections from the end of an Icelandic romance, *Mírmanns saga*.[8] In the seventeenth century, two paper manuscripts of *Erex saga* were copied from late medieval vellums. The first is AM 181 b fol. (c. 1650) that most likely was copied from Holm Perg. 6 4°. Holm Perg. 6 4° is still extant but with some lacunae, and most scholars presume that this manuscript contained *Erex saga*.[9] The other is Holm Papp. 46 fol. (c. 1690) copied by Jón Vigfússon from the now lost **Ormsbók*.

Of *Ívens saga*, there are preserved two medieval manuscripts. The first is from Holm Perg. 6 4° dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century and most often used in editions. The second manuscript is AM 489 4° from around 1450.[10] A third important manuscript is Holm Papp. 46 fol. The first ten chapters of *Ívens saga* were copied in 1690 from the lost **Ormsbók*, and the rest from Holm Perg. 6 4°.

Erex saga and *Ívens saga* were thus paired in at least two manuscripts from the decades around 1400, **Ormsbók* and Holm Perg. 6 4°. Both of these manuscripts contained many so-called *riddarasögur*, often translated as 'knights' sagas,' 'chivalric sagas,' or 'late medieval Icelandic romances.' These labels are used both for translated romances and original Icelandic sagas.

Holm Perg. 6 4° contained in its original form the three Arthurian sagas connected to Chrétien de Troyes, as well as several Icelandic romances.[11] The provenance is uncertain, but it has on paleographical grounds been assumed to have been written by a Northern Icelandic scribe. Although it is possible that the scribe was working in another part of Iceland, the hypothesis of the northern provenance is strengthened by the identification of the main scribe of Holm Perg. 6 4° with one of the hands in *Bergsbók* (Holm Perg. 1 fol). This is a large manuscript produced in northern Iceland in the early fifteenth century, probably at the monastery of Þingeyrar.[12] The same hand has written a third manuscript (NKS 1824 b 4°), containing *Völsunga saga* and its sequel *Ragnars saga loðbrók*, as well as a poem, *Krákumál*, related to the cycle of the Völsungs.[13] These three manuscripts point to a rich

scribal milieu around 1400, with close contacts between the Benedictine monasteries Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá in northern Iceland and an aristocratic audience.

**Ormsbók* was a collection of both translated and original *riddarasögur*.[14] It is named after Ormur Snorrason, who is seen as the owner and probable commissioner of the manuscript. The codex was lost in the fire at Stockholm castle in 1697, but since a slightly condensed copy of the manuscript was made in 1690–91, **Ormsbók* has been used in the stemmas of the many sagas it contained. Based on the use of texts in **Ormsbók* that are in other medieval manuscripts, the manuscript can be dated with a high degree of certainty to the last half of the fourteenth century. This was the time Ormur Snorrason was one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in Iceland. The copy of the manuscript in Holm Papp. 46 fol. thus can be considered as the earliest preserved remnants of the Arthurian sagas on Iceland.

EREX SAGA: DEFENDING POSSESSIONS

The Old Norse version of *Erec* is much altered in comparison to the Old French romance of Chrétien de Troyes. Although the saga has the same basic plot as the French romance, many episodes have been shortened or rearranged, and especially descriptions of clothes, equipment, and inner thoughts are deleted. Nevertheless, there are some additions. Two episodes clearly inspired by the Old Norse version of the legends of Dietrich von Bern, *Þiðreks saga*, are inserted, as well as a short epilogue.[15]

Marianne Kalinke has stated that King Artús (Arthur) appears as an ideal king in *Erex saga*.[16] The Norse narrator left few direct comments on kingship, and when Artús reflects on his own power during the wedding feast he holds for Erex and Ovide (Enide) after the defeat of Malpriant (Ydier), he is surely content with himself. When he sees all the kings, earls, and knights from all of his realms that have come to the feast, he is delighted with his great power and strength, since a great part of the world and powerful chieftains serve him: 'he rejoiced in his heart and thanked God for this great fief, but did not pride himself in his heart on account of his power over his vassals.'[17]

Still, Artús' power is somewhat troubled and double-sided. First, Artús seems more or less amazed at the appearance of all these kings and knights. He dubs many young men as knights and arranges much entertainment, but he functions most of all as master of ceremonies. And his rejoicing at the great fief Erex has won from Malpriant in the story is telling. The king has little to do with this, but his loyal knight sends the defeated Malpriant to the queen to ask for mercy. It is the

brave Erex who defends the vulnerable queen in the woods, while the king functions mainly to acknowledge the honor of Erex and beauty of Ovide.

In the very beginning of the saga, however, Artús shows his royal pride. The saga begins at King Artús' castle in Kardigan where all the knights are present. After an account of the entertainment at the court, the action starts when Artús initiates a hunt for a hart. The successful hunter will be granted the kiss from the most beautiful maid at the court. However, Valven (Gawain) protests against this competition and suggests it is unwise since no knight will accept that any woman could be more beautiful than their own sweetheart. The competition will inevitably lead to disagreement, disorder, and dishonor among the knights. Rather than legitimize or defend his decision, Artús angrily answers that 'no vassal must refuse what his superior commands.'[18] As in the French romance, the king's command sparks off the adventures of the hero but also signals potential disruptions between the knights and the peace of the kings' court.

The main theme in the saga is Erex' defense of his honor, as well as his protection of law and order in the realm of the king. In the episodes during Erex' journey with Ovide, there is an emphasis on three general values that have to be defended: possession, justice, and the preservation of the king's rulership over his realm.

In *Erex saga*, the ownership and protection of artifacts symbolizes power. In his first encounter with Malpriant, Erex fights with him over a golden sparrow-hawk. This hawk functions as a symbol of the knight's superiority and ownership of his realm.[19] The following adventures concern the knight's defense of his woman, his horse, and equipment. Over several encounters, Erex always manages to protect his possessions. Still, he has to defend himself alone. The king himself is distant and unable to assist him against the chieftains and robbers. The main function for the king is to receive and pass judgments on the knights Erex defeats and sends to the court. But it is Erex who actually has to enforce justice and encounter robbers and lustful earls. His ability to send them to the king's court is crucial, since the king himself is unaware of what is going on in the margins of his realm. When situated at his court, the king is just too distant to do anything with injustice in the periphery.

Erex' most important possession turns out to be Ovide. In the first episode on the journey of Erex and Ovide, which is a contraction of the two first episodes of the French verse romance, eight robbers spot the couple. Even before the robbers attack, they divide the knight's possessions. Ovide is valued as the most costly prize and is given to

their leader.[20] Although most clearly in the case of Earl Placidus' (Earl Oringles) attempt to seduce and marry Ovide, the motif of Erex' ability to defend his woman against his opponents is more emphasized in the saga than in Chrétien's romance.[21] Rather than developing the love relationship between Erex and Ovide, the saga stresses that Erex' honor depends on him defending his woman. This underscores the notion that honor is more important in the saga than in the romance.[22]

Erex himself never challenges other knights' properties, but only attacks in episodes when knights are forcefully captured by giants, dragons, or evil armed men. This is done after pleas for help—women and nobles in the margins of the kingdom are quite dependent on the able knight to protect them. It is telling that both of the inserted episodes based on *Þiðreks saga* concern Erex' fight against the evil forces in the periphery. They underscore how the knight's encounter with the monsters and dangers in the wilderness threatens the order and peace of the kingdom.[23]

King Artús and the court clearly remain the spatial center of *Erex saga*. But it is mostly a center of richness, ceremony and splendor, not one exhibiting an effective rulership of his lands.[24] To actually rule, Artús depends on the able and loyal knight. Occasionally also the court represents the place where just sentences are made. Still, it is the knight who deals with problems and threats in the periphery.

ÍVENS SAGA: THE UNSETTLED KNIGHT

Ívens saga is much shorter than Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, only around 40% the length of the French text. Still, even though the scenes are often very condensed, it stays quite close to the plot of the romance.[25] Previous studies of the Norse saga usually state that the image of the king in *Ívens saga* is that of an ideal ruler.[26] And indeed, in the opening of the saga, the narrative emphasizes that Artús is the most illustrious king of England, and that among Christian rulers, only Charlemagne can rival his popularity.[27] The saga seems to remove the implicit and sometimes explicit criticism that can be found in the romance.[28] Several scholars have pointed out the influence of Norse literary tradition and mentalities on the saga, for instance in the emphasis on honor and duty toward friends and kin.[29]

A main theme in the saga is the hero's movement between center and periphery. In the opening of the saga, the knights of Artús are gathered at the court. Íven is challenged by Kæi to visit the dangerous spring that is guarded by a fierce knight, since it is dishonorable to stay back at the court with the king.[30] Knights find honor most of all

outside the center and in the periphery. After defeating and killing the knight guarding the well, Íven falls in love with the grieving lady at the castle. Although his love is justified by her beauty, the saga emphasizes that his love is a kind of prison. This is the start of his problems; his passionate love makes him forget his duties as a knight. Because of his love for the lady, he is able neither to protect the periphery nor defend his position at the court.[31]

When Íven is again accused of lack of honor, it becomes clear that he, despite his love and commitment to his lady, has to travel back to the court to defend his honor and to try to reacquire his position at the court. Kæi accuses him of cowardliness, and Íven himself is afraid to be called a 'soft man' (*bleyðimaðr*).[32] His appearance at the king's court, the spatial center of the story, becomes necessary for him to keep his identity as a brave knight of Artús and Christendom. However, the king's court itself is hardly a safe haven for the knight. Kæi is perhaps the most prominent knight at the court, but he is also a slanderer. The king himself seems unable to see what is right or wrong in Kæi's accusations. It is up to the accused knight himself to seek justice, defend his honor, and reinstate peace.

The madness that follows after his restatement of position at the king's court is then explained by the double sets of demands: those he owes his Lady (Luneta is not named in the saga) and those he owes the king. In spatial terms, this conflict is between his lord's court and his own castle, to which he is tied by the obligation to defend the well. After being struck by madness, Íven shows his prowess by doing many heroic deeds and helping nobles and women. But he always refuses to stay at a particular place or make any vows to women. He defends society against trouble, but remains himself unsettled. In these fights, moreover, he is never assisted by the king. Artús remains absent, virtually with no force or influence without his knights.[33] In the end, it is Íven's reconciliation and marriage to his Lady that make him settle and establish his own center, more or less independent of the king.

ORMUR SNORRASON AND THE ABSENT KING

The world of splendor, richness, tournaments, and clothing seems a world apart from fourteenth-century Iceland. Still, even if this also was the case for Icelandic aristocrats at the time, the adventures of the Arthurian knights certainly appealed to the commissioner of **Ormsbók*. Ormur Snorrason (c. 1320–c. 1402) belonged to the family *Skarðverjar* (men from Skarð) connected to the farm Skarð in Dalasýsla in northwestern Iceland. The family had owned the farm at least since the late eleventh century.[34] In the intense struggles in the decades before the end

of the Free State, the *Skarðverjar* were among the families who headed the struggles for power, but usually supported the Sturlunga family.

After Iceland submitted to the Norwegian king in 1262/64, the Icelandic aristocracy changed significantly in character. This was especially so after King Magnus Håkonson (1263–80), nicknamed *lagabætir* (Law-amender) imposed a new law on Iceland in 1271. This law was revised in 1280 to adapt to Icelandic conditions. Known as *Jónsbók*, this law-book was accepted by the General Assembly in 1281 and remained in force throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Early Modern period.[35] After the acceptance of *Jónsbók*, families who wanted to remain in power and increase their income had to become officials of the Norwegian king.

For the king, the main purpose of the new laws was to collect taxes and control the trade. On a local level, Iceland was divided into twelve *sýslur* (shires), after a Norwegian model. They were to be controlled by *sýslumenn* (sheriffs), who were to collect taxes and ensure law and order. There were two law districts, one in the north and west, and one in the south and east, each with one *lögmaður*, lawman. They led the *Lögretta* (Law-Court) and would lay sentences based on the law-books. During the fourteenth century, we find also the office of *hirðstjóri* (leader of the king's men).

In principle, the king was to appoint men to all 15 offices. According to an agreement, only Icelanders were to be appointed to offices. But from the 1340s onward, the office of *hirðstjóri* was often given to Norwegians. The office must have been very lucrative. It seems to have been standard practice during the fourteenth century to split the tax in two: one part to the king and one part to the offices in Iceland. Sheriffs and lawmen also kept the minor fines paid by offenders.[36]

At the end of the thirteenth century, the *Skarðverjar* were one of the families that was most successful in getting new offices. They seem to have been closely related to Bishop Árni Þorláksson (d. 1298), who might have had some impact on their access to offices.[37] Indeed, the author of the saga about Bishop Árni praised their qualities: 'they were all wise and able men.'[38] The *Skarðverjar* were one of the few families that had the offices of lawmen and *hirðstjóri* for several generations.[39]

Ormur Snorrason's great grandfather was Snorri Narfason (d. 1260), also known as Skarðs-Snorri.[40] He was one of the richest men in the district in the mid-thirteenth century, and he was also ordained a priest. Skarðs-Snorri's brother was the father-in-law of Sturla Þórðarson, the saga-writer. Skarðs-Snorri's son Narfi (d. 1284)[41] was also a priest and married to Valgerður, whose mother was the sister of Gissur (Gizurr) jarl Þorvaldsson, the most prominent man on Iceland when it be-

came the tributary land of the king of Norway.[42] Ormur's father was Snorri Narfason (d. 1332), also a lawman, and his uncle was Þórður Narfason, lawman (d. 1308). Þórður Narfason has been suggested to be the compiler of the large collection of so-called contemporary sagas known as *Sturlunga saga* and also containing lineages that emphasize the forefathers of Skarðs-Snorri.[43] This was very much a family of great learning, power and wealth.

Ormur's cousin Ketill Þorláksson (d. 1342) was married to Una, the sister of Jón Guttormsson, *hirðstjóri* 1357–60 and lawman together with Ormur Snorrason in 1361–62.[44] Ketill had acquired the shire in Vestfjörður and was knighted in 1313 by King Håkon V Magnusson (1299–1319). He was appointed *hirðstjóri* in 1320 but stayed in Norway for long periods, especially in the 1330s.[45] It is evident that the expertise of the *Skarðverjar* family was connected to legal training—all three sons of Narfi Snorrason attained the office of lawman around 1300.[46]

Ormur Snorrason himself was a successful official; he was *sýslumaður*, *lögmaður* and *hirðstjóri*—sometimes having more than one office at a time.[47] Initially, his older brother Guðmundur was appointed *sýslumaður* in 1344 on a journey to Norway and he held this position until he drowned in 1354 when his ship was wrecked while on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella.[48] Some years later, in 1359, Ormur became lawman. In 1365, he went to Norway a second time and was appointed *hirðstjóri* together with Andrés Gíslasson. Ormur held the office at least until 1368 and possibly until 1370, with special responsibility for the northern and western part of the country. However, Andrés went to Norway again in 1367, and Ormur was then the most powerful man in Iceland during 1367–68, even more so since he continued to be a lawman for the southern and eastern parts of Iceland until 1368. After some years, he once again became lawman in the same district, 1374–75.

Ormur knew how to acquire and to hold offices in a very turbulent time. Although he only visited Norway twice, he seems to have had a fairly good relationship with King Magnus Eriksson of Norway and Sweden (d. 1374). However, King Magnus spent much energy on power struggles in Sweden, and his interest in Icelandic affairs seems to have been mainly fiscal. He fought many wars over the region Skåne in the 1330s and led crusades against Russia in the late 1340s. He had to deal with much opposition as well, especially from the Swedish magnates. Magnus' youngest son, Håkon, was elected as a Norwegian king in 1343, when still a child, and became in effect the king of Norway in 1355, when he reached maturity. The elder son of Magnus, Erik, was to be king of Sweden. In 1355 it was clear that King Magnus did not want to share Sweden with his son, and Erik rebelled against his father.

In 1359 Erik died and Håkon was elected king also of Sweden in 1362.

The magnates in Sweden wanted King Håkon to marry a German princess, Elisabeth of Holstein, but King Magnus arranged a new alliance with King Valdemar instead, by marrying Håkon to Valdemar's daughter Margrethe in 1362. This led the Swedish magnates to invite and elect Albrecht of Mecklenburg as Swedish king in 1363. The conflict between Magnus and Håkon on the one hand, and the Swedish magnates and Albrecht of Mecklenburg on the other, lasted for many years, and those events contributed to Magnus' preoccupation with Sweden, while he seldom stayed long in Norway.

Even though his son Håkon became king of Norway in 1355, Iceland continued to be King Magnus' tributary land.[49] Magnus tried to get as much income as possible from Iceland in order to finance his wars. Since neither he nor his son King Håkon were able to give much attention to the internal affairs of Iceland, Magnus needed loyal and reliable men in Iceland. From the 1340s, he appointed a Norwegian *hirðstjóri*, and in the 1350s he leased this office to those who would pay a fixed sum for it. The first of these seems to have been a Norwegian, Ívar *hólmur* Vigfússon, for a period of three years. Later, in 1357, four Icelanders shared this lucrative office. The payment for the lease was most certainly too high for just one family, but it also still must have been have been profitable to obtain this. In the 1360s, King Magnus seems to have shifted officeholders often, calling them to him overseas for a year or two, then appointing them to office for some years, and then calling them back again.

This way of ruling Iceland seems to have contributed to the internal conflicts between the office holders in Iceland, as well as between Norwegians and Icelanders. Although the discourse of power became linked to an identity of royal service during the fourteenth century, the absence of a king and his army made the politics on Iceland open for competition, rivalry, and violence. Ormur Snorrason had an important role in one such episode, a violent incident that might have affected his perception of Arthurian legends.

THE BATTLE AT GRUND

Much has been written about how the service aristocracy on Iceland distinguished themselves culturally in a new way throughout the fourteenth century, by means of books and new ideas of courtliness and noble friendship.[50] However, conflicts and rivalry continued within this group. In the summer of 1362, there were troubles brewing in the north of Iceland. Ormur Snorrason—at the time lawman of the southern and eastern parts—came to participate in one of the bloodiest battles in

fourteenth-century Iceland, fought at the farm Grund in Eyjafjörður. The king's representative on Iceland, the *hirðstjóri* Smiður Andrésson, had gathered a large following and was accompanied by both lawmen, Ormur Snorrason and Jón Guttormsson. Presumably, the aim of his journey to the north was to confront several opposing magnates and negotiate terms with them.

According to later sources, Smiður and his followers were well received by Helga, who ran the farm at Grund.[51] Smiður is said to have demanded that Helga spend the night with him and that her serving women accompany his men.[52] Before that came to pass, Helga gave them a good meal and plenty to drink. However, in secret Helga sent her servants to the neighboring farms with a message to come fully armed.[53] Smiður Andrésson ended up without a head. His companion, the lawman Jón Guttormsson, was hunted down and killed.[54] Ormur Snorrason managed to escape into the church close to the farm. He was granted peace after the battle along with his men. In all, 14 people were killed that day. Not much of a war, but quite a serious business considering that the participants were the most powerful on the island.

The battle had a complex background. Smiður Andrésson had been in the office as a *hirðstjóri* for only a year, and had already become very unpopular in the north. The previous year he had executed one of the powerful men in the north, Árni Þórðarson. Árni had been one of the four Icelanders who had shared the office of *hirðstjóri* in 1357–60, together with among others Jón Guttormsson. In 1360, one of Jón's retainers, Markús *barkaður* Marðarson, accompanied by his wife and sons, attacked Ormur á Krossi, an important farm and ancient assembly site in Rangárþing over which Árni was *sýslumaður*.[55] Árni sentenced the whole family to death and had them executed in 1361. That same summer, the men of Árni and Jón fought at the Alþing, probably partly because of this case. When Smiður became *hirðstjóri*, he allied with Jón and arrested Árni. Although Árni wanted to bring his case before the king in Norway, he was executed shortly after.[56]

Quite soon after the battle at Grund, the events became the object of poetry and legendary tales. An otherwise unknown poet called Snjólfur composed a poem in *runhent* metre in six stanzas about it.[57] Here, Ormur is not depicted as especially brave, but rather pious on the verge of cowardice:

> Fra ek stála storm
> miok sturla Orm,
> þ*ar* er kysti kyrr
> k*ir*kjunn*ar* dyrr,

kuad h*ann* þurfa þ*ess*
at þylja v*ers*;
þo e*r* bænin bezst
h*onu*m byrgi mest.

I have heard that the battle confused Ormur much; he calmly kissed the precious church door; he said he needed this to sing a verse, though prayer is best and protects him most.

The skald was most probably connected to the attackers of Smiður and the lawmen.[58] In the poem, Ormur is himself written into history in another kind of narrative, with a more submissive position in the social space than the one he must have been used to. He became trapped in the battle and made a run for it. In this poem, the recent events become written into heroic legend. Heroic discourse about honor can hardly have been forgotten in the fourteenth century, and at Grund it seems to have been re-activated in the description of the skirmish there.

It is striking that in the chronicles and the various accounts concerning the skirmish, the lady of the farm, Helga, and her two antagonists, Smiður and Jón, play prominent parts, while Ormur is largely forgotten. In this widely known and popular kind of narrative, the heroic stories in Ormur's manuscripts may not have helped his reputation much. According to an account from the early eighteenth century, two swords used at the battle were at that time still kept at Grund.[59]

Despite the scale of the skirmishes at Grund, the consequences for the killers were lenient. One of killers, Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson—the previous colleague as a *hirðstjóri* to both Árni and Jón—went to Norway in 1362. The ship was caught by the *sýslumaður* in Hålogaland in northern Norway, Hreiða Darri, and sent to King Magnus. The reason may not have been primarily the killings, but possibly that the king's representative suspected them for contravening the monopoly of Bergen's merchants in trade in Iceland. The surviving Icelanders were sent to King Magnus at the castle Varberghus in Halland.[60]

A year later, at the time of the wedding of King Håkon Magnusson and Margrethe, daughter of King Valdemar of Denmark, Þorsteinn and his men were set free. The next spring, in 1364, Þorsteinn returned to Iceland as the new *hirðstjóri* of Iceland, an office King Magnus made him share with one of his companions from the ship, Ólafur Pétursson. The long stay at Varberg must have convinced Magnus that those men were to be trusted.

His enemies' return from Grund, restored to honor, riches, and offices, must have been a blow to Ormur Snorrason who barely escaped

with his life in a less honorable fashion. He seems to have recovered from the humiliation quite soon. It is telling that the magnificent law manuscript commissioned by Ormur, *Skarðsbók*, was finished in 1363, only a year after the battle at Grund. The completion of *Skarðsbók* indicates that Ormur wanted to show his aspiration to be a loyal servant of the king and demonstrate his ability to enforce royal legislation in Iceland, despite his recent tribulations and sufferings. In 1365 he made his second journey to Norway and was appointed *hirðstjóri* by the king as a reward for his services.

THE TEXTUAL COMMUNITIES OF ORMUR

As seen above, Ormur Snorrason came from a family with a great interest in learning. The legal training and wealth of his father, uncles and cousin is evident both from the family background and from one of the most splendid manuscripts produced in Iceland, AM 350 fol., or *Skarðsbók*. This manuscript contains the Icelandic lawbook *Jónsbók*, issued by King Magnus Håkonsson and ratified by the Icelanders in 1281, as well as the later amendments, the law of the king's retainers, *Hirðskrá*, and some episcopal statutes.[61] The manuscript itself clarifies that it is written in 1363, and comparisons with other manuscripts indicate that it was produced at Helgafell. The owner is not named explicitly, but Ormur Snorrason was at this time lawman and living at Skarð, so his ownership has been generally accepted.[62] In this richly illustrated codex, we also find a miniature that shows how the book is presented as a gift to the Holy Trinity (fol. 2r). The donor in the image is most probably Ormur Snorrason himself.[63]

As a lawman, Ormur clearly needed and read law-books like *Skarðsbók*. In 1374, he sent a letter to King Magnus Eriksson concerning a difficult case. It concerned the inheritance of a man who had no surviving children. Ormur asked the king whether a nephew who was born in wedlock should inherit instead of a legitimate daughter's son whose mother (the daughter of the deceased) was born out of wedlock. King Håkon Magnusson (King Magnus had died in 1374) answered that the nephew should get the inheritance.[64] This amendment became attached to later copies of *Jónsbók*. The case also reflects the concern in the Arthurian sagas, especially *Erex saga*, that a woman always should give her consent to marriage.[65] Such a relation between *Skarðsbók* and *Erex saga* could be interpreted as evidence for a clerical-didactic scribe, but a lawman like Ormur Snorrason must have been familiar with the doctrine of consent.

It is also striking that in the beginning of the section on the marriage for women in *Skarðsbók*, there is a fearsome dragon (fol. 19r). It

has been, albeit somewhat jokingly, suggested that the miniature is an ironic commentary on marriage or women,[66] although the reason for placing the dragon there might be an allusion to the dragon episode inserted into *Erex saga*, in which the defense of women against threats is an important theme.

Ormur also commissioned *Codex Scardensis* (SÁM 1 fol.). This manuscript contains a large collection of sagas of the apostles. It is dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century and is mentioned as a gift from Ormur to the church of Skarð in 1397 'so that the church should own half but the farmer half.' In an inventory from 1401 it is mentioned as a gift from Ormur Snorrason to the church of Skarð, probably meaning that they should have the whole ownership of the codex.[67]

The attribution to Ormur is important, and makes him one of many Icelandic aristocrats who seems to have been genuinely interested in saints' lives.[68] His great-grandson Ormur Loftsson (d. c. 1446), also a *hirðstjóri*, identifies himself as the scribe of another famous manuscript containing saints' lives, Holm Perg. 2 fol.[69] In the manuscript, an Ólafur *tóni* has signed his name in the margin—this has to be another great-grandson of Ormur Snorrason, Ólafur Geirmundsson *tóni yngri*.[70] Ólöf Loftsdóttir, Ormur's sister, married Björn Þorleifsson *ríki* (c. 1408–67). Their grandson was Björn Þorleifsson að Reykhólum who in the 1530s wrote two legendaries.[71] This interest of saints' lives over many generations shows another facet of what most learned laymen were more or less obliged to learn: stories of the champions of Christianity, no less than stories of courtliness and legal texts.[72]

Both *Codex Scardensis* and *Skarðsbók* have been linked to the scriptorium of the Augustinian canon's house of Helgafell in the western part of Iceland. Together with a group of other manuscripts containing legal texts, kings' sagas, saints' sagas, sagas of antiquity, and Bible translation, these were a part of the Helgafell group of manuscripts produced ca. 1350–1400.[73] This was a scriptorium whose output was filled with extensive references, using and adapting works of, among others, Vincent of Beauvais and Peter Comestor.[74] One should not underestimate the fact the narratives and discourse of the saga of apostles occasionally were influenced by legal discourse, while the language of saints' sagas would be used in legal texts as well.[75]

Ormur Snorrason hardly knew all these manuscripts and texts by heart, but they define the learned milieu of which he was a part. In this textual community, the scribes and audience shared ideas about piety, kingship, and the legal foundations of Christian society. To construct a division between the Augustinian convent and the powerful layman

was less important than promoting solidarity and understanding within this community of clerics and laity against the outside world.[76] In this context, Ormur's three manuscripts produced at Helgafell were part of the same aristocratic-monastic community, sharing many of the same stories about knights and saints, and having the texts as a common denominator for their knowledge about king and world.[77]

At the same time, Ormur was part of several overlapping communities besides the regional Skarð/Helgafell axis. He would have shared legal manuscripts with the other Icelandic lawmen—and also potentially lawmen in other parts of the Norwegian realm—and indeed in the Christian realm.[78]

A third community is the courtly and chivalric, suggested by both *Hirðskrá* in AM 350 fol. and the sagas in **Ormsbók*. Many of these sagas are found in Holm Perg. 6 4° from the beginning of the 1400s, a manuscript most likely commissioned by an aristocrat and written at the Benedictine monastery of Munkaþverá.[79] Mention of another contemporary example is relevant here. Ívarr Vígfússon (*hirðstjóri* 1354–57, d. 1371) can be connected to *Bevers saga*, the Norse translation of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*. Ívarr's grandfather was probably a Norwegian, going to Iceland in 1307 as a royal servant and knighted by King Håkon V in 1312. His descendants had family connections to Norway and also extensive property there.[80] *Bevers saga* was also included in **Ormsbók*, perhaps through Ormur's connection to Ívarr or a member of his family.

A recent study has concluded that *Bevers saga* is markedly more pious in tone than the Anglo-Norman romance.[81] Other sagas in **Ormsbók* also considered bookish learning as important, or even crucial, in a young nobleman's education. The hero of *Rémundar saga* was set to the book when he was young and 'learned much clerical knowledge with much skills.'[82] *Mírmanns saga* emphasizes bookish education even more. Mírmann learned Latin in his youth, reading *grammatica* and 'many other old books.'[83] Indeed, this kind of learning is a recurrent theme also in other contemporary courtly sagas. Such sagas often stressed the importance of learning both Latin and foreign languages.[84] Such education had become a requirement for the diplomats and lawyers of the king in Norway, and an aspiring lawman and *hirðstjóri* in Iceland would necessarily need *klerkdómur* ('clerical learning'). Surely, strength and fighting also are praised qualities in the kings, but these qualities are always necessary in order to fight the monsters or demonic heathens. However, being learned is emphasized as a way of being superior to other kings.

What seems to be lacking in the literary milieu of Ormur Snorrason

are stories about the legendary heroes of the north, or sagas about the settlement of Iceland and narratives about feud and honor in Iceland. The sagas today known as *fornaldarsögur* and *íslendingasögur* are almost absent in the Helgafell group of manuscripts; there are only some additions from Sagas of Icelanders concerning the Icelanders' conversion to Christianity by the instigation of the kings of Norway. Ormur probably knew these sagas well, although they are not represented in the three manuscripts connected to him. One contemporary manuscript he might have seen himself is *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.), a manuscript containing only Sagas of Icelanders. It was produced in Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland, not far from Grund, around 1350. In this manuscript we find a reference between *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga* to a now lost saga, **Gauks saga Trandilssonar*, in the possession of Grímur Þorsteinsson (d. ca. 1350).[85] Grímur was a lawman, *hirðstjóri* and knight, connected to the southwestern part of Iceland, and knew Snorri Narfason, Ormur's father, well. **Vatnshyrna* from the 1390s (lost in the fire in Copenhagen, 1728) is a third manuscript of Sagas of Icelanders of which we know the commissioner. It was Jón Hákonarson, whose father had participated in the battle of Grund in 1362.[86]

Still, the scribes of these manuscripts were not just interested in Sagas of Icelanders. For example, a hand in *Möðruvallabók* is also found in manuscripts containing sagas of saints and antiquity.[87] Intriguing examples are the three illuminated initials of *Njáls saga* in the manuscript *Kálfalækjarbók* (AM 133 fol.) from ca. 1350. Here we find a lion fighting a dragon (in the chapter introducing Gunnar Hámundarson), a beardless man fighting a dragon (in the chapter introducing Njáll), and a knight on horse (in the chapter introducing Christianity). These illuminations are best explained by an allegorical interpretation, where good fights off evil.[88] This does not mean that the audience must have read *Njáls saga* allegorically, but that at least the illuminator of *Kálfalækjarbók* invited those in the audience who were learned and initiated in the allegorical reading to interpret the narrative in this way as well.[89] To a learned layman as Ormur Snorrason, this must have been a way of reading in which he was trained, even though he was not a cleric himself.

The lack of Sagas of Icelanders and legendary sagas in manuscripts related to Ormur was thus hardly due to his lack of knowledge or that these sagas had little relevance for aristocrats in general. Their absence in the textual community of Skarð and Helgafell may rather be explained by Ormur's lack of heroic lineage. He oriented himself towards the court, service to a king, legal training, and apostles who served Christianity, often against bad rulers. In this way, he seems to have identified himself more with his position as a royal official than

as an Icelander of prominent past. Ormur had thus a taste more in line with the canons of Helgafell than some of his colleagues who had a more glorious lineage.

In the texts connected to Ormur, the good ruler was the one who combined power, learning and piety. The manuscripts produced prestige, and could have been used in many social fields; at social events, at law court, and in an official's meeting with other lawmen, foreign traders, and courtiers of the king. The three manuscripts related to Ormur thus offer a glimpse into what the canons at Helgafell, Ormur himself, his family and visiting farmers would have in common.

The case of Ormur Snorrason might shed some light over the didacticism/entertainment question of the chivalric sagas. Issues such as consent and women's fickleness in *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga* are most often connected to a clerical compiler or scribe wanting to educate laymen.[90] As a lawman, Ormur Snorrason would, however, have been very familiar with the idea of consent.[91] If this is an addition from the Icelandic scribe working at Helgafell, it would just have confirmed what Ormur already knew—consent was important for a legitimate marriage. What the saga did, however, was to link love, marital consent, and the humility of women in a way with which both clerics and laymen would identify.[92]

Still, the competing aristocratic ambitions in the Icelandic élite and the fragile, but necessary, links to King Magnus Eriksson, produced a tension between the center of power within Iceland and the power center at the king's court overseas. In the two Arthurian sagas, honor must be sought in the periphery as much as at the king's court. But it is impossible to choose one of them—the good and able knight has to be honorable in both social fields. Trouble arises when the knights become too attached to just one center, as when love confines the knights to a place outside the king's court (Íven), or hinders him from confronting the margins (Erex). The solution was to be able to move between home and court, without neglecting either of them.

The premise for the heroic deeds in the periphery was that the knights could not expect help from the king. Rather, the king's court itself could be a treacherous place with slanderers and deceivers. Indeed, even such treacherous people were protected by the king. The unpredictability of the absent king, who appointed new officials very often, must have been frustrating for officials like Ormur who tried to be loyal to the king, the law, chivalric ideals and God. Almost every summer in the 1350s and 1360s there came a new official appointed by the king: potential allies or rivals to Ormur and others. This was something an Icelandic official in the middle of the fourteenth century had to deal

with, but it might have been some comfort knowing that the best knights in the world also fought alone, experiencing wondrous events and taking on robbers and dragons; of even greater comfort would be the knowledge that the king, the kingdom—and even Christianity—depended on them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is not possible to conclude that it was Ormur Snorrason who introduced Chrétien's romances to Iceland. Arthurian legends were clearly known through other texts already from the end of the twelfth century. Still, Ormur Snorrason was the first Icelander who we know collected Norse adaptations of Arthurian romances.

Ormur Snorrason lived in an insecure world, a world he himself tried to govern and survive in. In his discussion of the royal official Haukur Erlendsson (d. 1334) and his compilation *Hauksbók*, Sverrir Jakobsson argued that the Icelanders in the king's service moved between an identity as a respectful subject of the king and a person of supreme authority within his district.[93] This double identity seems also to be characteristic for Ormur Snorrason and an important background for including *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga* into his collection of *riddarasögur*.

Still, even if the *hirðstjóri*, lawman, and sheriff were superior in their own farms and regions, they were potentially threatened by new officeholders sent from the king and by rivalry with other officials on the island. Although there were no wars in Iceland, this did not mean that there were no power struggles and feuds.[94]

This also meant that struggles for power and resources could affect the hegemony of the regional textual community of Skarð and Helgafell. At one occasion, in the battle of Grund in 1362, Ormur barely escaped with his life. Ormur was not remembered as a hero, while the *hirðstjóri* Smiður Andrésson was praised for his resistance. This poem was produced in another textual community, and might give a glimpse of a divergent view of relations between heroism and courtliness, royalty and knighthood.

Still, within the texts in which Ormur showed interest there were also negotiations of the position of men of his standing in the periphery and the troubles of honor when the king was more or less absent. Further studies will show if the Arthurian legends were read and used in other ways by other Icelanders.

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NOTES

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1 For a recent overview of the transmission of Arthurian romances into Old Norse, see Marianne E. Kalinke, 'Sources, Translations, Redactions, Manuscript Transmission,' in *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus' Realms*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 5 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 22–47. Jonna Kjær has emphasized that the preserved Arthurian sagas, especially *Erex saga* and *Ívens saga*, 'contain recastings made in Iceland at a later date, and closer to the Reformation, than *Tristrams saga*. Whatever the case may be, it has to be admitted that there no longer exist Norwegian versions of these two texts'; Jonna Kjær, 'Franco-Scandinavian Literary Transmission in the Middle Ages: Two Old Norse Translations of Chrétien de Troyes—*Ívens saga* and *Erex saga*,' in *The Arthurian Yearbook* 2 (1992): 113–34 at 131.

2 In an earlier study on the reception of courtly love and the application of the consensual doctrine of marriage in medieval Norway and Iceland, I used these Arthurian sagas as sources for the courtly culture in thirteenth-century Norway, see Bjørn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway,* trans. Betsy van der Hoek, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), ch. 8.

3 Henric Bagerius, *Mandom och mödom: Sexualitet, homosocialitet och aristokratisk identitet på det senmedeltida Island* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet, 2009); see also Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, Islandica 46 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

4 Ólafur Halldorsson, *Grettisfærsla: Safn ritgerða eftir Ólaf Halldórsson gefið út á sjötugsafmæli hans 18. apríl 1990*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Stefán Karlsson and Sverrir Tómasson, Rit 38 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1990), p. 430. This thesis has been developed by Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389*, The Viking Collection 15 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark 2005).

5 Sverrir Jakobsson, 'State Formation and Pre-Modern Identities in the North: A Synchronic Perspective from the Early 14[th] Century,' *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 125

(2010): 67–82. The lack of warfare in Iceland has been connected to the production of new saga genres; the competition for status was in the context of the books, not warfare, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'Historical Writing and the Political Situation in Iceland 1100–1400,' in *Negotiating Pasts in the Nordic Countries: Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Memory*, ed. Anne Eriksen and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), pp. 59–78. On the other hand, Birgir Loftsson (*Hernaðarsaga Íslands 1170–1581* [Reykjavík: Pjaxi, 2006]) argues that military activity was a constant during the entire period. For the continuation of feuding in fourteenth-century Iceland, see Helgi Þorláksson, 'Konungsvald og hefnd,' in *Sagas and the Norwegian Experience. Preprints of the 10th International Saga Conference* (Trondheim: Senter for Middelalderstudier, 1997), pp. 249–61; idem., 'Feider: Begrep, betydning, komparasjon,' in *Feider og fred i nordisk middelalder*, ed. Erik Opsahl (Oslo: Unipub, 2007), pp. 21–34; Erika Ruth Sigurdson, 'The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: Ecclesiastical Administration, Literacy, and the Formation of an Elite Clerical Identity' (Ph.D. diss., University of Leeds, 2011), pp. 31–32, 163–69.

6 Hans Jacob Orning, 'The Magical Reality of the Late Middle Ages: Exploring the World of the *Fornaldarsögur*,' *Scandinavian Journal of History* 35 (2010): 3–20; idem, 'Örvar-Oddr og senmiddelalderens adelskultur,' in *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, ed. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012), pp. 291–321.

7 A recent overview of the debate is in Kalinke, ed., *The Arthur of the North.* See also the articles by Géraldine Barnes, 'Arthurian Chivalry in Old Norse,' *Arthurian Literature* 7 (1987): 50–102; idem, 'Some Current Issues in *Riddarasögur* Research,' *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 104 (1989): 73–88; idem, 'Scandinavian Versions of Arthurian Romance,' in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 58 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 189–201.

8 *Erex saga Artuskappa*, ed. Foster W. Blaisdell, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ B 19 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), pp. xxxix–xliv. Here the hero is called Errek, not Erex. The hand in these fragments is identical, or very similar, to that of AM 556 a-b 4°, see p. xliii.

9 Holm Perg. 6 4° is still extant, but with some lacunae. It is generally accepted that it once contained *Erex saga*, see e.g. Marianne E. Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest: The Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 37 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1981), pp. 73–74; Povl Skårup, 'Tre marginalnoter om Erex saga,' *Gripla* 6 (1984): 49–63 at 53. Skårup uses Lbs. 1230 III 8° as evidence, suggesting that it derived from Holm Perg. 6 4°. However, the preserved lines of the end of *Mírmanns saga* in Lbs. 1230 III 8° has been connected to AM 593 a 4° rather than Holm Perg. 6 4°, see *Mírmanns saga*, ed. Desmond Slay, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ A 17 (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 1997), pp. cxxix–cxxx, 181–84.

10 It has been suggested that AM 489 4° [B] contained *Erex saga* as well, although it is impossible to be certain; see on this manuscript in general the introduction

in Foster W. Blaisdell ed., *The Sagas of Ywain and Tristan and other Tales: AM 489 4to*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 12 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1980).

11 It contains twelve sagas, *Amícus saga ok Amilíus, Bevers saga, Ívens saga, Parcevals saga, Valvens þáttr, Mírmanns saga, Flóvents saga, Elís saga, Konráðs saga, Þjalar Jóns saga, Möttuls saga, Clárus saga*.

12 Stefán Karlsson, 'Perg. Fol. Nr. 1 (Bergsbók) og Perg. 4to Nr. 6 í Stokkhólmi,' *Opuscula* 3 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 29) (1967): 74–82; rep. in *Stafkrókar: Ritgerðir eftir Stefán Karlsson*, Rit 49 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússon á Íslandi, 2000), pp. 368–76; Desmond Slay, ed., *Romances: Perg 4to nr. 6 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 10 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1972), pp. 21–22. *Bergsbók* contains mainly material on the two Norwegian kings in the Christianization period, Ólafur Tryggvason (d. 995) and St Ólafur Haraldsson (d. 1030). It opens with an attribution of the saga of Ólafur Tryggvason as being 'translated' (*bergr aboti snaradi*) by Abbot Bergur Sokkason (d. 1350). Bergur had entered the Benedictine monastery Þingeyrar in Northern Iceland in 1317, and later became abbot at Munkaþverá to the east in the same region. He can be connected to a scriptorium with a huge mid fourteenth century production of sagas about apostles, saints, and bishops, as well as exempla and historical works. On Bergur Sokkason and the Northern scriptorium he belonged to, see Karl G. Johansson, 'Texter i rörelse: Översättning, original textproduktion och tradering på norra Island 1150–1400,' in *Übersetzen im skandinavischen Mittelalter,* ed. Vera Johanterwage and Stefanie Würth, Studia Medievalia Septentrionalia 14 (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2007), pp. 83–106. The alleged 'translation' of Bergur Sokkason in *Bergsbók* might be an allusion to the (now lost) Latin lives of Ólafur Tryggvason written by Oddur Snorrason and Gunnlaugur Leifsson at Þingeyrar monastery in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. *Bergsbók* can be dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, contemporary to Holm Perg. 6 4°. Part of it was written by Sira Guthormur, probably a monk attached to the Northern monastic scriptorium. This Guthormur has signed his name on 113r in *Bergsbók* at the end of a poem about Ólafur Tryggvason, and is the 'Hand B' in the manuscript; see *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store sagaen om Olav den hellige*, ed. Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, 2 vols. (Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet i kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1941), 2:1008–09. The attribution of the saga of Ólafur Tryggvasonar to Bergur Sokkason in *Bergsbók* indicates a regional tradition of Abbot Bergur's literary achievements.

13 Stefán Karlsson, 'Nks 1824 B 4to,' *Opuscula* 4 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 30) (1970): 368–69; rep. in *Stafkrókar*, p. 377.

14 The contents of **Ormsbók*, which probably perished when Stockholm castle burned down in 1697, is known through seventeenth-century dictionaries with excerpts and references to this manuscript. There are references to the following sagas: *Trójumanna saga, Breta sögur, Mágus saga, Lais þáttur, Vilhjálms þáttur Laissonar, Geirarðs þáttur, Flóvents saga, Bærings saga, Rémundar saga, Erex saga*, *Bevers saga*, *Ívens saga*, *Mírmanns saga*, *Partalópa saga*, *Enoks saga* (a translation of

Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis*), and *Parcevals saga*. It was the Icelander Jón Vigfússon who copied all of the sagas of **Ormsbók* in 1690–91, except *Parcevals saga*, in Holm Papp. 46 fol., Holm Papp. 47 fol., Holm Papp. 58 fol. and Holm Papp. 66 fol. A list of the contents of the latter part of the codex was printed in Olaus Verelius' *Index Lingvæ Veteris Scytho-Scandicæ* (etc.) in 1691, with *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga* immediately following each other, but these sagas were most probably separated by *Bevers saga*; see Christopher Sanders, 'The Order of the Knights in *Ormsbók*,' *Opuscula* 7 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 34) (1979): 140–56. Jón Vigfússon seems to have copied quite faithfully a manuscript with many difficult abbreviations: see the general comments in *Trójumanna saga*, ed. Jonna Louis-Jensen, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ A 8 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), pp. xi–xxxi. However, *Ívens saga* was only copied up to chapter 13—the rest is copied from Holm Perg. 6 4° or perhaps a lost manuscript, probably due to a lacuna in **Ormsbók*, see *Ívens saga*, ed. Foster W. Blaisdell, Editiones Arnmagnæanæ B 18 (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 1978), pp. xc–xci, and the discussion by Desmond Slay, '*Ívens saga*, *Mírmanns saga* and Ormr Snorrason's *Book*,' in *The Sixth International Saga Conference: Workshop Papers,* 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Det arnamagnæanske Institut, 1985), 2:956–59 [953–66]. See also Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Enoks saga,' *Opuscula* 5 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 31) (1975): 225–37.

15 For a useful overview, see Claudia Bornholdt, 'The Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances,' in *The Arthur of the North,* pp. 98–122 at 112–20. *Þiðreks saga* is preserved in a late thirteenth-century Norwegian manuscript, but it is usually thought to have been translated in Norway in the first half of the same century.

16 Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, pp. 40; cf. the comments in Bornholdt, 'The Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances,' p. 113.

17 *Erex saga*, 27–28: 'glediast miök i sïnu hiarta ok þacka Gude þetta sitt häleita län enn mikla ecki þui helldur i sinu hiarta af þegna vallde.' Citations from the Holm. Papp. 46 fol. version of *Erex saga* are from Blaisdell's edition (see note 6) where it is printed on the lower part of the page. On the upper part is the text from AM 181 b fol., the same is the base text in the edition by Marianne E. Kalinke in *Norse Romance II: Knights of the Round Table*, Arthurian Archives 4 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999) pp. 217–65, but with useful variants from Holm Papp. 46 fol. in the notes. I have also found useful the notes in the recent Norwegian translation of the saga in *Norrøne sagaer om Arthurs riddere*, trans. Birgit Nyborg (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2009), pp. 27–69.

18 *Erex saga*, p. 5: 'þui at einginn þiönustu-madur ä þui at neita sem hanns yfvirbodari bÿdur.'

19 *Erex saga*, pp. 13–15.

20 *Erex saga*, pp. 33–35.

21 Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, pp. 100–01.

22 Marianne E. Kalinke, 'Honor: The Motivating Principle of the *Erex saga*,' *Scandinavian Studies* 45 (1973): 135–43.

23 It has been argued that the inserted episodes from *Þiðreks saga* show 'a striking amount of parallelism with the rest of the saga, whether in general thought and

course of action or in specific expressions'; Foster W. Blaisdell, 'The Composition of the Interpolated Chapter in the *Erex Saga*,' *Scandinavian Studies* 36 (1964): 119 [118–26].

24 This is in accordance with many of the other chivalric sagas, such as those that were included in **Ormsbók*, where there is an 'almost complete silence and lack of any interest at all in the political importance of the monarch'; Shaun F.D. Hughes, 'The Ideal of Kingship in the *Riddarasögur*,' *Michigan Academician* 10 (1978): 336 [321–36]. There are still different opinions as to whether the inserted chapter was included by an Icelander translating the romance in Norway for King Håkon Håkonsson in the thirteenth century, or included in the fourteenth century in Iceland; see Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, pp. 197–98; Alfred Jakobsen, 'Var oversetteren av Erex saga islending?' in *Festskrift til Finn Hødnebø 29. desember 1989*, ed. Bjørn Eithun et al. (Oslo: Novus, 1989), pp. 130–41.

25 Hanna Steinunn Þorleifsdóttir, 'Dialogue in the Icelandic Copies of *Ívens saga*,' in *Übersetzen im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, p. 167 [167–76].

26 Liliane Reynard, 'Når en roman av Chrétien de Troyes blir til en norrøn saga: Fra *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* til *Ívens saga*,' *Historisk tidsskrift* 83 (2004): 255 [245–59]. An interesting comparison between the Old Norse and Middle English translations of *Yvain* is in Sif Rikharðsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 76–112.

27 Bernd Kretschmer, *Höfische und altwestnordische Erzähltradition in den Riddarasögur: Studien zur Rezeption der altfranzösischen Artusepik am Beispiel der Erex saga, Ívens sage* [sic] *und Parcevals saga*, Wissenschaftliche Reihe 4 (Hattingen: Verlag Dr. Bernd Kretschmer, 1982), p. 150; Nicola Jordan, 'Eine alte und doch immer neue Geschichte: Die *Ívents saga* Artúskappa und der *Iwein* Hartmanns von Aue als Bearbeitungen von Chrétiens *Yvain*,' in *Übersetzen im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, pp. 141–66.

28 Bornholdt, 'The Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes' Romances,' p. 109.

29 Bornholdt, 'The Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes' Romances,' pp. 110–11. Sif Rikharðsdottir (*Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, p. 112) concludes that 'both the Norse and English translations reveal a distinct movement away from a focus on the individual in Chrétien's work to a concern with social order and the role played by appropriate behavioural models in achieving and maintaining such communal coherence.' In a study on *Herra Ivan*, the early fourteenth-century Swedish translation of *Yvain*, Sofia Lodén argues that the translator removes the ambiguity of love, honor and courtliness. Instead the romance seems to function as an introduction to chivalry for princes and aristocrats; Sofia Lodén, 'Le chevalier courtois à la rencontre de la Suède médiévale: Du *Chevalier au lion* à *Herr Ivan*' (Ph.D. diss., Stockholm University, 2012).

30 *Ívens saga*, p. 23: 'Nü huxar Ivent sit mäl, at ef at hann bidur konginn þä muni Köe snart gabba hann.' Holm Papp. 46 fol., the copy made in 1690 of **Ormsbók*, is in the lower pages in Blaisdell's edition.

31 In Holm Perg. 6 4° and AM 489 4° this is emphasized even more. In an addition to the French text it is stated that women are fickle by nature, because they let their hearts lead them. This is also implicitly a criticism of Íven himself, see *Ívens saga*, pp. 66–7. Holm Papp. 46 fol. is very abbreviated in some passages, but has ca. 40 passages that are closer to the French romance than the other two main manuscripts, cf. Hanna Steinunn Þorleifsdóttir, 'Dialogue in the Icelandic Copies of *Ívens saga*,' p. 167.

32 *Ívens saga*, pp. 78–9: 'Mïn kiæra frü ert mitt lif ok huggan ok sannur elskuge, lofva mier at rïda medur Artus köngi at fremia minn riddaraskap at ek virdunst æigi meiri bleidumadur sïdann ek kendunst enn ädur.'

33 One example is King Reinion of Ungaria who lost a battle against two 'blue men' (*blámönnum*). He saved his life by trading it for 300 maidens who had to work as slaves in *Finnandi Atburðr* (Chrétien's 'Le Chastel de Pesme Avanture'); *Ívens saga*, pp. 126–27. It is again up to a knight to save the maidens, not the king.

34 Björn Þorsteinsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 'Enska öldin, með viðaukum eftir Sigurð Líndal,' in *Saga Íslands*, vol. 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1990), pp. 3–216 at 89.

35 See *Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland. The Icelandic Text According to MS AM 351 fol. Skálholtsbók eldri,* ed. and trans. Jana K. Schulman, Bibliotheca Germanica, Series Nova 4 (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2010), and *Jónsbók: Lögbók Íslendinga hver samþykkt var á alþingi árið 1281 og endurnýjuð um miðja 14.* öld *en fyrst prentuð árið 1578,* ed. Már Jónsson, Sýnisbók íslenskrar alþýðumenningar 8 (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2004).

36 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Icelandic Aristocracy after the Fall of the Free State,' *Scandinavian Journal of History* 20 (1995): 153–66; Axel Kristinsson, 'Embættismenn konungs fyrir 1400,' *Saga* 36 (1998): 113–52.

37 Helgi Þorláksson, *Vaðmál og verðlag. Vaðmál i utanlandsviðskiptum og búskap Íslendinga á 13. og 14. öld* (Reykjavík: Helgi Þorláksson, 1991), p. 185.

38 'Þeir voru allir vitrir menn og vel mannaðir,' *Árna saga biskups*, in *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, Islenzk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1998), p. 103 (ch. 69). Ketill *lögsögumaður* Þorláksson (d. 1273) was married to Halldóra Þorvaldsdóttir, and their daughter Valgerður married Narfi Snorrason of the Skarðverjar. Halldóra's nephew Klængur Teitsson Þorvaldsson í Tungu took as his second wife, Þorgerður Þorláksdottir, the sister of Bishop Árni. Their daughter, Ásta, married Ívarr *hólmur* Jónsson who came to Iceland in 1307 and may have had the title of *hirðstjóri.* See '7. ættaskrá' and '8. ættaskrá' in *Sturlunga saga,* ed. Jón Jóhannesson, et al., 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), 2:32–33. See further Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, ed. Jón Pétursson and Hannes Þorsteinsson, 5 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Bokmenntafélag, 1881–1932), 2:416–19.

39 Jósafat Jónasson, 'Viðauki 1. Um Skarðverjaætt,' in Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 2: 407–19.

40 See Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 2: 416–19.

41 See Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 2: 430–33.

42 Valgerður was the daughter of Ketill Þorláksson (d. 1273) and Halldóra Þorvaldsdóttir. See '14. ættaskrá' in *Sturlunga saga,* 2: 338. On Gissur *jarl,* see further, Gunnar Benediktsson, 'Gissur kemur til sögunnar' and 'Ísland hefur jarl,' in *Ísland hefur jarl: Nokkrir örlagaþættir Sturlungaaldir* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1954), pp. 59–72, 115–26.

43 Stephen N. Tranter, *Sturlunga Saga: The Rôle of the Creative Compiler,* European University Studies: Series I, German Language and Literature 941 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987); Úlfar Bragason, *Ætt og heim: Um frásagnarfrʒði Sturlungu eða Íslendinga sögu hinnar miklu* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2010).

44 On Jón Guttormsson and his sister Una, see 'Lögsögumannatal og lögmanna á Íslandi,' ed. Jón Sigurðsson, *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmenta að fornu og nýju* 2 (1886): 64 [1–250].

45 See 'Ketill Þorláksson,' in 'Hirðstjóra annáll Jóns orófasts Halldórssonar,' ed. Guðmundur Þorláksson, *Safn til sögu Íslands* 2 (1886): 611–14 [593–784].

46 Þorlákur was *lögmaður norður og vestur*, 1290–91 and again 1293–95, 1298–99; Þórður *lögmaður norður og vestur* 1296–97, 1300, Snorri *lögmaður norður og vestur* 1320–29, 'Lögsögumannatal og lögmanna,' 44–46, 48–49, 58–59.

47 Ormur was *sýslumaður* in Dalasýsla, c. 1360–70 and in Snæfellssýla, c. 1375–c. 1396, Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 2:440–44; he was *lögmaður suður og austur* 1359–68 and 1374–75, 'Lögsögumannatal og lögmanna,' 63–64, 69–70; from 1366–70 he shared the office of *hirðstjóri* with Andres Gíslason, 'Hirðstjóra annáll,' 633.

48 Guðmundur seems first to have been *sýslumaður* in the Vestfirðingafjörðungur, and in Snæfellssýsla, Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 2:256–57, 419; 3:9. While Ormur was *sýslumaður* in Snæfellssýsla by the end of the century is is not clear that he succeeded his brother, although there is no record of anyone else holding the position during this period.

49 For the following, see Grethe Authén Blom, *Magnus Eriksson og Island: Til belysning av periferi og sentrum i nordisk 1300-tallshistorie*, Skrifter fra Det Kongelige norske videnskabers selskab, 2:1983 (Trondheim: Universitetsforlaget, 1983); see also Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, *The Incorporation and Integration of the King's Tributary Lands into the Norwegian Realm, c. 1195–1397*, The Northern World 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and Sigríður Beck, *I kungens frånvaro: Formeringen av en isländsk aristokrati 1271–1387* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2011), 75–99. On the economic aspects, see the discussion in Helgi Þorláksson, 'King and Commerce: The Foreign Trade of Iceland in Medieval Times and the Impact of Royal Authority,' in *The Norwegian Domination and the Norse World, c. 1100–c. 1400*, ed. Steinar Imsen, Rostra Books; 'Norgesveldet,' Occasional Papers 1 (Trondheim: Tapir, 2010), pp. 149–73.

50 See for instance Sigríður Beck, 'Att vinna vänner: Vänskap som politiskt redskap på Island ca. 1250–1400,' in *Vänner, patroner och klienter i Norden*, *Rapport till 26:e nordiska historikermötet i Reykjavík den 8–12 augusti 2007*, ed. Lars Hermanson, Ritsafn Sagnfræðistofnunar 39 (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007), pp. 101–22; Axel Kristinsson, 'Lords and Literature: The Icelandic Sagas as Political and

Social Instruments,' *Scandinavian Journal of History* 28 (2003): 1–17; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'Historical Writing'; Bagerius, *Mandom och mödom*.

51 Helga's family connections remain obscure, but Steinn Dofri has argued that she was the daughter of Jón Björnsson á Grund, 'Rannsóknir eldri ætta, til skýringa ýmsra óljósra atriða í miðaldasögu Íslendinga,' *Blanda* 6 (1936–39): 379 [371–91]. This seems to have gained some acceptance; see Einar Arnórsson, 'Smiður Andrésson: Brot úr sögu 14. aldar,' *Saga* 1.1 (1949): 9–126 at 54.

52 'Hirðstjóra annáll,' 629. However, this is a detail which is not found earlier than the early seventeenth century although it becomes a familiar motif in later retellings of the battle (Einar Árnórsson, 'Smiður Andrésson,' 121–23). Other more reliable sources are clear that the battle took place in the morning.

53 Benedikt Gíslason frá Hofteigi, 'Smiður Andrésson,' in *Smiður Andrésson og þætttir* (Akureyri: Bókaútgáfan Norðri, 1949), pp. 15–103; Einar Arnórsson, 'Smiður Andrésson'; Einar Bjarnason, 'Árni Þórðarson, Smiður Andrésson og Grundar-Helga,' *Saga* 12 (1974): 88–108, esp. 100–08 on the scattered sources on Helga. She was the mother of the famous Björn Einarsson, nicknamed 'Jerusalem-traveller.' She seems not to have married, but Björn, whose father was the magnate Einarr Eiríksson of Vatnsfjörður, was probably born a few years before the battle at Grund. According to a later tradition in the family, Helga also had a daughter with a priest, but no other children with Einarr.

54 See Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir*, 1: 449–52 at 451.

55 See Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir,* 1: 450; 4: 375–76.

56 The other problem was due to the bishop of Hólar, Jón *skalli* Eiriksson, who also had become unpopular in the north shortly after he began his episcopacy in 1358. The priests in Eyjafjörður and Þingeyjrarsýsla refused to accept him as bishop in 1361. Bishop Jón excommunicated the priests, but they continued to hold masses. Jón sailed from Iceland to meet the Archbishop of Niðarós in 1362 but eventually was forced to get a confirmation from pope Urban V in Avignon in 1369.

57 'Hirðstjóra annáll,' 630–31 (normalized); *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtningen*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols. (1912–14; Rep. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1967–73), IIA:396; IIB:417–18 (normalized with translation); *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm (1888; repr. Oslo: Norsk historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt, 1977), pp. 409–10; *Flateyjarbók*, 3 vols., ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C.R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: P. T. Malling 1860–68); 3:567. The poem is preserved in *Flateyjarannáll*, commissioned by Jón Hákonarson of Viðidalstunga (1359–1416) who married Ingileif, the daughter of Árni Þórðarson.

58 The scribe of the *Flateyjarannáll*-entry was Magnús Þórhallsson who also wrote much of *Flateyjarbók*. Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, p. 269, points out that Magnús was little competent in skaldic poetry, and thus that Snjólfur's poem must have been included at the request of Jón Hákonarson, whose father had taken part in the battle.

59 Páll *lögmaður* Vídalín (1667–1727) in § 28 of his discussion of 'Alin að lengd og Meðalmaður,' in *Skýríngar yfir fornyrði lögbókar þeirrar, er Jónsbók kallast* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bóknentafélag, 1854), pp. 16–55 reports that two swords

supposed to have been used in the Grundarbardagur were still kept on the farm and includes a detailed description of them provided by Brynjólfur Thorlacius (1681–1762) (pp. 38–39). There were also many legends told about Grundar-Helga—for example that she tied knots on the trousers of the men sleeping at Grund the night before the battle. She is also said to have let herself be buried in a mound (see 'Hirðstjóra annáll,' 629–30), and allegedly brought her treasure with her into the burial mound; see 'Helguhóll,' in Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, new ed., ed. Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 6 vols. (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1954–61), 1:269, collected by Konrad Maurer during his trip to Iceland 1858 and published in his *Isländische Volkssagen der Gegenwart* (1860; repr. North Charleston, NC: Elibron Classics, 2006), pp. 71–72. The poet Ólafur Eggertsson Briem who was then living at Grund showed Maurer this landmark during his visit to the farm on the afternoon of July 22 1858 as recorded in his travel diary, Konrad Maurer, *Íslands ferð 1858*, trans. Baldur Hafstað (Reykjavík: Ferðafélag Íslands, 1997), p. 140. Helgahóll is also mentioned in 'Grundar-Helga, Örn og Eyvindur,' in Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, 2: 115 [114–15] collected from Eggert Ó. Briem. From Grund are also preserved two late medieval chairs with elaborate carvings, runic inscriptions, and animal heads, 'very similar' to the chair in which God is seated in the dedication picture in *Skarðsbók* where Ormur is depicted; see Ellen Magerøy, *Planteornamentikken i islandsk treskurd: En stilhistorisk studie*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, Supplementum, 5 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1967), pp. 40–42. Magerøy (pp. 38, 42–43) also compares the carvings on the chairs with illuminations in manuscripts and found parallels among others in *Svalbarðsbók* (AM 343 fol.), connected to a farm in Eyjafjörður and produced at an unknown place in the 1330s, and *Skarðsbók* (AM 350 fol.) written at Helgafell in 1363.

60 See 'Hirðstjóra annáll,' p. 624 [pp. 623–27].

61 The collection of law amendments, or réttarbætur, in AM 350 fol. is edited in *Jónsbók,* ed. Már Jónsson, 253–308.

62 Ólafur Halldórsson, 'Skarðsbók—Origins and History', in *Skarðsbók: Codex Scardensis AM 350 fol.*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, Sigurður Líndal, Íslensk miðaldarita 1 (Reykjavík: Lögberg, 1981), pp. 46–51.

63 Selma Jónsdóttir, 'Gjafaramynd í íslenzku handriti,' *Árbók hins íslenzka fornleifafélags* 61 (1964): 5–19.

64 *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson et al. 16 vols. (Copenhagen and Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Bókmenntafélag, 1857–1972), 2:299–300, no. 243; *Jónsbók*, ed. Már Jónsson, pp. 293–94.

65 Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, pp. 207–08.

66 Harry Fett, *Norges malerkunst i middelalderen* (Kristiania [Oslo]: A. Cammermeyer, 1917), p. 201.

67 *Codex Scardensis*, ed. Desmond Slay, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 2 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1960). Both these manuscripts are known as *Skarðsbók* or *Codex Scardensis*, but here I have chosen to use *Skarðsbók* for the legal manuscript (AM 350 fol.), and *Codex Scardensis* for the collection of Sagas of Apostles (SÁM 1 fol.).

68 Studies have indicated a close contact between the narrative structures of saints' sagas and other 'classic' saga genres, indicating that sagas of saints were not isolated and strictly for a monastic or clerical audience; see Lucy Grace Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis: Studies in Icelandic Hagiography' (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1969); Margaret Cormack, 'Saints' Lives and Icelandic Literature,' in *Saints and Sagas: A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Birte Carlé (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994), pp. 27–47; idem, 'Sagas of Saints,' in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 302–25; Philip Roughton, 'Stylistics and Sources of the *Postola sögur* in AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to,' *Gripla* 16 (2006): 7–49.

69 Vilhelm Gödel, *Katalog öfver Kongl. Bibliotekets fornisländska och fornnorska handskrifter* (Stockholm: Norstedt och Söner, 1897–1900), 5–9 dates Holm Perg. 2 fol. to the latter half of the fourteenth century, and this assertion is found frequently repeated. The signature then would quite likely be that of Ólafur Þorleifsson *tóni eldri* who died in 1393. However Peter Foote dates the MS to 1425–45, *Lives of Saints: Perg. fol. nr. 2 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Peter Foote, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 4 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962), pp. 11–14 [7–29]. Stefán Karlsson identifies the scribe of Holm Perg. 2 fol. as Ormur Loftsson in 'Ritun Reykjafjarðarbók,' *Opuscula* 4 (1970): 120–40 at 137; rep. with excursus in *Stafkrókar*, pp. 325–26 [pp. 310–29]. Ormur married in 1434 so he cannot have been born much before 1400 (*Sýslumannaæfir*, 2:487–88).

70 *Lives of Saints: Perg. fol. nr. 2,* pp. 10–11, 14, 17–18. Probably also the fragments of a legendary, AM 238 VIII fol., was written in whole or in part by Ormur Loftsson after Holm Perg. 2 fol. was finished. Ólafur *tóni yngri* inhertied his nickname from his maternal grandfather, Ólafur Þorleifsson *tóni* of Reykhólar. He was married to Þorbjörg, daughter of Ormur Snorrason.

71 Marianne E. Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

72 It is of some interest that the mother of Ormur Loftsson, Kristín, daughter of the lawman Oddur *leppur* Þórðarson, was the sister of Guðni whose daughter Kristín is connected to AM 489 4° which contains *Ívens saga*; see Stefán Karlsson, *Islandske originaldiplomer indtil 1450*, Editiones Arnamagnæana A 7 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), p. 410; Blaisdell, *The Sagas of Ywain and Tristan*, p. 19.

73 Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, Studia Islandica 24 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1966); Stéfan Karlsson, ed., *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops: Fragments of Eight Manuscripts*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 7 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1967), pp. 9–22; see also the recent discussion of the manuscripts that might have belonged to this group based on book painting, Lena Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, Rit Snorrastofa 6 (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2009). The manuscripts in question are (besides AM 350 fol., SÁM 1 fol., and **Ormsbók*, and some more doubtfully ascribed to the Helgafell scriptorium than others, and the last four by its attachment to Helgafell school of illumination): AM 239 fol. (Sagas of Apostles),

AM 219 fol. (Sagas of Icelandic saints), AM 383 IV 4° (Saga of St Þorlákur), AM 73 b fol. (*Bæjarbók*, containing the saga of St Ólafur, with interpolated episodes relating to Helgafell district from *Bjarnar saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Laxdæla saga*), AM 325 X 4° (Kings' sagas), AM 325 VIII 3 a 4° (Saga of St Ólafur), Holm Perg. 34 4° (legal texts), AM 226 fol. (*Stjórn*, Sagas of Antiquity), AM 233 a fol. (Sagas of saints), AM 653 a 4° (Saga of the apostles Jón and Jakob, copied from AM 239 fol.), Holm Perg. 5 fol. (Sagas of Icelandic saints, Saga of St Edmund), AM 347 fol. (*Belgdalsbók*, containing *Jónsbók*, Christian laws and other legal texts), AM 225 fol. (*Stjórn*, Sagas of Antiquity), *Flateyjarbók* (a collection of kings' sagas and other texts, illuminator probably trained in Helgafell).

74 In relation to *Codex Scardensis*, see Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis'; Peter Foote, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle in Iceland: A Contribution to the Study of the Karlamagnús saga,* London Mediæval Studies Monograph 4 (London: Mediæval Studies, University College, 1959), pp. 15–22; Kirsten Wolf, 'Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* in Old Norse Translation,' *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 33 (1991): 149–66; Simonetta Battista, 'Translation and Redaction in Old Norse Hagiography,' in *Pratiques de traduction au Moyen Age: Medieval Translation Practices*, ed. Peter Andersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2004), pp. 100–10. Also *Amícus saga ok Amilíus* in **Ormsbók* used Vincent's *Speculum Historiale* as a source. The version of *Jóns saga baptista* made by Grímur Hólmsteinsson (d. 1298) is of related interest, see for example Ole-Jörgen Johannessen, 'Litt om kildene til Jóns saga baptista II,' *Opuscula septentrionalia: Festskrift til Ole Widding 10.10. 1977*, ed. Bent Chr. Jacobsen et al. (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 1977 *Opuscula* II.2, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 25.2), pp. 100–15; and on his reasons for including learned material to the legend, Margaret Cormack, 'Christian Biography,' in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 31 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 33 [pp. 27–42].

75 Simonetta Battista, 'Blámenn, *djöflar* and Other Representations of Evil in Old Norse Translation Literature,' in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature. Sagas and the British Isles: Preprint Papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York*, ed. John McKinnell et al., 2 vols. (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance studies, 2006), 1:113–22. See also Kristoffer Vadum, *Sumir meistarar segir – Resepsjon og gjendiktning av Bolognakanonistenes kirkerettslige tekster i Nidarosprovinsen ca. 1270–1298* (Ph.D. diss., University of Oslo, forthcoming [2014]).

76 I use here the term 'textual community' from Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 90–92, but also related is Pierre Bourdieu's notion of social space, in which text plays a part in making distinctions between groups of people; see Torfi H. Tulinius, 'Kapital, felt, illusio: Kan Bourdieus sociologi hjælpe os til at forstå litteraturens udvikling i middelalderens Island?' *Maal og Minne* no. 1 (2004): 1–20; Kevin J. Wanner, *Snorri Sturluson and the Edda: The Conversion of Cultural Capital in Medieval*

Scandinavia, Old Norse-Icelandic Series 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). See also the discussion in Bjørn Bandlien, *Man or Monster: Negotiations of Masculinity in Old Norse Society*, Acta humaniora 236 (Oslo: Unipub, 2005), ch. 1.

77 On texts as a common denominator for a group in an Icelandic context, see Pernille Hermann, 'Spatial and Temporal Perspectives in Íslendingabók: Historiography and Social Structures,' *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (2005): 73–89.

78 A scriptorium in Skagafjörður, probably at the nunnery of Reynistaður, was contemporary with Helgafell. There are many similarities in the type of manuscripts produced by Helgafell—for instance law books, sagas of apostles and Icelandic saints, sagas of kings in the conversion period, sagas of chivalry and antiquity, as well as large compilations of pseudo-history and encyclopedic texts; see Stéfan Karlsson, 'Ritun Reykjafjarðarbók,'; Peter Foote, ed., *A Saga of St Peter the Apostle: Perg 4:o nr. 19 in The Royal Library, Stockholm*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 19 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1990), pp. 55–60; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 'Genbrug i Skagafjörður: Arbejdsmetoder hos skrivere i klostret på Reynistaður,' in *Reykholt som makt—og lærdomssenter i den islandske og nordiske kontekst*, ed. Else Mundal, Rit Snorrastofa 3 (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2006), pp. 141–54.

79 For a recent analysis of this manuscript, see Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, 'Writing and Reading in Medieval Manuscript Culture: The Transmission of the Story of Elye in Old French and Old Norse Literary Contexts' (Ph.D. diss., University of Oslo, 2010), pp. 274–349.

80 The oldest manuscript of *Bevers saga* is AM 567 II 4° from ca. 1350. *Bevers saga* is mentioned in an inventory made in 1366 for the farm Talgje in south-western Norway in connection to the wedding between Holmfriður Ánundsdóttir and Ingimundur Utyrmsson. It is said that *Bevers saga* was one of several good sagas in that same book. Their daughter, Guðríður, married Ívarr's son Vígfús, also a *hirðstjóri*; see *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, IV, no. 457; Nicolai Stene, 'Norsk-islandske slegtsforbindelser i Middelalderen,' *Norsk Slektshistorisk Tidsskrift* 4 (1933): 158–71. Hólmfriður was probably a descendant from the baron Gautur Erlingsson, one of the most powerful men in Norway at the end of the thirteenth century. A daughter of Ormur Snorrason was married to Ólafur tóni Þorleifsson, who had owned land in Norway, see Stene, 'Norsk-islandske slegtsforbindelser,' 161.The son of Óláfur, and grandson of Ormur, went on pilgrimage in 1405, and reported that he had seen part of Sigurður Fáfnisbani's sword and the tooth of the legendary hero Starkaður in the place called Affrica, *Islandske Annaler*, p. 288; see also Sverrir Jakobsson, *Við og veröldin: Heimsmynd Íslendinga 1100–1400* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan. 2005), 109–10. On the Norwegian lady he traveled with – a member of one of the most important families in Norway at the time and a possible relative, see Gaute Losnegård et al., *Riddarane av Losna* (Førde: Selja, 2003), pp. 102–03. Árni later became bishop at Skálholt. For another example of a book, in this case a psalter, brought from Norway in 1333 by a *hirðstjóri*, Eiríkr Sveinbjarnarson, see Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Fra skriptoriet i Vatnsfjörður i Eiríkr Sveinbjarnarsons tid,' in *Reykholt som makt—og lærdomssenter*, pp. 127–40.

81 Christopher Sanders, '*Bevers saga* in the Context of Old Norse Historical Prose,' in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevi, Studies in Medieval Romance 8 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 51–66. This also accords with the books at the farm Talgje in 1366; Hólmfriður and her brother, a minor, also owned a large lawbook, a psalter, a book of hours, and 'seven other small books, both books of hours and saga books.'

82 *Rémundar saga Keisarasonar*, ed. Sven Grén Broberg, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 38 (Copenhagen: S.L. Møller, 1909–12), 4: 'var hann til bækr settr ok nam mikinn klerkdóm með morgum listum.'

83 *Mirmanns saga,* ed. Slay, p. 3.

84 Marianne E. Kalinke, 'The Foreign Language Requirement in Medieval Icelandic Romance,' *Modern Language Review* 78 (1983): 850–61. An obvious example of a learned knight is of course the hero in *Tristrams saga* who learns all seven liberal arts. Other Icelandic examples from this time are *Clári saga* and *Kirialax saga*, see for instance Shaun F.D. Hughes, '*Klári saga* as an Indigenous Romance,' *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honor of Marianne Kalinke*, ed. Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin, Islandica 54 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 135–63. Hughes also points out some legal phrases in the saga that might have caught the attention of lawmen, pp. 140–42.

85 Jón Helgason, 'Gauks saga Trandilssonar,' in *Heidersskrift til Gustav Indrebø på femtiårsdagen 17. november 1939*, ed. Hjørdis Johannessen et al. (Bergen: A.S. Lunde, 1939), pp. 92–100; rep. *Ritgerðakorn og ræðustúfar* (Reykjavík: Félag íslenzkra stúdenta í Kaupmannahöfn, 1959), pp. 100–08. The contents might have been related to one of the characters in *Njáls saga*.

86 Stéfan Karlsson, 'Um Vatnshyrnu,' *Opuscula* 4 (1970): 279–303, rep. with excursus in *Stafkrókar*, pp. 336–59. Jón Hákonarson is more famous for commissioning *Flateyjarbók* in the late 1380s.

87 Stéfan Karlsson, *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops*, pp. 28–29.

88 Lars Lönnroth, 'Structural Divisions in the *Njála* Manuscripts,' *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 90 (1975): 49–79; Andrew Joseph Hamer, 'Njáls saga and its Christian Background: A Study in Narrative Method' (Ph.D. diss, University of Groningen, 2008), 182–85 and 252–64; Lena Liepe, 'The Knight and the Dragon Slayer: Illuminations in a Fourteenth-Century Saga Manuscript,' in *Ornament and Order: Essays on Viking and Northern Medieval Art for Signe Horn Fuglesang*, edited by Margrethe C. Stang and Kristin B. Aavitsland (Trondheim: Tapir, 2008), pp. 179–99. For a critical view of allegorical reading of Sagas of Icelanders, see Gísli Sigurðsson, *Túlkun Íslendingasagna í ljósi munnlegrar hefðar,* Rit 56 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2002), p. 34; *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method,* trans. Nicholas Jones, Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 33.

89 See the discussion in Vésteinn Ólason, *Samræður við söguöld: Frásagnalist Íslendingasagna og fortíðarmynd* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998), pp. 227–28; *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Represention in the Sagas of the*

Icelanders, trans. Andrew Wawn (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998), p. 227. I am more inclined to support a reading of such texts in a polyphonic way, as suggested in Carl Phelpstead, *Holy Vikings: Saint's Lives in Old Icelandic Kings' Sagas*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 340 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007).

90 Whether *Erex saga* was read as a moralistic tale could depend on the context. It is difficult to decide in the case of the medieval fragments of *Erex saga*, Lbs. 1230 III 8°. However, its twin manuscript, probably by the same hand, AM 566 a-b 4°, contains for instance the rather explicitly sexual poem *Grettisfærsla*, see Ólafur Halldórsson, 'Grettisfœrsla,' trans. J.B. Dodsworth, *Opuscula* 1 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 20) (1960): 49–77; Icelandic version with appendix in Ólafur Halldórsson, *Grettisfærsla*, pp. 19–50. However, this was not necessarily less 'learned' than the Helgafell manuscript.

91 On consent and marriage in law and practice, see Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, *Property and Virginity: The Christianization of Marriage in Medieval Iceland, 1200–1600* (Århus: Aarhus University Press, 2010).

92 Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, pp. 241–94.

93 Sverrir Jakobsson, 'State Formation and Pre-Modern Identities,' 67–82.

94 In 1381, Ormur Snorrason's son, Guttormur, died of a wound received at Snóksdalur delivered by the farmer there, Þorsteinn Kirkju-Jónsson. They had apparently quarreled over fishing rights in the Miðá river; see Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaæfir,* 2:444, 449–50.