

“The Best Medicine in the Bitterest of Herbs”:

An Eighteenth-Century Moral Tale

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1. Introduction

The Icelandic clergyman and poet Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín (1749–1835), known chiefly in his day as a hymnist, was also the author of ten original prose romances (*lygisögur*) and translations or adaptations of a number of other works in prose, principally products of the European Enlightenment, an area in which he appears to have taken a great interest and been reasonably well read for his time.¹ On the last leaves of the manuscript Lbs 893 8vo, one of a number of miscellanies in his hand, there is a list headed “Historiur Lesnar” (stories read), covering the years 1792 and 1793. Alongside works by the Danish authors Johan Herman Wessel (1742–1785) and Peter Frederik Suhm (1728–1798), *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding (1707–1754), and the *Novelas ejemplares* of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616)—the latter two both read in Danish translation—there is reference to a work called “Lucian og Gedula.” A *Saga af Lucian og Gedulu* is also listed among the works Jón is said to have translated (“útlagt,” which can also mean “interpreted”) in two unpublished nineteenth-century registers of Icelandic writers, one by Hallgrímur Jónsson djákni (1780–1836), the other by Einar Bjarnason á Mælifelli (1782–1856); the former, writing in 1822, claims to have got this information from Jón himself

1. I discuss Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín’s life and work at length in *The Unwashed Children of Eve: The Production, Dissemination and Reception of Popular Literature in Post-Reformation Iceland* (London: Hisarlik Press, 1997), especially chapter III, “A parson’s pleasure,” pp. 75–132.

(“eptir hans egin mèt sendri skírslu”), so there seems every reason to accept the attribution.

Texts of a *Saga af Lucian og Gedulu* survive in three manuscripts, the earliest of which, Lbs 638 8vo, is Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín’s autograph. The other two manuscripts, Lbs 3021 4to and Lbs 3162 4to,² are younger than 638, from 1877 and ca. 1900 respectively, and the texts they preserve of the saga are demonstrably derived from it.

In terms of its style and vocabulary, the *Saga af Lucian og Gedulu* is not unlike Jón’s other translations, for example *Sagan af Zadig*, which derives from the earlier of two translations into Danish of Voltaire’s philosophical novel *Zadig ou la Destinée*, which Jón appears to have translated some time in the 1790s, or about the same time as he read the original *Lucian og Gedula*.³

Lbs 638 is a miscellany, containing, among other things, three sets of Jón’s own *rímur* (*Rímur af Sigurði fót og Ásmundi Húnakóngi*, *Rímur af Hreiðari heimska*, and *Fiskimannsríma*), several short texts predominantly on cities of the ancient world (Troy, Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, Tyre, Sidon, and Rome), several short texts on heroic personages (Karlagnús, Olgeir danski, Skanderbeg, Piðrik af Bern, Belisarius), Jón’s poem *Prastarkviða*, composed in 1809, and the poem *Heimsósómi* by sr. Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–1674). Also in the manuscript, immediately following *Lucian og Gedula*, we find one of the two surviving texts of Jón’s *Sagan af Thómas Jones* (mentioned, as was said, in the list of “Historiur Lesnar” for 1792–93 and also listed among Jón’s translations in the registers by Hallgrímur djákni and Einar á Mælifelli), a précis, only some 10,000 words, of Fielding’s novel, derived from Hans Jørgen Birch’s Danish translation *Tom Jones Historie eller Hittebarnet* from 1781.⁴

2. Lbs 3021 4to was written by Grímólfur Ólafsson, who is normally associated with the farms Hrísar and Mávahlíð in Neshreppur on Snæfellsnes; *Lucian og Gedula* is the second of six items, the others being *Starkaðs saga gamla*, *Clarus saga*, *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, *Bergbúaþáttur* and *Hinriks saga góðgjarna*, and was completed, according to the colophon, on 29 January 1877. Lbs 3162 4to was written around 1900 by sr. Ólafur Ólafsson (1851–1907) í Saurbæjarþingum; *Lucian og Gedula* is the third of six items, the others being *Flóres saga og Blankiflúr*, *Virgilius saga galdramanns*, *Appolónius saga kóngs af Tyrus*, *Cyrus saga Persakóns* and *Adonius saga*.

3. On Jón’s translation of *Zadig* see *Fjórar sögur frá hendi Jóns Oddssonar Hjaltalín* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2006), pp. xxx–xxxv.

4. See Driscoll, *The Unwashed Children*, pp. 100, 116–7, 121–4, 127–8.

Jón’s *Rímur af Hreiðari heimiska*, based on the *þáttur* of the same name,⁵ were composed, according to the penultimate verse, in “átíán hundrud seýtián” (1817), providing us with a *terminus post quem* for the manuscript as a whole. Assuming that the text of *Saga af Lucian og Gedulu* is indeed by Jón—and there seems no reason not to—the *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript would be 1822, the year in which Hallgrímur djákni lists the saga as among the works Jón himself says he has translated. This agrees with Páll Eggert Ólason’s dating of it to “ca. 1820.”⁶

A fourth manuscript, JS 631 4to, contains a text entitled “Historia af þeim fræga Lucian og Gedula” written in an unknown hand in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.⁷ Although the basic storyline is the same as in Jón Hjaltalín’s *Saga af Lucian og Gedulu*, there are a great many differences, some quite substantial. In addition, the wording of the two texts is quite different—so much so, in fact, that it does not seem possible that there can be any direct connection between them. The following, taken from the beginning of the story, should suffice to show the extent of the differences between the two texts:

J Flæmingia landi var herramadr nockr ad nafni Prísillanus. Kongvadr⁸ var hann, og átti döttr eýna barna er Gedula hét. Hún var yfrid frýd og ad öllu vel mentud þvý sem fólki af adli þikir sér somi ad nema og æfa. Prísillanus var madr miög rýkr. Átti hann storann herragard og svo mikid jardagóts þar ad auki ad 1200 bændr voru hans landsetar. Hann var madr stoltr og ágiarn og áleit fólk af borgara standi so sem dupt fóta sinna, er eý væri samhæft ad nefnast undir eins og fólk af adli. Prísillanus unni mikid döttr sinni. Hafdi

5. In Björn Sigfússon, ed., *Ljósvetninga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 10 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1940), pp. 245–60; there is one other manuscript of the *rímur*, also an autograph, Lbs 248 8vo, from 1826.

6. Páll Eggert Ólason et al., ed., *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, 3 vols. and supplements 1–4 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg and Félagsprentsmiðjan, 1918–37), vol. 3, p. 124.

7. JS 631 4to is vol. 9 of a 19-volume collection (JS 623–641 4to) of romances of various kinds, written in different hands at different times from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Also in this volume are texts of *Trójumannasaga*, *Mágus saga jarls* and *Blómsturvalla saga*.

8. This is the form, rather than *kvongaðr*, which is normally used by Jón Hjaltalín, so I have decided to let it stand.

hann látid smýða henni lýtinn vagn til að aka ý daglega. Lýka hafði hann tekið heim á sinn herra-garð einn bónda son af gótsi sýnu til að draga vagn hennar og vera henni til skémtunar. Hiet þessi dreingr Lucian. Hann var frýdr ásýndum, fljótr, snar og eýnardlegr, og svo Gedula hefði sem mest gaman af dreingnum hafði faðir hennar látid klæða hann sem húsara, og ý þessum búningi dró hann vagn hennar dagliga, og nefndi hun hann jafnann húsara sinn. (Lbs 638 8vo, ff. 77v-78r)

(In Flanders there lived a certain gentleman named Pricillanus. He was married and had only one child, a daughter, whose name is Gedula. She was very beautiful and well accomplished in the things which the nobility view as being of importance. Pricillanus was a very wealthy man and had a large manor and so much land in addition that 1200 farmers were his tenants. He was a very proud and avaricious man and regarded common people as like the dust of his feet and unworthy of mention in the same breath as the nobility. Pricillanus was very fond of his daughter and had made for her a little cart in which to drive around. He had also taken the son of one of the tenants on his estate and had him pull his daughter's cart and amuse her. This boy's name was Lucian. He was handsome, quick and faithful, and so that Gedula would get the most enjoyment out of him her father had the boy dressed as a hussar, and in this uniform he pulled her about every day in her cart and she always referred to him as her hussar.)

J Flandern biuggu ein luckuleg ektahión sem voru af adle og sem áttu öll þaug jardnesk audæfe sem nokkr manneskia kunne ser að æskia. Þaug áttu fyrer utan 2 storgarda einn ótrúannlegann rikdom af peningum gulle og gérsemum, og til allra þessara storu audæfa attu þaug einn einasta erfinga, nefnelega eina dóttur fryda. Þeirra dóttur var 6 ára enn einn hussmans sonur þar a þeirra gardi var tilsettur að keira með þessa dotter i litlum vagne um kring stadenn. Fröjkenenn het Gedula enn dreingurenn, sem henne til glede var klæddur sem husare, het Lucian. Gedula var miög fagurt barn synumm so með öllum rette matte um hana seigia að hun være nattu-runnar furduverk. Lucian var ogso fagur asindum og þar hann hafde sifelt frá sinu 8da aldurs are vered a þessum herragarde þa

fastheldur eckert almugalegt i fare /:fase:/ hans. Han hafde fagurlega krullad hár, lifleg augu og höfðinglegt yfirbragd. Hann æfer sig so i ad skrifa og reikna ad hann i biriun sins 14da aldurs ars kunne hvorutveggia ágæta vel. (JS 631 4to, f. 147r)

(In Flanders there lived a fortunate couple who were of the nobility and had all the worldly wealth any person could want. They possessed, in addition to two large manor houses, an unbelievable fortune in money, gold, and jewels, and to all this great wealth they had only one heir, namely a lovely daughter. Their daughter was six years old, and the son of one of the smallholders on their estate was set to pull her about the place in a small cart. The girl was named Gedula and the boy, who for her amusement was dressed as a hussar, Lucian. Gedula was a very beautiful child, so that it might rightly be said of her that she was a marvel of nature. Lucian was also very handsome, and as he had been at the manor continuously from the time he was eight years old there remained nothing of the peasant in his demeanor. He had beautiful curly hair, lively eyes, and a noble appearance. He worked so hard at writing and sums that by the start of his fourteenth year he was quite accomplished in both.)

Although essentially the same information is given in both, the actual wording, and in some ways also the focus, is quite different, suggesting that the two Icelandic texts represent independent translations or adaptations of the same original work—but of what work?

Jón Hjaltalín’s other translations are all from Danish—the only foreign language, apart from Latin, with which he appears to have been familiar—so the common source of these two texts is most likely also to have been in that language, although whether it was an original Danish work or a work translated into Danish from some other language, German or Dutch, for example, is difficult to say. The vocabulary and syntax of the two texts also reveal considerable influence from Danish, about which more will be said below.

The original is clearly not a work of any great antiquity. The story is set in Flanders at a time when there is a war, according to Jón’s text, “milli franskra og keisarans ý Þýskalandi” (between the French and the Kaiser in Germany). If this is meant to refer to an actual historical period (no specific dates or events are mentioned in either text) it is

presumably either the Thirty Years War (1618–48) or the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), when the southern Netherlands, under Spanish rule until 1713, were administered by Austria. Some of the ideas expressed in the story, in particular its criticism of the assumptions about human nature which underlay aristocratic rule, were scarcely current much before the middle of the eighteenth century, so we are probably looking for a work, perhaps original, perhaps translated, published in Danish sometime between about mid-century and 1793, the year in which Jón says he read the story, a period of at most some forty-five years. In terms of length it is most likely to have been a novella, probably not more than 20,000 words, rather than a full-length novel. Jón's text, like his *Sagan af Thómas Jones*, is clearly a précis, only some 5,700 words; the text of JS 631 is considerably longer—about two and a half times longer, in fact—but still shows signs of having been abridged in places.

Despite many hours spent perusing collections of late eighteenth-century *moralske fortællinger*—and there are many such⁹—and checking short-title catalogues and the like (and in recent years also the Internet), I have not been able to discover the source for these texts. I hasten to add that I am not necessarily saying that the source does not exist, only that, if it does, I have as yet not been able to find it. The present article may, I hope, help to lead me to it.

2. Plot

The plot of the story of Lucian and Gedula, common to both versions, is as follows:

A wealthy Flemish nobleman named Pri(s)cillanus and his wife have a daughter named Gedula. As a child she is attended by the son of one of the tenants on the estate, a handsome and intelligent boy named Lucian. He dresses in the uniform of a hussar and pulls her about the estate in a small cart.

One day, when Lucian is 14 and Gedula about 7, a count/marquis who is visiting Pri(s)cillanus is so impressed by Lucian's manner that

9. See Chr. V. Bruun and Lauritz Nielsen, ed. *Bibliotheca Danica: Systematisk fortegnelse over den danske litteratur fra 1482 til 1830*, 5 vols (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1961–63), vol. 4, cols. 435–40.

he asks if he can take the boy with him and make something of him in the military, even offering to pay for him. Pri(s)cillanus is, or pretends to be, reluctant to part with the boy, but eventually agrees. Lucian, for his part, declares himself keen to follow the count/marquis, but Gedula is greatly upset at the loss of her “hussar.” The count/marquis takes a golden ring set with diamonds from his finger and gives it to Lucian, telling him to present it to Gedula and to tell her that he will first visit her, then ask for her hand, and finally marry her as he advances in rank, a prospect with which Gedula’s parents are far from pleased.

In the years that follow, Gedula often wonders what has become of her “hussar,” only to be told by her parents that she should forget about him, since he is not of their station. Gedula questions why it is that the nobility should be regarded as so much better than other folk, but is told to keep silent. Nevertheless, she thinks she knows what the truth of the matter is.

One day a letter arrives from Lucian. At first Pri(s)cillanus refuses to tell Gedula what it says, but eventually he reads the letter out. In it Lucian says that he has had much success in the military and has already advanced significantly in rank; furthermore he hopes to visit them soon and looks in particular forward to giving Gedula a chance to see her “hussar” again. Pri(s)cillanus and his wife are deeply distressed by this news and decide to put Gedula, very much against her will, into a nearby cloister governed by a very strict abbess/prioress. Initially deeply unhappy there, Gedula is befriended by a young noblewoman named Gyron(n)e, who is also there because she is involved with an officer in the army—called Friðrik in Jón’s text and Evfranor in JS 631—of whom her mother does not approve. The two women become inseparable and agree to help each other however they can to get to see the men they love.

At this point the two texts diverge somewhat. In Jón’s text it says merely that Lucian writes again to Pri(s)cillanus saying that the count/marquis has died, peace has been established, and that he has advanced even further and now achieved the rank of major and will soon call on them. When he does he is poorly received and not told anything about Gedula’s whereabouts. In JS 631 there are several more letters, principally between Evfranor and Gyronne, and a great deal of dialogue, principally between the two women, reporting and commenting on the events outside.

One day two officers arrive at the cloister, one of whom Gyron(n)e recognizes as her fiancé. She asks if the other might be Lucian but is told that it is Captain of Horse Tontrú, Lucian's close friend, Lucian himself being too ill to visit. Gedula, for her part, says that she would not be able to recognize Lucian, not having seen him in so many years. The two men dine with the abbess/prioress, who, having been alerted by Pri(s)cillanus, makes enquiries about Lucian and asks that they not bring him with them on their future visits to the cloister or make it known to him that Gedula is there, to which they agree. While there, the officers are allowed to stroll through the grounds with the young women, and in the weeks that follow the men return repeatedly, dining with the abbess and walking with the young women. During these visits Tontrú's principal topic of conversation is his friend Lucian, in particular the great love he bears for Gedula, which he hopes is reciprocated. At the same time he indicates repeatedly that he wishes he were in Lucian's position, while Gedula, who is not unattracted to Tontrú, finds this wooing by proxy initially confusing and later irritating. One day she receives a package containing a beautiful picture in a golden frame set with jewels which she is told depicts Lucian but, she and Gyronne agree, in fact looks remarkably like Tontrú. The next time the men visit, Gedula asks Tontrú how it can be that he has sent her a picture which is supposedly that of his friend and yet resembles him so completely; is he, she wants to know, Major Lucian, who has under an assumed identity sneaked into the cloister? If this were the case, she says, it would diminish greatly the respect which she would otherwise have for such a famous hero. He replies that he is Master of Horse Tontrú and the image that of Lucian. Even if things were as she suggests, he says, he would hope that Lucian would be forgiven, as his actions would be the result of his great love. Gedula is greatly angered by this and refuses to speak further to any of them. She eventually overcomes her anger, however, and learns that Tontrú and Lucian are indeed one and the same; on their next meeting the two swear their undying love for each other.

Here the two texts again differ somewhat. In JS 631 it is decided that Lucian should continue to pose as Tontrú, and as such he and Gedula are able to secure her parents' permission to wed. Rumors that Tontrú is in fact Lucian reach Pri(s)cillanus's ears, however, and he rushes to the cloister to confront her. It does not help matters that

Lucian is there, without the knowledge of the prioress. Pri(s)cillanus breaks off the engagement and declares that the two may never see each other again. Soon after it emerges that Gedula is pregnant, for which she is expelled from the cloister and brought back to her father’s manor in shame. These two incidents are conflated in Jón’s text, where Pri(s)cillanus, who has no knowledge of Tontrú, rushes to the cloister upon hearing from the abbess of Gedula’s pregnancy.

Gedula is put in a dungeon where she languishes until it is time for her to give birth, attended by an old woman. In the text of JS 631 the old woman herself takes pity on Gedula and asks to be allowed to help her, against the will of Gedula’s mother, whereas in Jón’s text she is merely set to it by the parents. The birth is difficult and the old woman declares that the child is stillborn. Gedula says that she is lying and, taking the child by the feet, dashes its head against the wall, smashing the skull. She then tells the old woman to take the dead child to her parents and tell them that she has killed it. The old woman does so, relating everything that has happened and swearing that the child was already dead. Gedula’s parents refuse to believe her and demand that Gedula be punished for her crime.

From this point on there is a great difference between the two versions. In Jón’s text an assembly is called at which Gedula is accused of the murder of her child. She is allowed no defense, we are told, nor would she have accepted any. She is found guilty and sentenced to death. Lucian, meanwhile, has vanished entirely from sight since Gedula’s expulsion from the cloister, for which he is greatly criticized.

Three days later Gedula is driven to the place of execution, where the executioner stands ready. Just then fifty armed men arrive, lead by the Kaiser’s herald, clutching a writ in one hand. He proclaims in a loud voice that Lucian is to be promoted to general and is to marry Gedula, while Pri(s)cillanus is to pay a fine; he must moreover accept Lucian as his son-in-law and hand over to him full control of all his estates. In addition, Friðrik is to be promoted to major and may marry Gyron(n)e (assuming the approval of her mother can be secured). At that moment Lucian and Friðrik arrive in a coach drawn by six white horses. Gedula is led into the coach, where a joyful reunion with her beloved takes place. Gedula asks to be taken to the cloister where she and Gyron(n)e are joyfully reunited and agree to forgive the abbess.

Lucian and the rest go to Pri(s)cillanus's manor. They are received with scorn, but upon hearing the Kaiser's decree Pri(s)cillanus becomes frightened and agrees to do whatever they say. He and Lucian are reconciled. The following morning Pri(s)cillanus goes to the cloister to see his daughter. Gedula is not at all keen to see him and it takes the others a long time to persuade her. Finally she agrees to forgive him, since he and Lucian have settled their differences. After this there is much joy and celebration.

In the other version, Gedula, having pleaded guilty to the murder of her baby, is initially condemned to death by the jury. The judges are in doubt, however, and the matter is referred to the University. Lucian, meanwhile, sends Evfranor with letters to various people in the court to make sure that his plea is heard by the government. On the day Gedula is to be executed Lucian goes before the authorities and declares that he is equally guilty and should also be punished; he argues his case with great determination and passion, asking not for mercy but for justice. The jury, judges, and other authorities, upon hearing of Pri(s)cillanus's gross mistreatment of Lucian, overthrow their earlier decision; at the same time there comes both an answer from the University in Gedula's favor, and a decree from the government stating that Lucian and Gedula are to be allowed to marry, that Pri(s)cillanus should pay a fine and must accept Lucian as his son-in-law, and that Lucian is to be promoted to *Oberst*. Gedula, who is still imprisoned in her father's dungeon and knows nothing of this, is greatly surprised when the assembled company arrives and tells her what has happened. A celebration follows, after which they all make their way to the cloister, where Gedula is reunited with Gyron(n)e, Pri(s)cillanus informs the prioress that he is fully reconciled with his son-in-law to be, and so on.

It is thought fitting that Gedula and Gyron(n)e should hold their weddings at the same time and there in the cloister, where together they have experienced so much joy and sorrow. In the version preserved in JS 631 there is nothing to stop this from happening, as Evfranor has already gained the consent of Gyron(n)e's mother, who conveniently arrives at the cloister at that moment. In Jón's version, however, this remains to be done, and Lucian offers to accompany Friðrik to seek Gyron(n)e's mother's approval for the wedding.

They leave the following day, taking four retainers with them. Their route takes them through a thick forest, where they are attacked by highwaymen. They are able to kill or rout them but are wounded in the exchange. When they reach the estate of Gyron’s mother she receives them well but becomes alarmed when she sees the blood on their clothing. They tell her what has happened and she praises their courage and thanks them for their great deed. Lucian asks for Gyron’s hand in marriage on behalf of the Major, to which Gyron’s mother, when she hears the Kaiser’s will, readily gives her consent. They remain there for three nights while their wounds heal and then return to the cloister, where there is a joyful reunion between mother and daughter.

Both versions end with the double wedding of Friðrik/Evfranor to Gyron(n)e and Lucian to Gedula, after which everyone, with the possible exception of Pri(s)cillanus, lives happily ever after.

3. Names

The names of the characters are for the most part identical in the two versions of the story. *Lucian*, the chief male protagonist, is a common name in many parts of Europe (*Lucien* in French, *Luciano* in Italian, *Luciaan* in Dutch, *Luzian* in German, and so on), the most famous bearers doubtless being the rhetorician and satirist Lucian of Samosata (ca. 120–after 180 A.D.), and the saints Lucian of Antioch (†312) and Lucian of Beauvais (†290).

Gedula, by contrast, does exist as a woman’s name, but is far less common. It comes from the Hebrew (גדולה) (*gedula*) and means “greatness” (sometimes also translated as or “largesse” or “grace”). According to Kabbalistic Judaism *gedula* is the first of the five godly forces or emotive attributes within creation,¹⁰ and is regarded as synonymous with (חסד) (*hesed*), “love,” the fourth of the ten (*sefirot*), or divine emanations, through which God reveals himself to man. *Gedula/chesed* is seen as paired with (גבורה) (*gevura*), the Hebrew

10. These five forces are listed in I *Chronicles* 29:11: “Yours, O Lord, [is] the greatness, and the might, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and on the earth [is Yours].”

word for “might,” also known as *din*), “judgment” or “severity,” the fifth of the ten *sefirot* and second of the emotive attributes, the two each acting to temper the other, as it were.¹¹

While this would not be an entirely inappropriate name for the female protagonist of our story—and the Kabbalah was certainly known and studied during the Enlightenment—the name could also be a corruption of *Gudula* (itself possibly a pet form of *Gudrun*), after St. Gudula (†712), patroness of Brussels, known in Flemish as *Goedele* and in French as *Gudule*.¹² As the events in our story take place in Flanders, where Gudula/Goedele is a relatively common name, this is certainly the most likely explanation. Interestingly, the feast day of St. Gudula is 8 January, the same day as that of St. Lucian of Beauvais (and the day after that of Lucian of Antioch). This may well be simple coincidence, but it is also possible that the author of the story, looking for names for his protagonists, fell upon these in a calendar of saints’ feast days.

Another connection with the Low Countries is found in the name of the man who is responsible for fostering Lucian. In Jón Hjaltalín’s text he is called simply “Carl” and is said to be a *greifi* (count); in the other version, however, his name is given as “Spinola,” and he is said to be a *margreifi* (margrave or marquis). The name is presumably that of the family of Genoese noblemen including Ambrosio Spínola, marqués de los Balbases (1569–1630), and his younger brother Federico (1571–1603), who distinguished themselves in the Spanish wars in the Netherlands. It is possible that in the original both names were used and that Jón has simply taken the first name and the scribe of JS 631 the surname. There was, in fact, a Carlo Spinola, a Jesuit missionary to China who died a martyr at Nagasaki on 10 September 1622, but there seems no reason why our character should be named for him.

The other names in the story are either so rare or so common as to be of little help in localizing the story. The name of Gedula’s father is spelt “Pricillanus” in Jón’s text and “Priscillanus” (with Latin declensional endings) or, especially toward the end, “Priscillan” (with Icelandic

11. See Gershom Scholem, *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, transl. by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), esp. pp. 31–55.

12. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07056b.htm>.

endings) in JS 631. Both are presumably corruptions of *Priscillianus*, which was the name of the founder of a sect of Gnostic-Manichaean ascetics in fourth-century Roman Galicia who has the distinction of being the first person in the history of Christianity to be executed for heresy.¹³ Although rare, doubtless owing to the severe measures taken by the church to suppress the heresy, the name appears to have survived in Spanish, chiefly in the Philippines, as *Pricillano*. There is also a Saint Priscillianus, a rather shadowy (and thus probably entirely legendary) figure, described simply as a cleric (*clericus*), who was martyred along with Saints Priscus, a priest (*presbyter romanus*), and Benedicta, a laywoman (*femina*), in the persecutions of Julian the Apostate in Rome in 362; their feast day, again probably coincidentally, is 4 January, four days before those of Saints Lucian and Gudula.¹⁴

The name of the woman who befriends Gedula in the cloister is spelt “Gyrone” in Jón Hjaltalín’s text while the form used in the other version is “Gyronne.” The former is the name of the principal (male) character in *Gyrone [or Girone] il Cortese*, a poetical romance by Luigi Alamanni (1495–1556), while the latter turns up as a surname in a number of on-line genealogies, generally with a single hit, a Jeanne Gyronne (1590–1639) of La Rochelle, Charente-Maritime, France,¹⁵ and as a first name, also of a male, in a number of court cases in the State of Arkansas.¹⁶ Curiously, the text of JS 631 parenthetically adds “edur Gudrun” (or Guðrún) the first time the name Gyronne appears; there is unlikely to be any connection between the names Guðrún and Gyronne, although there may be, as was mentioned, between Guðrún and Gedula.

The name of Lucian’s friend and fellow officer, and Gyron(n)e’s fiancé, is quite different in the two texts; he is called *Friðrik* (written “Fridrich,” “Friderich,” or “Frederik”) in Jón Hjaltalín’s text, a common name throughout Europe, but Evfranor (or Evranor—there are nine instances of each) in the other text. This name could be

13. H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12429b.htm>

14. *The Book of Saints: A Dictionary of Servants of God Canonized by the Catholic Church*, 4th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1947), p. 493

15. See e.g. <http://www.familysearch.org/>, the genealogy website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

16. See e.g. <http://courts.state.ar.us/unpublished/2005a/20050616/cro4-554.html>.

that of the fourth-century B.C. Greek artist and sculptor Euphranor (Ευφράνωρ) of Corinth, although it is hard to see any reason for the choice.

In Jón's text the two officers, Lucian and his friend Friðrik, both conceal their identities when they visit the cloister, presenting themselves as "Gert" and "Tontrú." In the other text, it is only Lucian who assumes a false identity, as his friend has no need to do so, since, as is spelt out in the text, the prioress knows nothing of his relationship with Gyron(n)e. *Gert*, or *Geert*, is the Low German and Dutch form of *Gerhard* and also found commonly in Scandinavia. *Tontrú*, on the other hand, is a bit of a mystery. It is possible that it is a garbled form of some Flemish or French name, but it is difficult to see what name that might be.

The cloister to which Gedula is sent, unnamed in Jón's text, is referred to repeatedly in JS 631 as "Dórótheu klaustur." The name is presumably that of Saint Dorothy, martyred 6 February 311 at Caesarea, Cappadocia.¹⁷ As the patron saint of horticulture, Dorothy has lent her name to a number of flower shops and florist groups in Flanders, including the Koninklijke Maatschappij Sint-Dorothea, but I am not aware of the existence of any Sint-Dorothea klooster (or a Cloître Sainte-Dorotheé in La Flandre française).¹⁸

Finally, a very minor figure, one of the servants (*þernur*) at the cloister who has no counterpart in Jón's text (where, in fact, there are no servants mentioned at all), is referred to in the text preserved in JS 631 as "Steinunn." One wonders whether there might have been a young woman with this name, and perhaps also one named Guðrún, in the household of the scribe.

3. Style and vocabulary

As was mentioned above, and will have been evident from the passages already cited, the language of both Icelandic texts shows considerable influence from Danish. There is, to start with, a large number of Danish loanwords (for the most part themselves borrowings from

17. *The Book of Saints*, p. 184.

18. There is a "Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy," founded in 1835 by Paula Frassinetti; see http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_19840311_frassinetti_en.html.

Low German). Words that are found in both texts include *betala* (to pay) and *betaling* (payment), *soddan* (such), *frö(j)ken* (young lady, miss), *or(ð)saka* (to cause), *spursmál* (question), *forakt* (contempt), *skilirí* (a painting, portrait), *ogs(v)o* (also, too), *enn nú* (still, yet), *ekta* (to marry), and *feil* (mistake, ultimately from Latin *fallere*). In addition, there are a great many loanwords from Danish which are found only in one or the other of the two texts. In Jón’s text, for example, there are words such as *stumpari* (a poor wretch, from Danish *stymper*¹⁹), *gunst* (favor, grace(s)), *tukthús* (prison), *testamentera* (will, bequeath, a back-formation from Latin *testāmentum*, from *testārī*), and *eðalmóðugheit* (generosity, magnanimity), while JS 631 has, among many others, *plaga*, in the phrase *plaga að gera e-ð* (be wont to do something), *komplíment*, in the phrase *afleggja sín komplíment* (greet or send one’s respects), *innprenta* (impress), *tendens* (tendency), *misbrúka* (misuse), *lumpinn* (of poor quality, cheap, low-class), *óbillegur* (unfair), *foraktanlega* (despicably), *kamers* (room), *lenistóll* ((easy-)chair), *spássera* (stroll), *yfirbevisa* (convince), *begering* (desire, request), *forþéna* (deserve), *yfirtala* (persuade), and *regering* (government). It should be noted that many if not most of these words were already common in Icelandic, some since the late middle ages,²⁰ and thus need not necessarily be derived from the Danish original. Some almost certainly are, however; *lumpinn*, for example, which is glossed parenthetically in the text as “lítilsverður” (of little worth). It should also be noted that while some of these words can still be used in colloquial/jocular Icelandic, at least by the older generation, the majority of them would not be regarded as possible, or necessarily even understood, by most contemporary native speakers of Icelandic, so effective has been the policy of “language purification” in the last hundred and fifty years or so.²¹

19. This delightful word, alas now rather rare in Danish, is defined in *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*, ed. Verner Dahlerup, 28 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1919–1956), vol. 22, cols. 697–99, as a “ringe, ussel, ynkværdig, ynkelig, sølle (mands)person” (lowly, wretched, pitiful, pathetic, shabby (male)person).

20. See, for example, Chr. Westergård-Nielsen, *Låneordene i det 16. århundredes trykte islandske litteratur*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana VI (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946), and Veturlíði Óskarsson, *Middelnedertyske låneord i islandsk diplomsprog frem til år 1500*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana LXIII (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003).

21. See Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Íslensk málhreinsum: Sögulegt yfirlit* (Reykjavík: Íslensk málnefnd, 1990), esp. pp. 29–50.

The text also contains a number of terms to do with the military, which, although not originally Danish, came into Icelandic through Danish, mostly in the eighteenth century. These include the military ranks *lautenant*, *kapteinn*, *majór*, *óberst* and *general(l)*, this last actually glossed in brackets in Jón's text as "æsti hershöfdingi" (highest commander), as well as *ritmeisteri* (master of cavalry) from Danish *ritmester* (itself from German *Rittmeister*). Finally there is *húsari*, in Danish *husar*. Originally from the Serbian *gussar*, this word came via the Hungarian *huszár* into French, German, and other European languages and was used to refer to a class of light cavalry regiment organized in Hungary in the fifteenth century and subsequently imitated throughout Europe. The appearance of the Hungarian hussars was also copied by those of other nations, being characterized by uniforms of brilliant colors and elaborate ornament—and moustaches: in order to give himself a more military appearance, according to Jón Hjaltalín's version,²² the young Lucian dons a false pair of *knefelbartar*, a loanword from the Danish *knevelsbart*, which is defined in *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*, vol. 10, cols. 825–26, as "overskæg; moustache; især om stort, svært overskæg (der giver et barsk, martialske udseende)" (moustache, in particular of a large, heavy moustache (which conveys a harsh, martial appearance)). The Danish word itself derives from German *Knebelbart* (from *Knebel*, gag), which is used to describe the short, pointed beard known in English as a "Vandyke," whereas the Icelandic text makes clear that it is the Danish sense of a large military-style moustache which is meant.

In addition to such obvious loan words, certain usages also show clear signs of Danish influence; *samt*, for example, is used in Jón's text in the Danish sense of "and in addition" rather than the normal Icelandic "still, even though," and both texts have examples of *mikið* (much) used adverbially to mean "very," like the Danish *meget*, as in the sentence "hann lítur mikið vel út" (he is very good looking) and, a particularly good example, "hún fær mikið lítil fríheit" (she is given very little freedom), and of *rétt* (right) to mean "rather" or "quite," as in "hún hefur ekki verið rétt frísk" (she hasn't been terribly well).

22. The other text says only that Lucian "leit nú ut sem einn litell stridsmaður" (looked like a little soldier), without mentioning the detail of the moustache.

There are also places, fewer in Jón’s text than in JS 631, where the syntax appears to have been influenced by Danish, for example in the word order of genitive constructions, such as “eftir foreldranna beiðni” (at the request of the parents), where it would be more natural in Icelandic to say “eftir beiðni foreldranna” (or “eftir beiðni foreldra þeirra”).

It must be said, however, that although the two Icelandic texts in all likelihood both derive directly from a Danish original, it would probably be difficult to prove this on linguistic grounds, since the written Icelandic of the eighteenth century tended generally to show a far greater degree of Danish influence in lexis, style, and syntax than would later be considered acceptable. Of the two texts, Jón’s is decidedly the more “Icelandic,” and contains many passages in perfectly respectable saga style, albeit of the “post-classical” variety. The text of JS 631, on the other hand, gives the impression of being a fairly raw translation from the Danish, but is certainly not without its moments, not least in the many passages of dialogue.

5. Theme

What is the story of Lucian and Gedula about? That depends, to large extent, on which text of it one reads. In Jón Hjaltalín’s version, there is a passage at the end in which the moral implicit in the story is spelt out for the reader:²³

Kennir saga þessi mönnum þrýár helstu athugasemdir, sem eru þessar: 1. ad dygd og dagnadur sieu hvòriumm adli dýrmætari; 2. ad grimdarfull og ránglát medhòndlan gétur svo trylt mans gied og synni ad hann af ðrvæntíng og gremju grýpi til þeirra medala, sem bædi hònumm og ðdrumm eru ý ráúninni hrillileg; og 3^{dia} hafi manni ordid það á ad taka stórlega feil er það sýálfs mans skildu og sannri skinsemi samqvæmast ad greida úr þvý á besta hátt og giðra sem verdur gott úr vondu, þvý opt er besta lækníng ý beiskustu jurtum. (Lbs 638 8vo, ff. 95v-96r)

23. The passage is found in Jón’s autograph manuscript and in Lbs 3162 4to, but is lacking in Lbs 3021 4to, where the text goes straight from “undu þau vel sínu ráði og lifðu saman langan aldur” into the standard formula “og endar svo þessi saga.”

(This story teaches people three main points, which are these: 1. that virtue and doughtiness are more valuable than any nobility; 2. that cruel and unjust treatment can so transform a person's mind and disposition, that in desperation and anger he resorts to measures that are in truth both to him and others horrible; and 3. if a person has made a serious error it is his own responsibility and most in keeping with duty and good sense to redress it in the best way possible, to make good come out of the bad, for often the best medicine is in the bitterest of herbs.)

This passage is not found in the other version, which ends simply with the statement that Lucian and Gedula lived for a long time and had many children, from whom they derived much pleasure. In the absence of the Danish original, it is impossible to say whether the passage was present there or whether Jón made it up. The points presented in it are easy enough to derive from a reading of the story, so he may well have done. There is, admittedly, nothing specific in either text that would lead one to the last of the points, that it is best to admit to one's mistakes, but then this is the sort of common-sense maxim found in many a piece of public-school-boy fiction, here given the Enlightenment seal of approval by being called "sannri skinsemi samqvæmast" (most in keeping with good sense/true reason); the final sentence, that the best medicine is often to be found in the bitterest of herbs, has the feel of a proverb, but is unknown to me.²⁴

The second of the points refers presumably to what for most readers is doubtless the most memorable (not to say shocking) scene in the story, where Gedula dashes the head of her stillborn baby against the wall. The idea that this is an act to which she has been driven by her parents' excessively harsh treatment is in keeping with the ideas of the Enlightenment that people, in particularly those who are to be educated or punished, respond better to rational treatment, the point of which they understand, than to severity (something much of the so-called "Western World" has yet to learn, or at least to implement). There is a passage in JS 631 which seems to point in the same direc-

24. "Bitter herbs" ("beiskar jurtir" in Icelandic, "bitre urter" in Danish) are mentioned in several places in the Bible, such as Exodus 12:8, Numbers 9:11, and Lamentations 3:15.

tion. It comes relatively early in the story, when, after Lucian’s second letter, Priscillanus has written to the prioress to ask that she ensure that there be no contact between his daughter and Lucian:

Nu huxade Priscillan ad hann hefde utvirkad allt sem einn skins-
amur fader kinne ad giöra til ad vardveita sinnar dóttur heidur enn
athugade ecke ad þesshattar ordsakar oft þad vesta utfall. (JS 631
4to, f. 153v)

(Priscillanus now thought that he had done everything a prudent
father could in order to protect his daughter’s honor, not realizing
that such things often have the worst consequences.)

It is the first of the points, the idea that virtue is a quality potentially present in all human beings and not restricted to, or necessarily even to be found in, members of the aristocracy, which sets the tone for much of the story. Although this theme is evident in both versions, much greater weight is laid on it in Jón’s text than in JS 631. The idea was, of course, one of the basic principles of the Enlightenment, which saw numerous critiques of the arbitrariness and injustice with which distinctions and honors were conferred in society and the idea that the masses were incapable of rational conduct and needed, willy-nilly, to be governed. The worst aristocracies, it was argued, were those in which the mass of people were bound into serfdom by the ruling nobility, as was the case under feudalism.²⁵ Although the society depicted in the story is not feudal as such, it is made clear enough that Priscillanus regards the people living on his estate more as his possessions than as human beings.

Priscillanus and his wife are described in both texts as excessively proud and arrogant people. In Jón’s text this comes at the very beginning, cited above, where we are told that Priscillanus “áleit fólk af borgara standi so sem duft fóta sinna,²⁶ er eý væri samhæft ad nefnast undir eins og fólk af adli” (regarded common people as like the dust

25. See e.g. J.Q.C. Mackrell, *The Attack on ‘Feudalism’ in 18th-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1973), in particular chapter V, “Humanitarian objections to ‘Feudalism’,” pp. 104–32.

26. The phrase “duft fóta sinna/þeirra” is used repeatedly in the Bible, e.g. Matthew 10:14, Luke 9:5, and Acts 13:50–51.

of his feet, who were unworthy of mention in the same breath as the nobility). The arrogance of Priscillanus and his wife manifests itself principally in their complete rejection of Lucian as a possible suitor for their daughter, solely on the grounds that he is not, and therefore never can be, of their class.²⁷ In the text of JS 63 1 it says:

Þesse hjón vóru [...] so stolt ad þaug ecke gatu þolad ad þeinkia um þad sem Margreifenn hafde sagt, því þo nu Lucian hefde orded General so hefdu þaug alldrej med gódu gede samþikt þeirra ektaskap, þared hann være fæddur sonur eins litelfjárlegs húsmanns en hun af adle. (JS 63 1 4to, f. 149r)

(This couple were so proud that they could not bear to consider what the marquis had said [sc. that Lucian and Gedula would one day wed], because even if Lucian became a General they would never willingly agree to the marriage, since he was born the son of a poor freeholder and she was of the nobility.)

They try to make this clear to their daughter, but as she grows up Gedula begins to have her doubts about the legitimacy of the division of mankind into commoner and lord. In Jón's text it says:

Gedulu þóckti þetta undarlegt og eptir því sem hún tók ad eldast fór hún ad jgrunda þetta betr og spurdi modr sýna þá opt hvad kiæmi til þess ad þetta fólk sem kallad væri af adli væri svo hátt upphafid yfir almúgann, hvört þad væri skapad af dýrmætara efni enn annad fólk. Hún sæe þó ad bædi yrði þad sýukt og lýka dæji þad sem adrir menn, ecki heldr hefði gud gefid því fegri sól, fallegrí himinn edr dýrmætara jörd til ábúdar enn ödru fólk. (Lbs 638 8vo, ff. 80v-81r)

27. This is also the driving force behind the plot of most products of the Hindi cinema (vulgarly referred to as “Bollywood”): one of the protagonists is prevented from marrying the other because of opposition to the union by one or both of the parents owing to the (perceived) unsuitability—generally on the basis of caste or religion—of the other partner. This applies both to such classic Hindi films as *Awaara* (1951) and *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960) and to modern productions like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001). Most Hindi films, at heart, are calls for tolerance. Little would be required, apart from the addition of a few dance numbers, to turn the the story of Lucian and Gedula into a fine “Bollywood” film.

(Gedula found this strange and as she grew older she began to wonder more about this and often asked her mother how it had come about that the people who were known as of the nobility were so much more highly favored than the common people, whether they were made of more costly stuff than other people. Yet she could see that they both became ill and died like everyone else; nor had God given them a fairer sun or more beautiful sky or better earth on which to live than other people.)

The corresponding passage in JS 631 is rather shorter; Gedula merely asks “hvort nockur mismunur vǽre a medal manneskianna i fædíngunne, og hvort adalfólk vǽre af annare tegund enn adrar manneskiur” (whether there was some difference between people at birth, and whether the nobility was of a different kind than other people).

The answers she receives are rather different in the two versions. In Jón’s text, Gedula’s mother, unable to muster arguments against these views, tells her to keep silent, while in JS 631 it says that “uppa þesse og mörg önnur spursmál svarade hennar móder mörgu sem munde ut heimta eina stóra bók ef skrifad vǽre” (to these and many other questions her mother gave many answers which would require a large book if they were written down). Either way, Gedula is unimpressed. In 631 it says that, upon further reflection, she “hélt ad vera þann rettasta dom er hun sialf dæmde” (reckoned the most correct judgment to be the one she herself made), or, according to Jón, “þócktist þó sýa hvad sannast vǽri” (thought she knew what the real truth was). What this “real truth” was is spelt out in Jón’s text, where Gedula tells her mother that “sér sýndist dygd og dugnadr vǽri sá besti adall, þvǽ einginn giæti ad þvǽ giórdr af hvöríumm hann vǽri fæddur” (she thought virtue and valor were the best nobility, for one could do nothing about the circumstances of one’s birth)—a sentiment repeated almost verbatim in the moral at the end: “ad dygd og dugnadr sieu hvöríumm adli dýrmætari.”

In Jón’s text there is a yet another statement of this theme, which again has no parallel in JS 631; it comes toward the end of the story, where Pricillanus and Lucian are reconciled. Priscillanus admits that Lucian, despite his humble beginnings, “hefði hreisti, digd og edalmó-dugheit framm yfir flesta menn adra” (had strength, virtue and noble-

mindedness beyond that of most men). It is interesting, though, that what finally convinces him of this is that when it is time for him to beg Lucian's forgiveness, as stipulated in the Kaiser's writ, Lucian says rather it is he who should ask forgiveness of him. "Þessi géneralsins hógværd," the saga tells us, "kitladi svo það drambsama sinni Pricillani að hann fell umm háls Lucians og qvadst með ánægiu antaka hann firir sinn dóttmann og erfingia" (This modesty on the part of the general so tickled the haughty Priscillanus that he embraced Lucian and said that he would gladly accept him as his son-in-law and heir).

All of these echo something said by the count/marquis near the very beginning of the text of JS 631, that "hraustleike er sa stædste adall" (doughtiness is the greatest nobility). Having said this, the count/marquis then turns to his host and says "edur er það ecke satt Hr Priscillanus?" (or is that not true, Mr. Priscillanus?), to which the parenthetical remark is added: "enn hann (Priscillanus) var hinn meste heimskinge" (but he (Priscillanus) was a total fool). It is interesting that in JS 631 Priscillanus appears as a rather ridiculous figure. There is, for example, a passage, not found in Jón's version but presumably in the original, describing how Priscillanus is so afraid of being robbed during the war that any time he hears anyone in the street outside he sends someone to look to see who it is, and has all his money and valuables buried in the cellar under a large stone, even though the enemy is many miles away.

Although Jón doesn't use this particular story, perhaps not wanting to make Priscillanus appear as anything other than the excessively stern *pater familias*, there are far more references to Priscillanus's greed—and to money and wealth in general—in his text than in JS 631. The count/marquis, for example, in contradistinction to Priscillanus, is described in Jón's text as "madr gödgiarn og mildr, ör af fie, og gódr sýnumm under lýd" (a good-natured man, kind and generous, and good to his men)—a common way of describing a king or chieftain in the sagas. The count's generosity in particular to Lucian knows no bounds: we are twice told that the count has given him "stórar summur penínga" (great sums of money) and he leaves his entire fortune to him on his deathbed. Of Lucian too it is said that he "géfur [...] opt fie á tvær hendr, helst þeim fátæku" (often gives money away freely, principally to the poor). None of this is even hinted at in JS 631.

The abbess/prioress, similarly, is only said to be “hörd” (strict) in JS 631, while in Jón’s text she is described not only as “vargur ad skaplindi” (with the temperament of a [she-]wolf) but also as “rýk” (rich). Lucian and Friðrik play upon her avarice, giving her fine gifts (“dýrmætar skeinkingar”),²⁸ with the result that although Jón’s text says specifically that once a young woman was inside the cloister any contact with the outside world was impossible, access to the women appears to have been rather easily obtained, once the abbess’s palm had been suitably greased. In JS 631 the situation is quite different, with Gedula and Gyronne going to great lengths to conceal from the prioress the fact the two men spend so much time with them. That they should be able to spend any time there at all is carefully explained in 631, where it says:

Það er ad giætandi ad i Flandern eru þar klaustur hvar i adalfolk ma lata sinar dætur an þess þær seu skuldbundnar til ad vera þar alla æfe sidann, því þær fá burtfararleife þa þeim bidst nockur sóma-samleg gifting. Það er heldur ecke i þeim klaustrum fyrerboded ad kallmenn meige tala vid þær, reika med þeim og borda opennberlega med þeim, enn þó er naquæmlega ad gætt ad soddann friheit ecke seu misbrukud (JS 631 4to, ff. 151r–v)

(It should be noted that in Flanders there are cloisters in which members of the aristocracy can put their daughters without their having to remain there all their lives, for they are allowed to leave when they are made a suitable proposal of marriage. Nor is it in these cloisters forbidden for men to speak to them, walk with them or dine publicly with them, but careful attention is paid that such freedoms are not abused.)

This all makes more sense than what we find in Jón’s version, where “Gert” and “Tontrú,” openly encouraged by the abbess, spend much of their time at the cloisters, coming and going, as we understand, without hindrance, “stundumm framm á nótt” (sometimes into the night).

28. Exploiting avariciousness is a standard trick in the maiden-king romances, for example *Hrólfs saga kraka*; see Marianne Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, *Islandica* 46 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 98–99.

This is not the only thing, it has to be said, which simply makes more sense in the text of JS 631 than in Jón's version. The entire *dénouement*, to take the most obvious example, is far more complicated—and believable—in JS 631 than the shameless *deus-ex-machina* of the Kaiser's writ, which in one fell swoop puts right everything that had otherwise appeared to have gone so horribly wrong: the two couples can marry, both Lucian and Friðrik receive promotions (without apparently having done anything to deserve them), the haughty Pri(s)cillanus gets his come-uppance—all's well that ends well, despite Lucian's rather unheroic behavior, disappearing entirely at a time when Gedula most needs him, for which, the text tells us, he is universally censured, even by those who had previously praised him. The explanation for such "factual" discrepancies between the two texts could be that Jón, having read the story in 1793, retold it from memory later, perhaps many years later, and had simply forgotten some of the less important details of the plot.

As noted above, it is, in the absence of the source, difficult—and probably unwise—to say much about which aspects or elements of the two texts may or may not be original. I will say, however, that if and when the source turns up I shall be very surprised indeed if it contains the relatively lengthy episode in Jón's text in which Lucian and Friðrik, seeking the approval of Gyronne's mother for the latter's marriage to Gyronne, travel through a thick forest and are ambushed by a band of highwaymen. Not only does it stand out by being the only episode not told from the point of view of the women, it is also written in a style, with a blow-by-blow description of the encounter worthy of any *lygisaga*, entirely at odds with the rest of the narrative.

I have suggested elsewhere that Jón may have used the texts found in this and several of his other miscellanies as raw material for his sermons.²⁹ Although the story of Lucian and Gedula would probably have been too long, even in his pared-down version, to be used in a sermon, it seems obvious that it was its moral message that appealed to him. It appears to have been first and foremost the love story, however, that appealed to the scribe of JS 631, who concentrates more on those aspects than on the moral and philosophical ones

29. Driscoll, *The Unwashed Children*, pp. 123, 125.

which so dominate Jón’s version. The original, one is tempted to think, had an equal measure of both, and so what we have in these two Icelandic texts are two different readings of, two different takes, as it were, on the same work.

That work, whatever it is, is obviously not a major landmark in world literature. It is, at heart, a romance, and one reminiscent less of the medieval *roman courtois* than of modern romantic fiction of the Mills & Boon variety. Jón seems to want to see it principally as a moral fable. But he also wants it to be a proper story, adhering to the narrative rules of (post-classical) Icelandic fiction. As such, he has had to make certain adjustments, for example the introduction in the very first sentence of the name of Gedula’s father, which in 631 comes as a parenthetical remark a couple of hundred words into the story (“so het fader Gedulæ”), and, arguably, the addition of the scene with the highwaymen toward the end—for what’s the use of a story with no battles in it? And even as a story can’t begin without saying that there was a certain man living in a certain country who had a son, or daughter, named X, so too must any story end, as Jón ends his, with the phrase “og hefur þetta æfintýri svo hier med enda” (and so ends this story).

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