

Klári saga as an Indigenous Romance

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Klári saga (also known as *Clári* or *Clarus saga*) survives incomplete in two vellum manuscripts from the late fourteenth century (AM 657b, 4to and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6) and in a fifteenth-century vellum, AM 589d 4to, as well as in numerous later manuscripts.¹ The saga was edited by Gustav Cederschiöld first diplomatically in 1879 and then in a normalized version which appeared in 1907.² Despite being long accessible, the saga has not excited much critical attention.³ Because

1. In addition to *Klári saga*, AM 657a–b 4to contains a considerable collection of *exempla*. Also the earliest version of the *Söguþáttur af Jóni biskupi*, originally catalogued as AM 764b 4to, has been restored to AM 657 4to of which it was originally a part (Kristian Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols. [Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1888–94], vol. 2, pp. 68–70, 184–5). AM 589d 4to, on the other hand, is a saga manuscript (Kálund, *Katalog*, vol. 1, p. 755). See Marianne Kalinke and P. M. Mitchell, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, *Islandica* 44 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 72–5 for the complete list of the surviving manuscripts of *Klári saga*, plus editions, translations, and scholarship. To the translations should be added: Dennis Ferrell Kearney, “Clarus saga: An Edition and Translation” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Mississippi, 1990).

2. Quotations from *Klári saga* will be taken from the slightly modernized version printed in Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, ed. *Riddarasögur*, 6 vols. (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1952–4), vol. 5, pp. 1–61 based on Cederschiöld’s 1907 edition. All translations are my own.

3. The sole monograph on the saga is Alfred Jakobsen, *Studier i Clarus saga: til spørsmålet om sagaens norske proveniens*, Årbok for Universitetet i Bergen, Humanistisk serie 1963.2 (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), which attempts to claim that the saga was translated from Latin into medieval Norwegian subsequently making its way to Iceland, a position which has garnered little support. See also Marianne Kalinke, “Klári saga,” in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 7 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1986), pp. 274–5 and “Table Decorum and the Quest for a Bride in

the prologue to the saga states that it is based on a Latin poem which the author encountered in France, it has been classified as belonging to that group of romances translated from continental models, largely French, and as a consequence of little interest.⁴ Marianne Kalinke in her *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* finds *Klári saga* particularly important for her purposes, as it appears to be the vehicle whereby the literary motif of the bridal quest entered Icelandic literature where it was to flourish like nowhere else.⁵ Because the bridal quest romance in Iceland is so closely linked with *Klári saga* and because neither the saga's putative continental original nor anything closely approximating it has ever materialized, the time has come to once again take a closer look at the saga. The following examination argues that *Klári saga* is not translated from a continental original, but is an indigenous Icelandic composition, in its present form from the second quarter of the fourteenth century. To support this hypothesis, some of the striking features of the saga's language will be considered followed by an examination of its narrative content.

Language

Klári saga is written in idiomatic Icelandic, which among other features demonstrates a penchant for metaphors and expressions from Icelandic legal language. The syntax is often markedly influenced by Latin, and while the vocabulary of the saga is sprinkled with elements which are identified as Norwegianisms, there is a much more striking influx in the narrative of words from Middle Low German. The clue to this linguistic mixture can be found in the person who is identified as author in the opening sentence:

Klári saga” in *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitello, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 51–72.

4. Because *Klári saga* is considered a “translated saga,” it is unfortunately not considered where it belongs in Jurg Glauser, *Isländische Märchensagas: Studien zur Prosaliteratur im spätmittelalterlichen Island*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie 12 (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1983).

5. Marianne Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, *Islandica* 46 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 98–107.

Þar byrjum vér upp þessa frásögn, sem sagði virðulegur herra Jón Halldórsson, ágætrar minningar,—en hann fann hana skrifaða með latínu í Franz í það form, er þeir kalla *rithmos*,⁶ en vér köllum hendingum⁷ . . .

(There we begin this story which the worthy reverend Bishop Jón Halldórsson of blessed memory told—and he found it in France written in Latin in that form which they call *ritmos* but which we call “versification.”)

It is generally assumed that Jón Halldórsson (†1339), thirteenth Bishop of Skálholt, 1322–1339, was Norwegian in origin, because he entered the Dominican monastery in Bergen as a youth and from there went to study at the Dominican run universities in Paris and Bologna.⁸ However, the claim to regard Jón as a Norwegian rests on shaky grounds. *Flateyjarannáll* begins the entry for 1323 with: “kom vt Jonn byskup Freygerdarson” (Bishop Jón, the son of Freygerðr, arrived in Iceland”).⁹ The woman’s name “Freygerðr” is quite rare, being found, apart from here, only in *Landnámabók* and *Vápnfirðinga saga*, but it is distinctly Icelandic and not Norwegian.¹⁰ On the other

6. Medieval Latin *rhythmus*, “poem” (see J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus*, 2nd ed., 2 vols, [Leiden: Brill, 2002], p. 1202.)

7. Used here in the sense of “poetry,” “verse,” rather than in reference to a specific verse style or meter. Cf. “Mælti hann [Óðinn] allt hendingum svo sem nú er það kveðið er skáldskapur heitir” (And he [Óðinn] spoke everything in verse just as that is now recited which is called poetry). *Ynglinga saga*, chap. 6 in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Bergljót Kristjánsdóttir *et al.*, 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1991), vol. 1, p. 10. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 3.

8. See *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir *et al.*, 3 vols., Íslensk fornrit 15–17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1998–2000), vol. 1, pp. cii–iv, and Gunnar Kristjánsson, *Saga biskupstólanna* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Hólar, 2006), pp. 36–37. Scholars have also assumed that Jón was Norwegian, because since the middle of the previous century the Norwegian Metropolitan had shown a preference for Norwegians as bishops in Skálholt and Hólar as part of a policy of strengthening Norwegian control over the Icelandic church. Archbishop Eilífur Árnason must have been aware of Jón Halldórsson’s linguistic and scholarly abilities honed during his studies on the continent, and what better candidate for the post at Skálholt than one educated in Norway and overseas and, in addition, having a thorough knowledge of Icelandic.

9. Gustav Storm, ed., *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (Christiania [Oslo]: Grøndahl and Søn, 1888), p. 395.

10. E. H. Lind, *Norsk-Islandska Dopnamn och fingerade Namn från Medeltiden*. 3 vols. (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1905–31), vol. 1, p. 283.

hand, Halldór, Jón's father, could have been either Norwegian or Icelandic. The fact that *Flateyjarannáll* identifies Jón by his mother's name suggests that his father had died early. Jón also had a brother, Finnur, who like him was a priest in Bergen.¹¹ While *Klári saga* may be stylistically influenced by Latin, it is still also written in highly idiomatic Icelandic. This permits the following scenario. One or possibly both of Jón's parents are Icelandic. They travel to the bustling Hansa port of Bergen. There both parents die and their children are received in religious order as oblates.¹²

In their search for Norwegian and Latin elements in *Klári saga*, scholars have tended to overlook how *rammíslensk* (strictly Icelandic) the saga is—and this apart from the fact that the long hundred is used and the text is sprinkled with collocations such as *makt og manér* (honor and conduct), *kukl og klókskapur* (sorcery and cunning), *með heilu ok holdnu* (with body and soul in one piece), *fúss og feginn*¹³ (ready and fain), *volk og vandræði*¹⁴ (turmoils and tribulations)¹⁵ and that it also uses proverbs such as *hinn ríkari verður ráð að segja*¹⁶ (the powerful are the ones to give counsel) and *eigi ver einn eiður*

11. See the discussion in Hugo Gering, ed. *Íslendzk æventýri: Isländische Legenden Novellen und Märchen*, 2 vols. (Halle: Buchhandlungen des Waisenhauses, 1882–83), vol. 2, pp. vi–vii. Jakobsen, *Studier i Clarus saga*, p. 18, admits the possibility that he may be Icelandic on his mother's side, but even so insists on his being Norwegian.

12. On the practice of abandoned or orphaned children being taken in by monastic orders, see John Boswell, *Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). Chapter 5 of the *Sögubáttur af Jóni biskupi* notes that Bishop Jón became fatally ill in Bergen (in 1339) while spending the winter “at predikaraklaustri er hann hafði first inn genget þegar í barndómi” (in the Dominican Monastery where he had first entered while still a child”) (*Biskupa sögur*, vol. 1., p. 454).

13. This collocation is found in *Tristrams saga ok Ísondar*, chap. 19 (“En þegar þeir, fúsir og fegnir, undu sitt segl upp . . .” [And then they, ready and fain, raised their sail . . .]) (*Riddarasögur*, vol. 1, p. 36), and in the *exemplum*: “Af einum sjúkum manni ok Kristi,” *Íslendzk æventýri* #35, line 35 (vol. 1, p. 123): “Ek vil þá fúss ok feginn gjarna miskunnar biðja . . .” (“I wish then, ready and fain, willingly to pray for mercy . . .”).

14. This is a fairly common collocation found, for example, in *Alexanders saga*, book 7: “. . . eftir þau mörgu volk og vandræði . . .” (. . . after those many turnoils and tribulations . . .), Galterus de Castellione, *Alexandreis: það er Alexanders saga á íslensku*, ed. Gunnlaugur Ingólfsson (Reykjavík: Steinholt, 2002), p. 123. The form *volk* is the modern form of an earlier *valk* with the same meaning.

15. *Riddarasögur* vol. 5, pp. 6–7, 8, 20, 55, 58.

16. *Riddarasögur* vol. 5, p. 38. There is a version of this proverb in the thirteenth-century poem, *Málsháttarkvæði* 32.1: “Jafnan segir hin ríkri ráð” (The powerful always give counsel), *Carmina Scaldica*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1929).

*alla*¹⁷ (one oath does not cover all oaths). Another striking example of Icelandic cultural influence occurs when the princess Serena wakes up after having spent the night in the arms of Klárus disguised as Eskelvarð, son of the king of Bláland. She discovers that she is no longer in her palace, and in fact everything familiar to her has vanished. Instead of the elegant bed with embroidered linen sheets in which she went to sleep, she is now lying on the ground covered in a “skarpur skinnstakkur” (coarse leather smock).¹⁸ No longer gazing out over the magnificent griffin-pavilion, she sees instead that:

Raftar eru þar niður lagðir á sléttum velli og við bundnir staurar með skörpum álum, sem féhirðar eru vanir að búast um.

(Long cross-pieces are laid down on the level field and bound to posts with coarse leather straps such as shepherds are accustomed to set up.)

This is nothing more nor less than the humble *færikví*, or portable sheep pen, which was a ubiquitous sight in the Icelandic countryside from the Middle Ages until well into the nineteenth century.¹⁹ And while such devices may also have existed in Norway and on the European mainland, Bishop Jón was a scholar, not a farmer, and seems to have spent his time in urban centers, not the countryside. Besides, when the sheep were at home from October to May, he could hardly have stepped out from the cathedral church at Skálholt without one or more of these structures impinging themselves upon his sight. The man sleeping beside Serena is also described in ways that share similarities with depictions in subsequent centuries of Icelandic farm laborers, especially by writers who wish to distance themselves socially and intellectually from the working poor.

Another specifically Icelandic feature of the saga is the metaphorical

17. *Riddarasögur* vol. 5, p. 35. This proverb is quite widespread being found in addition to other places in *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa* chap. 11 (*Íslendinga sögur og þættir*, ed. Bragi Halldórsson *et al.*, 3rd ed., 3 vols [Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1998], vol. 1, p. 88) and *Njáls saga*, chap. 13 (*Íslendinga sögur*, vol. 1, p. 142).

18. This garment is used both as a bed-covering and as her husband’s wearing apparel.

19. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 43. See the drawing in Jónas Jónasson, *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 3rd ed. (Reykjavík: Ísafold, 1961), p. 174.

use of language that is drawn from the specialized idiom of Icelandic legal vocabulary. Bishop Jón had studied in Bologna, which was famous for its legal school. And while he was bishop of Skálholt, he was clearly involved in legal issues at the Alþingi. In 1326 he was responsible for having the *Bannsakabréf* (a document listing the causes for excommunication, 24 in all) added to the law. And from 1326–1328 he was involved in the so-called “Möðruvallamál,” the struggle he had with Lárentíus Kálfsson (1267–1330), Bishop of Hólar, in an effort to enforce the Archbishop’s edict that the monastery at Möðruvellir be re-established against the wishes of Bishop Lárentíus, who had confiscated the lands and income of the monastery after the drunken monks had burned the coister to the ground in 1316.²⁰ At the Alþingi the legal debates were conducted in Icelandic and Bishop Jón would have had plenty of opportunity to absorb the specialized vocabulary subsequently found reflected in the saga.

The first example to be encountered of this legal idiom is the description of Tecla, daughter of the king of Scots, and maiden-in-waiting to Princess Serena:

Bæði var hún listug og fögur með heiðurlegri málsnilld og myndi þykja hið kurteisasta konungsbarn, ef eigi hefði þvílíkur gimsteinn legið í annað skaut sem var Serena konungsdóttir.²¹

(She was both refined and beautiful with noble elequence and would have seemed the most courteous king’s child if such a jewel had not lain in another lap of a garment, namely Serena the king’s daughter.)

The term *að leggja í skaut* is a legal term referring to the casting lots which were marked and placed in the lap or fold (*skaut*) of a garment from which they would be drawn by some third person as is explained in *Grágás*: “Hver maður skal merkja hlut sinn og bera alla saman í skaut” (Each man must mark his piece [in the drawing

20. On the “Möðruvallamál” (1326–1328), see Torfi K. Stefánsson Hjaltalín, *Eldur á Möðruvöllum: Saga Möðruvalla í Hörgárdal frá öndverða til okkar tíma*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Flateyjarútgáfan, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 31–5, 47–8.

21. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 10.

of lots] and bring all together in the lap of a garment).²² The term is used here metaphorically to indicate that it was not to fall to Tecla's lot to be drawn for the honor of being considered the most elegant and accomplished young woman in the realm, that being reserved for the Princess Serena. Later on in the same chapter Serena listens to the "framburður" of Tecla to treat Klárus respectfully.²³ Here the word can only be used in its legal sense of "a plea presented in a law court" as in *Grágás*: "Ef maður hefir þá sök að sækja er vottorð fylgir og á hann að beiða réttingar að og framburðar" (If a man has a case to prosecute which requires sworn evidence, also he has to request the proper wording and the plea-making).²⁴ When Serena scolds Klárus for spilling soft-boiled egg on his tunic, she does so, in the phrasing of the narrator, "með svo föllnum orðum" (with the words as follows). The use of *fallinn* in this sense had developed also as a legal idiom in the fourteenth century.²⁵ *Fallinn* is used in the same sense later in the saga when Tecla reports Serena's message to Eskelvarð: "er það svo fallið" (and it is as follows).²⁶ When Serena promises the hideous creature she believes is her husband, that she will love him with all her strength and see to it that he becomes king of Frakkland, she introduces her pledge by saying: "og eg vil borga þér upp á mína trú" (and I shall pledge on my troth). The verb she uses, *að borga*, is used in the legal sense "to go bail for."²⁷ Finally there is the use of collocations with legal overtones such as *land og lög* (land and sea) (twice) and *að*

22. *Grágás: Lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, ed. Gunnar Karlsson *et al.* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2001), p. 383 (see also p. 401); "þá leggja þeir hluti í skaut" (then they placed their lots in the lap of a garment), *Vatnsdæla saga*, chap. 42 (*Íslendinga sögur*, vol. 3, p. 1896). While this latter example does not take place in a legal setting, the action is equally formal and binding. Furthermore, even though a new law code (*Jónsbók*) had been adopted in 1281, that does not mean traditional legal vocabulary and expressions disappeared overnight, especially since the text of *Jónsbók* was subject of various amendments (*réttarbætur*) and not stabilized until the middle of the fourteenth century. See *Jónsbók. Lögbók Íslendinga hver samþykkt var á alþingi árið 1281 . . .*, ed. Már Jónsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2002), pp. 16–24.

23. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 13.

24. *Grágás*, p. 385.

25. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 18. See the *Máldagi* of Vilkin Hinriksson, Bishop of Skálholt (1391–1405): *svo fallinn vitnesburð* (the testimony as follows), *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. 1, p. 47.

26. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 29.

27. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 45. The phrase is not common in early Icelandic, but frequently encountered in Old Norwegian and may be best regarded here as a Norwegianism.

hlýða boði og banni (to heed command and prohibition).²⁸ The first is a legal formula found in *Grágás* (p. 283) and while the second is something of a commonplace, it too is legal in origin.²⁹

While it must remain a matter of speculation whether or not Bishop Jón's first language may have been Icelandic, there is less ambiguity concerning his knowledge of Latin. In the summer of 1327, Bishop Jón visited Hólar in pursuit of a settlement of the "Möðruvallamál" already mentioned. The southerners had brought with them many books of canon law and Bishop Jón began the proceedings in Latin. When his turn to reply came, Bishop Lárentíus did so in the vernacular (*á norrænu*): "Vita menn þat, herra Jón, at yðr er svo mjúkt latínu at tala sem móður-tungu yðra, en þó skilir þat ekki alþýða." (People know that, reverend Jón, that Latin is as easy for you to speak as your mother tongue, but on the other hand the ordinary people do not understand it).³⁰

That the syntax of *Klári saga* is indeed influenced by Latin is hardly a revelation as this aspect of the saga was studied in detail by Alfred Jakobsen in his *Studier i Clarus saga*.³¹ These Latinisms manifest themselves, for example, in the form of participial phrases ("styrkjandi hans ráð og ríki með öllum mætti og megni" [strengthening his rule and realm with all might and main]), tags such as "og hvað meira" (and what more [to say]) reflecting Latin "quis multa"; ablative absolute constructions ("og að skipunum búnum og öllum hlutum vel til fengnum" [And the ships being ready and matters well taken care of]); and puns ("og betur má hún nú kallast Severa en Serena" [and it would be better to call her 'Stern' rather than 'Serene']).³² Furthermore, Latinate names are inflected after prepositions and in oblique cases

28. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, pp. 5, 45, 22.

29. "Konongr skal raða bode og banne" (the king must control commands and prohibitions) (*Gulathings-lov*, #295, *Norges Gamle Love*, vol. 1, p. 96; *Frostathings-Lov*, VII.1, *Norges Gamle Love*, vol. 1, p. 198); cf. "helldr hlyddv allir þeirra boði og banni" (rather all of them heeded the commands and prohibitions [of Joshua]), *Stjorn: Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie*, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg and Landmark, 1862), p. 375; also *Egils saga*, chapter 66 (*Íslendinga sögur*, vol. 1, p. 470) and *Vatnsdæla saga*, chapter 7 (*Íslendinga sögur*, vol. 3, p. 1851).

30. *Biskupa sögur*, vol. 1, pp. 405–6 (*Lárentíus saga biskups*, chapter 55). *Lárentíus saga* also remarks that Bishops Jón and Lárentíus were considered the two most skilled practitioners of Latin in the country (*Biskupa sögur*, vol. 1, p. 383).

31. See also *Clári saga*, pp. xx–xxiv.

32. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, pp. 3, 5 (and *passim*), pp. 9, 18.

after verbs, but in accordance with Latin, not Icelandic grammar (“til Teclam,” [to Tecla] rather than “til Teclae” reflecting the Latin “ad Teclam”) (see also “með ráðum Teclae” [with the advice of Tecla]). Latin vocabulary is also inserted into the text: “er þeir kalla *rithmos* (< Latin *rhythmus* “poem”); “í *Paradisum*”; “hann velur . . . *bissum* . . . og *cicladem* (he chooses fine linen [< *bissus*] and rich gold-embroidered fabric (< *cyclas*, -*dis*); “af þeim *carbunculo*” (< *carbunculus*, a bright red stone such as a ruby or red garnet); “þar til sem honum gerist *signum*” (until is given to him a *signum* [hand signal]); “upp í það *solarium*” (up in the upper room < *solarium*); and “og í durum þess tjalds setur hann ein *limitem*; það köllum vér þresköld” (and in the doorway of this tent he places a *limes*; we call that a threshold).³³ This latter presents a small problem because *limitem* is the accusative singular of *limes* “a boundary,” not of *limen* “a threshold” whose accusative singular is *liminem*. Since *limitem* is the *lectio difficilior*, there is a strong argument that it is the original reading and not a later corruption, and that the Latin word is used here to indicate that Pétur places a marker at the door of the tent to distinguish the boundary between the space where Tecla walks freely from the space where she will be constrained to reveal the truth. At some subsequent point in the text’s transmission, however, it was felt necessary to gloss *limitem* and because the text says shortly afterwards that Tecla “kemur inn um þresköldinn” (crosses over the threshold), a redactor with a less than adequate memory of his Latin grammar, makes an elementary mistake, because it is not possible to believe that Bishop Jón, even on a bad day, would be capable of such a schoolboy’s blunder.

The pervasive influence of Latin on the text is furthermore not *a priori* evidence that the saga was translated from Latin, for these Latinisms are just as likely to have been second nature to someone as well versed in Latin as Bishop Jón. In addition, these Latinisms are no more than a reflection of what Mattias Tveitane has identified as aspects of a learned style which he discusses in terms of translated prose,³⁴ but which again is likely to have been equally a feature of the prose style

33. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, pp. 28 (37), 3, 16, 24 (and 18), 24, 27, 32, 37.

34. Mattias Tveitane, *Den lærde stil: oversetterprosa i den norrøne versjonen av Vite Patrum*, Årbok for Universitetet i Bergen, Humanistisk serie; 1967.2 (Bergen, Norwegian Universities Press, 1967).

of a man like Bishop Jón whose skill in Latin was remarkable enough for his contemporaries to comment upon it.

But if this is not sufficient to argue against a supposed Latin original as being the source text for *Klári saga*, then there is the third notable linguistic feature of the saga which can be called “the German connection.” Whereas the Latinity of the saga is no more than might be expected given who its author is, what is striking about the text is the large amount of vocabulary derived from Middle Low German. This is not the place to investigate this evidence in detail, so it will suffice just to list some of these words used in the text:³⁵ *alþingis* (absolutely < MLG *aldinc*); *angst* (misery); *espinger* (ship’s boat); *fordrifast* (to exclude); *frygð* (sensuousness); *fyrirstanda* (to understand); *heimullig* (private); *hóf* (banquet) *junkeri* (young man); (?) *klódrepp* (blow with the hand)³⁶; *klókskapur* (cunningness); *krankur* (sick); *kukl* (sorcery, a Scandinavian back-formation from Middle Low German *kokeler* [*kökeler*], juggler, trickster); *kvitta* (to acquit); *kyndugskapur* (wiliness); *lista* (a streak, i.e., interpreting the smear from the soft-boiled egg as yet another decoration on Klárus’ richly ornamented garment < MLG *listen*, a strip of material forming a border); *lykt* (smell); *pláz* (place); *mekt* (pomp); *skari* (company); *skerfur* (penny); *spázéra* (to walk); *spégill* (mirror)³⁷; *spíza* (to provide); *stolz* (proud); *tyftunarmeistari* (task-master, cf. Modern German *Zuchtmeister*); *æra* (privilege); and *ævintýr* (matter, i.e., something written or reported < MLG *eventür* < OFr *aventure* [adventure]).³⁸ Some of these words were already

35. While Otto Höfler, *Altnordische Lehnwortstudien* (Lund: Håkon Ohlsson, 1931) has some information on Old Norse loans from Middle Low German, a great deal more is found in Christian Westergård-Nielsen, *Låneordene i det 16. århundredes trykte islandske litteratur*, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 6 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1946), although his corpus is restricted to Post-Reformation printed texts, and Veturlíði Óskarsson, *Middelalderens låneord i islandsk diplomsprog frem til år 1500*, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 43 (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2002).

36. This word occurs only in *Klári saga* and in the *exemplum*: “Af rómverska dáránun,” *Íslendzk æventýri* #83 line 51 (vol. 1, p. 241), a text attributed to Bishop Jón Jakobsen, *Studier i Clarus saga*, p. 98, considers it possible that Jón himself made up the word, but it is just as likely to be based on a slang form otherwise unrecorded.

37. The late fourteenth-century AM 657b 4to uses the indigenous word *gler* (a glass) instead of *spégill* (*Klári saga* [1907], p. 34).

38. At one point in the saga *ævintýr* it is used in the sense “chance,” a usage also found in Low German, see: Pekka Katara, *Das französische Lehngut in mittelniederdeutschen Denkmälern von 1300 bis 1500*, Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki 30 (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1966), pp. 24–5 under “aventür(e).” Old French *aventure* is frequently encountered in this meaning.

established in the Icelandic and the Norwegian of the time. Others are used here for the first and only time.³⁹ There also seems to be a significant overlap between the Low German derived vocabulary of *Klári saga* and that found in *Stjórn I* but the significance of this has been long disputed.⁴⁰ But if it can be agreed that the surviving version of *Stjórn I* was composed at Skálholt in the first half of the fourteenth century, then it would be possible to conclude that the Low German colored vocabulary of *Stjórn I* and *Klári saga* represent the fashionable Icelandic of the elite circles in the bishopric during this period which took as its model the Icelandic spoken by the Bishop.

As was mentioned earlier, Bishop Jón grew up in a Dominican monastery in Bergen and lived there for approximately two decades after his return from his studies in Paris and Bologna.⁴¹ This is sufficient to explain why his Icelandic is so colored with Middle Low German vocabulary since Bergen was a Hansa port and the Low German of the Hansa merchants a prestige language.⁴² Furthermore, in the case of Bishop Jón, since the possibility has been raised that he was bilingual in Icelandic and Norwegian before he came to Iceland, the Low German vocabulary he used was available for utilization in both languages, and so the question of whether or not they were borrowed first into

39. In the *Sagan af Klarusi keisarasynti*, ed. Bjarni Bjarnason (Reykjavík: Ísafold, 1884), a version of *Klári saga* taken from a later paper manuscript, much of this vocabulary has vanished or been replaced with more familiar Icelandic words.

40. The main points of view are summarized in Reidar Astås, *An Old Norse Biblical Compilation: Studies in Stjórn*, American University studies 7: Theology and Religion 109 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 9–11. Jakobsen, for example, proposed in *Studier i Clarus saga*, pp. 109–111, that Bishop Jón Halldórsson was the compiler of *Stjórn I*, a position rejected by Tveitane, *Den lærde stil*, pp. 26–34.

41. There are five documents dated between 1310–1320 from Bergen in which he is mentioned (*Íslendzk æventýri*, vol. 2, p. viii).

42. See Olav Brattgard, *Die mittelniederdeutsche Geschäftssprache des hansischen Kaufmanns zu Bergen*, 2 vols., Skrifter fra Norges Handelshøyskole i rekken språklige avhandlinger 2–3 (Bergen: John Grieg, 1945–46). The first volume gives a description of this language based on written materials from 1365–1535. Even though Hansa merchants had first legally established themselves in Bergen in 1186 and increased their presence in the following century (vol. 1, pp. 12–3), there are no documents in German surviving from this early period, but: “Bergen war im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert der Stapelplatz für den grössten Teil der norwegischen Westküste und für die Zinsländer Island, Shetland, Færøyaner und Orknøyaner” (vol. 1, p. 105). For a recent study which stresses the sociolinguistic aspects of the language contact (stressing also that Low German was itself a mix of dialects), see Agnete Nesse, *Språkkontakt mellom norsk og tysk in hansatidens Bergen*, Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi II: Hist.-Filos. Klasse Skrifter og avhandlinger 2 (Oslo: Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi, 2002).

Norwegian and then into Icelandic becomes moot—especially if he also had in addition a working knowledge of Hansa German. As Veturliði Óskarsson has demonstrated in *Middelnedertyske låneord i islandsk diplomsprog*, Low German vocabulary entered Icelandic much earlier and in much greater quantities than has generally been considered the case. While one such venue for this vocabulary was certainly through Norwegian language contact or from Norwegian speakers living in Iceland, more recognition needs to be given to the existence through the centuries of a not inconsiderable number of Icelanders who were fluent in Low German in their own right, and who adopted vocabulary directly from the manuscripts in Low German which circulated in Iceland as well as from books which entered the country after the beginning of printing in that language.⁴³

But Bishop Jón absorbed more than linguistic influences from Icelandic, Latin and Low German; he also absorbed from all three language traditions narrative elements, which he proceeded to reword in the striking and original way they appear in *Klári saga*.

Narrative structure

The redactor of *Klári saga* states that Bishop Jón “found [the story] in France written in Latin” verse. Finnur Jónsson says with respect to this:

Denne oplysning er vistnok rigtig. Her siges der intet om, at Jon selv skulde have nedskrevet den. Det er med den som med æventyrene; han har fortalt den, andre har så nedskrevet den.⁴⁴

⁴³ Marianne Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjabólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) has shown how numerous of the saints’ lives in the early sixteenth-century *Reykjabólarbók* have Middle Low German sources printed and otherwise. In MS Icel. 15 in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, written in the winter of 1822, Ólafur Sveinsson á Purkey (c. 1762–1845) writes that he had access to “þá gömlu Lybsku grasa bók” (1501), a Low German version of the “Smaller” or “German Ortus” attributed to Johannes de Cuba (fl. 1484–1503), *Dit is de genochlike garde der suntheit to latine Ortulus sanitatis, edder herbarius genömet: dar me ynne vindet alle arth, nature vð eghenschop & frudere, vnde der eddelen sten . . .* (Lübeck: Steffen Arndes, 1520). This copy used by Ólafur had been brought to Iceland by Magnús *prúði* Jónsson (c. 1525–91) when he returned to Iceland after his studies in Germany in the middle of the sixteenth century.

⁴⁴ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), pp. 96–7.

(This information is certainly correct. It does not say here that Jón himself is said to have written it down. It is the same with fairy-tales; he has narrated the story, but someone else has written it down.)

Most scholars appear to agree with this position. But Jan de Vries is having none of it. He rejects the saga's claim that it originated with Jón Halldórsson: "Die Bemerkung der Saga über die Autorschaft des Jón Halldórsson betrachte ich als reine Erfindung; nachdem er die *Ævintýri* nach Island gebracht hatte, konnte er ja leicht auch als Importeur anderer abenteuerlicher Geschichten ausgegeben werden." And further: "Es ist reine Phantasie, wenn Cedersciöld annimmt daß dieser Norweger in Paris das lateinische Gedicht übersetzt habe, und wenn er darauf eine Datierung um 1290 gründet."⁴⁵ Torfi H. Tulinius in the new Icelandic literary history straddles the fence by reporting the saga's opening sentence and speculating that the lost poem may have been one like Galterus de Castellione's *Alexandreis*, but then adding with respect to authorship: "en þó kann vera að þessi klausa sé einvörðungu ritklif, að sögumaðurinn vitni til frægra manna til að frásögn hans fái aukið vægi" (but on the other hand it may be that this clause is merely a topos, that the author makes reference to a famous person so that his narrative should gain by it increased importance.)⁴⁶

There seems no particular reason to doubt the claim that Jón Halldórsson is the author of *Klári saga*. But on the other hand there is no reason to believe that he based the story on a Latin poem found in France. France after all was the country which produced the best romances, a number of which had already been translated into Old Norse with great success. It is easy, for example, to find passages in which an author makes the claim that the work being presented is translated from French when all the available evidence suggests otherwise. The Middle High German *Ogier von Dänemark* is clearly translated from a Middle Dutch original.⁴⁷ Yet the text is replete with

45. Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964–67), p. 535.

46. Torfi H. Tulinius, "Kynjasögur úr fortíð og framandi löndum," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. 2, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), pp. 165–245 at p. 196.

47. Only fragments of the Dutch original survive. They have been edited by H. van Dijk, "Ogier van Denemarken: Diplomatische uitgave van de Middelnederlandse fragmenten . . .," *De Nieuwe taalgids* 67 (1974), pp. 177–202, and H. van Dijk and H. Kienhorst, "Ogier

phrases such as: “Uß dem welsche von wort zû wort” (From the French word for word) (line 19) and “Das ich uß welscher sprache / Dis bûch wolte in tútsch machen” (That I from the French language wished to translate this book into German) (lines 4215–16).⁴⁸ An even clearer set of examples is found in the Middle Dutch *Roman van Heinric en Margriete van Limborch*.⁴⁹ There is general agreement that the work is an original Dutch composition,⁵⁰ yet the poet insists in Book I, line 2542, and on numerous other occasions: “Dat Welsche sade, dar icht en las” (The French in which I read this said).⁵¹ Therefore Jón Halldórsson had every reason to claim that the story he was presenting originated in France. That the supposed poem from which the narrative was translated should be in Latin was also in keeping with his reputation as a Latin scholar. In fact elements of the story may have had their inspiration in Latin texts, but they were texts in prose, not in verse.

The opening chapter of the *Sögubáttur af Jóni biskupi* states: “En hverr man greina mega hverr hans góðvili var at gleðja næverandis menn við fáheyrðum dæmisögum er hann hafði tekit í útlöndum, bæði með lettrum ok eigin raun” (And everyone is able to determine what

van Denemarken, Nieuwe fragmenten,” *Wat Duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W. M. H. Hummelen* ed. G. R. W. Dibbets *et al.* (Wijhe: Quarto, 1989), pp. 3–24. The poem is dated to the fourteenth century (van Dijk, p. 180). For an edition of the Middle High German version which includes the Middle Dutch fragments, see: *Ogier von Dänemark nach der Heidelberger Handschrift CPG 363*, ed. Hilbert Weddige with Theo J. A. Broers and Hans van Dijk, *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* 83 (Berlin: Akademie, 2002). The colophon on the manuscript CPG 363 dates it 1479.

48. See similar sentiments in lines 1132, 4162–63, 6038, 6745, 9764, 9869–70, 11941, 12037, 12181, 12309, 13860–61, 13267, 14687, 17196, 19635, and 20095.

49. Examples are taken from the edition of MS Brussels, Koninklijke bibliotheek, No. 18231, dated first half of the fifteenth century, *Roman van Heinric en Margriete van Limborch: Uitgeven volgens het Brusselse Handschrift*, ed. Robertus Meesters, Two parts (Amsterdam: Stichting “Onze Oude Letteren,” 1951), pp. lvi–lvii. Meesters states “we moeten wel aannemen dat het werk ± 1300 geschreven is” (we can easily accept that the work is written around 1300”) (p. xvi). It is sometimes attributed to Hein van Aken, the translator into Middle Dutch of the *Roman de la rose*, pp. xli–xlii.

50. “Alle kenners . . . houden de *Limborch* voor oorspronkelijk, in die zin, dat ze de roman niet zien als de vertaling van een kant en klaar Frans voorbeeld en ook niet als de vrije bewerking van een Frans origineel” (“All scholars . . . consider the *Limborch* to be original in the sense that the romance is not seen as the translation of a ready-made French model, and also not as the free adaptation of a French original”) (*Roman van Heinric en Margriete van Limborch*, p. xli). This is based on the lack of a French *exemplum* and the fact that the subject matter is one that would neither interest nor benefit a French poet.

51. See also I: 1909, 2798; III: 1163; IV: 1461–62; V: 1706, 2014, 2166; VI: 266, 1435, 2085, 2589; VII: 1677; VIII: 1161, 1211.

kind his benevolence was to entertain people within hearing with rarely heard *exempla*⁵² which he had picked up in foreign countries both in written form and as the result of his own experience).⁵³ Numerous large collections of *exempla* were compiled in the Middle Ages both for entertainment and as aids for the clergy when composing their sermons, the *Disciplina clericis* of Petrus Alfonsi (1062–1110) and the *Gesta Romanorum* (c. 1300) being among the best known. A number of the *exempla* attributed to Bishop Jón have been preserved and edited in *Íslendzk æventýri*, several of them being translations of stories from the *Disciplina clericis*,⁵⁴ but exactly what role Jón Halldórsson may have had in the narratives collected in *Íslendzk æventýri* remains a matter of contention and the issues will not be rehearsed here. Bishop Jón was a Dominican and one of the largest collections of *exempla* was that collected by the Dominican Stephen of Bourbon (Stephanus de Borbone) (c. 1180–1261)⁵⁵ under the title *Tractatus de*

52. Medieval Latin *exemplum* means a moral anecdote. It was originally translated into Old Norse as *dæmisaga*, “fable,” “parable,” “a tale with a moral.” The loan-word *æventýr* / *æventýri* meant “tale,” “adventure” and later “(international-) fairy tale.” The fifteenth-century manuscripts containing the Icelandic *exempla* confuses the matter by only occasionally referring to them as *dæmisögur*, preferring instead *ævintýri*, a usage followed by modern scholars. On the other hand, in the copion to *Klári saga*, the narrator, presumably Bishop Jón, states that the saga has served as a “ljós dæmi” (clear example) of how women should behave (*Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 61).

53. *Biskupa sögur*, vol. 1, p. 445. The sentence continues: “ok til vitnis þar um harðla smátt ok lítit man setjaz í þenna bækling af því stóra efni, því at sumir menn á Íslandi samsettu hans frásagnir sér til gleði ok öðrum” (and as an example of this, some small and insignificant examples will be placed in this little treatise from that large body of material, because some people in Iceland gathered his narratives together both for their own entertainment and that of others).

54. In addition to the *exempla* collected in *Íslendzk æventýri* see those edited by Jonna Louis-Jensen, “Nogle Æventýri,” *Opuscula* 5, Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana 31 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1975), pp. 263–77, Peter A. Jorgensen, “Four Æventýri,” *Opuscula* 5 (1975), pp. 295–328, and Ólafur Halldórsson, “AM 240. fol. XV, tvinn úr handriti með ævintýrum,” *Gripla* 18 (2007): 23–46. *Exempla* translated from English into Icelandic are edited by Jorgensen, “Ten Icelandic Exempla and their Middle English Source,” *Opuscula* 4, Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana 30 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1970), pp. 177–207, and by Einar G. Pétursson, *Miðaldaævintýri þýdd úr ensku* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1976). They are discussed by Jorgensen in “The Icelandic Translations from Middle English,” *Studies for Einar Haugen*, ed. Evelyn Scherabon Firchow *et al.* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), pp. 305–20. A longer narrative from an English translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* is edited by Jorgensen as *The Story of Jonatas in Iceland* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1997).

55. Stephen is the inquisitor featured in Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Martin Thom, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

diversis materiis predicabilibus, designed as a compilation illustrating the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Only the sections on Fear, Piety, Knowledge, Fortitude and the beginning of Counsel were completed before Stephen died.⁵⁶ The *Tractatus* is a text that Bishop Jón could have encountered in Paris in particular, and at least one of the narratives in *Íslendzk æventýri* is translated from this work (although it is not identified in the manuscript as one of the *exempla* by Bishop Jón),⁵⁷ and perhaps additional examples will come to light when the complete edition is available. Bishop Jón's demonstrated fondness for *exempla* is important because *Klári saga* can be seen as the combination of *exempla* grafted on to an older narrative structure.

As is mentioned above, *Klári saga* is the earliest surviving bridal quest romance in Icelandic. There is no reason to suppose that it had any predecessors and a case can be made that the popularity of the genre in the subsequent Icelandic literary scene may owe a not inconsiderable debt to the authority that *Klári saga* gave to it. Claudia Bornholdt has demonstrated that the medieval bridal quest narrative is a specifically German phenomenon with its roots in Merovingian historical accounts,⁵⁸ and Bishop Jón was probably exposed to such stories during his time in Bergen. Even so, *Klári saga* is not a typical bridal-quest romance as it lacks many of the narrative elements characteristic of the genre. Its closest analogue is found in a passage in the Old English poem *Beowulf*. In determining the appropriateness of her own behavior, Hygd, the wife of Hygelac, “Mōd Þrȳðo wæg . . . firen’ ondrysne” (weighed the pride of Þrȳð . . . the terrible wickedness).⁵⁹

56. The first complete edition of the work is underway: Stephan de Borbone, *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus*, gen. ed. Jacques Berlioz, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis 124 (Turnout: Brepols, 2002-). So far volumes 1 and 3 have appeared.

57. “Af tveimr munkum,” *Íslendzk æventýri* #44 (1: 147–49).

58. Claudia Bornholdt, *Engaging Moments: The Origins of the Medieval Bridal-Quest Narrative*, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 46 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

59. *Beowulf: An Edition with Relevant Shorter Texts*, ed. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, rev. ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), lines 1931–2. The entire episode runs lines 1931–62. Much about this passage is disputed. Some editors deny *Þrȳð* is a proper noun, reading instead *mōdþrȳð*, a compound meaning “arrogance,” while others interpret the name of the queen as *Mōdþrȳð*. However, various traditions associated with the “cruel queens” in the family of the fourth-century king of the continental Angles, Offa, are relevant here. The founder of Offa’s line was married to a woman called Herminthruth who had the habit of killing her suitors, while in later narratives, Offa’s descendant, the eighth-century Offa of Mercia, was said to be married to a cruel woman called Drida. See R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge

Like Serena in *Klári saga*, Þrýð is not a *meykóngur* or maiden queen,⁶⁰ but a princess who lets no one look at her except her “sinfrea” (great-lord)⁶¹ on pain of death. The poet continues with sentiments that are also applicable to Serena:

Ne bið swylc cwēlic þēaw
 idese tō efanne, þēah ðe hīo ænlicu sý,
 þætte freoðuwebbe fēores onsæce
 æfter ligetorne lēofne mannan.⁶²

(Nor is suchlike a queenly custom for a woman to carry out even though she may be peerless, that a peace-weaver should deprive a dear man of life for an imagined insult.)

However, for reasons unexplained, Þrýð is given in marriage on her father’s counsel (“be fæder lāre,” line 1950) to Offa, king of the Continental Angles. After this happens, people begin to tell quite different stories about her. She now becomes a model queen, to her own credit and the greater glory of her husband. While only the

University Press, 1959), pp. 31–40. The connection of this episode with Tale Type 900, “King Thrushbeard,” was noted by Ernst Philippson, *Der Märchentypus von König Drosselbart*, FF Communications 50 (Greifswald: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1923), pp. 93–4, but not linked specifically to *Klári saga*, while Frederick Amory, “Things Greek and the Riddarasögur,” *Les Sagas de Chevaliers (Riddarasögur)*, ed. Régis Boyer, Civilizations 10 (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1985), pp. 417–30 at p. 422, and *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp. 509–23, at p. 517, links the story of Þrýð to the concept of the *meykóngur* in general (the form *meykönungur* is sometimes found in normalized texts but “this form is nonexistent in medieval or modern Icelandic” (Amory, “Things Greek,” *Speculum* 59 [1984], p. 517). See also Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*, pp. 36, 103.

60. While not a *meykóngur*, Serena has all the features of the type. See Shaun F. D. Hughes, “The Ideal of Kingship in the *Riddarasögur*,” *Michigan Academician* 10 (1978), pp. 321–36 at pp. 230–2; Marianne Kalinke, “The Misogamous Maiden Kings,” *Bridal-Quest*, pp. 66–108 (on *Klári saga*, pp. 66–8 and *passim*); Eric Wahlgren, *The Maiden King in Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1938); and Harald Müller, “Kampf der Geschlechter? Der Mädchenkönig im isländischen Märchensaga,” *Mann und Frau im Märchen*, ed. Harlinda Lox *et al.* (Kreuzlingen: Heinrich Hugendubel [Diederichs], 2002), pp. 62–79. Amory, “Things Greek and the *Riddarasögur*,” p. 422 and *Speculum* 59 (1984), p. 517, suggests the concept of the *meykóngur* may have its origins in the figure of “the Byzantine female autocrat.”

61. *Beowulf*, line 1934. While some editors interpret *sinfrea* to mean “husband,” it seems more appropriate that at this stage in the narrative it refer to Þrýð’s father.

62. *Beowulf*, lines 1940–3.

broad outlines of the story are sketched out in *Beowulf*, this is exactly the same plot structure that Bishop Jón uses for his saga. To flesh out the details he used narratives that have long been familiar to folklorists and are classified by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson as Tale Types 900 “King Thrushbeard” (corresponding to *Klári saga*, chapters 1–15) and 901 “Taming of the Shrew” under the heading “The Shrewish wife is Reformed” (now “The Obstinate Wife Learns to Obey”)⁶³ (corresponding to *Klári saga*, chapters 16–19), although the behavior of Serena in the second half of the saga in the face of the overweening cruelty of her husband is more reminiscent of Tale Type 887, “Griselda.”⁶⁴

Ernest Philippson in his study of Tale Type 900 identifies the Middle High German verse *Märe* (“folktale”), “Die halbe Birne,” attributed to Konrad von Würzburg (d. 1287),⁶⁵ as the earliest surviving version of the story while the next in chronological order is *Klári saga*.⁶⁶ Marianne Kalinke has recently investigated the breaches of table decorum which allow the women in “Die halbe Birne” and *Klári saga* to reject their (subsequently successful) suitors and relates these episodes to a body of literature in Middle High German and Latin

63. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, FF Communications 184 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1981), pp. 310–2. Now revised by Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols., FF Communications 284–86 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 523–7. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten*, FF Communications 83 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1929) classifies Icelandic folktales according to the Aarne-Thompson system.

64. Aarne-Thompson, *Types of the Folktale*, pp. 302–3; Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, vol. 1, pp. 521–2.

65. Konrad von Würzburg (attrib.), “Die halbe Birne,” *Novellistik des Mittelalters. Märendichtung*, ed. Klaus Grubmüller (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1996), pp. 178–207, 1083–101. For a convenient summary of the story see Helmut Birkhan, Karin Lichtblau, Christa Tuczay *et al.* for the Austrian Academy of Sciences, ed., *Motif-Index of German Secular Narratives from the Beginning to 1400*, 7 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005–06), vol. 4, p. 334.

66. Philippson, *Der Märchentypus von König Drosselbart*, pp. 3–5. See also *Klári saga*, pp. xvi–xvii; Johannes Bolte and Georg Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, rev. ed., ed. Ernst Schade, 5 vols. in 4 (1913–32, rpt. Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1992–94), no. 52; König Drosselbart, vol. 1, pp. 443–9. Outside of *Klári saga*, the tale type is found in Icelandic only in the folktale “Meykóngurinn,” collected from Guðriður Eyjólfsdóttir (c. 1811–78) from Ákvörn on Fljótshlíð, and written down in 1865 (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten*, p. 136) and published in Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, new ed., ed. Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 6 vols. (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfan Þjóðsaga, 1954–61), vol. 5, pp. 234–6.

which was concerned with improving the table manners of those in elite society.⁶⁷ Thus while Tale Type 900 is not found in the *exempla* collections analyzed by Frederic Tubach, a parallel may yet surface when a more thorough analysis of medieval *exempla* is completed, because the story has a sufficient moral dimension to have made it attractive to those who put such collections of stories together.⁶⁸ To the narrative of the princess who humiliates her suitors until she finds herself married, a narrative structure going back at least as far as *Beowulf*, as has already been suggested, Bishop Jón added elements that he is likely to have encountered in medieval German romances. For example, when Tiburcius, the emperor of Saxland, wants a tutor for his son Klárus, who had already mastered the seven liberal arts and was considered the most learned scholar in Europe, he learns of a superior *meistari* out in Arabia, named Pérús, and engages him to be the boy's tutor.⁶⁹ This figure of Pérús has much in common with the court magicians who are a feature of the medieval German romances.⁷⁰ Of particular interest is the magician Gansguoter in Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*, a sprawling Gawain-romance dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century.⁷¹ Gansguoter

67. Kalinke, "Table Decorum," pp. 60–5.

68. Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1981). For the limitations of this ground-breaking analysis of 5400 *exempla*, see Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, ed., *Les Exempla médiévaux: Introduction à la recherche, suivie des tables critiques de l'Index exemplorum de Frederic C. Tubach* (Carcassonne: Garae / Hesiode, 1992), while their volume *Les Exempla médiévaux: Nouvelles perspectives* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998) reports on the progress of "Le Groupe de Recherche sur les Exempla Médiévaux" headquartered in Paris in providing a more complete analysis.

69. The origin of the name is obscure, but it may be a variant of Porus, the king of India, who was one of the main opponents of Alexander the Great (and it is perhaps not irrelevant that in *Klári saga* the king of the French is named Alexander). See Galterus de Castellione, *Alexandreis: það er Alexanders saga*, book 9, pp. 158–76. *Klári saga* states that there are many adventures (*ævintýr*) told involving Pérús and, indeed, three (rather unremarkable) stories about him survive, *Íslendzk ævintýri* #81: "Af meistara Pero ok hans leikum" vol. 1, pp. 217–31. The third story is similar in outline to "De lo que contesçió a un Deán de Santiago cor Don Illán, el grand Maestro de Toledo" (What happened to a Dean of Santiago with Don Illán, the grand master of Toledo), *El conde Lucanor*, pp. 84–91. See footnote 80 below. See also Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, pp. 245–46, #3137.

70. On these magicians seem Stephan Maksymiuk, *The Court Magician in Medieval German Romance*, Mikrokosmos 44 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

71. For a detailed summary of the story, see Helmut Birkhan *et al.*, ed. *Motif-Index of German Secular Narratives*, vol. 1, pp. 120–207, while Niel Thomas, *Diu Crône and the Medieval Arthurian Cycle*, Arthurian Studies 50 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002) provides a useful introduction to the romance.

is very much an engineer, responsible for the design and construction of three remarkable castles which are full of mechanical tricks and wonders.⁷² Pérús also turns out to be an engineer and uses the entire resources of Saxland to build three magnificent land-tents or pavilions, each of which is drawn to land by a splendid mechanical creature. The creature chosen for the first pavilion is a brown bear, a totemic animal in the northern regions, while the creature chosen for the second pavilion is a lion, a totemic animal in the southern regions. The creature chosen for the third pavilion is called a *gammur*, which has been translated as “vulture,”⁷³ although to have a vulture for the third and most magnificent pavilion is hardly appropriate. However, it has been pointed out that *gammur* can also refer to an entirely apposite creature, the griffin, with its head and wings of an eagle and body of a lion.⁷⁴ As an heraldic figure, the griffin here may be meant to signify the imperial rank of the disguised Klárus.⁷⁵ While these creatures Pérús has constructed are not strictly automata (in that they require human muscle-power to work them), the three animals have

72. Christine Zach, *Die Erzählmotive der Crône Heinrichs von dem Türlin und ihre altfranzösischen Quellen*, Passauer Schriften zu Sprache und Literatur 5 (Passau: Wissenschaftsverlag Richard Rothe, 1990), pp. 130–9, examines the sources for these mechanical devices and constructions, but there is nothing in *Diu Crône* at all like the mechanical marvels in *Klári saga*. Marianne Kalinke also draws attention to a mechanical ship in the early thirteenth-century *Moriz van Craon* (Helmut Birkhan *et al.*, ed., *Motif-Index of German Secular Narratives*, vol. 4, pp. 326–9), but that is built by the hero himself not by a court attendant (“Table Decorum,” p. 69).

73. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Viktors saga ok Blávus: Sources and Characteristics,” in *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Riddarasögur 2* (Reykjavík: Handritastofnun, 1964), pp. cix–ccx at p. xciv.

74. John Bernström, “Gamar,” *Kulturbistorisk Lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, vol. 5, cols. 169–70.

75. The three animals may also have Christian symbolism: the bear who licks its cubs into shape as the symbol of Christianity “which reforms and regenerates heathen peoples (George Ferguson, *signs and Symbols in Christian Art* [1959, rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966], p. 12); the lion is the symbol of the evangelist Mark who “proclaims with great emphasis the royal dignity of Christ” (Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols*, p. 21); the Griffin in its positive aspect represents Christ (Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols*, p. 20). Thus Klárus disguised as Eskelvarð, son of the king of Bláland (Ethiopia, or Africa in general) and ostensibly a pagan, thereby symbolically affirms his Christian faith. In Johannes von Würzburg’s *Willhelm von Österreich* written in 1314, there is a sorceress, Parklise, who rides around on a griffin and who advises the hero Wilhlem how to deal with the wicked magician Merlin who has defended himself with two fire-spewing iron dragons. The romance also features other mechanical creatures as well as a magnificent pavilion which shares some superficial features with those constructed by Pérús (for a detailed summary see Helmut Birkhan *et al.*, ed. *Motif-Index of German Secular Narratives*, vol. 3, pp. 87–101).

much in common with the mechanical marvels that feature frequently in medieval romances.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the creatures in *Klári saga* have no precise literary models, and it is possible that Bishop Jón may have got the idea for them from one of the elaborate festivals or processions with their mechanical figures whose movements were a source of delight to the crowds of onlookers that he might have encountered in Paris or Bologna.⁷⁷ It is also from these urban experiences that he would have been exposed to the world of elegant clothing and costly fabrics, something in which he must have taken an interest, as the saga is remarkable for the extensive and detailed vocabulary relating to this topic.

It has also been observed that *Klári saga* is a version of the “Taming of the Shrew” story.⁷⁸ This is apparently based on the latter part of the story where Serena and the ugly churl whom she believes to be her husband travel from Frakkland to Saxland and during which time Serena is bullied and humiliated, a situation bearing some very superficial resemblance to Act 4, scene 6 of Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. The play has no printed source and Jan Brunvand concludes that Shakespeare composed it out of folklore elements with which he was familiar.⁷⁹ The oldest surviving version of the story is found in the Spanish collection of *exempla*, *El Conde Lucanor* (Count Lucanor) compiled by Juan Manuel (1282–1348), regent of Castille 1321–1325, and founder of the Dominican convent at Peñafiel.⁸⁰ But there is little

76. For details see: Rosemary Ascherl, “The Technology of Chivalry in Reality and Romance,” *The Study of Chivalry: Resources and Approaches*, ed. Howard Chickering and Thomas H. Seiler (Kalamazoo: Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages and Medieval Institute Publications, 1988), pp. 263–311, and the articles in Klaus Grubmüller and Markus Stock, ed., *Automaten in Kunst und Literatur des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

77. Such processions at the height of their magnificence are described in Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore, rev. and ed. Irene Gordon (New York: Mentor / New American Library, 1961), pp. 283–301.

78. See *Clári saga*, p. xvi.

79. Jan Harold Brunvand, “The Folktale Origin of *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17 (1966), pp. 345–59 at p. 357. See also his extensive survey of Tale Type 901, “The Taming of the Shrew: A Comparative Study of Oral and Literary Versions” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1961). In Iceland, Tale type 901 is only recorded in an uncollected tale from Vestur Skaftafellssýsla, “Þið hafið ekki borið söðulinn eins og ég” (You’ve not worn a saddle as I have), told by Vilborg Einarsdóttir, the mother of Einar Ól. Sveinsson (*Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten*, p. 137).

80. “Se lo que contesció a un mançebo que casó con una muger muy fuerte et muy brava” (What happened to a young man who married a fierce and truculent woman),

if any connection between Tale Type 901 and chapters 16–19 of *Klári saga*, because at this point in the saga Serena is no longer a “shrew.” She is totally obedient and humble no matter what outrage the churl visits upon her, and there is no indication at all of her having to be “tamed” as in the other variants of the story. Rather, she has more in common with the extraordinarily patient wife found in Tale Type 887, “Griselda,” a tale medieval in origin, being first recorded in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1352), day 10, tale 10. While the narrative details of the “Griselda” tale (which is well known in Iceland, although all surviving versions belong to the early modern period)⁸¹ differ from those in *Klári saga*, in both versions the patience of the wife remains constant and unwavering. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*⁸² put a version of the Griselda story in the mouth of the Clerk (“scholar”) from Oxford. The episode is introduced with the host commenting on the Clerk’s silence thus far during the pilgrimage as if he were studying a sophism, that is, a fallacious argument. He then asks the Clerk to tell a tale unadorned by the colors of rhetoric. The tale the Clerk tells may well be based on a sophism, namely the so-called fallacy “wives are patient,” and this certainly appears to be the surface reading of the story to judge by the comments in the Clerk’s envoi to his tale.⁸³ But it is also possible that the Clerk is denying the moral consequences of his own tale and this interpretation has proven attractive to modern audiences. However, there is no such interpretive leeway in *Klári saga*, as the epilogue to the saga makes abundantly clear.

Juan Manuel, *El Conde Lucanor: A Collection of Medieval Spanish Stories*, ed. and trans. John England (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1987), pp. 216–23. See also Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 333, #4354.

81. The principal texts have been studied in detail and published by Halldór Hermannsson in *The Story of Griselda in Iceland*, *Islandica* 7 (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 1914).

82. See W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, ed. *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales* (1914, rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1958), pp. 288–331, and Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, ed. *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002–05), vol. 1, pp. 101–67, both of which contain the Latin text of Petrarch’s version of the tale and its French translation which Chaucer drew on to write the “Clerk’s Tale.” See also Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 188, #2383, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten*, pp. 132–3.

83. “The Clerk’s Tale” has proven distasteful to modern audiences, and scholars have long debated over how to read it. See the discussion in Helen Cooper, “The Clerk’s Tale,” *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 185–201 at pp. 193–200.

En hún [Serena] þoldi allan þenna tíma angist og armæðu fyrir ekki vætta utan fyrir sig sína einlega dyggð og einfaldleik . . . Og þetta allt lagði hún að baki sér og þar með föður, frændur og vini og allan heimsins metnað, upp takandi viljanlegt fátækt með þessum hinum herfilegan stafkarli, gefandi svo á sér ljós dæmi hversu öðrum góðum konum byrjar að halda dyggð við sína eiginbændur eða unnasta. Fór það og eftir verðugu að síðustu, að hún fékk það, er hún var makleg fyrir sína fáheyrða staðfestu, að . . . varð hún yfirdrottning alls Saxlands . . .⁸⁴

(But she [Serena] endured all the time the misery and distress for no other reason than her singular probity and simplicity . . . And absolutely everything she put behind her, including father, kin and friends and all the world's honor, taking up poverty willingly with this miserable beggar, giving so by her behavior a clear example, how it befits other good women to maintain their probity with their husbands or betrothed ones. That also turned out in due course as it was deserved, that she received that which was fitting for her because of her unheard of steadfastness, that . . . she became sovereign queen of all Saxland . . .

It is clear from the epilogue to *Klári saga*, that Bishop Jón is using the romance genre as an elaborate *exemplum* to promote his uncompromising views on the responsible behaviors of wives towards their husbands.⁸⁵ Tale Type 887, however, is not one about which an audience remains neutral. Marianne Kalinke points out that although later authors quickly followed *Klári saga* with their own versions of bridal quest romances, they “chose to ignore a most important part of *Clári saga*, its exemplary character, residing in its Christian view of marriage.”⁸⁶ A modern audience can “rescue” the “Clerk’s Tale” by “reading it against the grain” to give it a meaning more in line

84. *Riddarasögur*, vol. 5, p. 61.

85. When the Jesuits came to New France in the early seventeenth century to convert the Native Americans, their comments in the “Jesuit Relations” reveal their attitudes to women and their place in society and marriage are very close to the views espoused by Bishop Jón at the conclusion of *Klári saga*. See Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1991), esp. pp. 67–100. It is possible that the missionaries were able to enforce a stricter morality among the Huron and Montagnais than they would have been allowed to get away with in France.

86. Kalinke, “Table Decorum,” p. 71.

with contemporary sensibilities. Not having such an option available, imitators of *Klári saga* just omitted this aspect of their source while those who copied the saga down through the centuries appear also to have considered this aspect of the saga expendable.⁸⁷

Conclusions

Klári saga was composed by Bishop Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt, who grew up in the Dominican house in Bergen and whose mother and possibly father were Icelandic. He studied in Dominican run universities on the continent, and there he became familiar with a rich *exempla* tradition, in the promoting and disseminating of which the Dominicans played a prominent role. Examples of this tradition he brought back with him to Norway and later on to Iceland. The opening statement of *Klári saga*, which claims that it is based on a Latin poem encountered in France, is a modesty topos: Latin is the prestige language, and France is the home of the romance. The idiomatic nature of the Icelandic suggests that it was composed after Bishop Jón had been some time in that country. After 1320 is as good a guess as any. The strong influence from Middle Low German in the language of the saga as well as numerous narrative elements that are indebted to medieval German romances reflect the time Bishop Jón lived in the Hansa port of Bergen.⁸⁸ Like Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crone*, *Klári saga* is a pastiche of romance and fairy tale, elements effectively woven together by a skilled story teller. There is no single source for the saga, rather the author has adapted *exempla* to a bridal quest narrative framework very similar to the one sketched out in the Þrýð episode in *Beowulf*.

If these conclusions are accepted, then the saga can no longer be considered as a translated romance, but should rightfully take its place among the Icelandic *riddarasögur* to whose development it has so significantly contributed.

87. In the nineteenth-century *Sagan af Klarusi keisarasynti*, the explanations and moralizing at the end of Bishop Jón's version of the text are reduced to: "Síðan er frú Serína upp hafin í drottingar sæti, hafandi dýrð og heiður með Klarusi Keisarasynti" (Afterwards Lady Serína is raised up to the queen's throne, having glory and honor with Klarus the Emperor's son) (28).

88. The role of Bergen and the Hansa in the dissemination of Medieval German literature in Scandinavia is the focus of the articles in Susanne Kramarz-Bein, *Hansische Literaturbeziehungen*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 14 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996).

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