

Rhetoric and Style in Old Norse Religious Narrative Prose



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Abstract

This thesis proposes a new, or rather, old, approach to the study of Old Norse-Icelandic prose style. Rather than framing stylistic simplicity and complexity as ‘popular’ and ‘learned’ styles, respectively, I recontextualise the different modes of vernacular prose style within the educational traditions that shaped medieval Icelandic and Norwegian learning and the intellectual history that informed them. At the crux of this intellectual history is the Christian reception of the Classical Liberal Arts tradition, especially its first three components: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, collectively called the Trivium. This method of study was subsumed into the practice of exegesis, the study of the Bible, which shaped the Christian study of history and, therefore, of narrative. This synthesis of the study of words with the study of the word of God gave a conceptual *gravitas* to Christian writers’ use of style that has literary and theological implications for understanding their works.

Each chapter, then, presents different modes of prose style in Old Norse-Icelandic religious narrative, the intellectual history of those styles, and a close reading of a text demonstrating their importance to both its verbal aesthetic and its literary themes. Chapter 1 shows how Christian reception of Classical learning favoured the *sermo humilis* (‘low style’) for narration and the *sermo sublimis* (‘high style’) for oratory. This establishes stylistic variegation as one of the most crucial components of our stylistic study. Each subsequent chapter addresses a new mode or element of style that can be added to that variegation, as well as the intellectual concepts that accompany it. Chapter 2 introduces the academic style, used for commentary within a narrative, and its relationship to medieval compilatory practices. Chapter 3 examines repeated hendiadyses, learned from biblical narratives, as a method of tying together related narratives within a large compilation. Chapter 4 explores the interaction of poetry and prose as a mode of stylistic variegation to show how they complement each other when compiled together. Chapter 5 explores the incorporation of

narrative storytelling into oratorical frameworks for courtly performance and the corresponding historiographical principles that accompany those frameworks. Chapter 6 examines the North Icelandic Benedictines' mastery of variegating multiple styles into a homiletic storytelling art.

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>High and Low Styles in Old Icelandic Literature</i>	<i>8</i>
1. i Introduction	8
1. ii The Popular Style in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose.....	9
1. iii The Learned Style in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose	10
1. iv Style, Age, and Genre.....	14
1. v Latin Learning in Iceland and Norway	17
1. vi Latin Rhetoric and Christian Homeliness.....	20
1. vii Style, Subject, and History	25
1. viii History and the Liberal Arts	27
1. ix The Sermo Humilis in Icelandic: The Older Páls saga postula	30
1. ix. a Paul at Lystra	35
1. ix. b Paul at the Areopagus	41
1. x The Old Icelandic Homily Book	47
1. x. a Scriptural Quotation and Expansion in the Homily Book	51
1. xi Conclusion	58
<i>Glosses, Commentaries, Compilations</i>	<i>60</i>
2. i Introduction	60
2. ii Glosses on the Tropological Level in the Homily Book	61
2. iii The Academic Style	66
2. iv The Styles of Páls saga postula II.....	67

2. v Glosses and Authorities	75
2. vi Compilatio	79
2. vii The Ordinatio of Páls saga postola II	84
2. vii. a <i>The Tribe of Benjamin</i>	87
2. vii. b <i>Syncrisis</i>	91
2. vii. c <i>The Trivium: Grammar</i>	100
2. vii. d <i>Transformation</i>	102
2. vii. e <i>Dialectic</i>	105
2. vii. f <i>Dialectic and Rhetoric: Paul's Speeches</i>	108
2. vii. g <i>Rhetoric: Other Adjustments</i>	113
2. vii. h <i>Skilja</i>	116
2. viii The Literary Use of Glosses	122
2. ix Rhetorical Language from Paul	124
2. x. Transition into Passio	127
2. xi. Conclusion	128
<i>Hendiadys</i>	130
3. i. Introduction	130
3. ii. Hendiadys	132
3. iii. Approaches to Hendiadys.....	134
3. iv. Rhetorical Writings and the Bible	137
3. v. Hendiadyses and Leitwortstil	138
3. vi. Spiritual Readings	141
3. vii. Gipta	145
3. vii. a. <i>Gipta and the Offering</i>	147
3. vii. b. <i>Solitary Uses of Gipta</i>	148

3. vii. c. <i>Gipta ok Miskunn</i>	150
3. vii. d. <i>Gipta ok Gæðska</i>	152
3. vii. e. <i>Gipta ok Miskunn as Human Grace</i>	159
3. vii. f. <i>Gipta and vin-based Compounds</i>	160
3. viii. Conclusion.....	161
<i>Verse, Paraphrase, and Oratory</i>	163
4. i. Introduction	163
4. ii. Classical and Early Christian Views of Poetry	164
4. iii. Prose, Verse, and Paraphrase	170
4. iv. The <i>Opus Geminatum</i>	172
4. v. The <i>Opus Geminatum</i> in Iceland	174
4. vi. <i>Pétr's saga I</i> and <i>Pétr'sdrápa</i>	177
4. vii. Paraphrase, Verse, and Oratory in <i>Stjórn III</i>	186
4. viii. Conclusion.....	191
<i>Res Gestae</i>	193
5. i. Introduction	193
5. ii. Two Modes of History	194
5. iii. <i>Exempla</i>	200
5. iv. <i>Barlaams saga: Flight from the Unicorn</i>	204
5. v. Didacticism	208
5. vi. Romance and Rhetoric	209
5. vii. <i>Parcevals saga</i>	216
5. vii. a. <i>Style and Exemplarity in Parcevals saga</i>	218
5. vii. b. <i>Gorman's as Master</i>	227

5. vii. c. <i>Eloquence and Wisdom in Parcevals saga</i>	233
5. viii. Conclusion.....	237
<i>The North Icelandic Benedictine School in the Fourteenth Century</i>	238
6. i. Introduction	238
6. ii. Academic and Florid	238
6. iii. Historical Information	242
6. iv. Previous Stylistic Studies	247
6. v. Bergr as Compiler: Mikjál's saga	248
6. v. a. <i>Homiletic Storytelling</i>	249
6. v. b. <i>Extrahistorical Narrative</i>	251
6. v. c. <i>Exempla</i>	257
6. v. d. <i>Monte Saint' Angelo</i>	264
6. v. e. <i>The Discovery of the Shrine</i>	268
6. v. f. <i>The War with the Neapolitans</i>	272
6. vi. Conclusion	274
<i>Conclusion</i>	276
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
1. Classical, Late Antique, and Medieval Texts	279
2. Secondary Sources.....	281

Abbreviations

- DCD* Augustine of Hippo. *De civitate dei*, 2 vols, edited by B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47-48. Turnhout: Brepols, 1955.
- DDC* Augustine of Hippo. *De Doctrina Christiana*, edited by R.P.H. Green. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.
- HAA* Peter of Poitiers. *Historia scholastica: Historia libri Actuum Apostolorum: (sec. editionem ab Emmanuele Navarro 1699 vulgatam)*. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019.
- Hms.* Unger, C. R., editor. *Heilagra manna søgur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*. Christiania: Trykt hos B.M. Bentzen, 1877.
- JSP IV* *Jóns saga postula IV, Hms.*, 466-513.
- PSP I* *Páls saga postula I, Hms.*, 216-236.
- PSP II* *Páls saga postula II, Hms.*, 236-283.
- PétSP I* *Pétrs saga postula I, Hms.*, 1-134.
- HS* Comestor, Petrus. *Historia Scholastica*. Edited by J.P. de la Migne, 1053-1722. Vol. 198 of *Patrologia Latina*. Paris, 1851.
- IHB* De Leeuw Van Weenen, Andrea, editor. *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm. Íslenzk Handrit. Series in Quarto, V.3*. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993.
- SPotSMA* Clunies Ross, Margaret, editor. *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*. 8 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007.
- Pét. dr.* David McDougall, ed., *Pétrs drápa, SPotSMA VII*: 796-844.

Introduction

This thesis approaches learned influences on Old Norse-Icelandic prose style from a new direction. Where past scholarship has framed verbal simplicity as a reflection of nativity and complexity as a reflection of foreign influence, I instead frame a variety of styles and the variegations between them as expressions of the Christianised reception of the Classical Liberal Arts, grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, and the related disciplines they have informed, such as the study of history and the exegesis of the Bible. Each chapter will contextualise a close reading of one or two texts and evaluate the stylistic decisions seen within those texts within the intellectual history of stylistics that informed them. This will allow us better to draw out both the provenance and purpose of stylistic variegation, and what impact this has on how we are to understand the narratives in which they are used.

Any study of prose style must offer some definition of what style is. In an effort to approach style through as near an approximation as we can manage to a working medieval definition, I offer two quotations from the fourth book of St. Augustine of Hippo's *De Doctrina Christiana*. The first pertains to the underlying conceptualisation of style; the second to how language is used to create that style.

Augustine frames the purpose of style in this way:

Nam cum per artem rhetoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis audeat dicere adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem, ut videlicet illi qui res falsas persuadere conantur noverint ... falsa breviter aperte verisimiliter, et isti vera sic narrent ut audire taedeat, intellegere non pateant, credere postremo non libeat?

Since rhetoric is used to give conviction to both truth and falsehood, who could dare maintain that truth, which depends on us for its defence, should stand unarmed in the fight against falsehood? This would mean that those who are trying to give conviction to their falsehoods ... would expound falsehoods in descriptions that are succinct, lucid, and convincing, while we would expound the truth in such a way as to bore our listeners, cloud their understanding, and stifle their desire to believe?¹

The essence of Christian style, then, is the use of eloquence to create the most persuasive framing device for drawing listeners toward the truth. This relationship between word and truth lies at the heart of Christian theology: it is to the person of Christ that all truth points, and John's gospel describes Christ as the *λόγος* (*logos*, 'word'). The right use of style is, in a sense, a kind of spiritual exercise, an outgrowth of theology. This is abstract, but it lies at the heart of medieval Christian engagement with language, and so it informs my analysis of style here. Because truth is integral to the definition of style, this discussion will be bound primarily to religious narratives, for they lie closer than other genres to the heart of what medieval Christians understood to be true. This ensures that we examine the inner workings of the relationship between word and truth in some of their most conceptually straightforward narrative contexts.

In the second quotation that I offer, Augustine alludes to the tools for making language persuasive: those of Classical rhetoric, a subject he used to teach:

Sed quaecumque sunt de hac re observations atque praecepta quibus, cum accredit in verbis plurimis ornamentisque verborum linguae sollertissima consuetudo, fit ill

¹ Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), IV. 4.

aquae facundia vel eloquentia nominator, extra istas litteras nostras... discenda sunt eis qui hoc celeriter possunt.

As for the relevant observations and rules, which, together with a skilful manner of speaking that uses an abundance of words and verbal ornament, constitute what we mean by eloquence, these should be learned independently of this work... by those who can do so quickly.²

Here, Augustine downplays the rules of eloquence, depicting them as a distraction from the Christian orator's primary aim, which is not eloquence itself, but the truth contained in it. Nevertheless, when he goes on to offer stylistic analyses of Paul's rhetorical language in his second letter to the Corinthians or the prophetic language of the Book of Amos, he draws out both the details of their stylistic craft and their underlying purposes of conveying truth.

What Augustine downplays is exactly what most past scholarship on Old Norse-Icelandic prose has focused on, that is, the linguistic particulars of rhetorical craft. Marius Nygaard's work was foundational, using syntax and vocabulary as the key characteristics that distinguish the popular from the learned styles, and other scholars have built upon Nygaard's criteria.³ The body of work that has built upon Nygaard's foundation has provided invaluable material on syntactic differences across texts but has been imprecise in creating a taxonomy of styles, for scholars now use terms like 'learned', 'florid', and 'courtly' variably. What is more, contrasting 'learned' with 'popular' is not sustainable, for all style its author's learning, his pursuit of truth. This thesis will try to follow Augustine's example of realigning the past linguistic study of style to focus on its relationship to the truth it presents.

² Aug. *DDC.*, ed. Green, IV. 6.

³ Marius Nygaard, 'Den lærde stil i den norrøne prosa', in *Sproglig-historiske Studier tilegnede Professor C.R. Unger*, ed. by Sophus Bugge, et al. (Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co. Forlag, 1896), 153-70.

Because the core of Christian truth is found in the person of Christ, and Christ was God incarnate as a man in historical time known primarily through the biblical Gospel accounts, this thesis will focus primarily on the use of style in the presentation of history. History, here, will be understood in the broad medieval sense of *historia*, that is, narrative. Each of the six chapters of this thesis will look at a different intersection of the concept of *historia* with the intellectual history of stylistics and the resulting modes of stylistic variegation.

Chapter One will set out our foundational stylistic and historical principles. Late Antique and Medieval Christian literary culture inherited and reshaped the Classical Liberal Arts in such a way that valued a simple, concise style called the *sermo humilis* ('low style') for conveying historical truth. Following Augustine's teachings on the use of rhetorical language, that literary culture nevertheless encouraged the use of the *sermo sublimis* ('high style') or the *sermo mixtus* ('mixed style') for oratory, especially homiletics. The first variegations of style that we will examine, then, are between narrative presented in the *sermo humilis* and reported oratory in the *sermo sublimis*. I will provide close readings of the earlier version of *Páls saga postola* (*The Saga of the Apostle Paul*) and of scriptural pericopes from the Old Icelandic Homily Book.

In Chapter Two, I will examine another mode of style, which I will call the academic style, a syntactically complex use of relative and subordinate clauses designed to offer precise explanations of learned concepts. It appears in texts that offer both narrative and a wealth of commentative materials designed to help the audience to better understand the correct interpretation of that narrative through the traditional Christian practice of exegesis. We will examine its use through a close reading of the later version of *Páls saga postula*.

In Chapter Three, I will focus closely on one element of style, the use of hendiadys, two words, often synonyms, joined in syndetic parataxis to represent one entity. Modern

scholars have viewed hendiadys as one of the defining features of the learned style but have tended not to scrutinise its use. We will examine the use of hendiadys in *Stjórn* I, the first part of an Old Norse-Icelandic compilation of Old Testament narrative and commentary that covers the beginning of Genesis through the eighteenth chapter of Exodus. We will see how its use is modelled on the similar use of hendiadys in the Old Testament itself and how different patterns of repetition and variation in hendiadyses can draw out complex theological themes from the narrative. This will highlight the close relationship that style and biblical exegesis developed in the Christian reception of Classical stylistic teachings.

Chapter Four will discuss two important concepts. The first will be the interplay of prose with poetry, the latter of which was understood within the Classical framework as a form of the *sermo sublimis*, and the appropriate narrative concepts assigned to each. I will use this distinction to examine, too, the rhetorical exercise of *paraphrasus*, through which works in verse could be paraphrased into prose and works in prose could be paraphrased into verse. Our case study will be *opus geminatum*, a type of text in which the same narrative is offered twice: once in prose and once in verse. We will look at the similarities and difference between *Pétrs saga postula* I (*The First Saga of St Peter*) and *Pétrs drápa* to see the ways that poetry was used to move its audience in a way that the Christianised Classical tradition did not normally permit in prose. We will take what we have learned from this study to then look at an example of paraphrastic activity in an oration in *Stjórn* III, the part of *Stjórn* that covers Joshua, Judges, and the Books of Kings.

In Chapter Five, we will approach a different mode of historical narrative called the *res gesta*, one that focuses more on the secular than the religious themes of history, but that, in the Christian era, is never without its sacred components. We will examine the interaction of religious history with this mode of storytelling through close readings of *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats* (*The Saga of Barlaam and Josaphat*) and *Parcevals saga* (*The Saga of Percival*),

and the ways in which they make use of oratory as a framing device for their narratives, allowing a greater use of the *sermo sublimis* woven together with the *sermo humilis* in narration than we have seen previously.

Chapter Six will bring us to the Fourteenth-Century North Icelandic Benedictine School, whose writings are widely regarded to display their own distinct house style called the florid style. We will see that this style, like that of the *res gesta*, is born from a framing of narrative in oratory. Our close reading will be of *Mikjál's saga* (*The Saga of the Archangel Michael*), whose author, Bergr Sökkason, makes use of different levels of style to move his audiences to praise his subject.

This study of the styles in Old Norse-Icelandic religious prose contributes to the reassessment of the relationship between secular and sacred narrative. Where past studies have focused especially on the style of the *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* and contrasted them with the styles of religious prose, I hope that a better understanding of the range of styles and variegations between them will allow scholars to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between vernacular literature and European learning. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

High and Low Styles in Old Icelandic Literature

1. i Introduction

Modern scholarship has perceived two forms of style in Old Norse-Icelandic prose, one called the ‘popular’ or ‘saga’ style and one called the ‘learned’ style.¹ When the popular style is defined positively, it is said to be exemplified by the simple syntax and short paratactic clauses of the classical *Íslendingasögur* and the works of Snorri Sturluson.² The learned style, in contrast, consists of longer sentences and recursive subordinate clauses often featuring florid rhetorical ornament, and it is seen in some of the saints’ lives and many of the romances.³ It is especially – though not exclusively – associated with works translated from other languages, showing stylistic components that modern scholars regard as foreign to the canonical literature of Old Norse-Icelandic studies and therefore likely to have been influenced by the texts’ foreign sources.⁴ This chapter will re-evaluate this stylistic dichotomy by examining the uses of simple and complex styles in some of the earliest vernacular literature in Old Norse-Icelandic, contextualising them within the teachings on style that shaped them: the Trivium, that is, grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. The reception of the Trivium in Christian Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages created a distinctive set of teachings on the uses of high style, the *sermo sublimis*, and the low style, the *sermo humilis*, a distinction that I will argue underlies the differences in prose style that modern scholars have

¹ Þórir Óskarsson, ‘Rhetoric and Style’, in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 354-371.

² Jónas Kristjánsson, ‘Learned Style or Saga Style?’, in *Speculum Norrænum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), 260-292.

³ Mattias Tveitane, *Den lærde stil. Oversætterprosa i den norrøne versjonen av Vitae Patrum* (Bergen: Norwegian Universities Press, 1968), 129-31.

⁴ Marius Nygaard, ‘Den lærde stil i den norrøne prosa’, in *Sproglig-historiske Studier tilegnede Professor C.R. Unger*, ed. by Sophus Bugge, et al. (Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co. Forlag, 1896), 153-70.

previously seen either as signs of nativity or of foreign influence. In this chapter, I will give an outline of the history of Christian reception of the Classical Liberal Arts tradition and its teachings on style. Because this Christianised tradition advised on the appropriate alignment of the *sermo sublimis* with oratory and the *sermo humilis* with historical narrative, I will look at examples of both oratory and historical narrative. First, I will provide a close reading of the earlier version of *Páls saga postula*, ‘the Saga of the Apostle Paul’, which records Paul’s high-style orations within a low-style narrative. I will then look at selections from the Old Icelandic Homily Book, high-style oratorical writings that incorporate low-style narrative pericopes. Viewing these styles and the variegation between them within the broader context of medieval European Latinity and its intellectual history will provide the foundational stylistic frameworks that will be elaborated upon as this thesis examines different approaches to stylistic variegation in Old Norse-Icelandic prose.

1. ii The Popular Style in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose

Descriptions of the ‘popular’ or ‘saga’ style are varied and often vague which imperils the task of coalescing them into an overview here with some risk of creating straw men. But three fairly consistent themes emerge. The first is that sentences are generally short, but even when they are long their clauses are short and syntactically simple, linked by coordinating conjunctions like *ok* and *en*. The style is often described as laconic.⁵ The second is an underlying belief that the popular style represents Old Norse-Icelandic prose in its most authentic and native form. This is consistent with its typically Germanic syntax and is encouraging to scholars who theorise about the role of oral tradition in the formation of the

⁵ Nygaard, ‘Den lærde stil i den norrøne prosa’, 153-70.

sagas, especially of the *Íslendingasögur*.⁶ The third theme, concomitant to the second, is that this style is relatively unsullied by the foreign influence that defines scholarly perceptions of the ‘learned style’. Indeed, many scholarly descriptions of the popular style appear as cursory overviews in articles aimed at defining the learned style and are provided as a sort of control group, a standard for normality in Old Norse-Icelandic prose, against which learnedness is defined. The effect this has, though, is not what its framing suggests, for these definitions of the popular style are all predicated on what it is not rather than on what it is.⁷ Its language is not verbose, florid, or ornamental.⁸ Its perspective is not didactic, not biased, not moralising.⁹ Even as the learned style is defined against it, the popular style is defined by little more than the absence of learned influence.¹⁰ A fuller explanation of the popular style will therefore emerge as we discuss the learned style.

1. iii *The Learned Style in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*

Definitions of what constitutes the learned style also vary: Widding, for example, limits his definition to the strictest translations, those texts which ‘result from a clumsy rendering of the Latin text’ into Old Norse-Icelandic, while Jonas Kristjánsson applies to the term to a wide variety of Latin-influenced texts. However, they are all predicated on some degree of

⁶ Gísli Sigurðsson and Nicholas Jones, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge, Mass.: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2004); Theodore Murdock Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins: A Historical Survey*, Yale Germanic Studies: 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 65-81; Jón Helgason, *Norrøn Litteraturhistorie* (København: Levin & Munksgaard, 1934), 109-120.

⁷ Ole Widding, ‘Jartegn og Maríu saga Eventyr’, *Norrøn Fortællekunst: Kapitler Af Den Norsk-islandske Middelalderlitteraturs Historie*, ed. by Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Thorkil Damsgaard Olsen, and Ole Widding (København: Akademisk Forlag, 1965), 134; Jakob Benediktsson, ‘Cursus hos Bergr Sökkason’, in *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag* (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984), 34-40.

⁸ Lars Lönnroth, ‘Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies* 42. 2 (1970): 158.

⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas: An Essay in Method* (London: Viking Society, 1958), 116.

¹⁰ This point is also made in Daniel Sävborg, ‘Style’, in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 111-26.

influence from continental languages and literatures. The study of the dichotomy between ‘learned’ and ‘popular’ owes much to the foundational work of Marius Nygaard (d. 1912) who established broadly three areas in which the *lærdstil* and *folkeligstil* differ: syntax, style, and perspective. The first of these, syntax, is perhaps the most concrete. Nygaard shows that Latinity is evidenced in the *lærdstil*’s syntax through the use of the present participle in a manner analogous to the Latin gerundive, the past participle in apposition to a noun, and morphologically reflexive verbs with decidedly reflexive meanings.¹¹ The absence of Latinate syntax, then, identifies a work as ‘popular’. We will return to questions of syntax throughout this analysis.

Nygaard is equally interested in elements of style. Jónas Kristjánsson, a critic of Nygaard’s paradigm, observes that the Nygaardian tradition has most memorably characterised the ‘learned’ style by its ‘greater verbosity’, its ‘tendency to form larger complex sentences’, and its ‘preference for ornate and rhetorical expressions with a surplus of epithets’, which contrasts the simpler style of the *Íslendingasögur*.¹² This emphasis on its wordiness remains integral to the learned style’s perception in scholarship and is echoed by more recent scholars like Þórir Óskarsson, who has also described the learned style as ‘wordy, flamboyant, and complex’, all negative caricatures that hearken back to presuppositions of native purity.¹³ It is a category that blurs the boundaries between linguistic and literary, for though wordiness can accompany Latinate syntactic features, recursive subordinate clauses are treated as equally indicative of learnedness even when they feature Germanic subject, verb, and object placement.

¹¹ Marius Nygaard, ‘Den lærde stil i den norrøne prosa’, 153-70.

¹² Jónas Kristjánsson, ‘Learned Style or Saga Style?’, 260-61.

¹³ Þórir Óskarsson, ‘Rhetoric and Style’, 354-71; Ole Widding, ‘Den florissante stile i norrøn prosa (isl. Skróðstillinn) specielt i forhold til den lærde stil’, in *Selskab for Nordisk Filologi: Årsberetning 1977-1978* (København 1979), 7-10.

The third of Nygaard's enduring criteria for distinguishing the *lærðstil* from the *folkeligstil* is narratorial perspective. Where scholars characterise perspective of the classical *Íslendingasögur* as one of objectivity toward the events they depict, they see learned narrators as demonstrating a 'moralising' tendency to 'insert themselves into the narrative'.¹⁴ Though the true objectivity of the popular style has been called into question, the atmosphere of objectivity created by the popular narrator's silence on matters of explicit moral analysis and of characters' interiority has been much-discussed as lending itself to a sense of realism.¹⁵ It must be stressed that this atmosphere of realism is created largely by an absence of narratorial commentary.

Though two stylistic poles may be discernible in Old Norse-Icelandic prose, too binary a distinction between them is difficult to maintain. Jónas Kristjánsson observes that Nygaard neglected the role that Latin learning, especially religious writings, played in the inception of the entirety of West Norse written culture.¹⁶ To take this into account would be to acknowledge a foundational learnedness and foreign influence undergirding even the most popular texts. Jónas also notes that, in his creation of the two categories, Nygaard failed to include any examples of Old Norse-Icelandic hagiographical writing (which by definition is a learned subject) that predate the mid-thirteenth century.¹⁷ Commenting on the neglected early hagiographical texts, Widding and Bekker Nielsen observe what they believe to be a defining principle of earlier Icelandic and Norwegian translations: to 'provide a close rendering of the Latin sources without aiming at a completely literal translation'.¹⁸ This aim is learned, but it is not only inconsistent with Nygaard's characterisation of the 'learned' style but results in

¹⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas: An Essay in Method* (London: Viking Society, 1958), 116.

¹⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 116.

¹⁶ Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Learned Style or Saga Style?' 264-66.

¹⁷ Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Learned Style or Saga Style?' 263.

¹⁸ Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography', *Germanic Review* 37.4 (1962): 241.

texts stylistically indistinguishable from ‘popular’ narratives like the classical *Íslendingasögur* that are also generically ‘popular’.¹⁹

Scholars’ efforts to define the popular style positively are also prone to testing the strength of the Nygaardian dichotomy. Hofmann, in an analysis of the *Old Icelandic Homily Book*, claims that positive markers of the popular style include a vacillation between past and present tenses despite the time of the action they indicate, as well as unheralded switches between direct and indirect speech, and asyndetic *Satzanreihung* without repetition of subject. He cites the prevalence of these features in both the classical *Íslendingasögur* and early translated hagiographic materials and suggests that they must be elements of native idiom.²⁰ But von See observes that these stylistic features are common in the broader corpus of Latin prose circulating in medieval Europe and should not be regarded as uncontested expressions of native idiom, even if Icelandic and Norwegian translators add them into their works in places where their Latin sources do not use them.²¹ Though they may be less common in more ornate prose, they are no more clearly outside the influence of Latin learning than are elements of ornate language like alliterating word pairs.

Jónas instead suggests a more nuanced approach to stylistic taxonomy in which a simpler ‘popular’ style and a more ornate style influence one another to varying degrees and in different ways at different times in the hands of different authors.²² This invites further comparison with different styles of continental literature and stages of development in medieval Latin writing. Þórir Óskarsson and Roughton have both called for this comparison, Þórir suggesting further consideration of the role that Latin teachings on style played in Old Norse-Icelandic style and Roughton urging that further analysis be done of the relationship

¹⁹ Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, ‘Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography’, 241.

²⁰ Dietrich Hofmann, ‘Die mündliche sagaerzählkunst aus pragmatischer Sicht’, *Skandinavistik* 12:1 (1982), 14.

²¹ Klaus von See, ‘Das Problem der mündlichen Erzählprosa im Altnordischen’, *Skandinavistik* 11 (1981), 90-91.

²² Jónas Kristjánsson, ‘Learned Style or Saga Style?’, 289.

between Norse-Icelandic translations and their Latin sources.²³ We will therefore return shortly to some of the more common Latin teachings on style.

Widding approaches Nygaard's dichotomy with similar caution but writing before Jónas suggests a different method of classification. Because he reserves the term 'learned style' for only the strictest translations, he creates a third stylistic taxon which he calls the 'florid' style. He associates this style primarily with hagiographical writings from the latter half of the thirteenth century and onward, especially those of the North Icelandic Benedictine School, which are roughly of the same genre and time period that Nygaard uses to characterise the 'learned' style. Though Nygaard and Widding observe many of the same elements of Latin style and syntax, to Widding they are not mere verbosity. He believes instead that lying beneath this 'highly demanding' wording is a 'wilful declamatory force expressed through a refined literary art form'.²⁴ We will examine the florid style more fully in Chapter 6, but for now let us take note that where Nygaard sees only ornament, Widding calls attention to its underlying rhetorical craft.²⁵

1. iv Style, Age, and Genre

Even when the Nygaardian dichotomy is questioned as above, there remains an underlying model of evolution in Old Norse-Icelandic writing from an earlier style that is sparsely worded to a later style with more complex clausal structures. Widding and Bekker Nielsen's critiques shows that this may hold broadly true for saints' lives as a genre. But the model is often extended to the whole Old Norse-Icelandic corpus. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's ground-breaking essay, 'The Dating of the Icelandic Sagas' appears to be only secondarily concerned

²³ Þórir Óskarsson, 'Rhetoric and Style', 360; Philip Roughton, 'Stylistics and Sources of the *Postola Sögur* in AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to', *Gripla* 16 (2005): 12-13.

²⁴ Widding, 'Jartegn og Maríu saga Eventyr', 134.

²⁵ Terminology has not been consistent in the academy since Widding introduced the term. The precise division between 'learned' and 'florid' varies, with some scholars using the two interchangeably.

with style as a criterion for its titular pursuit. Its three primary criteria are manuscript age, cultural references within the sagas, and linguistic evidence. But he discusses two other criteria briefly at the end of the work which are more aesthetic or critical: 1) the breaking of the illusion of reality by an author ‘eager to insert himself into the narrative’, and 2) an observable ‘decline of realism’ in later sagas influenced by foreign writings.²⁶ These are recognisable components of what Nygaard termed ‘perspective’, and the classification of perspective often descends into a hunt for syntactic and stylistic elements of learnedness as evidence for a later composition date or revision.²⁷ Einar Ólafur seems to assert, then, a model of development from popular as pure nativity to learned as a dilution of the saga-writing art form. This underlying nationalism is evident when he labels the decline of realism and the use of ornate language as examples of ‘bad taste’ and attributes them to the growth of foreign influence and a national moral malaise after the fall of the Icelandic Free State in 1262-1264, largely dating the classical sagas to the period before it.²⁸

His chronology does not lack nuance. It is of note that he makes an allowance that there are some classical *Íslendingasögur* ‘in which these rules [i.e., the absence of ‘learned’ elements] are more flagrantly broken than in others’, an important concession that we shall return to below.²⁹ He also addresses the fact that some of the seemingly more ‘learned’ *Íslendingasögur*, e.g., *Fóstbræðra saga*, may be among the oldest attested and therefore require the separate designation of ‘archaic sagas’ to indicate that they predate the development of the ‘popular’ style.³⁰ This contrasts the view espoused by Liestøl, that the saga style originated as a distinctive style of oral storytelling and that in writing ‘it is fully

²⁶ See Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas* (1958), and further discussion in Ármann Jakobsson and Yoav Tirosh, ‘The ‘Decline of Realism’ and inefficacious Old Norse literary genres and sub-genres’, *Scandia* 3 (2020): 102-38.

²⁷ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *The Dating of the Icelandic Sagas* (1958), see especially chapters XII and XIII.

²⁸ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ‘The Dating of the Icelandic Sagas’, 125-26.

²⁹ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ‘The Dating of the Icelandic Sagas’, 116.

³⁰ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ‘The Dating of the Icelandic Sagas’, 116

developed at the first cast. That is to say: it was fully developed when one began to write sagas.³¹ But his essential synchronisation of the popular-to-learned with progression of time, with the decline of the Free State as the key turning point, has remained ‘foundational for establishing saga dating practices’.³²

Ármann Jakobsson and Tirosh note that, when scrutinised, Einar Ólafur’s ‘decline of realism’ theory ‘reveals itself to really be a genre issue in disguise’.³³ They perceive a marked connection between the content of the sagas and the dates that Einar Ólafur assigns them: ‘The preconceived idea of what a “classical” saga should look like is used as a frame for how to regard the sagas. If the saga has a strong genealogical focus, if there is a clearly defined feud narrative at its centre, if it is tragic, compelling and well-written, then the narrative is a classical saga.’³⁴ They note further that, because of the discrepancy between the ages assigned to the classical *Íslendingasögur* (ca. 1250-1300) and the ages of the manuscripts that contain them (often the 14th or 15th centuries), Einar Ólafur and others likely dated the sagas more according to their style, perspective, and subject matter than according to the supposedly objective criteria that Einar Ólafur sets forth in his essay. It is possible, then, that saga writers living well after the fall of the Free State could have composed or adapted the *Íslendingasögur* to the ‘popular’ style because they perceived it to be appropriate to the genre. This does not entirely eliminate the old model of a stylistic development from simple to complex, as it may suggest that later sagas were consciously shaped to emulate the style of an earlier period, and, again, Bekker Nielsen and Widding do observe some of this evolution in the saints’ lives. But it shows that this evolution did not follow a simple or direct course. Too much emphasis on such a model draws attention away from the fact that style is the

³¹ Knut Liestøl, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, trans. A.G. Jayne (Oslo: 1930), 8.

³² Ármann and Tirosh, ‘The Decline of Realism’, 105.

³³ Ármann and Tirosh, ‘The Decline of Realism’, 107.

³⁴ Ármann and Tirosh, ‘The Decline of Realism’, 107.

product of decisions made by individual authors, however unknown they may be, seeking to achieve desired literary effects.

1. v Latin Learning in Iceland and Norway

To further evaluate style in Icelandic writing, it is profitable to examine the sources from which the Icelanders learned to write. No such examination would be complete without acknowledging Turville-Petre's oft-quoted dictum that 'learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it'.³⁵ Later scholars of both nativist and internationalist persuasions have found this quote a serviceable starting-point for discussion, since, *ex situ*, it can be construed equally as calling attention to or as downplaying the influence of the Latinate Christian tradition on medieval Icelandic literature. Curiously, though, Turville-Petre leaves one of the clauses in the first part of his dictum unanswered: learned models 'did not teach the Icelanders *what* to think' (emphasis mine); we might ask, then, if it taught them *how* to think and, if so, to what degree.

The literate culture of the Classical Mediterranean, sustained and transformed after the fall of the Western Empire by Christian and especially monastic culture, provided to the vernacular cultures of Germanic Europe not only the technology of alphabet and codex, but also a culture of education: the Liberal Arts. *Liberalis* here plays on the pun between *liber* ('free') and *liber* ('book'), for in aspiration these arts were meant to provide an education that enabled students to be free persons with free minds, but they are in a practical sense the arts of reading, pointing to a natural connection between reading and thinking.³⁶ This connection is most clear in the first three of the seven arts, collectively called the Trivium, which dealt

³⁵ Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature*, 142.

³⁶ For the connection between literacy and freedom, see Hugh, *Did.*, ed. Buttimer, II.xx.

especially with how to read and to think. Grammar primarily concerned correct speech and writing; logic or dialectic, discerning the true from the false through reason and argumentation; and rhetoric, the art of using language to engage in persuasion, ideally toward what is true.³⁷ These were imported together with many of the core principles of Christian theology, itself deeply rooted in the reader's relationship to text and narrative, the *logos*. Medieval Christian thinkers like Hugh of St Victor attributed a special restorative power to the arts, asserting that their purpose was to help restore lapsarian human nature to its divine likeness.³⁸ This cultivated a refined understanding of the written word and the reader's relationship to it, creating a definition of literacy that was far more comprehensive and formative than what we might call the technology of literacy, that is, the ability to represent and understand speech in writing.

The Trivium establishes a framework for comprehending the grammatical categories, logical structures, and rhetorical uses of language that reached beyond Latin instruction to shape the ways that learned Icelanders evaluated their own mother tongue. The four Icelandic Grammatical Treatises compiled together with Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* in the Codex Wormianus, AM 242 fol. (1340-1370), though designed for teaching Icelandic, imitate the structures of Classical didactic works. The *Háttalykill* section of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise (FoGT)* and the *Háttatal* of Snorri's *Edda* are likely modelled in part on Latin keys to verse forms called *claves metricae* ('metrical keys').³⁹ Óláfr *hvítaskáld* Þórðarson's (d.1259) *Third Grammatical Treatise (TGT)* is especially noteworthy, as its first nine chapters, *Málfræðinar grundvöllr*, are adapted from the first two books of Priscian's

³⁷ Hugh, *Did.*, I.xi

³⁸ Hugh, *Did.*, II.i. For further discussion, see Franklin T. Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St. Victor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009).

³⁹ For a full analysis, see Stephen Norman Tranter, *Clavis Metrica: Háttatal, Háttalykill and the Irish Metrical Tracts*, Beiträge Zur Nordischen Philologie, Bd. 25 (Basel: 1997); Margaret Clunies Ross and Jonas Wellendorf, eds., *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* (London, 2014).

Institutiones Grammaticae, and its next seven, *Málskrúðsfræði*, are adapted from Donatus's *Ars Maior*.⁴⁰ That he replaces Latin examples of stylistic ornaments with examples from skaldic poetry shows the utility that medieval Icelanders perceived in the Trivium's model for literary pedagogy in their own language. It is fairly well accepted that Snorri composed his *Edda* to formalise the teaching of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry, and similarly Óláfr *hvítaskáld* likely wrote the Third Grammatical Treatise for use at the school he founded at Stafaholt in Borgarfjörður in c. 1242.⁴¹ The structures of Latinate education were shaping the ways in which the Icelandic language was being taught and perceived. This may have been the result of a bilingual educational structure.⁴² But Óláfr Þórðarson asserts a mythological link between Old Norse-Icelandic poetry and the teachings of Classical rhetors: Óðinn, the god of poetry, came from Troy, and was from the same cultural stock as those who studied in Athens and in Rome. Since there was no need to teach Old Norse-Icelandic to the Icelanders as a new language, as there might have been for Latin, the grammatical treatises show that the Trivium impacted the study and reception of one's own language and its grammatical systems through the lens of Classical thought.

The adaptation of the *Disticha Catonis* (3rd or 4th Century) into Old Norse-Icelandic as *Hugsvinnsmál* (ca. 13th Century) indicates, further, an interest in making Classical thought accessible in and applicable to the native tongue. The fact that the Third Grammatical Treatise uses the phrase *kenningar Donati* shows that within the confluence of Classical and native linguistic concepts, foreign borrowings could also be received into native categories, in this case Classical *sententiae* into the native *kenningar*.

⁴⁰ Carlo Santini, "Kenningar Donati": An Investigation of the Classical Models in the Third Icelandic Grammatical Treatise', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1.2 (1994): 37-38.

⁴¹ Santini, 'Kenningar Donati', p. 38.

⁴² Santini, 'Kenningar Donati', p. 38; For an overview of educational practices in medieval Iceland, see Ryder Patzuk-Russell, 'The Development of Education and *Grammatica* in Medieval Iceland', PhD Diss. (University of Birmingham, 2016).

Turville-Petre's dictum is helpful for modelling a conciliatory approach to nationalist scholarly camps, assuaging fears they may have that too much acknowledgement of foreign influence jeopardises popular perceptions of Icelandic literature's uniqueness. Though I hope to maintain Turville-Petre's sensitivity, I also think that such a threat need not be assumed. To borrow words from Elva Johnson, writing about similar developments in other parts of the Latin-influenced world, literacy and its concomitant Classicism 'did not so much destroy local identities as encourage their re-orientation along Roman lines'.⁴³ Siân Grønlie's and Andrew Hamer's research on the diverse ways in which the sagas appropriate and reinvent hagiographic, biblical, and liturgical motifs in saga narrative further attest to the ways in which learned influence provided a wellspring of inspiration for native creativity.⁴⁴

1. vi Latin Rhetoric and Christian Homeliness

Jónas Kristjánsson's observation that Nygaard neglected the role of religious writings in the inception of Old Norse-Icelandic literate culture invites an examination of the teachings on style that were brought to the North with Christianity and Latinity. The Classical tradition makes a distinction between what is called the *sermo sublimis* or *sermo gravis*, that is, 'high style', and the *sermo humilis* or *sermo remissus*, 'low' or 'reserved style'.⁴⁵ The *sermo remissus* is concerned with clarity, succinctness, and grammatical accuracy, and is reflective of the teachings of the first stage of the Trivium, grammar. Among the Classical writers, it is exemplified by Julius Caesar in his *De bello Gallico* and *De bello civili*. The *sermo gravis* exemplifies all of the verbal ornaments and rhetorical devices taught at the third level of the

⁴³ Elva Johnson, *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 2.

⁴⁴ Siân E. Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017); Andrew J. Hamer, *Njáls Saga and Its Christian Background: A Study of Narrative Method* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

⁴⁵ For full discussion, see Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* IV.

Trivium, rhetoric, and features longer sentences and more frequent subordinate clauses. It is exemplified in prose by Roman rhetors like Cicero (d. 43 BC) and Cato the Elder (d. 149 BC) and in poetry – for poetry and rhetorical prose were equally regarded as forms of high style – by Vergil (d. 19 BC), Horace (d. 8 BC), and Ovid (d. AD 17 or 18), all of whose works were studied and emulated by those seeking to learn *eloquentia* long after the fall of the Western Empire.

The rise of Christianity brought about some handwringing among the Church Fathers over whether and how to repurpose secular teachings on style and rhetoric. Authors like Tertullian (d. ca. 240), Cyprian (d. ca. 258), and Lactantius (d. ca. 325) sought to distance themselves from the high style of ‘your Cicero’ and ‘your Vergil’, even as their own styles continued to reflect these authors.⁴⁶ A sharp distinction between high and low language, high and low subject matter, and, by extension, high and low individuals is presumably a part of what made Classical Rhetoric seem inherently pagan to the early fathers, for early Christianity strove to cut against the grain of Greco-Roman social stratification.⁴⁷

Jerome (d. 420), too, found high style distressing, and famously suffered a nightmare in which he learned that his penchant for Classical rhetoric was so great that he was at risk of being a *Ciceronianus* rather than a *Christianus*.⁴⁸ Because Jerome was a pupil of Aelius Donatus (active ca. 350), whose *Ars Maior* cautions strongly against the use of rhetorical devices in prose, we might well imagine the origins of his anxiety. Donatus’s warnings against a *sermo affabilis*, likely synonymous with *sermo sublimis*, remained common into the early medieval period and were propagated by Alcuin (d. 804).⁴⁹ Jerome therefore worked to create a style for his translation of the Bible that would appeal not to the high style of the

⁴⁶ Christine Mohrmann, ‘Augustine and the *Eloquentia*.’ *Études Sur Le Latin Des Chrétiens* II (1958): 353.

⁴⁷ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997).

⁴⁸ Jerome, Ep. 22, 30: *Ad Eustochium*.

⁴⁹ Jerome, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, Alcuin, *Commentaria super Ecclesiasten*, ed. J.P. Migne, PL 100 (Paris, 1851), 706a

rhetors but to the language of the common people, hence the name of his translation:

Vulgatus. But though he was never satisfied with how he finessed this perceived divide between secular and sacred style, his Vulgate provided an important exemplar for those seeking to learn a ‘Christian’ style.⁵⁰

His contemporary, Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), shared in the role of defining that style. In the fourth book of his *De Doctrina Christiana*, he sidesteps the older tendency to see Christian writing as something to be defined against the ‘pagan’ rhetorical tradition, insisting that if pagans are using rhetoric to persuade their audiences to believe what is false, then Christians should not hesitate to use it to persuade audiences to believe what is true.⁵¹ He repurposes the traditional rhetorical distinction between high and low styles, acknowledging Cicero’s encouragement that the rhetor align the level of his style with the importance of his subject matter.⁵² Augustine believes that though this alignment is appropriate in a forensic setting, wherein the distinction between high and low matters is important to make clear, it may not be pertinent in an ecclesiastical setting, for there all matters are of eternal importance. But this does not mean that all matters demand a high style. Augustine provides thorough advice for pairing style with purpose, recommending a restrained style for teaching, an intermediate style for censure or praise, and a grand style when moving listeners to action.⁵³ He acknowledges the Ciceronian model of aligning high and low style with high and low subject matter, respectively, and asks that the rhetor align style instead with the needs of his audience, informing his readers that a rhetor can speak about the same subject matter in high, low, or mixed styles.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Mohrman, ‘Augustine and the *Eloquentia*’, 357.

⁵¹ Augustine of Hippo, *De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford: 1995), IV. 4.

⁵² Aug. *DDC* IV. 96 quoting Cic. *Orator* 101.

⁵³ Aug. *DDC* IV. 104.

⁵⁴ Aug. *DDC* IV. 104.

His core emphasis for Christian wordsmiths is the union of *sapientia* and *eloquentia*, with the latter subservient to the former, as the Christian's stylistic aim.⁵⁵ While the old rhetorical tradition is useful for learning *eloquentia*, it is not necessary; a Christian could alternatively gain eloquence through immersion in scriptures (which naturally pointed future generations in the Latinate West toward Jerome) as well as works by non-canonical Christian writers.⁵⁶ When asked whether the Scriptures are just wise or eloquent as well, Augustine responds, *nam ubi eos intellego, non solum nihil eis sapientius, verum etiam nihil eloquentius mihi videri potest* ('for when I understand these, not only is nothing wiser than them, but indeed there is nothing that seems more eloquent to me'), which put an enormous emphasis on the biblical canon as a stylistic model.⁵⁷

The collected Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments show a tremendous stylistic variety. Though not all elements of style survive the translation from their source languages to Latin (on which more below), some do, and Augustine explores their variety as part of his discussion of style in the fourth book of *De Doctrina Christiana* (*DDC*). He cautions against emulating those biblical writers who 'have spoken with a helpful and healthy obscurity in order to exercise and somehow refine their readers' minds'.⁵⁸ But he sees several levels of style in the canon worthy of emulation, and he analyses these with the terminology of Classical rhetoric by providing sweeping analyses of high, low, and mixed styles all in Paul's epistles, as well as examples of low but eloquent style in the exhortations of the prophet Amos.⁵⁹ He goes on to observe high, low, and middle styles in the works of the early fathers and to note, importantly, that while they were plainly capable of writing in all

⁵⁵ Though this had been the aim of a rhetorical education since the time of Aristotle, *sapientia* had by this time been redefined to reflect Christian belief.

⁵⁶ Aug. *DDC* IV. 6-13.

⁵⁷ Aug. *DDC*. IV.vi. 25.

⁵⁸ Aug. *DDC* IV 61-62.

⁵⁹ Aug. *DDC* IV. 31-43.

three, they generally preferred the low style for its clarity and accessibility.⁶⁰ All stylistic levels therefore had functions within Christian society, but the *sermo humilis* was the true hallmark of Christian writing, making it what Erich Auerbach calls a ‘Christian aesthetic of humility’ that typified much of the Latin Christian prose of the Late Antique and early Medieval periods.⁶¹

Augustine’s emphasis on the low style was bolstered by the seeming predominance of low styles in the narrative portions of both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in early saints’ lives. That the Gospels especially convey Christianity’s highest subject matter in low styles was of special interest to the late Auerbach, who writes that the Gospel writers achieved a literary effect that paralleled the mystery of the Incarnation and of the sacraments: Jesus was God incarnate in the low form of a man; the Eucharist imparts everlasting life-giving properties, the body and blood of that God-man, through the ordinary means of bread and wine. This perception suggests that there was a spiritual dimension to low style that rested in its paradox. Auerbach terms this carriage of divine subject matter through restrained vessels the ‘sublime’.⁶² His use and further discussion of the term ‘sublime’ draw on a body of philosophical debate ongoing in his day that lies outside the scope of this thesis and is a potential source of confusion when used in the same discussion as the traditional Ciceronian terminology for high style, *sermo sublimis*.⁶³ Nevertheless, his observation that pairing high subject matter with low style creates a distinct literary atmosphere, one that conveyed spiritual *gravitas*, is important to bear in mind when examining the medieval perception of narrative in low styles.

⁶⁰ Aug. *DDC* IV. xx. 40.

⁶¹ Erich Auerbach, ‘*Sermo Humilis*’, in *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 51-52.

⁶² Erich Auerbach, ‘*Sermo Humilis*’, 41-42, 47-49.

⁶³ For a valuable critique of Auerbach’s use of the term, see Peter Dronke, ‘Style in Late Classical and Medieval Latin - Erich Auerbach: *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*’, *The Classical Review* 16.3 (1966): 362-64.

It is important to bear in mind the value that Latinate Christian literary culture placed on the *sermo humilis* when considering Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular writing within its broader context in the western European literary system. It should give us some caution in accepting Nygaard's association of high style alone with Latin influence as high, low, and mixed styles are all in evidence in the body of Latin works known in Iceland. Some of the better-known elements of ornament in the learned style, such as alliterative and synonymous word pairs, are also attested in the native poetic tradition, a fact further illustrated by the inclusion of native poetry in the Third and Fourth Grammatical Treatises. The relationship between learning and the 'learned' style, then, may not be a simple one. But the dichotomy between what the Classical and medieval western Christian traditions called the *sermo humilis* and the *sermo sublimis* closely parallels the dichotomy between the 'popular' and 'learned' styles that Nygaard and other scholars since have detected in Old Norse-Icelandic prose. With Classical teachings informing literary thought in Iceland, this is likely more than coincidence.

1. vii Style, Subject, and History

That Classical and Christian teachings on style influenced early Old Norse-Icelandic writing is probable. At least one copy of Augustine's *DDC* is known to have existed in medieval Iceland as part of the book collection at Viðeyjarklaustr.⁶⁴ Isidore of Seville promulgates Augustinian teachings on style in his encyclopaedic work, *Etymologiae*, attested in one extant Icelandic manuscript, AM Acc. 7Ms 140, as well as in booklists from Hólstaðr and Viðeyjarklaustr.⁶⁵ A Christian preference for low over high styles untempered by Augustinian

⁶⁴ 'Augustinus Aurelius (354-430)', *Islandia Latina*, accessed 4 February 2022, <https://islandialatina.hum.ku.dk/Show.aspx?Author=13>.

⁶⁵ 'Isidorus Hispalensis episcopus (ca. 560-636)', *Islandia Latina*, accessed 4 February 2022, <https://islandialatina.hum.ku.dk/Show.aspx?Author=35>.

moderation is asserted by Donatus in his *Ars Maior* which, as we saw above, was one of the sources for the Third Grammatical Treatise, and the often high style associated with the *sententiae* taught in the *Disticha Catonis* is evident in *Hugsvinnsmál*. This body of thought played a substantial enough role in forming the educational practices and Latin literature of the day that the fingerprints of the Classical teachings on style can reasonably be assumed to have informed education in scriptoria even when its best-known didactic works are not attested, both in Iceland and on the continent.⁶⁶ A body of Latin literature that followed broadly within the Trivium's guidelines would surely have modelled its teachings for Icelandic writers.

Early Icelandic hagiography's uses of high and low styles are not consistent with the alignment of style and genre that Nygaard and Einar Ólafur posit, in which high style indicates religious or learned narrative and low style indicates the authentic native voice. But they are broadly consistent with some observations of the Augustinian inheritance, for narratives of the 'popular' style, both in the classical *Íslendingasögur* and early saints' lives, reflect the *sermo humilis* in accordance with biblical and hagiographical models. Widding's observation that Icelandic adaptations translate their source texts accessibly and idiomatically accords with the aim of 'homeliness' that characterises the *sermo humilis* according to Auerbach. Contemporarily, the sermons of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books reflect the higher oratorical styles of the *sermo sublimis*, useful, Augustine says, for teaching and moving audiences. Since Widding and Bekker-Nielsen's studies suggest that hagiographical prose did roughly undergo an evolution from simpler to more ornate styles, this Augustinian division between high and low styles may well underlie stylistic variations in the earlier stages of Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular literature, especially in those works with an overtly spiritual or educational focus. There is likely some measure in which the

⁶⁶ Jón Sigurðsson, ed., *Diplomatarium Islandicum* IV (København 1857-1972), 111.

simple prose style of the classical *Íslendingasögur* is also attributable to Classical and Augustinian teachings. Here, we will examine some of the medieval thought surrounding the concept of *historia* and its relationship to the Liberal Arts.

1. viii History and the Liberal Arts

Despite Augustine's alignment of style with purpose instead of with subject, there is a degree to which a correlation between style and subject can be sourced to the Classical inheritance through the Trivium's impact on subjects other than language. Though grammar, logic, and rhetoric are primarily the arts of reading, they provided an intellectual framework that was applied to other fields. They were not only regarded as subjects in their own right as were the other four Liberal Arts, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music – the Quadrivium – but also as a series of lenses through which subjects could be distilled and analysed. Long before Hugh of St Victor, Isidore of Seville asserted that the study of history was a form of the study of grammar, if only for the simple reason that 'whatever is worthy of remembrance is committed to writing'.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, this, paired with the observation of the simple *sermo humilis* of the historical portions of the Bible helped to entrench a correlation between low styles, representative of the grammatical level of the Trivium, and historical writing. Low style, then, became the expected vehicle of *historia* in early Christian writings.

Hugh of St Victor, in his *Didascalicon*, helped to breathe new life into the study of history as a part of the medieval educational culture structured around the Liberal Arts. Grammar, he writes, derives from Greek *gramma*, 'letter', which would be *litera* in Latin, making the 'grammatical' reading of a text synonymous with the 'literal' reading, which Hugh also calls the 'historical' reading. Just as the grammatical study of language is

⁶⁷ Isidore, *Etymologiae* I. xli.

foundational to the higher studies of dialectic and rhetoric, so too the literal or historical reading of narrative, especially the Bible, is foundational to higher levels of interpretation.⁶⁸ These higher levels of interpretation, the allegorical and tropological readings, had, in Hugh's view, drawn too much attention from students who had not adequately grasped the literal reading first and had, therefore, failed to produce sound interpretations at the higher levels. Other Augustinian canons educated at the Abbey of St Victor in Paris such as Andrew and Richard followed in Hugh's path, reemphasising the importance of the literal or historical study of Scriptures by aligning the levels of biblical exegesis with the Liberal Arts. Different arrangements for that alignment were offered. Though Hugh likens the study of grammar to the historical reading of Scripture, he ultimately aligns all three branches of the Trivium with the literal reading and likens the Quadrivium to the allegorical and tropological readings.⁶⁹ Richard does the same in some instances, but also aligns each of the three components of the Trivium with each of the three levels of exegesis: grammar, like history, is concerned with the letter, dialectic, like allegory, pertains to signification, and tropology, like rhetoric pertains to both the letter and to its signification to persuade the audience to whatever things are suitable.⁷⁰

Hugh does not advise his reader on the use of high or low style, but in his discussion of the literal reading of Scripture he reaffirms that a concise style typifies narrative in the historical books of the Bible, and furthermore identifies the lives of the church fathers and the triumphs of the martyrs as other examples of simple style.⁷¹ Though Auerbach does not reference it, Hugh appears to foreshadow Auerbach's description of the sublime by saying that 'divine writings are like a honeycomb: they appear dry on account of the simplicity of

⁶⁸ Hugh, *Did.* II. xxviii-xxix.

⁶⁹ Hugh, *Did.* II.

⁷⁰ Richard, *Notae* II. 2-3.

⁷¹ Hugh, *Did.* V.vii; VI.iii.

their words but are full of sweetness inside'.⁷² These Victorine perceptions of history suggest that a simple style was part of what it meant for a narrative to be 'history', and that it expressed an aesthetic of holiness.

Noteworthy, too, is the fact that higher and mixed styles are in evidence in much of the corpus written by or heavily influenced by the Victorines. Especially noteworthy is Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HS*), one of the chief sources for the Old Icelandic biblical compilation, *Stjórn*.⁷³ Though I have not found any explicit reason for Comestor's stylistic alternations, I suspect that a hint lies in the work's title, 'scholastic history'. This is a form of history for the schoolroom, a text designed to help expound on history for students. Perhaps it was meant to be understood as an exposition of historical content and was therefore not history in the sense than the Victorines felt that the Bible was history, but rather commentary upon history. Its Vulgate quotations retain a *sermo humilis*, while its commentary selections veer into less simple styles, sometimes the *sermones mixtus* and, more rarely, *sublimis*, but often not demonstrative enough of rhetorical tropes and figures to be neatly categorised into either. It is more likely that this non-rhetorical but complex style is designed for explaining complexity. Perhaps the commentary passages were conceived of more in the light of Augustine's teaching on crafting language for teaching and exhortation in the *sermo mixtus*, while the truly historical portions were left in their historical form. Chapter 2 will be a fuller discussion of commentary and compilation practices and the styles that accompany them.

It must be restated that the pairing of the *sermo humilis* with *historia* existed without Victorine articulation and reassertion due in large part to the influence of Jerome's style in the narrative portions of the Bible. But its articulation in the Victorine synthesis of learning

⁷² Hugh, *Did.* IV.i.

⁷³ Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, Vol. 198 of *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1851), 1053-1722.

adds conceptual dimension to it by packaging it together with other components and applications of the Classical liberal arts.

1. ix The Sermo Humilis in Icelandic: The Older Páls saga postula

The earlier version of *Páls saga postula* (*PSP I*) comes from AM 645 4to. This manuscript dates from the first half of the thirteenth century and is therefore the oldest surviving collection of saints' lives in Icelandic.⁷⁴ Its provenance cannot be determined with certainty, but Holtsmark finds it reasonable to suppose that it may have been composed at or for the cathedral school at Skálholt, which had close associations with the Augustinians in the south of Iceland, a possibility that may have implications for an analysis of its style. It is also a reasonable place to begin discussions of translated style because it is translated from the Vulgate and, as we saw above, Jerome's Latin was formative in the development of the Christian *sermo humilis*. Its narrative begins at the ninth chapter of Acts wherein Paul encounters a vision of Christ on the road to Damascus. Kirby has described the AM 645 text of *PSP I* as being close to its Latin source, pointing to 'nearly verbatim' translations of Paul's speeches and to the fact that 'very little' has been omitted from the account.⁷⁵ From this analysis, he believes the AM 645 text is likely to be an autograph. Philip Roughton has pushed back against this assertion on several grounds. He shows that scribal errors are common enough to suggest that the AM 645 scribe was more likely to have copied it from a pre-existing Icelandic text than to have translated it himself directly from the Vulgate Acts.⁷⁶ He also disputes the closeness of the translation, pointing to the fact that some elements of its

⁷⁴ Philip Roughton, 'Stylistics and Sources of the *Postula Sögur* in AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to', *Gripla* 16 (2005), 7.

⁷⁵ Kirby, *Bible Translation in Old Norse*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1986), 87-89.

⁷⁶ Philip Roughton, 'AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to: Study and Translation of Two Thirteenth-century Icelandic Collections of Apostles' and Saints' Lives'. PhD diss. (University of Colorado, 2002), 163.

narrative structure are streamlined by reducing what the translator may have perceived to have been extraneous information, especially itineraries and other details of travel sequences and the names of minor characters.⁷⁷ Roughton also provides a detailed examination of the saga's omissions, some of which we will discuss.⁷⁸

Luke's already unadorned style, clear effort to convey an accessible historical narrative, and important position in the history of the development of a Christian low style make the book of Acts a useful text for discussing the *sermo humilis* or, when it is adapted into Old Norse-Icelandic, popular style. Luke's narrative even shares generic traits with the *Íslendingasögur*, making the text useful for further discussing the relationship between style and genre that permeates scholarly discussion of Old Norse-Icelandic style. Roughton notes that Acts, especially Paul's life, includes 'sea travel, criminal defence, intrigue and danger (the persistent attacks upon Paul and his often-times narrow escapes), and dreams and visions predicting the future'.⁷⁹

The narrative begins *in medias res*, a fact perhaps inconsistent with native works in the saga style, which might favour more genealogical information, but consistent with fact that this translation simply does not begin at the beginning of the Book of Acts. Character introductions, though honouring of their source passages in brevity, nevertheless take on saga idiom. In this the translator of *PSP I* follows Jerome's 'sense for sense' approach to translation rather than 'word for word'. Ananias's introduction in the Vulgate runs thusly:

erat autem quidam discipulus Damasci nomine Ananias et dixit ad illum in visu

⁷⁷ Roughton, 'AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to', 163.

⁷⁸ In comparing his findings with Kirby's it should be noted that in his thoroughness Roughton regards the saga's exclusion of those passages of Acts that do not concern Paul to be omissions whereas Kirby, who focuses on the adaptation of the Pauline strand of Acts' narrative, does not. Of course, both agree that they are not there.

⁷⁹ Roughton, 'Stylistics', 33.

*Dominus Anania at ille ait ecce ego Domine et Dominus ad illum surgens vade in vicum qui vocatur Rectus et quaere in domo Iudae Saulum nomine Tarsensem ecce enim orat et vidit virum Ananiam nomine itroeuntem et inponentem sibi manus ut visum recipiat.*⁸⁰

So, there was at that time a disciple in Damascus by the name of Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias’, and then he said, ‘behold, it is I, o Lord’. And the Lord said to him, ‘rising, go forth into the lane which is called Straight and in the house of Judas seek out a man called Saul of Tarsus for behold: he prays, and he has seen a man called Ananias coming to him and laying his hands upon him that he might regain his sight.

And in *PSP I*:

Annianias het nōqerr ungr sveinn i borgenne, oc vitraðez drotten honom oc melte sva: ‘Ris up ðu, Annania, oc leita manz þess, es Saulus heiter, i husom Jude, oc legg þu hendr þinar yfer höfoð honom, at hann tak syn sina’ (Postola sögur 216).

‘There was a certain young lad called Ananias in the city, and the Lord revealed himself to him and said, ‘Rise up, o Ananias, and seek out that man called Saul in the house of Judas and lay your hand over his head that he might regain his sight’.

The action has been condensed, and this can be observed in several ways. In word choice, the difference between *dixit ad illum in visu*, ‘spoke to him in a vision’, and *vitraðez*, ‘manifested

⁸⁰ Acts 9. 10.

himself', may demonstrate the translator's calculated effort toward verbal succinctness, showing how he took advantage of those components of Old Norse-Icelandic vocabulary whose semantic ranges allowed a reduction in word count from the Latin. Such moments where native idiom allows for both sense-for-sense accuracy to the text and succinctness are noteworthy but cannot be taken as proof of an Icelandic preference for brevity. Though Latin would normally allow for greater verbal concision than would the Germanic languages, this is not always the case. Jerome's introduction of Ananias, *erat autem quidam discipulus Damasci nomine Ananias* ('and so there was certain disciple in Damascus by the name of Ananias'), is represented by *Annánias het nǫqerr ungr sveinn i borgenne* ('There was a certain young man called Ananias in the city'). The idiomatic introduction, *het*, effectively represents both *erat* and *nomine* in a manner that is both accurate to the Latin and reflective of the language of the *Íslendingasögur*. What might be taken as proof of an Icelandic preference for brevity is that the angel's command to Ananias has been simplified: in Acts, he tells him that Paul has had a vision in which a man named Ananias comes to lay hands on him. In *PSP I*, he simply commands him to find Paul and lay hands on him. This makes the narrative more concise, winnowing the audience's focus to palpable actions.

Other narrative reductions likely stem from a desire to keep the audience's attention on Paul, now the titular character of the narrative rather than one of many early Christian figures seeking to expand the church. Though some of the narrative information may simply be extraneous, as Roughton posits, some draws attention to other characters. Ananias's initial response to God calling his name as it is recorded in Jerome's translation of Acts is *ille ait, ecce ego, Domine*, 'he said, "behold, it is I, o Lord"'. It is an important part of the structure of biblical narratives in which God reveals himself that the recipient of the revelation responds, 'I am here' before God sends them to do his bidding. It is seen in Genesis 22.1 when God first calls to Abraham and Abraham answers *adsum*. After his response, God gives him the

command to sacrifice his son, Isaac. In Exodus 3.4 when God speaks to Moses from the burning bush, Moses replies *adsum*, after which God sends him to Egypt. In I Samuel 3.4, when God first reveals himself to Samuel, the young prophet responds, *ecce ego* ('behold, it is I'). It appears in Isaiah 6.8 when God asks whom he can send, Isaiah replies *ecce ego*, and God sends him to rebuke Israel. The same formulation here, then, gives weight to Ananias's mission to Paul by establishing it as part of a literary motif in the greater biblical narrative. But the result of this is to cast Ananias into the missionary light that the now biographical narrative likely wishes to set aside exclusively for its titular character.

Roughton pays special attention to the tripartite structures of narrative episodes both in Acts and in *PSP I*, dividing them into a preface, a dramatic encounter, and a conclusion. He states that this is the standard structure for narrative episodes in Acts as well as in other biblical narratives (though he states the latter without further qualification), but believes that the omissions made by the translator of *Páls saga* allow the structure to be displayed more prominently and welcomes a study that would further compare the episodic structures of the Vulgate's narratives with the *Postola sögur* and to extend those findings to parallels in the *Íslendingasögur*.⁸¹ Though such a study lies outside the scope of this thesis, the perceived closeness of biblical and saga narrative together with the difficulty of disentangling the influences of the two makes the *PSP I* a good place to begin examining the relationship between Classical levels of style and the Old Norse-Icelandic popular and learned styles.

In the narrative of Acts, Paul uses his status as a Roman citizen to escape from corporal punishment nearly inflicted without trial, and his use of the *sermones sublimis* and *mixtus* – as analysed by Augustine – demonstrate the rhetorical education offered to Roman citizens.⁸² The result is a noticeable differentiation between the *sermo humilis* of Luke's

⁸¹ Roughton, 'AM 645 and AM 652/630 4to', 168.

⁸² Acts 22.25

narration and more rhetorical styles in Paul's speeches. These speeches are often placed at the culmination of what Roughton has termed the 'dramatic encounter' phase of narrative episodes as their climaxes. Their stylistic contrast from the narrative backdrop in the *sermo humilis* lends them emphasis and makes the climax of each dramatic encounter especially potent, probably more so given the traditional association of high style with moving speech. There is a degree to which Luke and Jerome can be credited with this purposeful stylistic variegation. But alterations that the *PSP I* translator has made to the Acts' style indicate that he, too, should be credited with stylistic purpose. Although *PSP I* is one of the earliest of the Old Norse-Icelandic saints' lives, the translator is clearly trained in Classical rhetoric, proving himself both to be an observant student of his source's styles, and a canny translator, varying his own styles between high and low to draw out the important role of Paul's speech in conversion. In this, he does not simply translate word for word or sense for sense, but style for style.

1. ix. a Paul at Lystra

As a missionary to the gentiles, the Apostle Paul is especially invested in the conversion of pagan peoples, and it is unsurprisingly to pagan audiences that he delivers some of Acts' most memorable speeches. For future Christian writers much distraught over the use of 'pagan' rhetoric, this evangelical use of rhetorical speech must have been of interest. Though the Icelandic translator of *PSP I* has chosen to shorten these, he has not done so without sensitivity to their style. In preserving their higher style, he has departed from conventional scholarly characterisations of the Old Norse-Icelandic popular style which, as Hofmann asserted, is known for its avoidance of long speeches and preference for indirect speech. The translator shows some awareness of the narrative implications of Paul's higher style.

Paul's speech at Lystra provides evidence of both the dangers and of the benefits of rhetoric. After Paul and Barnabas miraculously cure a crippled man of his disability, the Lystrans mistake the two evangelists for the Classical gods Hermes/Mercurius and Zeus/Jupiter, respectively, and begin to offer sacrifices to them.⁸³ Mercurius is associated with both eloquence and wisdom, the two traits that Augustine says that the Christian rhetor should aspire to attain and which Paul demonstrates in his speeches. Though he aspires to use these skills to persuade the Lystrans toward the truth with a rhetorical speech, as Augustine later encouraged, he and Barnabas still *vix sedaverunt turbas ne sibi immolarent* ('scarcely allayed the crowd from worshipping him') instead of God, as Donatus might have feared.⁸⁴

The Icelandic translator appears not only to have noticed this, but to have sought to draw our attention to it. Through the *interpretatio norræna* he has translated Mercurius as Óðinn and Jupiter as Þórr. Mercurius' and Óðinn's shared associations with language and wisdom are well-attested.⁸⁵ This alone would not suggest the translator's awareness of a shift from historical to rhetorical style, but it contributes to a picture of that awareness when taken together with the fact that while the translator has largely condensed Paul's speech, he has done so in a way that draws out its rhetorical flourish. Consider Paul's address in Jerome's Latin:

Viri, quid haec facitis? Et nos aetiti sumus similes vobis homines adnuntiantes vobis ab his vanis converti ad Deum vivum qui fecit caelum et terram et mare et omnia quae in eis sunt. (Acts 14.14)

⁸³ Acts 14.11.

⁸⁴ Acts 14.18.

⁸⁵ Simonetta Battista, 'Interpretations of the Roman Pantheon in the Old Norse Hagiographic Sagas', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, The Viking Collection 14 (Odense, 2003) 175-197.

Men, why do you do this? We are mortals like you, men imploring you to turn from these empty pursuits to the living God who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them.

The translator of *PSP I* combines this address with components of the following line from later in the speech:

Et quidem non sine testimonio semet ipsum reliquit, beneficiens de caelo, dans pluvias et tempora fructifera implens cibo et laetitia corda vestra.

Nevertheless, he did not leave himself without witness, doing good from Heaven, giving rains and fruit-bearing seasons, and filling our hearts with food and joy. (Acts 14.16)

Here, now, is the combined address from *PSP I*:

‘Hvi gegnir þat, er er gøret? Menn dauþliger erom ver sem ér, oc kennom yðr at snuaz fra lostom til guþs, þess er scop himen oc iorþ oc sæ, oc gaf yþr aetiti himne oc allden af viþe, oc fyllde heroþ yðor fagnaþar.’⁸⁶

What is the profit of what you are doing? We are mortal men like you are, and we teach you to turn from your sins to God, the one who shaped heaven and earth and sea, and gave you rain from heaven and fruit from the tree and filled the land with your joy.

⁸⁶ *Postola sögur*, 220.

Hvi gegnir þat, er er gøret? Lengthens its Latin source passage. This auxesis is not necessary for adapting Paul's question into Icelandic idiom. That it expands the Latin *facitis* into two verbs, *gegnir* and *gøret*, and, what is more, two verbs that alliterate, gives Paul's question more rhetorical weight. Another figure of sound apparent in *PSP I* that does not directly reflect the Vulgate's Latin is the use of homoioteleuton, the repetition of similar-sounding word endings, in *erom*, *kennom*, and *lostom*.

The translator of *PSP I* has condensed Paul's appeal, but the way in which he has done so shows his interest in some of its rhetorical structures. The apostle's address to the Lystrans includes two tricola, *qui fecit caelum et terram et mare*, ('who made heaven and earth and sea') and *benefaciens de caelo, dans pluvias et tempora fructifera, implens cibo et laetitia corda vestra* ('doing good from heaven, giving rain and fruit-bearing seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness').⁸⁷ The first is a tricolon of three nouns, *caelum*, *terram*, and *mare*, that together function as a form of merism, the use of contrasting parts of a whole to express that whole which, in this case, is the cosmos. The standard form that this expression of the cosmos takes in biblical literature – especially poetry – is only two parts, *caelus* and *terra*. In addition to adding extra weight by expansion, Paul's inclusion of *mare* alludes to the three-part structure of the creation story and, by extension, to its relationship to the three-part structure of the Tabernacle and Temple, alerting audience members familiar with the Bible or with the liturgy to the impending call to treat the cosmos as a space of worship. The second is shaped around three present participles, *benefaciens*, *dans*, and *implens*. The Icelandic translator removes several lines of text between these two structures and places them instead in the same sentence, allowing the tricolon structure of the latter to function as an echo of the former. One of its participles has been omitted entirely, and the

⁸⁷ Acts 14.14b,16b

other two have been translated into present active verbs; its tricolon structure survives instead conceptually: three physical spaces – *himne*, *vibe*, and *herop* – and three expressions of the blessing that God bestows within that space – *regn*, *allden*, and *fagnaþar*. Its reduced wording makes its tricolon structure more apparent, as does the fact that two of its three parts echo the first two parts of the previous tricolon, *himen oc iorþ oc sæ*.

The material that the translator has kept here is an example of what the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* calls *cosmographia*, in which the speaker *segir frá heimsins skipan, skapan, stöðu eða hætti eða setningu* (speaks about the structure of the world, its shaping, state or ways or design').⁸⁸ It emphasises the source text's appeal to the Natural Law, an apologetic practice that might not be a rhetorical figure in a traditional sense, but that is a crucial part of Paul's persuasion strategies both in Acts and in his epistles.⁸⁹ It is the theological basis for the concept of the noble heathen in both Latin and vernacular literature of the Middle Ages and could therefore have been of particular interest to the Icelandic translator of *PSP I*, especially as it is cast here as an appeal to turning away from Óðinn worship.⁹⁰ Noteworthy in relationship to this is the significant alteration that the translator makes to the ending of Paul's time in Lystra. Luke and Jerome after him lead their reader to fear that this will shortly become one of Paul's missionary failures: *haec dicentes vix sedaverunt turbas ne sibi immolarent* ('saying these things, they scarcely allayed the crowds from making sacrifices to them').⁹¹ Subsequently, a rival Jewish party from Antioch arrives in Lystra and incites a crowd to stone Paul and leave him for dead, after which he and Barnabas leave for Derbe for a time. The Icelandic translator omits all of this material despite

⁸⁸ Clunies Ross and Wellingdorf, eds., *FoGT*, 6.

⁸⁹ See also Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17 and the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

⁹⁰ For an overview of this concept in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, see Lars Lönnroth, 'The Noble Heathen', *Scandinavian Studies* 41 (1969), 1-30.

⁹¹ Acts 14.17.

its dramatic value. Instead, his narrative moves directly from Paul's speech to a description of the Lystrans' conversion:

En er þeir hófðu þetta melt oc toco (þeir) tru, er heyrðo orþ þeira oc sa iarteiner þeira...

And when they received that speech and those who heard their words and saw their miracles, they accepted faith.

This is unattested in Acts, which instead describes Paul and Barnabas *confirmantes animas discipulorum* ('strengthening the souls of the disciples') already present in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and *exhortantes ut permanerent in fide* ('encouraging them to persevere in the faith'), then appointing church officials on a return journey through Lystra in the following chapter.⁹² There is no reason that the Christian community in Lystra could not have come to include some of Paul's former worshipers by the time he returns, but there is nothing in Luke's text to suggest that it does. The fact that the translator of *PSP* I has extrapolated the conversion of the Lystran people from this description may owe to cultural differences: the teaming metropolitan areas in the eastern half of the Roman Empire in the first century were often home to various religious and ethnic communities. The idea that one of them could simultaneously be home to a Christian community that Paul strengthens, a Jewish community that stones him, and a pagan community that worships him could well have failed to cross the Icelandic translator's mind, and he may have thought it necessary for the pagan community described first to have converted in order for there to have been a Christian community to encourage and appoint priests for later. But this also provides a more definitive conclusion to

⁹² *Postola sögur* 220; Acts 14.23

this episode's dramatic encounter. That the conversion is a response to rhetorical speech illustrates Augustine's argument from *DDC* IV: the Lystrans have mistaken Paul for a false god because of his speech and wisdom, but it is nevertheless by using speech and wisdom that Paul persuades them to Christian truth.

1. ix. b Paul at the Areopagus

The Areopagus in Athens is the hill (*πάγος*) of Ares, a deity associated with warfare. One might expect the *PSP* I translator to have adapted the hill's name into a reference to Týr, who is conventionally associated with the Greek Ares and Latin Mars, but he has not. This could owe to the fact that the Areopagus finds its way into the Vulgate without being Latinised as the Hill of Mars and that thirteenth-century Icelanders and Norwegians were, as far as we are aware, unlikely to have known Greek. He has also not identified Athens as the city of the Greek Athena or Latin Minerva. In the place of the more conventional *interpretatio norræna*, the translator has resorted to the kind of false etymology that so delighted medieval scholars in the Isidorean tradition and drawn a connection between Athens and Óðinn. The city has become *Óðinsborg*, and the Areopagus, no longer a hill consecrated to a separate deity, has become the centre of the city's titular cult as Óðinn's *hof* ('temple'). *Acts* itself provides thematically plausible evidence for a connection between the Athenians and Óðinn:

Athenienses autem omnes et advenae hospites ad nihil aliud vacabant nisi aut dicere aut audire aliquid novi. (*Acts* 17.21)

For all the Athenians and those who had travelled there would spend their time doing nothing that was not telling or hearing something new.

And according to the translator of *PSP* I:

En Oþensborgar menn soto avalt snafðir til þess at fregna eþa spuria neckver ny
tiþennde. (*PSP I 221, 25-26*)

For the men of Óðinsborg always sought, keen, to ask or to hear told some new tiding.

We know from Eddic poems like *Vǫluspá*, *Hávamál*, and *Vafþrúðnismál* that Óðinn has a voracious desire for knowledge and wisdom, a trait that has traditionally led to his association with Hermes/Mercurius but that could as plausibly have led to an analogy with Athena/Minerva, also associated with wisdom, as it has done here, if unknowingly. It is therefore at the heart of a community dedicated to the god of eloquence and wisdom that Paul delivers one of his most famous orations, and the translator demonstrates the Athenians' interest in rhetorical language by including a rhetorical figure of sound, alliteration, in their request that Paul tell them his news, *vita viliom ver* ('we wish to know'), that is not preceded in Jerome's Latin, *possumus scire* ('might we learn...?').⁹³

PSP I's translation of the Areopagus speech hews closely to the Vulgate's. Though the translator shortens it as he has shortened all of Acts, he leaves more of it intact than he does of Paul's speech at Lystra or much of Acts' narration. It is likely that he perceived it as one of the saga's key dramatic encounters. After a preface in which Paul is invited to preach in Athens by Athenians, arrives in the city and interacts with Jewish and gentile inhabitants, he then begins his missionary oration. He appeals to the Athenians saying that he has seen a *stalli* ('altar') *er tignaþr ocunnom guþi* ('which was consecrated to an unknown god'), and he uses this as an opportunity to tell the Athenians about the Judeo-Christian God, who is indeed unknown to them.⁹⁴ As he does at Lystra, Paul uses *cosmographia* to introduce an argument

⁹³ *Postola sögur* 221, 13-14. Whether the following word, *hvilic* ('which'), would also have been perceived as alliterative is uncertain; Acts 17.19.

⁹⁴ *Postola sögur* 221.

from Natural Law, telling them that this is the God who is *drottinn himens oc iarþar, oc scop hann allan heim* ('Lord of Heaven and Earth, and he created the cosmos').

He then sets up a rhetorical contrast, or syncrisis (*σύνκρισις*), between the Christian God and the pagan gods: human beings are made by the Christian God (*ver erom hans scepna*, 'we are his creation'), but the pagan gods are made by human beings. Here we see how the translator has adapted Paul's rhetoric to suit his own tastes:

... non debemus aestimare auro aut argento aut lapidi sculpturae artis et cogitationis hominis divinum esse simile. (Acts 17.9)

... we should not imagine the Divine to be like gold or silver or precious stone, the sculptures of art or the reckoning of man.

Here Paul uses a tricolon of three singular nouns connected by *aut* – *auro*, *argento*, and *lapidi* – followed by a bicolon of two plural genitive clauses, *sculpturae artis* and *cogitationis hominis*. The translator of *PSP I* seems to have admired the tricolon and decided, once again, to double it:

... þa scolom ver eigi ætla guði glict þat, er menn smiþa af tre eþa malme eþa af hugvite sino, or golle eþa silfre eþa or steine. (*PSP I* 221, 33-36)

... then we should not assume God [to be] like that which men craft from wood or from metal or from the wits of their minds, from gold or from silver or from stone.

Paul's bicolon is adapted here into a tricolon. The translator has added wood, which might have been the most relatable substance for idol making in a Scandinavian setting. He has

relocated the new tricolon to precede the first tricolon and form a two-part catalogue of six materials, with the first tricolon connected by the repetition of *af* ('from') and the second by the repetition of *or* ('out of'). By increasing the idol-making materials to six, he has also chosen a significant number, for six represents material creation and earthly imperfection. What this emphasises is both the multiplicity and the insufficiency of materials from which the pagan idols have been crafted, and this, importantly contrasts the fact that God *gerþe einn mann or iorþo oc sette allar verallder, oc erom ver af honom oc lifum i honum* ('fashioned one [emphasis mine] human/person from soil and appointed him over the entire earth, and we are from him and live in him'). The pagan idols are made of many substances by the many people who worship them. Humankind is made of one substance by the one God whom they ought to worship.

The translator has shortened the conclusion to this narrative episode. In Luke's account, Paul's listeners display three reactions:

Cum audissent autem resurrectionem mortuorum quidam quidem inridebant quidam vero dixerunt audiemus te de hoc iterum. (Acts 17.32)

So, when they had heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them were laughing. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this matter.'

Before we learn of the third reaction, Luke tells us that Paul leaves the Areopagus, ostensibly in frustration both at those who reject his teaching and at those who are too slow to accept it. His portrayal of the Athenians always seeking for new ideas has built to their inability to embrace a new idea, showing that their love of learning is not necessarily conducive to them accepting the truth when they encounter it. Only after Paul leaves in frustration do we learn:

Quidam vero viri adherentes ei crediderunt ... (Acts 17.34)

But some men, adhering to him, believed...

The translator of *PSP I* has omitted those who ask to hear Paul's speech again:

En er borgarmenn heyrþo sagt fra upriso dǫþra, þa hlógu sumer men, en sumer truþo. (*Postola sögur* 222, 3-4)

And when the men of the town heard the speech about the resurrection from the dead, then some men laughed, and some men believed.

The result of this is a much starker contrast between those who accept Christian truth and those who do not. This is emphasised by a chiasm: in *þa hlógu sumer men*, the predicate verb, *hlógu* ('laughed'), precedes the nominal subject, *men*, while in the following contrasting clause, the verb, *truþo* ('believed'), follows more standard Germanic word order and follows *men*. There is also now no mention of Paul leaving the *hof* until he departs from Athens altogether. His relatable sense of frustration is gone, and we are left instead with the very clear conclusion that his speech has triggered a sharp division between Christian and pagan and that he is there to see it. Perhaps this is an example of what Roughton has called 'streamlining' the narrative, for the translator may have deemed those who did not accept the faith but wanted to hear more later as unworthy of distinction from those who laughed.

Even in this sharp dichotomy, Paul's missionary success is made clearer in *PSP I* than in the Vulgate. The final piece of information we are given is *Dionisius hofshöþingi toc tru*,

oc marger aprer men meþ honom (Dionysius, the chief of the temple, took the faith, and many other men/people with him').⁹⁵ This is only a loose adaptation of the Vulgate's:

Quidam vero viri adherentes ei crediderunt in quibus et Dionisius Ariopagita et mulier nomine Damaris et alii cum eis. (Acts 17.34)

Then some men, clinging to him, believed, among them both Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman by the name of Damaris, and others with them.

Roughton has observed that the translator tends to omit the names of characters whose roles are not significant, especially those of women.⁹⁶ Though neither Dionysius nor Damaris plays any further role in the saga, Dionysius is recognised as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church and associated with the sixth-century writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. He was probably known to Icelandic audiences. The translator has left out Damaris who, though a saint in Eastern Orthodox tradition, is not canonised in the West. In his retention and translation of Dionysius, he has made a substantial change in the narrative, for he is now no mere Areopagite but the chief of the Óðinnic temple. The chief priest's conversion makes *PSP I*'s account of the Areopagus address a much more resounding success for Paul than Acts' does, the group of listeners moved to laughter notwithstanding, for with its chief priest converted, the Óðinnic cult is much more effectively damaged, possibly brought to an institutional end by being transformed into an episcopacy.⁹⁷ The translator then switches his spelling of Athens from

⁹⁵ *Postola sögur*, 222.

⁹⁶ Roughton, 'Stylistics', 34.

⁹⁷ Tradition holds that St Dionysius the Areopagite became the first bishop of Athens. It is not clear that the translator of *PSP I* knew this tradition, but it is possible that he did and that his decision to recast Dionysius as *hofshöfþingi* was an effort to fashion him into a kind of pre-Christian version of a bishop. His conversion, then, would play a similar missional role in Athens to Paul's appointment of priests in Lystra. But it could provide further value on the allegorical level, the conversion of a pagan ecclesiastical order to Christian episcopacy being another illustration of the Augustinian principle of repurposing of the goods of pagan learning for Christian aims. The tradition of Dionysius' episcopacy is attested in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia*

Opensborg to *Apenisborg*, as if to further demonstrate that Paul's speech functioned as a kind of exorcism, the falsehood of pagan rhetors driven out by Christian rhetorical speech. The story returns to narrative and Paul's voyage to Corinth is narrated in the *sermo humilis*.

By selecting a text that features oratory so prominently, I hope to have conveyed two things. The first is that the translator of *PSP I* was not simply creating a slavish translation of his Latin source, but actively analysed its prosody to present both its historical narrative and its oratory with a studied accuracy that evidences his loyalty to the text in a way that reflects the educational aims of the Christianised Liberal Arts tradition. Though it grew and changed over the centuries, the Liberal Arts tradition educated both Paul and his Icelandic biographer, and the latter must have felt that reality keenly. The second thing I hope to have conveyed is the spiritual potency that the translator attributed to speech. Though this is demonstrated especially in the efficacy of Paul's speech to bring about spiritual change, it is also evident in the preservation of Luke's low-style narration. Now that we have seen high-style oratory inset into low-style narrative, we turn our attention to the inverse: low-style narrative inset in high-style oratory.

1. x The Old Icelandic Homily Book

As the forensic and political settings for which the Classical rhetors prepared their students – like the Areopagus – were less a part of medieval north-western European societies than they were of the Classical Mediterranean, the pulpit became the most natural place for the survival of the rhetorical craft. As a cultural change occurring across the Latin West, this development

Ecclesiastica III. iv. Eusebius's *Historia* was known in Iceland through Rufus Aquileiensis's Latin translation, which was a source for *Pétrs saga postula* ('*Historia Ecclesiastica* [opus Eusebii Caesariensis; translation ex graeco] // *Continuatio Eusebii Historiarum*', *Islandia Latina*, accessed 24 February 2022, <https://islandialatina.hum.ku.dk/Show.aspx?Work=69>). *Pétrs saga*, like *PSP I*, is contained in AM 645 4to. (Roughton, 'Stylistics', 7), which is some reason to wonder whether the *PSP I* translator knew of the tradition.

is already in evidence in Augustine's *DDC* which prepares its readers for preaching. But it is fully evidenced by the time of Gregory the Great's *Sermones*, which are among the primary sources from which those of the *Old Icelandic Homily Book (IHB)* are translated. The *IHB* offers some of the most pointedly rhetorical texts in the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus, reflecting Augustine's threefold aim of the Christian rhetor: to instruct, to delight, and to move.⁹⁸ The compilation survives in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15, and is also called the *Stockholm Homily Book*. Kirsten Wolf says that the Homily Book 'occupies a central place in the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature as being among the oldest monuments of Old West Norse prose'.⁹⁹ Though Jónas Kristjánsson and Widding believe that Nygaard gave sermons inadequate attention in the formulation of a dichotomy between and evolution from 'learned' to 'popular', he did use them in his formulation of the 'learned' style.

Many of the homilies are themed according to the major feast days of the liturgical year.¹⁰⁰ Though some of the homilies are translated from single source texts, many compile elements from multiple sources, among them the works of Gregory the Great, Jerome, Honorius Augustodunensis, Caesarius of Arles, Pseudo-Augustine, and Bede. The translators' freedom in adapting these sources has posed some difficulty for determining all of their sources with certainty.¹⁰¹

There are times when the homilies display elements of Latin syntax and times when they have altered Latin syntax into Icelandic idiom. In his 1983 doctoral thesis on the styles of the *IHB* and the *GNB*, David McDougall thoroughly catalogues the tropes and figures of

⁹⁸ Aug. *DDC* Lib IV. 96.

⁹⁹ Kirsten Wolf, 'The Icelandic Homily Book. Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 94 2 (1995): 288-91.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the way the book follows the liturgical year, its similarities to and differences with the Old Norwegian Homily Book (*GNB*), see Gabriel Turville-Petre, 'The Old Norse Homily on the Dedication', *Medieval Studies* 11 (1949): 215-18.

¹⁰¹ For an overview of the sources that have been determined, see the Andrea De Leeuw Van Weenen, *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, Íslenzk Handrit (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993): 7-15; for a thorough analysis, see D.M. McDougall, 'Studies in the Prose Style of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books', PhD diss., (University College, London, 1983).

Classical rhetoric that appear throughout both Homily Books.¹⁰² McDougall also documents examples of Latin syntax such as participial constructions, substantive adjectives, and descriptive genitives, which leads him, like Nygaard, to describe the homilies' styles as learned. Part of the reason for the Icelandic homilies' higher style and Latinate syntax is surely that their translators sought to be accurate to their source texts, but while many of these elements of high style are prompted by analogous features in their Latin sources, many others are not. What is more, McDougall also documents examples of stylistic features that appear to derive from native poetry rather than from Classical teaching, which shows some confluence in the reception of stylistic elements from foreign and native traditions that is perhaps not unlike their reception in the Grammatical Treatises. This careful imitation of select components of their sources' styles, innovative addition of other Classical stylistic components, and adaptation of others into Icelandic idiom, is probably more the product of the translator's conscious engagement with questions of style than a mere clumsy and slavish translation of his source. Though McDougall's treatment of the rhetorical language in the *IHB* is not exhaustive, it is full enough that it does not need extensive cataloguing here. The especially salient point that it makes for our purposes is that the homilists show themselves to be adept both at conveying their sources' rhetorical language and of imitating it themselves. The homilies, then, should probably be regarded as a distinctly Icelandic manifestation of what Augustine calls the *sermo mixtus*, a mixture of components of direct simple style and moving high style used for teaching and exhortation, and the translators or compilers of those homilies are actively engaging in creating that stylistic mixture.

¹⁰² McDougall, 'Studies in Prose Style'.

What follows are some of the elements of rhetorical flourish that mark the Homilies out as samples of the *sermo mixtus*. First is an excerpt from an untitled homily, possibly for Lent, whose source has not yet been determined:¹⁰³

Nu es comen tíþ su es þægeleg es guþe til yverbótar synþa vára. oc ero nu comner heílsodagar. nu scolom vér bœta oss i mikille þolenmóþe. (*IHB* 111. 21-23)

Now is come that time when it is acceptable to God to do penance for our sins and now are come the days of salvation. Now we must amend ourselves in great patience...

Note the anaphora in the repetitions of *nu*, twice used in *nu es comen* followed by *nu scolom*. The repeated present perfect construction of *nu es comen* emphasises that time has built toward this time of repentance; the third *nu* looking toward what will happen in the immediate future; *scolom* works together with the first two *nus* to build anticipation for the coming service. It is possible that this is the introduction to this homily, but Hans Bekker-Nielsen has also proposed that it is a continuation of the preceding homily.¹⁰⁴ If this is the case, the statement *nu es comen* is a repetition, too, of the same anaphora in that homily's introduction:

Nu er komen tíþ su at hondom er ver eigom alla nauþsyn til góþer breoþr at leiþa huga ráþ vart. (*IHB* 47v4)

¹⁰³ The Lenten identification is Bekker-Nielsen's, relayed by personal conversation to de Leeuw van Weenen. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993) 12.

¹⁰⁴ Personal correspondence referenced in Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, *The Icelandic Homily Book*, 12.

Now the time has come to hand when we all have need, good brothers, to lead to consider our condition.

Nu es viðtéokeyleg tíþ. Oc nu ero héilso dagar. (*IHB* 47v7)

Now is an acceptable time, and now are the days of salvation.

This serves to re-emphasise the arrival of the Lenten season. Though it is not technically narrative writing, the repeated annunciation of the arrival of Lent draws the listener into the narrative of the liturgical calendar, creating an important area of conceptual fluidity between narrative and exhortation that will become more relevant as we discuss exegesis and commentary in the next chapter.

1. x. a Scriptural Quotation and Expansion in the Homily Book

Despite displaying clear characteristics of Latin rhetorical teaching and seemingly belonging to Augustine's *sermo mixtus*, the style of the Icelandic homilies is nevertheless disputed. Finnur Jónsson, Fredrik Paasche, Kárel Vrátný, and Jan de Vries, for example, have all praised the homilies 'forcefulness' and 'homeliness', with Vrátný praising their *kräftige, echt isländische Sprache* ('strong, genuine Icelandic language'), leading them to classify the homilies as examples of the popular style.¹⁰⁵ These criteria, though, echo past assessments of popular and learned as subjective statements of good and poor taste. The homilies' 'homeliness' and 'forcefulness' could equally be attributed to Augustine's teachings on the

¹⁰⁵ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (København: G.E.C. Gad, 1920-1924), 930; Frederik Paasche, ed., *Homiliu-Bók (Icelandic Sermons)*, *Perg. 4to No.15 in the Royal Library, Stockholm* (København: Levin and Munksgaard, 1935), 18; Kárel Vrátný, 'Enthält das Stockholmer Homilienbuch durchweg Übersetzungen?', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 32 (1916), 45; Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*. (Berlin: Grundriss der germanischen Philologie, 1964-1967), II, 182.

uses of the mixed and high styles, respectively. Above we discussed some of Hofmann's criteria for diagnosing the popular style – vacillation between past and present tenses, sudden switches between direct and indirect speech – drawn from his study of the *IHB* and that these should not be regarded as uncontested expressions of native idiom as they may have been learned from Latin prose.¹⁰⁶ But we might further ask whether their greater prevalence in Icelandic translations than in those translations' source texts suggests that, if they were learned from Latin models, they nevertheless suited the tastes of Icelandic scribes and, perhaps, listeners, to such a degree that they effectively became more characteristic of Icelandic than of Latin style. Or perhaps more bluntly, did medieval translators view elements of Latin and native style in the stark dichotomy that we do now?

Hofmann's analysis of the *IHB*'s style as essentially popular is nevertheless more objective than are the analyses of Finnur Jónsson, *et alia*, and deserves further attention which, fortunately, McDougall has given them. Importantly, McDougall calls attention to the fact that Hofmann draws the passages he analyses only from the sermon's scriptural pericopes – which are narrative prose – rather than from the surrounding homiletic texts. In his own more thorough analysis of the *IHB* and *GNB* in their entirety, he concludes that the style of the sermons themselves should instead be considered 'learned'.¹⁰⁷ This stylistic differentiation between scriptural narrative and homiletic exhortation is surely part of what leads Kirby to ask whether the quotations may have been sourced from earlier, now lost, translations of the biblical texts.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps they were but, importantly for this thesis, it also suggests a differentiation in the prose styles of narrative and exhortation that follows the Christianised Classical inheritance discussed above: though the *sermo sublimis* or *mixtus* is

¹⁰⁶ Klaus von See, 'Das Problem der mündlichen Erzählprosa im Altnordischen', *Skandinavistik* 11 (1981), 90-91.

¹⁰⁷ McDougall, 'Studies in Prose Style', 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Kirby, *Bible Translation in Old Norse*, 42-44.

the primary vehicle for homiletic material, the *sermo humilis* remains the standard stylistic expression for historical narrative, even when delivered from the pulpit.

McDougall's analysis does not address the style of the biblical pericopes any further. Here we will address the *sermo humilis* as it appears in the homilies by examining a passage of scriptural quotation that scholars like Hofmann, who are proponents of considering the homilies to be popular in style, and skeptics like McDougall would both consider to be a clear expression of the popular style. It is the Annunciation from Luke's Gospel and is used in the Annunciation Homily. Here first is the Vulgate's Latin:

Dixit autem Maria ad angelum: Quomodo fiet istud, quoniam virum non cognosco? Et respondens angelus dixit ei: Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi. Ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei. (Luke 1.34-35)

And so, Mary said to the angel: How can this be, for I do not know a man? And responding, the angel said to her: the Holy Spirit will overcome you, and the virtue of the Most High will overshadow you. And so, the child born out of you will be holy, and will be called the Son of God.

And here is the Icelandic translation and adaptation from the Homily Book:

... En þa es gabriel hafði sagt þessi stórtíðendi mario. Þa svarar hon. Oc spurði hvesso þat métti verða at hon yrði hafandi at barni. Þars hon hafði óngo við carlman skipt... En engillin sagði oc brotsi at. At eige þyrfti hon at uga at hreinlifet hennar mynde fyr farasc við þan getnoð. Heldr myndi helgasc mioc. Oc fyr þui at eigi mon síá getnoþr a

þanig sem veralldar venia es til meþal carla oc qvena. [“]heldr mun guþs craptr oc heilagr andi coma til at vitia þín. Oc munþu af honom oc barns hafandi verþa. Nu ef þér es þetta of afl at trva sogo mini eíni saman. Þa mon ec segia þér dómi sogo til þessa. Þa es þu mun eige vita áþr. Oc þa es þu reýner at su es sæn. Es þér mun óglícleg þyckia fyrst es ec sege þér. Þa máttu oc trva at þetta mun sva epter ganga sem ec hefi sagt þér... (IHB 139. 3-22)

And when Gabriel had told this great news to Mary, then she answers, and asked how that might be that she might be having a child then when she had not had dealings with a man. And the angel said, and smiled, that she did not need to be afraid that her chastity might be destroyed with that conception, rather it would be greatly hallowed. And for this reason: that the conception would not be according to the world's way, between a man and a woman. [“]Rather God's power and the Holy Ghost will come to visit you and you will from him become with child. Now if it is too great an effort for you to believe my speech alone, then I will say to you this *exemplum*, which you do not already know [i.e., Elizabeth's pregnancy]. And when you find out that what will seem unlikely to you is true, then you will believe that this will come to pass as I have said to you.

What distinguishes this passage from other examples of translated low-style religious narratives like *PSP* I is that despite its syntactic simplicity and native idiom it is greatly expanded from its source text. Even McDougall is forced to call it ‘garrulous’, echoing past scholarly descriptions not of the popular style but of the learned.¹⁰⁹ Some of the greater verbosity in the Icelandic can be attributed to the fact that Latin often lends itself to concision

¹⁰⁹ McDougall, ‘Studies in Prose Style’, 13.

more easily than do the Germanic languages. But much is deliberate expansion, and these expansions feature few of the rhetorical devices of the *sermo sublimis* and few of the ‘learned’ syntactic features that we might expect of such garrulousness.

McDougall and Hofmann both comment on the switch in the Icelandic from indirect to direct speech, which both hold to be an example of popular style.¹¹⁰ Whatever De Vries may say about this practice having precedent in other Latin texts, we should allow that its inclusion in the Icelandic here without precedent in the source text in Luke suggests a taste for this device among Icelandic writers, and this may indeed indicate that it was an Icelandic alteration worth treating as feature of popular style. The syntax here is, for the most part, simple. Though the participle *hafandi* occurs twice, neither instance is prompted by the Vulgate’s Latin, and it is also not clear that it is a structural imitation of Latin gerundives rather than an Icelandic usage of the participle. There is only one prominent element of rhetorical language, the isocolon structure *Þa mon ... Þa es þu mun ... Þa máttu*, and this form of repetition might similarly be regarded as occupying a position of ambiguous origin in either learned or native writing, as isocolon is used in native poetry.¹¹¹ Alone, it is unlikely to be enough to elevate the entire pericope from *sermo humilis* to *sermo mixtus*. It is important to our observations here about the uses of the *sermo humilis* and *sermo sublimis* that the isocolon occurs in Gabriel’s direct speech to Mary. This may indicate that the translator meant to turn that speech into something more rhetorical to draw out both the drama of the angelic encounter and to emphasise its theological importance to the congregation. That the Icelandic reports this as direct speech while adapting the rest of Gabriel’s and Mary’s conversation into indirect speech draws out the importance of this portion of Gabriel’s dialogue, much as the translator of *PSP* I did with Paul’s missionary orations.

¹¹⁰ McDougall, ‘Studies in Prose Style’, 13.

¹¹¹ E.g., stanzas 76-77 of *Hávamál*: *Deyr fé, / deya frændr, / deyr siálfir it sama*; (‘cattle die, / kinsmen die, / you shall die the same’), in Klaus von See, Beatrice la Farge, Katja Schulz, eds., *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* I (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1997), 684-688.

When Gabriel first appears to Mary in Luke's Gospel, she is frightened, and he assures her that she should not be afraid.¹¹² Much of the expanded material seems designed to provide Mary – and, by extension, the audience – with greater assurance, detailing what it is that she need not fear (a visit from an angel being, apparently, insufficient). The first thing he mentions is that in bearing Jesus she will not lose her chastity. It is not unreasonable for Mary to be concerned for her chastity before she is married, but it is likely here that the homilist (or his source) is glossing a later Christian concern for holy chastity, itself greatly increased by the veneration of Mary, into the text where Luke is silent, as is further suggested by his assurance that Jesus's conception will not be as the world knows conception. The Marian cult is also alluded to in Gabriel's promise that her chastity will *helgasc mioc*, be 'greatly hallowed'. In Luke's Gospel, Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, tells her after the annunciation that she will be blessed among women (*benedicta tu inter mulieres*), and it is this reassuring meeting with Elizabeth that prompts Mary to deliver the Magnificat.¹¹³ Both Elizabeth's declaration that Mary will be 'blessed among women' and the Magnificat are common components of later liturgies and were almost certainly used in the liturgical setting for the feast of the Annunciation when this homily would have been given. By relocating this ostensibly familiar reassurance to this passage and placing it in Gabriel's speech, the homilist creates a subtle intertext, relying on his audience's familiarity with this line from the liturgy to create a more compact presentation of the Annunciation's theological meaning. It is likely also for intertext that Gabriel says to her, 'if it is too great an effort for you to believe my speech ...', a condition he does not present in Luke, which frames Mary's subsequent meeting with Elizabeth as evidence of his claim. He says that this meeting will be a *dómi soga*, which is commonly used as an Old Norse-Icelandic translation of the Latin *exemplum*,

¹¹² Luke 1.30

¹¹³ Luke 1. 42-55.

a narrative used in support of a rhetorical argument. We will discuss *exempla* further in Chapters 5 and 6. For now, it is sufficient to note that this links Elizabeth's and Mary's meeting to the Annunciation as a narrative continuation of a rhetorical argument, which is to say that Gabriel's speech and Mary's lived experience are intertwined, and, what is more, they are intertwined in a way that likely interfaces with the liturgy that the audience will shortly experience themselves when they hear the recitation of the Magnificat. The series of assurances and conditions in Gabriel's speech is given verbal weight by its presentation within the isocolonic structure *Pa mon ... Pa es pu mun ... Pa máttu*. This calculated narrative addition makes Mary's uniquely virtuous state clear to the audience in dramatic form.

All of these expansions are designed to clarify. Augustine speaks of some passages in scripture having a 'healthy obscurity' that should not be imitated by the Christian rhetor and that, in the homiletic context, requires exposition.¹¹⁴ This appears to be an act of exposition – or *efflexegesis*, to use the language of the *FoGT* – but, importantly, none of this exposition is on the allegorical or tropological levels.¹¹⁵ All, even the allusions to the liturgy, are glosses on the historical level. What is more, the homilist inserts this material in a manner that serves to develop the interaction between his characters: note, for example, Gabriel's smile as he speaks to Mary. Information that is useful to the audience but unknowable to mortals within the story is put into Gabriel's mouth as part of his reassurance to Mary, allowing the audience to be educated through Mary who would very plausibly have wanted this information, too. It is not put into the mouth of the narrator as commentary.

Traditional explanations of the popular and learned style might lead us to classify Gabriel's expanded speech as an essentially learned revision, both for the fact that it is a longer example of direct speech and for the fact that it includes the isocolon, arguably a

¹¹⁴ Aug. *DDC* IV 61-62.

¹¹⁵ *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* 20.

device learned from Latin rhetoric. But the adaptor's expansion of Gabriel's speech together with his alteration of Mary's speech from direct to indirect should slow us in making this judgement. It is more comprehensively explained by dividing the pericope into narrative in *sermo humilis* and oration in *sermo mixtus*, the latter used for exhorting Mary to virtue. This lends weight to the interaction between the narrative and speech, with its series of admonishments and conditions increasing the dramatic impact of Mary's virtuous state, an aim that is consistent with the definitions of the popular style but is learned in that it draws out greater theological meaning from the text.

The homilists' adaptations together take on an important theological distinction from other reduced low-style narratives. Without 'inserting himself into the text' through the narration, the adaptor of Luke's Gospel and Gregory's homily has expanded the biblical text with dramatized commentary that brings the fuller theological significance of the Annunciation and its corresponding feast day into sharper focus. Though his syntax is popular according to modern views, his incorporated materials show both his own learning and his homiletic and narrative aims. This is starkly different from the ways in which the adaptor of the earlier *Páls saga* adapts his narrative, for signs of connectivity to the larger biblical narrative are among the textual components he is most likely to exclude in his effort to focus on narrative action. Though the two adaptors have very different methods of increasing their source passages' dramatic effects, they show kindred literary means of making the drama of biblical narrative salient to their audiences in the low language of the *sermo humilis* and the oratory forceful by its use of higher styles, either the *sermo sublimis* or the *sermo mixtus*.

1. xi Conclusion

In this chapter, I hope to have built on past scholars' analyses of the low and high styles in Old Norse-Icelandic prose, but to have demonstrated that it is more probable that the origins of those styles lie in the transnational medieval reception of the Classical Liberal Arts tradition than in a dichotomy between native and foreign, pagan and Christian. Many of the texts that make up this tradition are known to have been studied in Medieval Iceland, and it is the contention of this thesis that their varied teachings on style offer a sophisticated framework for both the formal and conceptual analysis of vernacular prose style. This avenue for future analysis will also enable clearer analysis of stylistic variegation, the presence of which already destabilises Nygaard's dichotomy, for texts deemed 'popular' contain passages of high style, and texts deemed 'learned' contain passages of low style. In the coming chapters, we will encounter still more forms of stylistic variegation, but it is important that we see now that underlying that variegation is a sophisticated understanding of Classical rhetoric. This understanding encompasses both the formal uses of rhetorical structures and also the meaning that those structures have taken on through the intellectual history of the Liberal Arts tradition's development.

Whereas past studies have focused primarily on the styles of the *Íslendingasögur*, *konungasögur*, and the works of Snorri Sturluson, I have focused instead on early saints' lives and homilies. Recent trends in scholarship have emphasized the interplay between these learned texts and native compositions, which means that the previous tendency to focus on the latter has allowed this thesis to fill an important niche in enabling further comparison between the styles of religious and secular prose. But before such comparisons can begin, we will first need to examine other modes of style in Old Norse-Icelandic religious narrative.

Glosses, Commentaries, Compilations

2. i Introduction

In the last chapter we saw that a distinction between low and high styles in keeping with the Christianised Classical tradition is evident in the earliest Old Norse-Icelandic prose texts, and that in those texts this distinction between different registers of prose language can be used to mark shifts between historical narrative and oration. This distinction aligns with some of modern scholars' most important criteria for distinguishing a 'learned' style from a 'popular' style, but also destabilises them, by showing that Old Norse-Icelandic writers trained in the Classical tradition had much more sophisticated approaches to variegating their stylistic registers than can be accounted for with such a simple dichotomy. But even as I have stressed variegation, I too have so far only presented another dichotomy, in which a historical low style, or *sermo humilis*, is associated with narration and a rhetorical high or mixed style, the *sermo sublimis* or *sermo mixtus*, is associated with oratory, and there is a greater variety of styles in Old Norse-Icelandic styles than can be evaluated with this simple binary. What is more, our small survey was limited to early texts, whereas this chapter will look at later texts with more markedly academic leanings.

In this chapter, we will examine other forms of stylistic variegation in Old Norse-Icelandic religious prose narrative, and discuss the impact on that variegation made by the influence of glosses and commentaries. We will begin by returning to the *IHB* to discuss the use of the *sermo mixtus*, the style Augustine advises for exhortation, in tropological glosses woven into narrative pericopes. This will set the stage for examining a different mode of style, one that I will call the academic style, that is especially associated with medieval academic writings such as commentaries and compilations. For compilations based around

narrative materials, the primary narrative, or *originalia*, often maintained the *sermo humilis* expected of *historia* while commentative materials glossing it used the academic style to serve the purpose of didactic explanation. Shifts in style were therefore likely to accompany transitions between narrative and gloss, making stylistic variegation crucial to understanding the uses of the academic style in compilatory narrative works. We will therefore explore the academic style's provenance in the history of commentative and compilatory practices. This will be framed within a case study that examines *Páls saga postula II* (*PSP II*). I have chosen this saga because, in addition to showing stylistic variegation between low, high, and academic styles, its compiler also arranged his depiction of Paul's life in a way that makes the apostle's education and eloquence both a key theme and a key structuring principle of the saga. With this new structure, or *ordinatio*, *PSP II* is not only a commentary on Paul's life, but also a reflection on the restorative role that the Liberal Arts play in conjunction with Christian theology. This makes it an important text for gleaning information on the medieval Icelandic study of language that will illuminate our understanding of style.

2. ii Glosses on the Tropological Level in the Homily Book

In the last chapter we examined several glosses added to scriptural pericopes in the *IHB*, and each of these was a gloss on the historical level. As such, each was written in the same low style as the historical narrative to which it was added. But because the aim of the gloss, like that of the exegetical sermon, is to provide clarity to a text that might otherwise be obscure, homilists also added glosses to their pericopes that expounded the text on the tropological level for the admonishment of their listeners. The resulting stylistic need was for those glosses to use the rhetorical language that Augustine advises for exhortation.

David McDougall calls our attention to what he sees as a noteworthy exception to the general trend of maintaining low-style language in scriptural pericopes. ‘*Apparicio Domini*’, an Epiphany homily translated from Gregory the Great’s Tenth Homily in *Evangelia*, includes a pericope from Matthew 2.1-12, in which astrologers from an unspecified part of the east arrive in Jerusalem in search of a newly born king of the Jews – Jesus – troubling the reigning king, Herod the Great, who now fears a potential rival. He consults the local scribes who cite Micah 5.2, a passage prophesying the birth of a king in Bethlehem.¹ He then sends the astrologers to Bethlehem asking them to report back when they find him so that he too can pay his respects. In an exegetical digression not attested in either Matthew’s Gospel or Gregory’s Tenth Homily, the Icelandic homilist feels the need to explain that the astrologers could not see the star while in Jerusalem, extrapolating this from the fact that they needed to ask directions while there. The entire interpolation is worth repeating here:

Nu fara þeir, oc só þegar stíornona es þeir quomo ýr borgenne en þeir só hana eige meþan þeir vóro meþ herode. Afþuiat liós trúnnar sloenar fyr hveriom er gléope gerer oc snýsc til fiánda, en þa er hann fremr góða hlute oc hverfr til goþs, þa kycnar fyrer honom liós miscunnar.

Now they leave, and they saw the star as soon as they came out of the city, but they had not seen it while they were with Herod. Because the light of faith goes out for whoever commits sin and turns to the enemy, but when he performs good deeds and turns to God, then the light of mercy kindles for him.

¹ *IHB* 27v13, 25-28; Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Evangelia X*, in *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1851), Vol. 100: 76.110ff.

The passage briefly captures McDougall's attention because it contains the metaphors *liós trúnar* ('light of faith') and *liós miscunnar* ('light of mercy').² These metaphors are seemingly Latinate in their inspiration, but, as McDougall notes, are not present in their known source passages.³ Metaphor is a trope of rhetorical language and should therefore be understood to elevate this sentence from the *sermo humilis* to the *sermo mixtus*. The homilist uses other rhetorical tropes, too. The second sentence of the gloss demonstrates chiasmus:

liós trúnar slocnar ('the light of faith dims')

gléope gerer oc snýsc til fiánda ('commits sin and turns to the enemy')

fremr góða hlute oc hverfr til goþs ('performs good deeds and turns to God')

kycnar... liós miscunnar ('the light of mercy kindles')

The homilist also creates antithesis by presenting contrasting spiritual behaviours with parallel clausal structures in *gléope gerer oc snýsc til fiánda* and *fremr góða hlute oc hverfr til goþs*.

The surrounding pericope is otherwise in the *sermo humilis* expected of writing in the historical mode. Consider the brisk sentences describing the astrologers' departure from Herod:

² McDougall, 'Studies in Prose Style', 12.

³ McDougall, 'Studies in Prose Style', 524.

Nu fara þeir, oc só þegar stíornona es þeir quomo ýr borgenne en þeir só hana eige meþan þeir vóro meþ herode.⁴

Now they leave, and they saw the star as soon as they came out of the city, but they had not seen it while they were with Herod.

Even though the information that they had not seen the star while they were with Herod is a gloss itself, it is all contained in a simple style that would be at home in the classical *Íslendingasögur*. Consider, too, the return to narration after the exhortative gloss:

Stiárman fór fyrer þeim unnz hon kom yver þat hús er sveinnen var í. Þeir fognuþo mioc es þeir só hana. Ganga siþan i húset inn. Hitta þar svenenn oc móþor hans mario. Falla til iarþar oc lutu honom.⁵

The star went before them until it came over that house which the boy was in. They rejoiced greatly when they saw it. Then they go into the house. There they met the boy and his mother, Mary. They fall to the ground and bowed down to him.

The sentences are short; there are no recursive subordinate clauses. Noteworthy, too, is the shift from the preterite tense as the star is going before them to the present as they meet Jesus and Mary, adding to the dramatic intensity of encountering the Messiah and his mother. This is historical narrative in low style/*sermo humilis*, or the saga style.

⁴ *IHB* 27v13, 25-26.

⁵ *IHB* 27v13, 28-31.

For our purposes, it is important to note that the application of scripture being made in the gloss departs from the historical level of exegesis and moves into the tropological: a general spiritual truth applicable to the congregation's lives is being drawn out of the narrative. The Christian audience members are likened to the astrologers, their spiritual lives to the search for the young Jesus, and the faith by which they see to the starlight guiding the astrologers. Herod, who in plotting to kill Jesus is his *fiándi* ('enemy') and is therefore likened to the devil, who is also called by the word *fiándi*.⁶ Whilst consulting the enemy, the astrologers lose the light of their guiding star just as a wayward Christian colluding with the enemy might lose faith, described in metaphorically luminous terms throughout the Bible and later Christian tradition. The comparison seems forced, for nothing in the text suggests that the astrologers' visit to Herod should be interpreted as sinful collaboration with the enemy, and again, Matthew makes no mention of whether the light from the relevant star has indeed left them. But note that the homilist employs the metaphors when he veers away from narrative and into this interpretation which he uses for admonishment, one of the aims of the Christian rhetor in Augustinian teaching.

That a non-historical gloss, even a short one, should exhibit language in a higher style that signposts the shift away from historical narrative and into commentary reveals the homilist's care in distinguishing the different modes of exegesis much as they accord with the distinctions we discuss in the previous chapter. Also important to the forthcoming discussion is the stylistic confluence of this distinction with the distinction made between *commentaria* and *historia*, that is, the exposition of the narrative and the narrative itself. As the desire to gloss texts for better understanding develops into the *commentaria* and *compilatio* traditions, care to distinguish *commentaria* from *originalia* (of any genre) becomes one of the chief concerns of medieval compilers.

⁶ *IHB* 27v13, 25-28.

2. iii *The Academic Style*

In this study of style in religious prose narrative, the academic style figures most prominently in commentative materials, often providing a stylistic distinction between those materials and the materials that they serve to expound. Understanding commentative and compilatory practices will, therefore, be crucial to understanding this style's uses.

While previous scholarship has, for the most part, overlooked the style of commentaries, I argue that it is a mode of style distinct from either the high or low styles. I will call it the academic style. Modern scholars seem to some degree to have conflated it with high styles, applying the name 'learned' to both because they are both used in texts on learned subjects and because both feature syntactic complexity that makes them readily distinguishable from the cultivated simplicity of the *sermo humilis*. But the academic style contains few of the rhetorical tropes and ornaments associated with the high or mixed styles of rhetoric. Though it is syntactically complex, marked especially by the prevalence of explanatory relative clauses, it is used primarily in passages designed to explain, that is, *docere*, an aim that the traditional reception of Augustine's teachings aligns with low style, rather than *flectere* ('to persuade') or *delectare* ('to delight').

The style has previously been commented upon by Astrid Marner, who describes it as a 'middle style' in her PhD thesis on Grímr Hólmsteinsson's *Jóns saga baptista II (JSB II)*.⁷ I will not be retaining Marner's use of the term 'middle style' in order to avoid the danger of conflating it with the similarly named 'mixed style' or *sermo mixtus*. Marner's examination

⁷ Astrid Marner, 'Glosur lesnar af undirdiupi omelíarum hins mikla Gregoríj, Augustíní, Ambrosíj ok Jeronímí ok annarra kennifedra. Väterzitate und Politik in der Jóns saga baptista des Grímr Hólmsteinsson', PhD diss., (Universität Bonn, 2013).

into the sources and methods of Grímr's work provides an important point of departure, for *JSB II* is compiled from many different sources, following the practices of compiling texts together with commentative materials that were growing in popularity throughout the Latin West following the Twelfth-Century Renaissance. As scribes recopied important texts from the Classical and Christian traditions, those texts accumulated greater and greater amounts of explanatory materials designed to aid the reader in understanding the primary works, or *originalia*. It is in the *commentaria* that we are most likely to find the academic style.

What this means for our examination is that the academic style most commonly occurs in narrative sagas within an environment of stylistic variegation. The reason Nygaard and other past scholars have so often conflated the academic, high, and mixed styles into one 'learned' category could very well be in part because they observed all three styles at work in different parts of the same saga. This is one of the primary reasons I have chosen *PSP II* for examination here, for it features examples of the low style, the academic style, and the high and mixed styles.

2. iv *The Styles of Páls saga postula II*

The younger *Páls saga* is attested in fragments XVI and XVII of AM 655 4to°, dated to the thirteenth century, and in AM 234 fol., dated between 1330 and 1350.⁸ Of interest to our study is that it is also attested in the *Codex Scardensis*, or *Skarðsbók* (SÁM 1 4to), compiled ca. 1360 at Helgafell for Ormr Snorrason, giving at least one likely connection to the Augustinians and to the Victorines.⁹ This means that the compiler could have been shaped by

⁸ Lucy Grace Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*: Studies in Icelandic Hagiography', PhD diss., (Cornell University, 1969), 31; 'AM 234 fol. *Helgensagaer*; Island, 1330-1350', *handrit.is*, accessed 25 June 2022, <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/da/AM02-0234?lang=en>;

⁹ SÁM 1: *Postulasögur og máldagar*; Iceland, 1360-1375', *handrit.is*, accessed 25 June 2022, <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/SAM-0001/0#mode/2up>.

and acting within an educational culture that prioritised the careful historical study of the Bible using the intellectual tools of the Liberal Arts tradition, and this likely influenced his stylistic and compilatory decisions.

Consider Lucy Grace Collings's analysis of the style of the younger redaction of *Páls saga postola* (*PSP II*). She observes that the language and style of the narrative components of *PSP II* have an affinity with the earlier Icelandic hagiographic sagas, but that its extensive commentary and the amount of explanatory material exhibit 'clumsy construction' that could not be 'the product of a man who is skilled in the traditions of the learned prose'.¹⁰ This analysis of the commentary passages echoes Widding's analysis of the parts of *Maríu saga* that he uses to formulate his definition of 'learned', but her use of 'learned' here resembles Widding's use of 'florid', that is, as a style requiring literary skill and rhetorical purpose. This suggests that both the 'learned' and 'florid' styles as defined by Widding are, in Collings's understanding, expressions of the same stylistic aim but differing in literary quality. This presents us with two important criteria for beginning our own investigation: the first is that Collings has, as we might expect, observed a stylistic distinction between narrative in a simple style and commentary in more complex styles. The second is that there are two modes of commentary: one that is rhetorically refined and one that does not reflect rhetorical skill. We will take a short look at these three styles here.

The first of these is the historical style we might expect of narrative:

Ok þaa er þeir foru ferðar sinnar einnhvern dag, þaa bar sva i moti, at liós mikit kom yfvir Saulum, ok voru þeir þaa naliga komnir at borginni. Ok varð þeim otti at mikill,

¹⁰ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 209.

ok fell Saulus af baki allr til iarðar. Þaa kom raudd yfir hann af himni ok mællti:

‘Saule, Saule, hvat sækir þu at mer?’¹¹

And then when they were making their journey on a certain day, then it happened in their midst that a great light came over Saul when they had nearly come to the city.

And a great terror came upon them, and Saul fell from the back [of his horse] all the way to the ground. Then a voice came over him from heaven and said, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you pursue me?’

Apart from the preservation of Latin case endings, there are no stylistic indications that the style here belongs to any style other than the historical. What is more, it is a close rendering of Jerome’s Latin, which itself belongs to the *sermo humilis*. From the Vulgate:

Et cum iter faceret contigit ut adpropinquaret Damasco et subito circumfulsit eum lux de caelo, et cadens in terram audivit vocem dicentem sibi Saule Saule quid me persequeris?¹²

And when he made his journey, it happened that he approached Damascus. And suddenly, a light out of Heaven shone all around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul. Why do you persecute me?’

The compiler has added that a terror seized Saul and his party, and has specified the distance of Paul’s fall by adding that it was from a horse, but has not adjusted his source’s style.

¹¹ *Postola sögur*, 239.

¹² Acts 9. 3-4.

A rhetorical style, reflective of the *sermo mixtus* and the language of homiletic literature is used in a passage added to the narrative from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

Þeir men eru ebreskir, er onyta vilia mina kenning, ok þyrpti þer eigi fyrir því at trúa þeim betr en mér, at ek em ok ebreskr, hefvi ek þaa tignn slíka sem þeir. Af Abrahams kyni eru þeir, ok sva em ek, Kristi þjóna þeir, ok sva þjóna ek, ok þó at ek giæta *orðtaksins* nockuru minnr en hæfvi, þaa em ek þó framarr í þeiri þjónustu en þeir. Nu þaa alla luti er þeir hafva til tignar fyrir ættar sakir ok kunnostu, þaa hefvi ek til íafns við þa. Hvi skuluð er minar kenningar onyta ok hverfva sva í frá sannendum? Fleiri *þrautir* hefvi ek *þolat* í meinlætum fyrir guðs sakir en þeir: Ek hefvi optliga verit í myrkvastofum fyrir guðs nafni ok morgum meinlætum mætt ok lífs haska; ek var fim sinnum barðr af Gyðingum með svipum, þeim er *quadragene* heita.¹³

These men who wish to destroy my teaching are Hebrews, and you need not believe them better than me, for I am also a Hebrew, I have the same rank as them. They are of Abraham's kin, and so am I; they serve Christ, and I serve him, too; and though I guard my speech somewhat less than is appropriate, yet I am greater than them in that servitude. Now all things which they have concerning their inheritance for their family's sake and knowledge, I have equally with them. Why should those who tear down my teachings turn so against truth? I had more struggles and persevered through tribulations for God's sake than they: I have been frequently in dungeons for God's name and met many troubles and perils to my life; and I was five times beaten by the Jews with whips, that kind which are called *quadragene*.

¹³ *Postola sögur*, 265; derived from II Cor. 11.

Importantly, this is one of the same passages that Augustine analyses in his teachings on the appropriate use of higher and mixed styles in *DDC IV*.¹⁴ It is likely that the compiler was familiar with *DDC* and selected the passage because of its importance in the historic Christian reformulation of Classical rhetoric, perhaps expecting his audiences to be familiar with it.

Paul establishes his equivalence with his rivals through a series of parallelisms - *Af Abrahams kyni eru þeir, ok sva em ek, Kristi þiona þeir, ok sva þiona ek* – before introducing his paradoxical superiority through servitude: *þaa em ek þo framarr i þeiri þionostu en þeir*. It is noteworthy that the compiler has introduced this reversal with Paul downplaying his care with words – *ok þo at ek giæta orðtaksins nockuru minnr en hæfyi* – for this is not a strict interpretation of the Vulgate’s *minus sapiens dico* (‘I speak as one less wise’).¹⁵ Speech is evident in the Vulgate in the verb *dico*, yet the *PSP II* compiler elevates and transforms its importance into a comparison of Paul’s oratorical abilities with those of his detractors rather than a comparison of their wisdom. This interpolation suits his purpose: the close association of eloquence with wisdom is a traditional part of rhetorical teaching. Here it may have been inspired by Augustine’s commentary on the passage:

Sed comes sapientiae, dux eloquentiae, illam sequens, istam praecedens et sequentem non respuens.¹⁶

But wisdom is his comrade, eloquence his leader; as he pursues the first, the second accompanies him, and he does not spurn it when it pursues him.

¹⁴ Aug. *DDC IV*. 13-14.

¹⁵ II Cor. 11.23.

¹⁶ Aug. *DDC IV*. 12.

This may have encouraged the *PSP* II compiler to substitute a description of eloquence for Paul's (via Jerome's) description of wisdom. It may also be justified by II Corinthians 11.6 where Paul writes that he is *imperitus sermone* ('unskilled in speech'), though there he compares himself with the other apostles rather than false teachers.

The academic style is the one that Widding and Collings attribute to clumsiness, lack of skill, or (Widding only) to rigid translation of Latin sources. Perhaps these accusations are fair. It is, at least, neither as influenced by the tropes and figures of Classical teaching as are the more rhetorical styles of the homilies nor as clearly intending to create the refined simplicity of the *sermo humilis* or saga style. But it is important that we note its purpose. Where the *sermo humilis* is used for narrative and the rhetorical style for exhortation, this style is used for explanation. Consider the following:

En þeir skyra sva, at i tvenningu se paradisus, su aunnur, er þessa heims er ok Adam var i settr, ok er þat land, er liggr í austrvegi, ok sva nauckuru hatt sem tungl gengr. En siðan er Adam var aa brutt rekinn þaðan, þa setti guð engil sinn til at varðveita þann stað, sva at engi kæmiz þann veg, ok visar sva til, sem engill hefði brugðit sverð i hendi. En þat er sva at skilia, at sverð þat er ecki annat en hitar þeir, er menn megu eigi komaz þangat. En þat er sva er sagt, at engill se með brugðnu sverði, þaa er liking samandregin elldzins ok sverðzins.¹⁷

But they mean this, that Paradise means two things: there is one which is of this world and in which Adam was set, and it is the land that lies in the east, and [stretches] as high as the moon goes. But since Adam was expelled from there, God sent his angel

¹⁷ *Postola sögur*, 268-9.

to guard that place, so that no one might come that way, and this is indicated by the fact that it is as if an angel had a drawn sword in his hand. But it is important to understand that the sword is nothing but the heat by which men cannot enter there. But when it is said that the angel has a drawn sword, then an analogy is drawn between fire and the sword.

The compiler provides the various meanings that can be assigned to the word *paradisus* in a broader discussion of medieval cosmography, itself prompted by a discursus on the possibility that Paul may have been taken up into heaven fourteen years before his final voyage to Rome and martyrdom. Though this cosmographical detour includes historical information, it is not presented in the mode of history, that is, narrative. It is instead offered up as theological explanation. Vocabulary like *skyra*, *visar*, and *skilja* all indicate the compiler's desire to express conceptual precision. The grammatical constructions that some scholars see as clumsy, then, are in fact designed to be much the opposite:

Sa maðr er sverð hefir i hendi, þa ma hann stundum sliðra sverðit, en stundum bregða því; ok sva eru ok hitar, þeir er þangat eru, at þa er Enok ok Elias foru i paradisum, þa var sem engill sliðraði sverðit, er þeir kendu ecki hitans af guðs fyrirhyggju, en þa er sem engill bregði sverðinu, er engi ma annarra þangat komaz, nema þeir.¹⁸

That man who has a sword in his hand, he may sometimes sheathe the sword, but sometimes he may draw it; and so too are those heats which are there, so that when Enoch and Elias went to paradise, it was like an angel sheathed the sword when they

¹⁸ *Postola sögur*, 269.

did not feel the heat by God's forethought, but it is like an angel unsheathed the sword when no other might come into that place except they.

Notice the re-statement of the subject in the presentation of the sword-wielding man at the beginning of this excerpt. The subject initially is *sa maðr* ('that man'), but this nominative noun governs no active verb. Its function is primarily to act as antecedent for the following relative clause (*er sverð hefir i hendi*) and for the main clause of the sentence, *ma hann stundum sliðra sverðit*, in which the subject is the pronoun *hann*. A similarly repetitive structure is used to compare the heats to the angel's sword: *sva eru ok hitar* could be followed simply by *er þangat eru*, but instead the compiler begins a new clause repeating the subject through the pronoun *þeir*. This is grammatically unnecessary in both Old Norse-Icelandic and in Latin and is likely done to provide precision.¹⁹

Note, too, although many passages in the academic style may owe some syntactic features to literal translation, this passage is translated neither from Acts nor from *PSP II*'s other main source, the *Historia Actuum Apostolorum*. Though it may be translated from an unknown source, it is also possible that it is the compiler's own composition. If this is the case, its use of recursive clauses is not simply the product of translation but of imitation of the style perceived to result from translation. Learned commentators may have found that the precision of academic Latin offered grammatical features well-suited to expounding the complexity of theological subject matter. For the purposes of our discussion, it is important that we reassert two things: one is that the academic style is a stylistic register that is distinct from the high and mixed styles of exhortation. The second is that, although it is more complex than the *sermo humilis*, the purpose of the academic style is nevertheless to instruct, *docere*. This

¹⁹ These constructions bear a striking resemblance to copula sentences in Middle Irish prose, so an unknown Hiberno-Latin source should not be ruled out.

is important, because the *PSP II*'s literary priority is to present Paul's life as an object of historical and theological study more than an object of spiritual imitation. When the compiler employs rhetorical styles, he does so where it best suits his literary purpose.

I will be arguing that one of *PSP II*'s main literary themes is Paul's learning, which it presents through references to the Trivium. We know that Hugh of St Victor saw the Liberal Arts as restorative, so Paul's development in eloquence and in wisdom interplays with his development in sanctity as he grows from persecutor of the church to apostle to martyr. The compiler has made conscious stylistic decisions to reflect the relationship of different modes of speech to different stages of learning, making *PSP II* a useful saga not only for seeing different styles at work in the same text, but also for gleaning appreciation for how medieval compilers reflected on those styles' relationship to learning. This is a departure from *PSP II*'s known sources and may reflect the Icelandic compiler's own compilation strategy.

In order to better understand the uses of multiple styles in a compiled work, we will first examine some of the currents of thought that informed compilatory practices. Because the academic style is especially common in glosses, we will find that stylistic variegation is closely related to the way that compilers structured their works. Until now, our discussion of the influence of the Trivium and other Christianised Classical educational practices on the styles of Old Norse-Icelandic prose has led us to look primarily at the simplicity or complexity of sentences, as well as the uses of rhetorical tropes of language. Our discussion of *compilatio* will require a fuller examination of the influence that Latinate educational practices had on style by understanding their relationships to structure.

2. *v Glosses and Authorities*

Medieval compilations grew out of the pre-existing practice of glossing texts to clarify passages that the reader might find obscure. We saw in the last chapter that Augustine cautioned the Christian orator against imitating the style of obscure passages of scripture, recommending, where necessary, a *sermo mixtus* in order to be clear and understandable.²⁰ The Carthaginian bishop's discussions of scripture's obscurities and the orator's responsibility toward clarity in language is echoed in commentators' justifications for offering exposition of obscure passages through glosses. Consider this passage from Grímur Hólmsteinsson's introduction to *JSB* II:

I annan stad truda ek, ef óbockfrodir menn heyrdi hans hin fögru blom ok hinar *myrku figurur*, at þeim mundu þær a þa leid onytsamar, sem gimsteinar ero svinum...²¹

[Emphasis added.]

Additionally, I believe that if unlearned men heard his fair blooms and obscure figures, to them they should be useless in the same way as gemstones are to pigs...

And this from the preface to *Stjórn* I:

Spa manna bekr ok postolanna ritningar verða morgum sua *myrkar ok vskilianlegar* sem þær se meðr nökkrum þokum eðr skyflókum skygðar ok hulðar. Enn þa uerða þær uel skiliandum monnum sua sem nytsamligt sannleiks skúr ef þær eru meðr margfalldri ok uitlegri tracteran talaðar ok skynsamlega skyrðar.²² [Emphasis added.]

²⁰ Aug. *DDC* IV 61-62

²¹ *Postola sögur*, 849.

²² Astås, ed., *Stjórn*, 46.

Wise men's books and the writings of the apostles will be murky and indecipherable to many, as if overshadowed and hidden with mists or packs of clouds. But to well-understanding men, they will be like a useful shower of truth if they are told with manifold and wise treatment and sensibly explained.

Though Einar Ólafur Sveinsson asserts that learned writers are guilty of 'inserting themselves into the narrative', it is important that we note that often it is not, in fact, themselves that they are inserting, but sources they deem to be authoritative. Najork draws our attention to the following introductory formulae used in *Mariu saga* and in *JSB II*: *skýra*, 'to explain', *skýring*, 'interpretation', *merkja*, 'to signify', *merking*, 'signification', *glosa*, 'to gloss', *glosur*, 'glosses'.²³ Glosses drawn from other sources are marked out with citations. *Stjórn I* uses such citations as *sem hinn heilagi Gregorius pávi segir* ('as the saint Pope Gregory says...'), *fra Augustino* ('from Augustine:'), or *sua segir Josephus* ('so says Josephus...').²⁴

A full study of the importance that medieval scholars placed on appealing to and properly ranking the *auctoritas* ('authority') of their sources is too great a discussion to include in this thesis, but several comments are worth making. The practice of appealing to authoritative figures, *auctores*, to strengthen one's argument was a part of the Classical rhetorical tradition from the time of Aristotle, if not earlier.²⁵ We can see similar appeals made in early Old Norse-Icelandic works. Ari Þorgilsson, in his *Íslendingabók*, appeals to the estimations of Teitr Ísleifsson, *þess manns es ek kunna spakastan* ('who of the men I know is the wisest'), Þorkell Gellisson, *es langt munði fram* ('who remembered a long way into the past'), and Þóriðr Snorradóttir, *es bæði vas margspök ok óljúgfróð* ('who was both greatly

²³ Najork, '*Mariu saga*' in *Context*, 78.

²⁴ *Stjórn*, 230, 231, 66.

²⁵ Alastair J. Minnis, 'Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the Compiler', *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Sprache Und Literatur* 101 3 (Tübingen: 1979), 387.

learned and not inaccurate’), citing his sources in a manner not dissimilar to Gospel writers.²⁶

In a Christian setting, such citations not only attest to the veracity of historical or theological claims, but also serve to demonstrate the compiler’s humility.

Scholars therefore paid meticulous attention to discerning, defending, and ranking the trustworthiness of sources. In the Old Norse-Icelandic context, we can see this concern reflected in Snorri Sturluson’s ranking of his sources:

Þvi var eigi undarligt, at Ari væri sannfróðr at fornum tíðendum bæði hér ok útan lands, at hann hafði numit at gömlum mönnum ok vitrum, en var sjálfr námngjarn ok minnigr. En kvæðin þykkja mér sízt ór stað færð, ef þau eru rétt kveðin ok skynsamliga upp tekin.²⁷

It is no wonder that Ari [Þorgilsson] was well-informed of old events both here and in foreign lands, that he had acquired from old and wise men, and he himself was eager to learn and had a good memory. But the poems seem to me least corrupted if they are composed rightly and understood wisely.

Snorri’s interest in authority reflects the same preoccupation held by wider medieval European society. Notice first that Ari’s character is cited as part of the defence of his authority: *var sjálfr námngjarn ok minnigr*. Notice, too, that poetry’s perceived antiquity grants its use within prosimetra a weight of authority not dissimilar to that of the glosses on texts from the broader European literary world.

²⁶ Ari Þorgilsson, *Íslendingabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Reykjavík: Íslensk fórnritafélag, 1968), 4.

²⁷ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (Reykjavík: Íslensk fórnritafélag, 1941), 7.

This concern for authority is perhaps most evident in discussions of the canonicity of the biblical books and other theological sources. The question of whether those books included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible were scriptural, for example, was not settled. Whereas Augustine acknowledged the authority of all of the books of the Septuagint, Jerome, in his *Prologus Galeatus*, advocated limiting the canon of the Old Testament only to those works attested in the Hebrew Bible.²⁸ Hugh of St Victor responded to this debate granting them authority but not canonicity, asserting that they ‘do contain some truth’ despite their ‘many errors’, therefore ranking them below the canonical scriptures.²⁹ Some modern scholars have interpreted Hugh’s understanding of the church fathers’ authority as granting them canonical status, though this is contested.³⁰ Rankings of authorities can become complex and involve both the question of who has greater authority and the question of whose authority is necessary for understanding other authorities.³¹ Because we have limited our discussion to narrative, we need engage only with a sliver of this debate. In addition to history having pre-eminence over other forms of interpretation (seen in our last chapter), the biblical text takes pre-eminence over other sources of historical materials. Other sources, whether the doctors of the church who comment upon scripture or pagan philosophers whose wisdom – gained through the Natural Law – is helpful for interpreting scripture, derive their authority subsidiarily to truth as revealed in scripture.

2. vi *Compilatio*

²⁸ Franklin T. Harkins and Frans van Liere, *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 38-39.

²⁹ Hugh, *Did.* IV.7.

³⁰ See *Script.* 6 and discussion in Harkins and van Liere, *Interpretation of Scriptures*, 38-41.

³¹ For the latter, see especially Godfrey of St Victor, *The Fountain of Philosophy*, translation in *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory*, 371-426.

The accrual of greater amounts of glossed materials to assist readers in understanding *originalia* led to the development of the medieval *compilatio*. The aim of the *compilatio* is to provide ready access to a pastiche of authoritative thought for readers who might not be able to access those writers' works in full. Though compiled texts were made in the ancient and late antique periods, the practice came to flourish especially in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance and to play an important role in medieval education. Alastair Minnis writes:

When reading the prologue to a major compilation (such as the *Speculum maius* of Vincent of Beauvais, the *De Proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus or the *Communiloquium* of John of Wales) one is immediately struck by the extent to which the writer is conscious both of his special literary activity and of his distinctive literary role or stance as *compilator*. Whereas an *auctor* was regarded as someone whose writings had considerable *auctoritas* ('authority') and who bore the full responsibility for what he had written, the *compilator* roundly disclaimed responsibility for what he had merely reported or repeated (the usual verb is *recitare*) from his sources, the works of *auctores*.³²

This prioritisation of the *auctores*' responsibility over the compiler's is an important facet of the *compilatio*, but it should not blind us to the enormous control over the content and reception of his work that the compiler still had, if through organisation and presentation rather than creation.

In identifying what he terms the 'learned' style, that is, that which he attributes to 'a clumsy rendering of the Latin text' into Old Norse-Icelandic, Widding primarily examines texts that appear to be Old Norse-Icelandic manifestations of the *compilatio* tradition, giving

³² Minnis, 'Late Medieval Discussions', 387.

special attention to *Mariú saga*.³³ That this saga is *compilatio* is evident in Wilhelm Heizmann's assertion that *Mariú saga*'s wealth of supplemental commentary gives 'the saga its distinctive stamp'.³⁴ Daniel Najork, in his recent book, *Reading the Old Norse-Icelandic 'Mariú saga' in Context*, assesses *Mariú saga*'s style similarly to Widding and Heizmann, noting stylistic similarities between *Mariú saga* and Grímr Hólmsteinnsson's *JSB II*, cited above, whose explanatory aims are clear.³⁵ In order to assess these learned texts and their variegation of style, we will recognise them as part of the broader *compilatio* tradition.

Because the aim of the *compilatio* is to assist readers in study, it should come as little surprise that the organisational principles governing *compilatio* are derived in part from teachings on how best to understand *originalia* by careful analysis of its structure, or *ordinatio*. According to Malcolm Beckwith Parkes, increased scholarly activity in the twelfth century, especially influenced by the Augustinians at St Victor in Paris, led thinking to 'become a craft', driving 'medieval thinkers to reorganise their *auctoritates* and other inherited materials in a new systematic way to make them accessible to new ways of thinking'.³⁶ The rediscovery of Aristotelean logic in the 13th Century, and the 'consequent interest in more rigorous philosophical procedures entailed the adoption of principles which demanded a more precise way of dissecting and defining human knowledge'.³⁷ One of the results of this was that copyists added new chapter divisions, titles, and summaries of their

³³ It must also be said that though Widding's distinction between the learned and florid styles provides a helpful correction to Nygaard's much broader category of 'learned', Widding gives relatively little attention to his own definition of 'learned' as his primary goal is to define the 'florid' against it, which he examines in the context of *Mariú Jærtegn*. Widding, 'Jærtegn og Mariú saga Eventyr', 134.

³⁴ Wilhelm Heizmann, "Mariú saga," in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip Pusliano, Kirsten Wolf, et al. (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 407–8.

³⁵ Confusingly, Najork applies the term 'florid' to this commentary-laden style rather than to the rhetorical style of the North Icelandic Benedictines, giving that term a definition broader than Widding's, both inclusive of Widding's and entirely antithetical to it. Daniel Najork, *Reading the Old Norse-Icelandic 'Mariú saga' in its Manuscript Contexts* (Kalamazoo: 2021), 76.

³⁶ Malcom Beckwith Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, eds. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 117.

³⁷ Parkes, *Ordinatio and Compilatio*, 119.

auctores' ordinationes to the *originalia* they transmitted to help guide their readers through the works systematically. Another was that *compilationes*, similarly, were carefully arranged according to systematic *ordinationes*. The intellectual tools used for the study of a work's structure were largely derived from the Trivium, especially logic and rhetoric. This means, for the purposes of this thesis, that our examination of the Trivium's influence on Old Norse-Icelandic prose will incorporate not only its impact on high and low language, but also approaches to structuring narrative materials.

The *ordinatio* of a text is often particular to the branch of knowledge it represents. According to Parkes, Bonaventura's exhortation, *ordinate procedere et exerceri* ('order to proceed and to be cultivated'), 'emphasises the need to recognise the principles of order inherent in each branch of knowledge and to follow the appropriate procedure'.³⁸ This is evident in the new titles and chapter divisions that copyists gave to the works they studied and in the arrangement of materials in *compilationes*. Parkes draws our attention to the new *tituli, capitula, intenciones, and conclusiones* that scholars like Grosseteste and Robert Kilwardby give to Aristotle's *Ethics* and the works of the church fathers.³⁹ Minnis comments on the new structures given to older writers, observing, for example that the concept of the *paragraphus* was adopted by compilers and transcribers for the purpose of organising older works by *auctores* and other compilers.⁴⁰ The primary structure given to a work of *historia* was normally its *ordo narrationis* ('order of narration').

Though it may have been, as Parkes asserts, that 'the Bible text was sufficiently familiar to the reader so that no further ostensible guide to the arrangement of the material was required', the *ordines narrationis* of the Bible and of other historical topics nevertheless offered challenges for scribes, compilers, and other students worth surveying briefly. In the

³⁸ Parkes, *Ordinatio and Compilatio*, 119.

³⁹ Parkes, *Ordinatio and Compilatio*, 124-125.

⁴⁰ Minnis, 'Late-Medieval Discussions', 396.

first place, some orders in which the biblical books were compiled were not strictly chronological. The four Gospels share much of the same information; the books of Chronicles recapitulate information from the books of Samuel and Kings. Ruth takes place within the timeframe of Judges. Interestingly, medieval scholars even began to see their own activities of compiling and reordering reflected in the works of the biblical authors: whereas Petrus Comestor and Stephen Langton had previously described the repetition in II Maccabees of material first attested I Maccabees as a *recapitulatio*, Hugh of St Cher and Nicholas of Lyra instead labelled II Maccabees a *compilatio*.⁴¹ As if to address the repetition of the same narrative in the two books, the Old Norse-Icelandic *Gyðinga saga* compiles materials from both in chronological order in what is now considered to be Part I of the saga.⁴² Other efforts to streamline the biblical chronology are reflected in the works of Comestor, Vincent, and the compiler(s) of *Stjórn* III, who incorporate materials from the books of Chronicles in their reworkings of the books of Samuel and Kings. Harmonisations of all four Gospels were common.

Narrative *compilationes* also reflect their sources' authoritative rankings in their *ordinationes*. The books of Samuel and Kings are tacitly given greater authority than the Chronicles by Comestor, Vincent, and the *Stjórn* III compiler(s) because it is from the former that their *compilationes* derive their *ordines narrationis* and from the latter that they pluck glosses. We can similarly infer that the compiler of *Gyðinga saga* felt that I Maccabees was the more authoritative of the two tellings of the Maccabean revolt.

Importantly, the concept of the *ordo narrationis* reflects the emphasis on historical study of the Bible introduced in the last chapter. But the *ordo narrationis* could be supplemented with other methods of *ordinatio*, and these could enhance the readers'

⁴¹ Parkes, *Ordinatio and Compilatio*, 128.

⁴² There are many other insertions for which sources cannot be determined with certainty. There is some scholarly debate as to whether some were drawn from Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* and *De bello Judaico*. See Kirsten Wolf, ed., *Gyðinga Saga*. (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1995), xciv.

historical understanding of the text or draw their attention to other levels of interpretation.

Below, we will examine the younger version of *Páls saga postola* and discuss some of the innovations its compiler made to its *ordinatio*. This will enable us to then discuss the uses of style within that *ordinatio*.

2. vii *The Ordinatio of Páls saga postola II*

There is no evidence that *PSP II* is based in any way on *PSP I*. Like *PSP I*, it draws its core narrative from the book of Acts, completing Paul's life with the information from his *Passio*, but it supplements them heavily with materials from other works. That Acts was its main source was the finding of Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, and L. Shook in their *Handlist of ON Saints' Lives*.⁴³ But Collings in her thesis on the *Codex Scardensis* shows, importantly, that Luke's narrative was mediated to *PSP II* through other works of *compilatio* (though she does not use that term). She asserts that the closest Latin parallel to *PSP II* 'with respect to the events, their sequence, and the commentary material' is the *Historia Actuum Apostolorum (HAA)*, a *compilatio* based on Acts and featuring a wide range of *commentaria* on its contents, including references to the Old Testament.⁴⁴ The *HAA* has at times been attributed to Petrus Comestor and at times to Peter of Poitiers (d. 1215), Comestor's successor as chair of theology at the University of Paris, and is dated between ca. 1168-83.⁴⁵

⁴³ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 31; Ole Widding, L.K. Shook, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose: A Handlist', in *Medieval Studies* 25 (1963) 294-337.

⁴⁴ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 6, 31; Peter of Poitiers, *Historia scholastica: Historia libri Actuum Apostolorum* (Turnhout: 2019).

⁴⁵ An edition of the *HAA* treated as the final part of Comestor's *HS* is in *Patrologia Latina* vol. 198, ed. J.P. Migne, (Paris, 1851), 1053-1722; *The Works of Peter of Poitiers* (Catholic University of America, 1936); For discussion, see Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 31; Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1952).

Even the *HAA* is not a close match to *PSP II*, for the saga contains a wide range of historical and theological lore not found in published versions of the *HAA*.⁴⁶ Collings argues that some of the differences between the content of *HAA* and *PSP II* arise from a generic shift that resulted from extracting Paul's life from what was previously a history of the early church and adapting it to better conform to the expectations of hagiographical biography.⁴⁷ The compiler has added some of the standard structural components of a saint's life like childhood narrative, martyrdom, and passion.⁴⁸ Collings has described *PSP II*'s structure according to how its components conform to these hagiographic tropes: *exordium* (also a rhetorical trope that we will return to in Chapter 5), *vita* (including missionary activity), *passio*, *mors*, and *peroratio*.⁴⁹ She also believes that this structure is obscured by the accrual of glosses and comments.

Rather than examine these hagiographic structuring principles, we will instead examine how the compiler's new *ordinatio* for Paul's biography structures the apostle's life around three major intertwining themes: the three stages of the Trivium, salvation by God's grace, and Paul's place in the genealogy of the Tribe of Benjamin. This new *ordinatio* draws out what the compiler perceives to be the key historical and tropological themes of the *vita* which might remain more obscure in a text narrated simply according to the *ordo narracionis*. Through the interplay between the *ordinatio* and the compiler's prose styles, we see that the compiler's thought was steeped in the teachings of the Trivium and that he saw Paul's life as an expression of liberal learning.

The first of these ordering themes, the alignment of the stages of Paul's life with grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, is noteworthy because it is unprecedented in both Acts and

⁴⁶ In this, the saga demonstrates one of the greater difficulties studying *compilationes*: each redactor of a *compilatio* could add or remove content as he saw fit, making it difficult for modern scholars to create editions representative either of the original compiler's intentions or of a single work known in multiple scriptoria.

⁴⁷ Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis', 32.

⁴⁸ Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis', 32, 36.

⁴⁹ Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis', 211-212.

the *HAA*. As stated previously, the Victorine association between the Liberal Arts and restoration allows the compiler to intertwine Paul's growth in eloquence and wisdom with his growth in sanctity. This sanctity is expressed especially through commentative materials, and the compiler draws many of these from Paul's own writings. Especially prominent among them is one of the key themes of Paul's epistles, and another of the compiler's ordering principles: the contrast between salvation by God's grace and the slavish adherence to the Old Testament law. Paul's growth in eloquence and wisdom interplay with his conversion from Pharisaism to Christianity. Pharisaism was a form of Judaism that prioritised close adherence to the letter, *gramma*, of the Hebrew law through careful study, creating an important link between Paul's development through the stages of the Trivium in *PSP II* and his teachings on the distinction that Paul makes between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law in II Corinthians 3 and Galatians 4. Paul's growth out of the simplest stage of learning aligns with his growth out of Pharisaism.

These two intertwining themes are treated not only as themes of Paul's life, but as themes within the history of Paul's tribe, the Benjaminites. The compiler's increased attention to Paul's place within a multi-generational family history is also a noteworthy structuring principle in *PSP II*, one that the compiler emphasises to a far greater extent than is evident in Acts or in any available editions *HAA*. This may reflect the specific tastes of a writer who has also been raised to appreciate the genealogy-focused narratives of the *Íslendingasögur*. The compiler has drawn materials from the books of the Old Testament, Paul's letters, and other commentaries to situate Paul's life within Benjaminite history and to draw important themes from Paul's life out of the lives of his forbearers, especially the dichotomy between salvation by grace and adherence to the law.

2. vii. a *The Tribe of Benjamin*

PSP II begins with a genealogical prologue not present in either Acts or the *HAA* giving Paul's ancestry in the tribe of Benjamin, whose progenitor and namesake is the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob, the progenitor of Israel. On his deathbed, Jacob offers blessings of each of his twelve sons that foretell the ways in which each of Israel's twelve tribes will develop in the biblical narrative to come.⁵⁰ The *PSP* II compiler excerpts his prophecy about the Benjaminites:

... það er Jakob mælti við Beniamin son sinn, þaa er hann blezaði hann, þaa skyra sva helgir feðr, at þa spasaugu hafvi atta Saulus ætmaðr Beniamin. En þar segir sva: Beniamin man arla dags vera skiaðr vargr, en skipta fæzlu með auðrum að kvellði. Þat er sva skilit i helgum ritningum, að þetta kiæmi til æfvi Sauli: hann var grimr við guðs kristni a unga alldri ok let drepa kristna menn, en hinn siðarra lut hans æfvi, þaa kendi hann kenningar ok boðaði retta tru, ok saddy sva andligri fæzlu hvers mannz salu þeira er hans kenningar villdi hafva.⁵¹

... what Jacob said to Benjamin his son, when he blessed him, the Holy Fathers interpret thus, that that prophecy had meant Saul the descendent of Benjamin. And they [the prophecies] say this: Benjamin will be in the early part of the day a vicious wolf and divide food with others in the evening. It is understood thusly in the holy scriptures that that pertained to the life of Saul: he was grim with God's church at a young age and killed Christian men, but in the later portion of his life, then he taught

⁵⁰ Genesis 49.

⁵¹ *Postola sögur*, 236-237.

doctrine and preached the true faith, and so sated with spiritual food each man's soul of them who wished to have his doctrines.

Here Paul is established as the fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy in a manner that both reflects a historical interest in biblical narrative and that establishes the trajectory of Paul's life in the story to come. The prophecy's explication by the narrator rather than revelation through the narrative is consistent with the commentary of other historical *compilationes*, as is the appeal to authorities – here the Church Fathers, though unnamed – for an interpretation of narrative events. Allusions to Benjaminite history, while not frequent, occur at important points within the narrative, often without precedent in either Acts or the *HAA*.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Benjaminites are characterised by a spirit of belligerence that ebbs and flows between valour and chaos, sometimes securing sweeping military victories for the Israelites, sometimes posing a dark internal threat to the nation's always precarious stability.⁵² It is this warlike behaviour that Jacob predicts when he calls them ravenous wolves. A transition from this wolfishness in the morning to dividing spoils in the evening is a recurring turning point in each of the Benjaminite narrative structures that find their way into scripture, including that of Paul. Paul – originally named Saul after an important Benjaminite ancestor – begins his role in Acts as a ferocious persecutor of the early Church but is converted to Christianity, after which he travels the Mediterranean preaching the Gospel to the various peoples of the Roman Empire. In so doing, he is dividing the spoils of Christ's victory at Calvary with non-Jews, people previously outside of the Covenant. As introduced by the *PSP II* compiler, Paul's own turning point from wolfishness to an agency of spoil division becomes a shared moment of transformation with the history of his entire tribe who, through Christ's transformation of Paul, experience a more permanent

⁵² See especially the Battle of Gibeah and the events leading up to it in Judges 19-21.

eschatological transformation than what any of the individual generations achieve in the books of Judges, Samuel, or Kings.

By his own attestation, Paul was, before his conversion, a close adherent of the Jewish Law, and he associates this closely with his persecution of the church.⁵³ This theme is important to the *PSP II* compiler. Here let us take note of the way church tradition ties both the zealous adherence to the law and the persecution of the church – and its prefigurations through the Old Testament prophets – with Paul’s tribe. The association of the Benjaminites with a close observance of the law and with the persecution of the church is attested in Comestor’s *HS*:

Quidam referent hoc ad Ierusalem, que fuit in sorte Benjamin, que dicitur lupus rapax quia sanguinem prophetarum et Christi fudit.⁵⁴

Certainly, these refer to Jerusalem, which was within the territory of Benjamin, which is said to be a ravenous wolf because it scattered the blood of the prophets and of Christ.

Because Jerusalem lay within Benjaminite territory, Comestor attributes all of the persecutions of that city, a prefiguration of the church and of the Kingdom of Heaven, to the lupine tribe. He also interprets the sacrificial system – in which the altar consumes sacrifices and the priests divide the parts of the sacrificed animals – as applying to Benjamin (despite the fact that the priests themselves are their own tribe, the Levites), creating an important part of the link between the Benjaminites and zealous legalistic observance later manifest in

⁵³ See especially Philippians 3.

⁵⁴ *HS* 108.

Saul/Paul. He also asserts that their ravenousness begins with their role in the plundering of Egypt, which he ties closely to their initial acceptance of the law at Sinai.⁵⁵ The antithesis of both the sacrificial system and the law to the ‘spirit’ is well-attested in Pauline writings and important to the *ordinatio* of *PSP* II. Perhaps most important for this discussion is this comment of Comestor’s:

Et adhuc eam comedit, sed in uespera mundi diuidet spiritum uiuificantem a littera occidente.

And thus far he [Benjamin] eats it [the law], but in the evening of the world he will divide the life-giving spirit from the letter at sunset.

This division of the spirit of the law from the letter is a theme drawn directly from Paul’s writings and apparent in *PSP* II. To examine it thoroughly, though, we will first look at some of the principles of *PSP* II’s structure. The division of the spirit of the law from the letter comes from Paul’s own writings in Galatians 4, in which the letter of the law is given so that its spirit, which points to the Kingdom of Heaven, might eventually be discerned. The Old Norse-Icelandic word for ‘dividing’, *skilja*, will be especially important for our discussion, for it is also used to mean ‘discern’ or ‘understand’ in educational contexts. As one of the Church’s earliest theologians, Paul’s ability to ‘divide’ both in the sense of sharing the Gospel and in the sense of offering understanding of it is crucial to understanding his life. For the *PSP* II compiler, it is also crucial to understanding how Paul is the descendant of Benjamin who fulfils Jacob’s prophecy. We will return to this shortly, and to its relationship to Liberal learning. But in order to see how *PSP* II weaves these themes together in his new

⁵⁵ *HS* 108; Petrus Comestor, *Scholastica Historia: Liber Genesis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 182.

ordinatio, we will first examine the way in which they are distilled in one of the saga's key structuring rhetorical tropes.

2. vii. b *Syncretism*

Syncretism (*σύνκρησις*) is the development of character through comparison and contrast with a foil. It is a rhetorical trope taught in Alexander de Villa-Dei's *Doctrinale* in Priscian's *Institutiones*, and in Donatus's *Ars Grammatica*, all of which were known in medieval Iceland.⁵⁶ The compiler has bookended *PSP II* with two syncretisms: in the first Paul, originally named Saul, is contrasted with his foster brother, Stephen, the first Christian martyr; in the final, he is compared with Peter, his fellow apostle.

That the *PSP II* compiler uses the trope as a structuring motif in narrative rather than in a rhetorical argument is not necessarily innovative: the approach was known in medieval Europe through Sallust's biographies of Catiline and Jugurtha, which were sources for the Old Norse-Icelandic *Rómverja saga*.⁵⁷ Despite its status as a trope of rhetorical language, it became an accepted component of hagiographical narrative through the influence of the Becket tradition, in which Thomas a Becket is contrasted with his persecutor, Henry II.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, because of its association with rhetoric, it marks a departure from the *sermo humilis* of earlier hagiographical writings. It could have been influenced by the tropes used in sermons: a syncretism comparing Stephen and Paul occurs in a homily for Stephen's feast day in the *IHB*, but there the homilist compares the two saints favourably to discuss the power of holy men's prayers for the sins of others – Stephen's for the *grímléic gyþinga* ('cruelty of the Jews'), Paul's for *fjöldá synþa* ('many sins') – rather than to contrast the two as the *PSP II* compiler has done.⁵⁹ The close textual proximity of Stephen's martyrdom and Paul's

⁵⁶ Margaret Clunies Ross and Jonas Wellendorf, eds., *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* (London, 2014), xix.

⁵⁷ Frederic Amory, 'Saga Style in some Kings' Sagas', *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 32, (1979): 80.

⁵⁸ Amory, 'Saga style', 80.

⁵⁹ *IHB* 81v-81r.

conversion, together with the resulting proximity of the Stephen's feast day (26 December) and the feast of Paul's conversion (25 January) on the liturgical calendar, must have made comparisons between them appealing.

The opening syncrisis in *PSP II* is a contrast between Paul, then called Saul, and his foster brother, Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Because it culminates in Stephen's martyrdom at Saul's hands and is the defining *ordinatio* of Paul's childhood narrative, this use of syncrisis illustrates the lupine traits characteristic of Paul's tribe in the morning. The second syncrisis, which closes *PSP II*'s narrative, is a comparison between Paul and his fellow apostle, Peter, including explanations of their different miracles, their historical roles in facilitating the early church's growth, and their soteriological roles helping Christians into the Kingdom of Heaven. This accords with the Benjaminite division of spoils. The first syncrisis emphasises the discordant contrast between Saul and Stephen, while the second draws out the complimentary nature of Paul's and Peter's contrasting roles, drawing attention to Paul's transformation and growth from wolfishness to spoil-division. This helps further establish Jacob's prophecy and Paul's role in his tribe's history as one of the text's defining motifs.

PSP II's account of Saul's early life studying alongside his foster brother, Stephen, under Gamaliel, the *haufutmeistari* ('head teacher') of Jerusalem is not given in Acts or in the *HAA*, but his kinship with Stephen is a common part of church tradition, and Paul speaks of his own study under Gamaliel in a speech at the temple in Jerusalem in Acts 22.⁶⁰ The *PSP II* compiler has reworked these into a childhood narrative, one of the generic conventions of hagiographic biography that Collings describes. That narrative culminates in Stephen's death, after which begins the story of Saul's conversion and transformation. Two passages are worth quoting to provide us with fuller understanding of its narrative and theological import:

⁶⁰ *Postola sögur*, 237.

... ok var su grein aa skilningu þeira fostbræðra, at Saulus skilði aull laugin til freku, eptir því sem ritningin þotti til standa, en Stephanus hugði mest at merkingunni ok hvat fram komið mundi af vera af því, er fyrir var spað, eða hverssu langt mundi til þess vera, er lausnin mundi fram koma, su er heitin var Gyðingum.⁶¹

... and there was this difference in understanding between those foster brothers, that Saul discerned all of the law to [his] hardship, according to how the scripture seemed to stand, but Stephen considered most of the signification of it and what might come to pass from that which was foretold, or how long it would be until it came about that redemption might come forth as was promised to the Jews.

And:

Ok eptir uppstigning vars drottins þaa segir Lucas, at Stephanus giorðiz lærisveinn guðs postola ok predicaði retta tru. En Saulus fostbroðir hans hellt Gyðinga laug rikuliga, eptir því sem hann hafði skilið, þaa er hann nam, at ecki væri iamskyllt sem þat.⁶²

And after the ascension of our Lord, Luke says that Stephen became a disciple [and] apostle of God's and preached the true faith. But Saul his foster brother held to the Jewish law rigidly, just as he had understood when he was studying, that nothing was as dutiful as that.

⁶¹ *Postola sögur*, 237.

⁶² *Postola sögur*, 237.

Here we see the theme of the letter of the law, adhered to by Saul, and the spirit, discerned by Stephen, and the ways in which those lead one to reject (initially) and the other to accept Christianity. It should be noted that, despite the attribution of this content to Luke, it is extrapolated rather than sourced from Acts (and is not present in the *HAA*). Luke does provide material from which an antithesis between Stephen's ministry and the Jewish Law might plausibly be extrapolated when he writes that:

statuerunt testes falsos dicentes homo iste non cessat loqui verba adversus locum sanctum et legem, audivimus enim eum dicentem quoniam Iesus Nazarenus hic destruet locum istum et mutabit traditions quas tradidit nobis Moses.⁶³

They [Stephen's persecutors] established false witnesses, saying, 'this man will not cease to speak words against the Holy Place and the law, and we have even heard him saying that this Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place [the temple] and will transform the traditions which Moses handed down to us.

This shows that the theme of an antithetical relationship between the Old Testament law and Stephen's preaching was perceived by his persecutors, even if Luke puts the antithesis in the mouths of *testes falsos*. It is Paul's own letters that provide the clearest source for this antithesis between the law and the Gospel, especially Philippians, in which he describes himself as a *secundum legem, Pharisaeus* ('According to the Law, a Pharisee'), *secundum iustitiam quae in lege est conversatus sine querela* ('according to the justice that is in the law, passing my life without blame'), and *persequens ecclesiam Dei* ('persecuting the Church of

⁶³ Acts 16.13-15.

God').⁶⁴ The syncrisis presents an important theological theme: the contrast between Stephen and Saul represents the contrast between spirit and law.

Though texts teaching syncrisis were known in medieval Iceland, it is important also to bear in mind Augustine's admonition to his readers in *DDC* that apart from studying the Classical rhetors, they could also learn eloquence from reading the Bible and the church fathers. The early narratives of the Bible include multiple stories of rivalries between brothers and other kinsmen, and as Israel grows these develop into rivalries between tribes and, eventually, allegories for the spiritual differences between those who are a part of God's covenant and those who are outside of it. There are two influential examples of syncrisis in allegorical readings of Old Testament narrative, one by Paul himself in his epistle to the Galatians and one by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* (*DCD*), both of which also establish foil relationships between kinsmen to illustrate the theological distinction between worldliness and law on the one hand and grace on the other. Though neither of these are expressly cited in *PSP II*, they were known in medieval Iceland and they or traditions deriving from them could have impacted the *PSP II* compiler's syncrisis of Saul and Stephen.

Augustine's *DCD* is one of Christendom's most influential examples of biblical exegesis. In it, Augustine compares and contrasts Cain and Abel, labelling them the founders of the city of the world and the City of God.⁶⁵ Augustine asserts that Abel is history's first martyr, which parallels Stephen's designation as Christianity's first martyr. Augustine observes that Genesis teaches that Cain founded the first city, and that this represents the City of Man. Abel is not said to found a city, but Augustine said that in dying he awaits the founding of the Kingdom of God which, as it happens, is the kingdom that Stephen witnesses

⁶⁴ See, esp., Philippians 3.5-6.

⁶⁵ See, esp., Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate dei*, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), XV.I.

when he sees the heavens open in Acts 7.⁶⁶ Citing Paul's words in I Corinthians 15, Augustine observes that the physical comes before the spiritual (*non primum quod spiritale est, sed quod animale, postea spiritale*), and this parallels the letter of the law preceding the spirit, introduced previously.⁶⁷ A connection between Saul and Stephen on the one hand and Cain and Abel on the other seems not unlikely.

The division of the letter of the law from the spirit of the law comes from Paul's epistle to the Galatians, which also features syncretism in an exegesis of Old Testament narrative. It occurs in an argument, which is a more natural setting for a rhetorical trope than in narrative. Paul, like the author of his saga, creates an antithesis between the Old Testament law and the Gospel through a contrast between two brothers, in this case Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac. The older, he says, is representative of those living under the law, and the younger those living under *repromissionem* ('promise'), a reference to the covenants of God that are ultimately fulfilled in the person of Christ. Ishmael is born to Hagar, an enslaved Egyptian, and Isaac to Abraham's wife, Sarah.⁶⁸ Paul likens the two mothers to Sinai, the mountain where God gave the law to Israel through Moses, and to *quae sursum est Hierusalem* ('the Jerusalem which is above'), that is, the Kingdom of God. Those who live according to the law are in bondage just as Ishmael, the son of an enslaved mother, lived, and those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven through the church are free, as was Isaac, the son of a free mother.

Neither of these sons of Abraham is referenced directly in Saul's childhood narrative in *PSP II*, and we might not expect a saga in the style of a *compilatio* to spare its readers from

⁶⁶ It is fitting, too, that Stephen's oration before death plays heavily with the theme of God calling his people out of earthly cities, Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans and Moses out of Egypt, and into the wilderness to await the Kingdom of God.

⁶⁷ Augustine cites the *Vetus Latina*. Here is the same passage from the Vulgate: *sed non prius quod spiritale est sed quod animale est deinde quod spiritale* ('but that which is spiritual does not come first, but that which is natural, and by and by that which is spiritual').

⁶⁸ Galatians 4. 21-31.

any references, comparisons, or citations. Nevertheless, the parallel carries a certain weight. Consider Paul's closing comparison: *sed quomodo tunc qui secundum carnem natus fuerat persequebatur eum qui secundum spiritum, ita et nunc* ('But just as then, when he who had been born according to the flesh persecuted him who had been born according to the spirit, so it is now'), a reference both to an interpretation of Genesis in which Ishmael plays roughly with Isaac and to those who held to the law – like Saul – persecuting members of the early church – like Stephen.⁶⁹ This brings us back to Comestor's description of the tribe of Benjamin cited above, and here pertains perfectly to Paul's biography as presented in *PSP II*. It is likely that the compiler of *PSP II* was familiar with the *HS* but, even if he was not, the popularity of Comestor's work does suggest that the association of this theological concept with Benjaminite history was known in medieval literary circles.⁷⁰

The close of *PSP II*'s syncretism is Stephen's prayer for his persecutors, followed by this gloss:

Ok er her mark till þess, hvat goðra manna bænir stoða synðgum maunnum, þo at þeir se eigi verðir af sjalfra sinna verðleikum at þiggia miskun af guði ser til iðranar ok salu sinni til hialpar þaðan af.⁷¹

And here this is signified: that the prayers of good men support sinful men, although they are not themselves worthy by their own merit to receive mercy of God for repentance and for the salvation of their souls from then on.

⁶⁹ Galatians 4. 29; Our meagre understanding of Ishmael's relationship with Isaac grows out of Genesis 21: *vidisset Sara filium Agar Aegyptiae ludentem* ('... when Sarah had seen the son of Hagar the Egyptian playing ...'). The tradition of extrapolating 'bullying' from 'playing' lies outside the scope of this thesis.

⁷⁰ Both Collings and Simonetta Battista have documented reasons to believe that the *PSP II* compiler knew the *HS*. See Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 34; Simonetta Battista, 'The *Compiler* and Contemporary Literary Culture in Old Norse Hagiography', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (2005): 7.

⁷¹ *Postola sögur*, 238.

The inefficacy of *sjalfra sinna verðleikum* ('one's own merit') for salvation is one of the themes that Paul discusses most in his epistles, and the benefits of *goðra mann bænir* ('good men's prayers') and God's own intervention for repentance and salvation also reflect his writings. The compiler has woven autobiographical information from Paul's epistles into Luke's account of his life, reconstructing the narrative of Saul's early life to reflect both themes from both writers. The placement of this discussion at this juncture in the narrative is not unique: a St Stephen's Day homily in the *IHB* also takes Saul's presence at Stephen's death as an opportunity to discuss the efficacy of holy men's loving intervention for their enemies, and though *PSP II*'s wording does not appear to be derived from that of the *IHB*, the compiler may still have been inspired by the homily or by a shared tradition.⁷² Stephen's stoning, then, becomes the climax of this phase's drama in which Stephen plays a decisive role in Saul/Paul's coming transformation. Paul's involvement in his kinsman's death and Stephen's intercessory prayer illustrate the maxim Paul articulates in II Corinthians: the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.⁷³

Paul's martyrdom in Rome and miraculous appearance in a vision to the emperor Nero are attested in various parts of the Christian tradition, but here are likely sourced from the *HAA*. After them, the *PSP II* compiler adds a syncrisis of Paul and Peter comparing their miracles, as well as their roles in the growth of the church and in the management of the souls of the departed that is drawn from a variety of sources.⁷⁴ Where the syncrisis between Saul and Stephen establishes the two students' contrast, the comparison between Peter and Paul is dedicated to establishing their parity and complementarity. Unlike the Stephen syncrisis, this is not so much a narrative as a list of analogies between the two figures. Though its contents

⁷² *IHB* 81v-81r.

⁷³ II Corinthians 3. 6.

⁷⁴ *Postola sögur*, 279; The sources of Paul's and Peter's miracles are given in Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 43-44.

may be broadly chronological within themselves, they are decidedly outside of the rest of the saga's *ordo narrationis*, making this syncritic *commentaria* much more clearly demonstrative of the compiler's own creative *ordinatio*. In it, Paul is cast as the thirteenth apostle: where the other twelve represent the twelve tribes of Israel and welcome each into Heaven, Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, sharing with them the covenant which previously had only been for the Hebrews. In dividing the spoils of Christ's victory with the gentiles and in dividing apostolic roles with Peter, Paul concludes his Benjaminite transformation.

The content of the closing syncrisis, Paul's relationship to Peter, is introduced in the saga's introduction in an allegorical connection to the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin, the compiler tells us, means *filius dextere* or *hægri handar son* ('son of [my] right hand'), and he explains that this is the reason that Paul appears on the right side of the *innsigli pafvans* (the 'pope's signet') opposite of Peter.⁷⁵ Though this is because the bishop of Rome is believed to derive his earthly authority by apostolic succession from Peter and Paul, it also points forward to the roles that both apostles play in bringing Christians into the eschatological Kingdom of Heaven, which the saga's concluding syncrisis describes.

By opening and closing the saga with these syncrises, the compiler frames Paul's life in terms that are likely to be of interest to a medieval Icelandic audience. References to Paul's genealogy may be motivated by the approaches to the historical study of the Bible prevalent throughout the Latinate West, but their inclusion by the *PSP II* compiler may also reflect the kind of historical interest that one might expect to have been cultivated by medieval Icelandic culture. A grim prophecy, an assertion of lupine family characteristics, and an understanding that familial traits will be passed from generation to generation might otherwise be as at home in one of the *Íslendingasögur* as they are in biblical narrative (*Egils saga* comes to

⁷⁵ Unger, *Postola sögur*, 237. Interestingly neglected is the fact that although Benjamin means 'son of my right hand', the Benjaminites in the Bible are often depicted as left-handed. See Judges 3 and 20.

mind).⁷⁶ Framing the saga as a recovery from wolfishness may highlight an especially Icelandic concern. As mentioned before, glosses tying Paul's life to the lives of his ancestors appear to have generally been additions made by the *PSP II* compiler rather than by the compiler of the *HAA*, and they are thematically linked with his syncritic bookends.

Because compilers often gave their *compilationes* sophisticated thematic *ordinationes*, modern scholars like Nygaard and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson are right to say that they lack any appearance of objectivity. They are comprehensively designed to expound theological, historical, and educational concepts for their audiences. Understanding the sagas' structures is crucial to understanding the didactic purposes that the compilers' styles will ultimately serve. Here, we have seen a close tie between education on the grammatical letter and the letter of the law, both concepts that relate closely to words and that we therefore know underlie the ways that writers choose wording when making stylistic decisions. The *PSP II* compiler's emphasis on Paul's genealogy may reflect especially Icelandic interests, but the close tie between the historical study of the Bible and the grammatical level of learning means that it, too, has the potential to tie closely with words. What this means is that, ultimately, *PSP II*'s *ordinatio* is not only crucial for understanding the compiler's uses of style, but also in some sense makes the saga about style as a function of Liberal learning. With this in mind, we will turn to the first level of the Trivium, grammar, which characterises the first phase of Paul's life.

2. vii. c *The Trivium: Grammar*

We saw in the previous chapter that both *Acts* and *PSP I* present Paul's rhetorical skill as one of his defining characteristics. This was underscored in those texts by stylistic shifts between

⁷⁶ Though consistent with iconographic imagery, Dionysius's nickname for Paul, *skalli* ('bald') is not attested in *Acts* or the *HAA*. It is, however, shared with Egill's father, Skalla-Grímr.

the *sermo humilis* and the *sermo mixtus* as the text moved from narrative to oration. It is perhaps surprising, then, that *PSP* II shortens or almost completely omits Paul's speeches, instead finding other ways to draw attention to Paul's eloquence through glosses, commentary, and reworked narrative. Whilst proclaiming the Gospel to Agrippa, Paul is said to have *viti ok snilld* ('wisdom and eloquence'), an echo of Aristotle's and Augustine's *sapientia et eloquentia*.⁷⁷ This reference does not come from the corollary passages in either Acts or the *HAA*.⁷⁸ It is clear from it that the compiler viewed Paul's wisdom within the intellectual framework of the Classical tradition. What follows is – let me clearly state – a tendentious argument: the compiler's reworking of Paul's biography together with his *ordinatio* that draws attention to eloquence-related glosses recasts Paul's development as growth in eloquence in which the apostle's life moves through the stages of the Trivium: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric.

No explicit reference to grammar is made in the narrative of Saul's early life studying together with Stephen under Gamaliel. Nevertheless, the image conjured by the compiler's description of Gamaliel suggests a grammar school: he is the *haufutmeistari* ('head teacher') who *hafði marga lærisveina* ('had many students').⁷⁹ Though no direct quotation is offered of the distinction between the letter and the spirit of the law, as discussed above, Saul's fascination with the letter of the law as contrasted with Stephen's perception of what it signifies suggests Saul's interest in the letter, or the *gramma*.

With this in mind, we return to Saul/Paul's encounter with the ascended Christ on the road to Damascus, translated from Acts 9. As we have seen, it is a close translation of Jerome's Latin, making it a good demonstration of low-style narrative. Its simple wording and quick pacing are fitting for describing a climactic encounter, especially one that occurs

⁷⁷ *Postola sögur*, 263

⁷⁸ Acts 26.

⁷⁹ *Postola sögur*, 237.

within the final days of Paul's Pharisaism, that is, his adherence to the letter. Rather than offer commentary, the compiler confronts us with dramatic encounter between the Pharisee and Jesus, the transformative power that demonstrates the theme of salvation by grace. This will prove to be the spiritual force that brings about Saul the Pharisee's transformation in Paul the Apostle and, as we shall see, it is Paul the Apostle who will use dialectic to spread greater understanding of the Gospel.

2. vii. d Transformation

The title character's change of name from Saul to Paul is original to Luke's narrative and not one of the compiler's additions, but it nevertheless adds alliterative emphasis to the compiler's rhetorical framework: Saul and Stephen, Paul and Peter. This draws further attention to the importance of Paul's name, and therefore lends the name change, or *nafnaskipti*, importance in connecting the opening and closing synchises.

First, let us look at the event in Acts. It occurs in chapter thirteen when Paul and Barnabas are traveling through Cyprus and arrive at Paphos to preach the Gospel to the local proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and his attendant magician, Bar-Jesus, also called Elymas. Though it is the first time that Luke tells us that Saul is also called Paul, the comment is a narratorial aside: *Saulus, qui autem Paulus, repletus Spiritu Sancto...* 'Saul, who was also Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit...'.⁸⁰ Though unmarked, the name change here introduces a tacit reference to one of Paul's Benjaminite kin, Saul, the first king of Israel. I Samuel characterises Saul in part by his height: *ab umero et sursum eminebat super omnem populum* ('From his shoulders upward he towered above the rest of the people [of Israel]').⁸¹ Though nothing is made of Saul/Paul's height in Acts, his renaming as Paul is a subtle reminder of the

⁸⁰ Acts 13.13.

⁸¹ I Samuel 9.2.

apostle's distant ancestor, for *paulus* is Latin for 'small' or 'short'. The transformation indicated by his new name plays cleverly with this intertextual relationship, for King Saul is also characterised as consistently frustrated both by his lack of knowledge and his inability to obtain knowledge.⁸² This is felt most poignantly in his constant inability to discern the will of God, a frustration that culminates tragically in Saul's turning instead to witchcraft for divination in I Samuel 28. Luke's decision to inform Theophilus that Saul the Pharisee also goes by the name Paul in his interaction with Sergius Paulus and Elymas, then, comes at a crucial point: Unlike his namesake who is deprived of divine knowledge and engages in witchcraft, this Saul is filled with the Holy Spirit and through the Spirit discerns that Elymas is a magician and rebukes him.⁸³ Though the name change is stylistically an aside, by its relationship to the greater biblical narrative it can be understood as narrative separation of Paul both from his earlier life and from the past misdeeds of his tribe.⁸⁴

The changes made to this narrative in *PSP II* are subtle but meaningful. Where the *nafnaskipti* occurs just before Paul condemns Elymas in Acts, the saga compiler instead moves it to after Sergius Paulus – here called a *iarll* – is converted and baptised, and it is the jarl himself who first calls Saul by the name Paul, making it a narrative event rather than a narratorial aside. The jarl gives Saul his own name *i minning þeirar miskunar er iarllinn hafði af honum hlotið* ('in memory of those mercies which the jarl had obtained from him').⁸⁵ In perhaps a reversal of what we might expect, the *PSP II* compiler has transformed the aside, which is functionally quite like a gloss, into a piece of narrative. It is worth noting that the

⁸² For a discussion of Saul's characteristic lack of knowledge, see Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 232-234.

⁸³ Acts 13.

⁸⁴ The translator of the older version of *Páls saga*, discussed in the last chapter, moves the renaming to a much earlier point in the story, the second chapter in Unger's edition, at approximately the ninth chapter of Acts just after the newly converted Saul is brought before the Apostles, begins to preach the Gospel in the synagogues, and first becomes the target of assassination plots by the Jewish priestly order. There the *nafnaskipti* corresponds roughly with Paul's conversion and transformation.

⁸⁵ *Postola sögur*, 243.

jarl's giving of a gift of gratitude – however immaterial – seems more reminiscent of the culture of the *Íslendingasögur* or *konungasögur* than that of Luke's narrative; it may be that the compiler therefore found such an arrangement historically plausible. Though Paul could be said to be 'dividing spoils' with Sergius Paulus here by sharing the faith with him, with the compiler's addition, it can equally be said that it is the jarl who is 'dividing the spoils' with the apostle in sharing his name. That the apostle takes his new name in a reciprocal act of sharing would seem to imbue the *nafnaskipti* with a greater sense of Benjaminite transformation than is suggested by Acts or the *HAA*.

The compiler cites Origen both to remind the reader of the wolf and spoils motif and to explain the meaning of Paul's *nafnaskipti*:

En Origenis segir, at Saulus þyðiz ofriðarmaðr en Paulus litilatr, ok er þaa sem fylgi spasagan Jacobs nafnaskiptinu, er hann nefndi hann varg aa unga alldri en hann varð aa efra alldri sva miukr sem lamb ok sva litillatr, at hann kallaði sik minztan allra guðs postola, fyr því at hann hafði ofrið giortt guðs lærisveinum aa unga alldri.

And Origen says that Saul signifies the inimical man and Paul the humble, and that this follows Jacob's prophecy concerning the name change, when he called him a wolf in his youth and in his later years as meek as a lamb, and so humble that he called himself the least of all of God's apostles, because he had worked enmity upon God's disciples at a young age.

The meaning of *paulus*, discussed above, is left implicit in Luke's narrative. While its etymology is not given directly, the Old Norse word for 'humble', *litillátr*, conveys the same smallness as the Latin *paulus* through the root, *litill*, while also allowing a tropological lesson

on the opposition of humility and enmity. Because the *nafnaskipti* is the symbolic conclusion of Paul's transition out of Pharisaism, we are left to also regard his developing devotion to the spirit of the law as closely linked to his growth in humility.

Importantly, Paul's *nafnaskipti* comes in a moment of intellectual conflict: an ideological clash with Elymas the magician. We are not given the details of this conflict, but because we know that it in it, Paul represented Christian orthodoxy and Elymas represented witchcraft, we can discern meeting of two different ideologies that necessitated the division of truth from falsehood, one of the primary aims of dialectic. This sets the stage for the coming phase of Paul's life, which is characterised by dialectic. Paul's spiritual transformation from letter to spirit, law to grace, is accompanied by a transformation in hermeneutic from grammar to dialectic.

2. vii. e *Dialectic*

Nowhere is dialectic more apparent than in Paul's visit to the Areopagus. As stated before, Paul's speech at the Areopagus has been removed entirely. It has been refashioned into a discussion between Paul and Dionysius the Areopagite. This discussion cannot, according to Collings, be accounted for by the text's known sources.⁸⁶ It appears to be in some measure the product of the compiler's reworking of Paul's speech in Acts and of materials from the Dionysian tradition and pseudo-Dionysian corpus, but it is also one of the rare instances in which the compiler does not cite his sources. No information from either Acts or the *HAA* is incorporated: from Athens, Dionysius witnesses the sky go dark from midday to *nones* on the day of Christ's crucifixion, prompting him to build the temple to the unknown God; Paul stays in Athens for twelve months and returns each day to the school in Athens to debate him;

⁸⁶ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 83-112.

near the end of their discussion, Dionysius is stricken blind and his sight is restored when he confesses the faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed.⁸⁷

The *PSP II* compiler has refashioned the narrative to create parallelism between Dionysius's kinesics from setting to setting – Areopagus, school, altar – as he comes to seek the unknown god before Paul's arrival and the movements that Paul and Dionysius make together as Paul guides him toward Christianity. The compiler tells us that Dionysius is called the Areopagite because of the time he spends at the Areopagus taking part in the sacrificial cult there. Then while visiting the school of Athens, he watches the sky grow dark and seeks to learn what has happened that:

... þeir er bazt kunnu a stjornubok ok *skilðu*, at þat hafði eigi orðit af natturu himintungla, ok varð eingi orlausn af þeim, hvat til mundi hallda.⁸⁸ [Emphasis added.]

... those who knew best from the book of stars and discerned that that had not occurred to the heavenly bodies by nature, and there was not an answer from them as to what might have been the cause.

Dissatisfied with the answers offered to him at the school, Dionysius proceeds to erect the altar to the unknown god, known from Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts. When Paul arrives, he meets Dionysius at the Areopagus and accompanies him to the school where he debates the *dialecticam* of Christianity with Dionysius, paralleling Dionysius's earlier discussions with the learned men of the school. It is fitting, too, that Paul tells him about Jesus in the same place from which he had seen the sky darken at the crucifixion. But this

⁸⁷ *Postola sögur*, 249.

⁸⁸ *Postola sögur*, 249.

also allows room for an instance of antithesis: the darkening of the sky from the earlier visit to the school is both paralleled and contrasted by Dionysius being struck blind, for both are modes of darkness, but the first is the result of Christ's death whereas the second is the result of Dionysius's inability to believe in Christ's death. It is paralleled and contrasted, too, by the darkness of Dionysius's blindness being lifted when he recites the creed: Just as the darkening of the sky and his dissatisfaction with the explanations of the scholars once brought him to the unknown god, so his restored sight and new faith bring him back to that altar to learn who that unknown God really is. His first procession through these spaces marks his conversion from an idolater to what Lönnroth would call a noble heathen, that is, a worshiper of the Christian God known not through Judaism or Christianity but through the Natural Law.⁸⁹ His second marks his conversion from noble heathenism to Christian orthodoxy. In this schema, the school – and, by extension, dialectic – occupies a sanctifying space of transition between the *hof* and the *kirkja*, demonstrating Hugh of St Victor's belief in the salvific properties of the Liberal Arts to the reader and that Christianity is reasonable to the Athenians.

Important for this thesis is that once again, the school is one of the episode's primary settings, one not mentioned in Acts or in the *HAA*. Dialectic, the second level of the Trivium, is mentioned explicitly:

... en Paulus disputaði við hann, er þaa kunni bezt *dialecticam* þeira manna, er þaa voru I Athenis.⁹⁰ [Emphasis added.]

⁸⁹ Lars Lönnroth, 'The Noble Heathen', *Scandinavian Studies* 41 (1969), 1-30.

⁹⁰ *Postola sögur*, 250.

... then Paul disputed with him [Dionysius], who understood dialectic best of those men who were in Athens.

Debate is one of the activities of the dialectic stage of learning. According to Hugh of St Victor, *dialectica ad distinguendas in eis significationes et ad veritatem per disputationem inquirendam valet* ('dialectic is healthy for distinguishing the significations [of words] and finding their truth through disputation').⁹¹ It is fitting, then, that Dionysius's observation of the darkening sky on the day of Jesus's crucifixion leads to his desire to learn the truth through disputation. It is important, too, for Paul, for just as once his fixation on the words of the scriptures prevented him from understanding their signification, now he is guiding others in greater understanding of signification. This event is an important point both in Dionysius's and Paul's spiritual development.

2. vii. f *Dialectic and Rhetoric: Paul's Speeches*

If Paul's skill in the Trivium is one of *PSP* II's key themes, then it should come as some surprise that *PSP*'s II compiler has largely omitted or abbreviated the speeches that Paul makes in Acts, sometimes replacing them with narration, dialogue (as at the Areopagus), or explanatory glosses. This would seem to leave the highest level of the Trivium, rhetoric, poorly accounted for in the saga.

If the theory advanced here has any weight, then Paul's earlier missionary speeches such as those at Lystra and the Areopagus in Athens would understandably be removed in order to transform those occasions into expressions of dialectic, as discussed above, rather than rhetoric, which would correlate better to the more climactic phase of Paul's life. The later events of Paul's life in Acts accordingly provide ample evidence of the apostle's public

⁹¹ Hugh, *De Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris* XII.

speaking ability, yet even here the *PSP II* compiler has chosen to modify his speeches. We shall examine the changes made here to see how they still contribute to the liberal *ordinatio* of the text.

The closing action of Luke's narrative in Acts begins with Paul's arrest at the temple in Jerusalem, after which he appeals to various levels of governing authority in the Levant on the grounds of his Roman citizenship before finally appealing to Caesar himself, leading to his voyage to Rome. This is the ideal literary setting for rhetoric: Hugh of St Victor, like others before him, associates rhetorical speech with the public sphere, especially with civil laws, and we saw in the previous chapter that its traditional setting was the forum.⁹²

The first speech that Paul makes to the Roman authorities following his arrest is an autobiographical account of his origins, education, and conversion. It has ostensibly been cut from *PSP II* because the material is already covered in the saga's narration.⁹³ It is worth noting, too, that unlike Paul's missionary speeches at Lystra and the Areopagus, this speech contains little overtly rhetorical language, possibly because of its largely narrative content. Like Paul's missionary addresses, though, it marks a dramatic moment in the narrative, and the culmination of that moment of drama is the moment when his captors, first a centurion, then a tribune, learn that he is a Roman citizen and is therefore entitled to a trial. The *PSP II* compiler therefore retains and reworks some of the relevant autobiographical material from Paul's speech into evidence of his citizenship in his dialogue with the Roman authorities.⁹⁴ Though still pertinent to civil dispute, it is no longer clearly representative of the rhetorical stage of learning.

⁹² Hugh, *Did.* I.xi.

⁹³ This speech, in Acts, is the one place where Gamaliel and Paul's study under him is mentioned. If the *PSP II* compiler associated this study with the grammatical stage of learning, it might be ill-suited to the rhetorical stage of Paul's life.

⁹⁴ *Postola sögur*, 256-257.

After learning that the Jewish leaders and scribes whom Paul has enraged are plotting to have the apostle assassinated, Claudius Lysias, the Roman tribune, has him dispatched to Caesarea to be interrogated by Felix, the governor of the province. Under Felix's captivity, Paul makes two speeches.⁹⁵ Only the first of these is recorded as direct speech in Acts, and it is Paul's rebuttal of accusations brought against him by a Jewish lawyer named Tertullus. Because it is largely a narrative account of his time in the temple it, like his speech before Lysias, also contains little rhetorical language. It therefore offers the *PSP II* compiler little material for expressing his rhetorical theme, which may be the reason he has chosen to rework it into indirect speech.

After this speech in both Acts and *PSP II*, Felix chooses to wait until Claudius Lysias's return to consider the matter further. But importantly, the *PSP II* compiler has significantly changed Felix's reaction to Paul's defence. In Acts, Jerome's Luke describes Felix as *certissime sciens de via* ('knowing most certainly about the way'), the *via* here ostensibly meaning Christian truth, understood fully or partially through either the Jewish or natural law.

The *PSP II* compiler decides instead that:

En er iarllinn heyrði þetta, at þeir disputuðu um laug sín, þaa virði hann þat litils ok letz her engann orskurð veita mundu, fyrr en Claudius Lisias kiæmi...

But when the jarl heard that they disputed about their law, then he thought little of that and would allow them no decision until Claudius Lysias came...

⁹⁵ *Postola sögur*, 259-260.

Felix's apparent disregard of the Jewish law is a modification to the text that the *PSP II* compiler has sourced from the *HAA*. It has likely been attributed to him partly by being transposed from Luke's description of his successor, Festus, who alludes to his own ignorance of Jewish law as he presents Paul before King Agrippa.⁹⁶ We will return to a second reason shortly. It is an important alteration for our interests here because in using the term *disputuōdu* ('disputed'), borrowed from Latin, the *PSP II* compiler casts Paul's defence against Tertullus not in the light of rhetoric but in that of dialectic, much as he did in Paul's dispute with Dionysius. The speech may not demonstrate rhetorical language, but the *PSP II* compiler has nevertheless fitted it into his liberal *ordinatio*.

Felix, then, has become an instrumental part of the civic setting for this phase of Paul's development and, as the Athenian school was important to the saga's depiction of dialectic, so the setting here is important for its presentation of dialectic and rhetoric.⁹⁷ Disputes over the nature of truth are germane to the dialectic phase of learning, and it is this form of learning in which the *PSP II* compiler depicts Tertullus and Paul engaging. But in the disputes that result from his arrest, Paul finds himself in the offices and courts of the Roman magistrates, the natural home not of dialectic but of rhetoric, and Felix, now functioning as an extension of this setting, is initially ineffectual in responding to it.

Felix's knowledge of the 'way' is ostensibly owed in part to the fact that his wife, Drusilla, is Jewish, and though not stated explicitly, it could be her expertise that he seeks to consult when he has Paul brought before him for his second speech. Perhaps in part because of this pre-existing understanding and perhaps through his wife's consultation, Felix becomes *timefactus* ('alarmed') following Paul's talk of *fidem quae est in Iesum Christum* ('the faith that is in Jesus Christ') and the *iudicio futuro* ('judgement to come').⁹⁸ Here, in moving Felix

⁹⁶ Acts 25.19-20.

⁹⁷ For the connection between rhetoric and civil law, see Hugh, *Did.* I. XI.

⁹⁸ Acts 24.22-24.

to conviction, Paul demonstrates one of the chief aims of the Christian rhetor that Augustine discusses in *DDC IV*.⁹⁹ He then chooses to leave Paul in chains in hopes of securing a favour from the Jewish authorities. The picture that Luke paints of Felix, then, is personal and tragic: though possessing a greater knowledge of the Law than the average Roman, when confronted with the Gospel he nevertheless turns away from it, passing Paul's judgement along to his successor, Portius Festus.

Luke has not provided the contents of this oration in direct speech and the *PSP II* compiler has not diverged from him. Nevertheless, he seems to regard this unrecorded oration as rhetoric rather than a debate and takes the opportunity to illustrate more fully the ability of rhetorical speech to provoke conviction. He does this by adding historical commentary from the *HAA* describing Drusilla's first marriage to a gentile king named Lakzicus (Lazitus in the *HAA*) and subsequent divorce from him for Felix.¹⁰⁰ In marrying a divorced woman, Felix is depicted as violating a Christian prohibition, providing better explanation for Luke's inclusion of *castitas* ('chastity') among the topics Paul addresses.¹⁰¹ In being moved by Paul's speech, Felix behaves almost as Augustine might have hoped for, but fails to repent and leaves Paul in chains.¹⁰² Where the compiler of the *HAA* inserts this information about Felix and Drusilla surrounding both Paul's first and second speeches, the *PSP II* compiler reserves all of it for the second, allowing it to better lend itself to a portrait of the apostle inciting Felix's guilt.

⁹⁹ Aug. *DDC IV*.55.

¹⁰⁰ *Postola sögur*, 260.

¹⁰¹ Luke 16.18; Acts 24.25.

¹⁰² Aug. *DDC IV*.12.27.

2. vii. g *Rhetoric: Other Adjustments*

In addition to altering Paul's speeches, the compiler has altered the word choices of his source texts, sometimes with only minor adjustments, but many of these draw attention to Paul's rhetorical skills. We shall examine them here.

After arresting Paul at the temple and learning that he is a Roman citizen, the Roman tribune – identified by the *PSP II* compiler as Claudius – calls together the Jewish priests to interrogate him so that he might better understand his perceived wrongdoing. Paul then discusses the correct interpretation of the law with two Jewish theological camps, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Doing so marks a phase of Paul's development wherein he has now come to contrast his younger self, a Pharisee, who interpreted the law harshly, and to better resemble his foster brother, Stephen.

The high priest, Ananias, commands his followers to strike Paul in the mouth, indicating that it is by his mouth, and therefore his speech, that Paul has caused offense. In Acts, Paul rebukes Ananias for the hypocrisy of defending the Jewish law from Paul's perceived violation of it whilst violating it himself by ordering him to be beaten unjustly. But the *PSP II* compiler has added an extra layer of meaning to this rebuke, reframing it as a discussion of the relationship between eloquence and truth. In the Vulgate Acts, Paul calls Ananias a *paries dealbate* ('whitewashed wall'), the meaning of which is not explained.¹⁰³ In *PSP II*, he uses the same insult, *hviti veggr* ('white wall'), which the compiler explains with this gloss:

¹⁰³ Acts 23.1-10.

En þat hellt til, at hann dro saman liking til þess manzins, er hann mælir fagrtt ok lætr, sem hann dæmi laug, þaa er hann dæmir i moti laugunum, ok veggisins þess, er hann er kallaðr fagr utan, en hann er onytr innan, fyr því at Pali þotti rangtt dæma.¹⁰⁴

And it is held that he [Paul] drew a comparison between the man who speaks beautifully and acts as if he were judging in accordance with the law, and the wall, which is called fair on the outside but worthless on the inside, because Paul thought he judged wrongly.

This analysis of Paul's comparison is not present in Acts 23 or in the *HAA*.¹⁰⁵ What it is, in essence, is an accusation of eloquence without wisdom, fair words without truth. It echoes the *sermo affabilis* that Jerome and Alcuin warn against, the improper use of rhetoric.¹⁰⁶ That this is merged with the discussion of the correct interpretation of the law shows the merging of two significant themes in *PSP II*'s presentation of Paul's life: the right use of eloquence and the right interpretation of the law. The union of these two themes was also crucial to the practice of Christian exegesis in the Middle Ages.

Paul escapes prolonged discussion by leveraging a key disagreement between the Pharisees and Sadducees over the resurrection of the dead, provoking an argument between them and ultimately securing a defence from the Pharisees who, like Paul, believe in the resurrection of the dead while the Sadducees do not.¹⁰⁷ He is then returned to prison, and

¹⁰⁴ *Postola sögur*, 257.

¹⁰⁵ The compiler of the *HAA*, interestingly, sees in this insult a comparison between Ananias and Moses: Ananias misleads God's people through the incorrect interpretation of God's commandments and is likened to a stone wall and Moses once misled God's people by misconstruing God's commandments in striking rather than tapping a rock in Numbers 20. The *HAA* makes no discussion of eloquence, but it is worth remembering that Moses was famously lacking in eloquence (Exodus 4.10).

¹⁰⁶ Ecclesiastes 9:12; Jerome, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten* (Library of Latin Texts. Series A. Turnhout, 2010), IX. Xii. 292; Alcuinus, *Commentaria super Ecclesiasten*, in *Patrologia Latina* 100, ed. J.P. Migne, (Paris, 1851), 706a.

¹⁰⁷ Acts 23; *Postola sögur*, 257-258.

Ananias brings a lawyer named Tertullus to prosecute him. The *PSP II* compiler adds of Tertullus that he is *sniallazti maðr af Gyðingum ok enn laugkiænsti* ('the most eloquent of the Jews and the most skilled in the law').¹⁰⁸ This further helps to establish the ensuing legal drama as a combat of rhetorical skills, despite the fact that Tertullus's and Paul's speeches have been largely reduced to narration.

As Paul uses his Roman citizenship to appeal his case from Claudius to Felix, Felix to Festus, and Festus to Agrippa, he defends himself and proclaims the gospel in orations to each. Though the *PSP II* compiler has largely abbreviated these or replaced them with narration, he has also made small changes to the narration that emphasise the importance of speech in the narrative. When Festus presents Paul before Agrippa, in Acts, he says *ego vero conperi nihil dignum eum morte admisisse ipso* ('Truly, I have discovered nothing deserving of his death to have been done by him').¹⁰⁹ The *PSP II* compiler has expanded this: *En nu hefvi ek nackvat ranzakað hans mal, ok finn ek engan þann lut með honum, er hann eigi dauðamaðr fyrir at vera* ('But now I have scrutinised his speech, and I find no such thing with him for which he should become a dead man').¹¹⁰ The added verbiage in *PSP II* creates a much clearer impression that Paul's rhetoric is a key part of the debate at issue in his trials than does that of Acts. As Claudius continues, he also registers the centrality of Paul's speech to his citizenship and to the appeal process: *enda hefvir hann skotið sinu mali undir keisarans dom, ok því hefvi ek heitið honum* ('because he has appealed his speech to Caesar's judgement, therefore I have promised to him').¹¹¹ The word *mál* here has no precedent in the Latin of the Vulgate or the *HAA*. Though it could be that its inclusion is simply the appropriate Old Norse-Icelandic idiom for approximating the Latin *appellante*, it nevertheless hints at the importance that speech held in the compiler's understanding of legal processes, a

¹⁰⁸ *Postola sögur*, 259.

¹⁰⁹ Acts 25.25.

¹¹⁰ *Postola sögur*, 262.

¹¹¹ *Postola sögur*, 262.

link also made in Hugh of St Victor's explanation of the origins of rhetoric in the *Didascalicon*.¹¹²

Collings has drawn attention to a more overt reference to rhetoric in Paul's defence before Agrippa, and that is in a gloss in which the compiler explains that Paul's *viti ok snilld* ('wisdom and eloquence') are on display in his ability to use either a question *að maðr spyrr þess, er honum er ifvi aa, ok vill hann þaa hafva orlausnn af auðrum* ('that a man asks when he is in doubt and he wishes to have an answer from another') or *er aullum er liost* ('which is clear to everyone'), that is, a rhetorical question.¹¹³ This is a trope taught in the rhetorical tradition from an early period and also attested as *teretema* (from Greek *ἐρώτημα*) in the FoGT, and makes clear that rhetoric is a crucial theme of this part of the narrative.¹¹⁴ Note, too, the use of 'wisdom and eloquence', the key aims of the rhetor according to the liberal tradition since Aristotle.

2. vii. h Skilja

We have seen that the word *skilja* can mean 'to divide' or 'to understand', making it important for tying together three of the saga's key motifs: the division of the spirit of the law from the letter, the Benjaminite division of spoils, and the right understanding of words and theological concepts through the combined teachings of biblical exegesis and the Liberal Arts. The word is an especially important thematic word in the life of Paul, who is the culmination of the Benjaminite spoil-division motif, a rhetorical-trained Roman Citizen, and one of the early Church's most influential theological teachers, spreading understanding of the Gospel throughout Mediterranean society.

¹¹² Hugh, *Did.* I. XI

¹¹³ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 40; *Postola sögur*, 263.

¹¹⁴ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 40; Clunies Ross and Wellingdorf, eds., *FoGT*, 48-49, 157.

The *PSP II* compiler uses the verb *skilja* and the related noun *skilning* frequently in his descriptions of academic activity, sometimes unprompted by Acts or the *HAA*. *Skilja*'s broad semantic range overlaps with that of the Latin *dividere*, and its first appearance in the saga is as a translation of *dividere* in Jacob's prophecy about the tribe of Benjamin 'dividing' spoils. Both words can mean to 'divide', 'share', 'separate', and 'distinguish'. This is important because it establishes a conceptual link between Jacob's prophecy and the arts of learning. *Dividendum* ('dividing') the parts of a discipline from one another in order to help readers to understand the internal logic of each individually is one of Hugh's most foundational methods of *distinguendum* ('distinguishing') truth from falsehood in the study of dialectic.¹¹⁵ The Old Norse word *skilja* possesses a semantic range that is similar but wider, further meaning to 'understand' or 'perceive', giving further emphasis to its use in passages about education. This is fitting since part of the way in which Paul comes to 'divide the spoils' is to understand the spirit of the law in addition to the letter and to help educate others in their understanding of Christianity. *Dividere* in its noun form, *divisio*, though normally a 'division' or 'separation', is the word applied by compilers to the internal logical structures they perceived in the texts they copied or edited. The noun form of *skilja*, *skilning*, can similarly be a 'division' or 'separation', but also 'understanding'. It may be that in the context of Old Norse-Icelandic liberal education, one's 'understanding' of a thing was also related to perceiving its correct logical structures, or *divisiones*.¹¹⁶ In *PSP II*, *skilja* and *skilning* appear to be academic terms that approximate the use *dividere* and *divisio* in learned Latinate texts.¹¹⁷ The interplay this provides with Jacob's prophecy creates a link between

¹¹⁵ Hugh, *De Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris* XII.

¹¹⁶ The masculine *skilningr* ('sense', 'meaning') could provide a closer analogue to *divisio* but is not used in the passages of *PSP II* discussed here.

¹¹⁷ Whether this is true in a broader range of Old Norse-Icelandic learned writings is unclear. It together with other questions of the equation of learned terminology is worthy of further investigation.

Paul's division of spoils and his function in church history as one of the key initiators of logical theological writing.

Skilja is used in *PSP II*'s opening syncretism. As students, the difference between Stephen and Saul is described using *grein aa skilningu*.¹¹⁸ This can be taken to indicate a difference in the understanding of the two students, a reading supported by the following description of their intellectual focuses. But precisely because of that difference in intellectual focus, letter and spirit, *grein aa skilningu* is also evocative of divisions between branches of logic, study, or knowledge, such as the approaches to scriptural interpretation that Saul and Stephen exemplify.

When the two students' hermeneutics are contrasted, Saul's approach to scripture is described with *skilja*: *Saulus skilði aull laugin til freku* ('Saul discerned all the law to his hardship'); the sentiment is repeated again shortly thereafter: *en Saulus fostbroðir hans hellt Gyðinga laug rikuliga, eptir því sem hann hafði skilið...* ('but Saul [Stephen's] foster brother held to the law of the Jews rigidly, according to what he had discerned...').¹¹⁹ His understanding of scripture, his division of its contents, is understood as something akin to the logical procedures of the medieval schoolroom, and this is contrasted with Stephen, who *hugði mest at merkingunni* ('thought most of signification...').¹²⁰ There is a clear differentiation between Stephen's spiritual understanding and the *skilning* of the school room that Paul practices.

That the concept is initially introduced as something distinct from spiritual understanding is useful when the compiler later recounts Dionysius's search for truth. Here he uses *skilja* to refer to heathen use of Classical learning, and his descriptions are couched in implications that their understanding is a product of the Natural Law. Consider the passage,

¹¹⁸ *Postola sögur*, 237.

¹¹⁹ *Postola sögur*, 237.

¹²⁰ *Postola sögur*, 237.

quoted above in which the learned men at the school *skilðu* ('discerned') that the sky had not darkened naturally, leading Dionysius eventually to build an altar to the unknown god. Their perception is imperfect, but points toward Christian truth. This is reiterated at the end of Paul's stay in Athens:

Ok þá vigði Paulus Dionisium til byskups yfvir borgina, aðr hann færi i brutt. En til marks, hverssu mikit vit ok *skilning* almattigr guð hafði gefvit spekingum heiðinna manna, þaa er þat sagtt, at i hofvinu, því er fyrr var fra sagtt, at þeir haufðu giort okunnum guði, þaa villdi alþyða færa blot fram. [Emphasis added.]

And then Paul consecrated Dionysius as bishop over the city before he went away. But as a sign of how great a wit and understanding almighty God had given to the wise of the heathen men, it is said that the whole people wished to carry out sacrifices at that temple – which was mentioned above – that they had set up to an unknown god.

The *vit ok skilning* ('wit and understanding') in this passage are those of the wise Athenian heathens before their conversion. Though *skilning* does not indicate Christian understanding, it is important that the compiler says that God gave them this understanding and, furthermore, that it motivated them to worship the unknown god. Though Paul's comments on the altar to the unknown god in Acts already hint toward the Christian conception of the Natural Law, by attributing their knowledge to God explicitly, the compiler has added greater emphasis to that concept more in accordance with Paul's description of it in Romans 1: *quia quod notum est*

Dei manifestum est in illis Deus enim illis manifestavit ('For what is known of God is manifest within them for God has manifested it within them').¹²¹

Within the context of a passage so focused on dialectic and in which *skilja* has been used with dialectic overtones, this also further indicates that the compiler, like Hugh of St Victor, attributes restorative power to the Trivium, for here logic is very clearly associated with the Natural Law.

Skilja is used pointedly in the story of Dionysius and Paul. Consider this interaction between them:

Ok sva tok Dionisius bratt at unna Pali, at hvertt kveld aðr þeir *skilði* sitt tal, þaa mællti Dionisius: 'Skalli, kom þu aa morgin.'¹²² [Emphasis added.]

And Dionysius soon took a such a liking to Paul, that each evening before they parted [ended] their talk, then Dionysius said, 'Baldy, come back in the morning'.

Skilði is used here to mean 'parted', but fittingly, it takes place in the evening just before Dionysius invites Paul back in the morning, offering a playful reminder of Jacob's prophecy in which morning and evening are crucial times: Perhaps the compiler imagines that Paul retains some sanctified variation of his tribe's wolfishness in the context of his verbal combat in the mornings which, by the evening, result in his having shared greater understanding with Dionysius.

Skilja and *skilning* appear, too, in the rhetorical stage of the saga during Paul's dispute with the Pharisees and Sadducees:

¹²¹ Romans 1. 18.

¹²² *Postola sögur*, 250.

En þar voru staddir yfvirgyðingar ok þeir menn, er Saducei voru kallaðir, ok þar haufðu sina skilning hvarir...¹²³

But the Pharisees were there, as were those men who were called the Sadducees, and they both had their own understanding...

The intellectual frameworks held by both the Pharisees and the Sadducees are portrayed as different forms of learned dialectic, but they are not the same. Whereas the Pharisees (here the *yfvirgyðingar*, ‘arch-Jews’) *truðu* (‘believed’, ‘trusted’, ‘had faith in’) *upprisnu dauðra manna eptir* (‘the resurrection of the dead’), the Sadducees *skilðu sva, at men skylldu at molldarauka verða* (‘discerned that men would be turned to dust’).¹²⁴ Though *trúa* is not the same verb used earlier for Stephen’s perception of the spirit of the law, the contrast between the Pharisees’ faith and the Sadducees’ intellectual discernment nevertheless faintly parallels the contrast between Stephen’s spiritual understanding and Saul’s meticulous but ultimately impaired reading of the scriptures, in this case confirmed by the Sadducees’ rejection of the resurrection of the body, an important part of credal orthodoxy. Both camps’ *skilningar* are nevertheless at odds with Paul’s teachings and reflect different degrees to which careful academic procedure can be antithetical to the spirit of the law. This both contrasts the relationship of Classical learning to the natural law established at Athens and demonstrates Paul’s spiritual development, for once he too was a Pharisee, and now he has grown more like his foster brother, Stephen.

¹²³ *Postola sögur*, 258.

¹²⁴ *Postola sögur*, 258.

In the word *skilja*, *PSP II*'s themes of theological hermeneutics, the study of eloquence, and Benjamin's tribal history are neatly distilled into active verb, allowing it to characterise Paul's life and missionary activity as a succinct demonstration of the synthesis of Liberal education, biblical exegesis, and the study of history into one cogent theoretical approach to knowledge and wisdom. The traditional link between wisdom and eloquence means that this synthesis of disciplines provides the intellectual framework from which Paul and the compiler both approach their use of language.

2. viii *The Literary Use of Glosses*

When modern scholars accuse the narrators of inserting themselves into their narratives, they can be taken to mean that the glosses are distracting clutter that divert readers from appreciating the story itself. This may be true in many cases. But there can also be methodology guiding the selection and placement of glosses that allows them to play a literary function in their texts. Consider the *PSP II* compiler's curation of the materials he has received concerning Paul's speech at Lystra. Though this is one of the speeches that the compiler has largely omitted, the event still affords him an opportunity to present Paul's eloquence.

When the Lystrans mistake Paul for Óðinn and Barnabas for Þórr, the compiler tells his audience that Óðinn is known to the Greeks as Mercurius and explains Mercurius' role is in Greek pagan belief:

En þvi kaulluðu þeir Pal Merkurium, at Merkurius hafði verið allra manna sniallaztr, ok truðu þeir, at hann giæfvi hverium manni snilid, er hefvir. Ok þyða sumir

Mercurium sva sem tulk, en sumir sem meðalfaranda tungu ok eyrna, sva sem snilldin rennr fram af tungunni oc til eyrna þeira er aa heyra.¹²⁵

And they called Paul Mercurius, for Mercurius had been the most eloquent of all men, and they believed that he gave eloquence to each man who had it. And some translate Mercurius as an interpreter, and some as intercessor between the tongue and the ears, just as the eloquence runs from the tongue and to their ears of those who hear it.

This explanation is taken very closely from the *HAA* which, by explaining Mercurius's association with speech also makes clear Paul's own talent for speech. But the *HAA* also gives an explanation of why Barnabas is mistaken for Jove, and the *PSP II* compiler includes neither this nor the Latin name, Jove. Note, too, that the compiler of *PSP II* has translated the Areopagus as *hof Tyss* ('the temple of Týr') where the *PSP I* translator did not.¹²⁶ This probably also points to the *HAA* as a source, for it explains the equivalence of Ares with Mars before providing a commentary on Mars' role in the Greco-Roman pantheon as it does later for Jove.

Collings asserts that the compiler's use of the *interpretatio norræna* here is evidence that its style is in keeping with the earlier hagiographic sagas like *PSP I*, believing that a more 'learned' stylist would be likely to have retained the gods' Classical names.¹²⁷ Contrast it, though, with *PSP I*'s use of the *interpretatio norræna*: Mercurius's and Jupiter's names are replaced with Óðinn's and Þórr's without comment on their Latin or Greek names. In replacing Ares with Týr, the *PSP II* compiler is even more thorough in following the *interpretatio norræna* than the *PSP I* translator. Yet where *PSP I* adapts the Classical gods to

¹²⁵ *Postola sögur*, 244.

¹²⁶ *Postola sögur*, 249.

¹²⁷ Collings, 'The *Codex Scardensis*', 209.

Scandinavian idiom without comment, the *PSP II* compiler instead wants his audience to know that Mercurius is a familiar figure with an unfamiliar name, perceived in similar but different terms in Greek culture. He then uses this to underscore Paul's eloquence with a description of Mercurius' eloquence. Though the appearance of heathen Scandinavian names may evoke earlier Old Norse-Icelandic saints' lives, the explanatory style is also evocative of medieval encyclopaedic writings, suggesting that the *PSP II* compiler approached his project with a different academic framework than that of the earlier Old Norse-Icelandic hagiographers.

It is likely that the *PSP II* compiler's selective translation and commentary is intended for literary effect. In translating most deities' names into Old Norse-Icelandic and excluding their corresponding explanations, the compiler curates his commentary to foreground Paul's skill with words. The other deities recede into a background literary familiarity for Icelandic audiences, while Mercurius's exoticism is used to draw out Paul's character. This fits the compiler's aim of refashioning the *HAA*'s materials into a biography of Paul specifically and demonstrates that purposefulness that can undergird a compiling and commentative practices.

2. ix Rhetorical Language from Paul

We finally encounter rhetorical language from Paul at the end of his *vita* and beginning of his *passio* as he journeys from the Levant to Rome for his *mannraun* ('trial'), and therefore marking an important climactic moment in the saga. In a deviation both from Acts and from the *HAA*, the *PSP II* compiler has decided to date the composition of Paul's epistles to this voyage, an important alteration for the saga's rhetorical *ordinatio*. Paul composes rhetorical works, his epistles, on his journey to Rome, the heart of civic society and the centre of the judicial and forensic aspects of first-century Mediterranean life. But he does not write them

for his own defence, rather to provide *sannendi* ('comfort', 'truth', or 'soothing') *fyr lærisveinum sinum* ('for his disciples') *sem þeir þurftu mest* (as they most needed).¹²⁸ This echoes the aims of rhetorical speech that Augustine advises in *DDC*, and also demonstrates the way in which Christian humility redirects Classical learning. It is also fitting that he composes his contribution to the canonical scriptures as he approaches the location of his martyrdom, therefore illustrating the sanctifying role of the Liberal Arts both in his life and in the lives of future Christians who rely on his works.

The passage quoted here is the passage from II Corinthians that is quoted earlier in this chapter, Paul's defence against those who would detract from his teachings. It is the most extensive instance of rhetorical language in the saga, and its heightened style contributes to the voyage's sense of dramatic escalation. Paul's life has so far progressed by degrees through the three stages of the Trivium, and we are now finally presented with an example of his rhetorical skill, one whose brilliance is asserted by no less an authority than St Augustine. It is part of Paul's larger argument in II Corinthians defending his ministry and his status as an apostle. His use of rhetorical language for this purpose suggests to us the passage's special interest to a medieval scholar in the age of the *compilatio*: it is Paul's defence of his *auctoritas*, his exhortation of readers to trust in his teachings.

We have seen before now that the purpose of rhetorical glosses is exhortation, and that such exhortation is normally moral, that is, a tropological reading of scripture. But *PSP* II, like other academic saints' lives, is a tool for historical and theological study, a work that focuses on the historical level. The compiler has, therefore, selected rhetorical language from Paul that suits this function. He does not seek to turn his reader from paganism, as Paul did at the Lystra and the Areopagus, or to defend Paul's innocence in court, for medieval Christians did not need such exhortation. Instead, he cites Paul's defence of why his readers should trust

¹²⁸ *Postola sögur*, 264.

him. He has reshaped the saga's narrative to reflect the same criteria for authority that Paul cites of himself: Paul is of Abraham's kin, demonstrated by his descent from Benjamin. Though Paul downplays his skill with words, the compiler demonstrates that this is in fact an example of his humility, and instead depicts his wisdom and eloquence through a framework that would have been familiar to his readers. Having demonstrated these components of Paul's authority through historical narrative, he now admonishes them to believe him with rhetoric.

It is not clear from the text of II Corinthians that Paul's detractors are, as the *PSP II* compiler asserts, advocates for Christian devotion to the Mosaic Law (that theme is more evident in the epistle to the Galatians). Nevertheless, the compiler neatly ties the letter-spirit dichotomy into his presentation of Paul's *auctoritas*, introducing Paul's admonishment by saying that these false teachers:

... tiaðu strangara lif en Pall postoli hafði þar boðit at hallda skyllði, ok saugðu skyllt Moyses laug at hallda með guðzspialla boðorðum; ok haufðu margir vikit eptir þeira kenning, fyr því at þeir haufðu mikít siðlætisbragð a ser.¹²⁹

... led a stricter life than Paul had admonished them to hold to and said that they should hold to the law of Moses together with the ordinances of the Gospel; and many had turned to their teaching because they had a great appearance of morality for themselves.

The bifurcation of the letter and the spirit of the law is not as stark in these false apostles as it once was in Saul, for they teach that the Corinthians ought to follow both the law of Moses

¹²⁹ *Postola sögur*, 264.

and the *guðzspialla boðorðum* ('the ordinances of the Gospel'). Nevertheless, their insistence that Christians should also follow the Mosaic law is a reminder of Paul's previous life as a Pharisee. Because this has been an important theme in *PSP II*, his rhetorical speech as an oration against his former stance is important to reassert here.

2. x. Transition into *Passio*

Paul's speech from II Corinthians leads into an extended commentary on II Corinthians 11 and 12 which leaves behind the rhetorical style and resumes the academic style which has otherwise been standard to the saga's glosses. This leads into the *passio* ('martyrdom') component of the narrative. The commentary begins with descriptions of the physical tortures that Paul endures which might not be known to his readers, and this contributes to the saga's escalation, as his martyrdom follows shortly.

Importantly, there is also extensive commentary on Paul's description in II Corinthians 12 where Paul describes a man he knew fourteen years before writing who was taken up into *tertium caelum* ('third heaven') in the Vulgate or *priðja himins* in *PSP II*. Following unspecified church fathers, the compiler surmises that it was Paul himself who was taken up into the third heaven and uses the opportunity to embark on a description of the different levels of heaven according to medieval views of cosmography.¹³⁰ After his death, the syncretism comparing Paul with Peter includes descriptions of their roles in admitting believers to Heaven and in the final judgement.¹³¹ This means that the *passio* in *PSP II* begins and ends with examples of *cosmographia*. This helps to contextualise Paul's death within a

¹³⁰ *Postola sögur*, 265.

¹³¹ *Postola sögur*, 278-279.

much larger cosmos, one in which the earth and, by extension, earthly life is small in comparison with heaven and eternal life.

2. xi. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the result of compiling multiple sources together to provide text and commentary results in a distinct literary atmosphere, one that draws the audience into the different hermeneutical layers of narrative analysis that can be applied to the text, allowing them to understand its variegated meanings through its variegated styles. If classical *Íslendingasögur* can be said to provide ‘that classical feeling’ by virtue of the setting they conjure in the audiences’ minds and – to a more debatable degree – by virtue of their distinct style of language, then we might also imagine that *compilationes* conjured a distinct literary atmosphere not by the contents they describe (which were various) but by the distinctive interplay of *originalia* and *commentaria*, content and exposition. Jan Ziolkowsky describes a different form of stylistically variegated text, the late antique Latin prosimetrum, as simulating on the page the auditory experience of a grammar school classroom in which didactic activities move back and forth between the recitation of poetry and the discussion of it in prose.¹³² Narrative *compilationes* must have offered readers a similar experience, inviting them alternatively into narrative and into a greater understanding of the narrative through auxiliary information.

PSP II provides a helpful case study for this stylistic variegation in Old Norse-Icelandic because of its tightly interwoven presentation of the Trivium’s linguistic hermeneutics, Pauline exegetical hermeneutics, and a close historical analysis of Paul’s life

¹³² Jan Ziolkowski, ‘The Prosimetrum in the Classical Tradition’, in *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 45-66.

within the histories both of his tribe and of the burgeoning Church. The compiler expresses these themes within a new carefully structured *ordinatio* for his materials in which the deliberate usage of low, high, and academic styles aligns neatly with the way he has reshaped Paul's life into a growth through the Trivium's teachings. Within this framework, the saga's sparse but deliberate use of rhetorical style allows us to distinguish clearly between the rhetorical and academic styles, two modes of style that previous scholars have tended to conflate. I hope to have drawn out the ways in which the saga allows us to see the purpose underlying various stylistic registers and how variegated passages are used within the saga's structure. It is of added interest that the Trivium is an important theme in *PSP II* much as it is in our study. This affords us with a unique literary setting in which we can observe the compiler's stylistic deliberation set against the backdrop of a text that has the uses of language and learning as one of its main themes.

Hendiadys

3. i. Introduction

Among the most-noted stylistic elements of learned texts is their use of alliterative pairs of synonyms. Nygaard observes that in learned texts, ‘synonyms are often placed side by side and in these combinations alliterating words are often chosen’, and this is one of the defining characteristics of his description of the learned style.¹ They are also one of the defining characteristics of the florid style according to Widding. Halvorsen notes that they were part of the ‘fashion’ of Hákon IV’s day, and they are especially common in the translated romances, making them, too, a marker of a distinctly courtly style, which we shall examine in Chapter 5. Because scholarly references to these word pairs are often made with special focus on their alliteration and their synonymy, it bears noting that neither of these characteristics is ubiquitous, as we shall see shortly. Nevertheless, accusations of verbosity might well be made especially with these word-pairs in mind, which is why I will dedicate this entire chapter to them.

In the previous two chapters, we have divided previous scholarly descriptions of a ‘learned’ style into the high and mixed styles on the one hand and the academic style on the other. Where the former reflects the Classical rhetorical tradition’s teachings on oratory, the latter reflects an effort at conceptual precision. The past scholarly conflation of the two is important here, because pairs of words linked in syndetic parataxis – from here called hendiadyses – are used in both styles. Because hendiadys is also used this way in the Old Testament, it is likely that the study of the Bible influenced the use of hendiadys in Old Norse-Icelandic religious prose. For this reason, I have chosen *Stjórn* I for this discussion. It

¹ Jónas Kristjánsson, ‘Learned Style or Saga style?’, 289.

is a compendium of translated historical materials from the Old Testament and interspersed commentary that features several different prose styles, including all the styles we have discussed so far: the *sermo humilis*, the *sermo sublimis*, the *sermo mixtus*, and the academic style.

I will argue in this chapter that one of the uses of hendiadys is to link similar characters or thematically similar narrative scenes in the disparate parts of stylistically variegated texts like *compilationes*. I will demonstrate this by examining the repeated hendiadys *þornar ok klungrar* ('thorns and brambles'), a word motif that characterises the descendants of Cain and represents the curse placed upon Adam and Eve when they are cast out of the Garden of Eden. I will then examine a nexus of related hendiadyses that contain the word *gipta* ('blessing') to discuss both the dramatic potential of using different but related pairings to draw attention both to similarities and differences in related scenes. I will also use this nexus of related hendiadyses to demonstrate the important contribution that a study of style can make to our lexicographical understanding of words.

3. ii. *Stjórn*

The name *Stjórn*, which is often translated as 'guidance', was applied by modern scholars, and Ian Kirby has labelled its three parts *Stjórn I*, *Stjórn II*, and *Stjórn III*. *Stjórn I* contains the biblical narrative from the beginning of Genesis to the 18th chapter of Exodus; *Stjórn II* contains an abbreviated translation of the rest of the Pentateuch; *Stjórn III* contains Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, and it is believed to be the oldest of the three parts. Parts of *Stjórn* are also attested in the manuscripts AM 225 fol., AM 226 fol., AM 227 fol., and AM 228 fol., as well as in a number of later paper manuscripts, and edited together in 1862 by C.J. Unger. Only AM 226 contains all three parts, and only 226 includes *Stjórn II* at all. Interestingly, 226 also contains *Alexanders saga*, a translation of Walter of Châtillon's

Alexandreis; *Gyðinga saga*, a compilation of historical materials and commentary on Jewish history, sourced especially from the books of the Maccabees; and *Rómverja saga*, compiled and translated from Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* and *Coniuratio Catilinae*, as well as Lucan's *Pharsalia*. This should give us some idea of *Stjórn*'s perceived use for the study of history and suggest important compilatory activity not just in collating the biblical texts and commentative materials, but also in collating different works in a manuscript.

Stjórn I, again, covers the biblical narrative from Genesis to Exodus 18. Reidar Astås dates it to sometime between 1295 and 1325 owing in part to the work's prologue which says that it was composed during the reign of Hákon Magnússon (V) (d. 1319).² Its text is translated largely from Jerome's Vulgate and Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* and it is heavily supplemented with translated commentary from a wide variety of texts, including Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*, Gregory's *Homilies*, and Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*. It also contains passages that are more difficult to attribute to sources and that may be products of the translator-compiler's innovation, as well as modifications to its source texts that show an active engagement with literary style, especially the embellishment of key passages with the learned style's much-touted word pairs. What the translator-compiler does with these is not merely decorative or verbose. Rather, it reflects the careful study of biblical texts and their styles. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric are as important to reading and interpreting texts as they are to composing them, so it should not surprise us that medieval writers like the *Stjórn* I compiler relied on their *auctores* to learn the correct use of stylistic elements.

3. iii. *Hendiadys*

² Astås, *Studies in Stjórn*, 150.

Past scholarship has noted that word pairs linked in syndetic parataxis are one of *Stjórn*'s defining stylistic features. One of the simplest explanations for them could be that by using two words the translator could triangulate the meanings of single words from the source texts that he felt were not adequately expressed by single words in Old Norse-Icelandic. This hypothesis would accord nicely with the belief that the origins of either learnedness or floridity lie chiefly in translation. Kirby and Astås have both suggested the additional possibility that pairs of words could be indicative of the translator's efforts to synthesise parallel sources. Kirby hypothesises that some of them reflect the compiler's effort to demonstrate a knowledge of the Latin in both the Vulgate and the *Vetus Latina*.³ This sounds plausible, as the aim of representing variant sources was common enough among medieval compilers. This practice is evident in other vernacular works. The redactor-compiler of the AM 327 4to. redaction of *Sverris saga* uses pairs of words to conflate the variant words in his source texts, now attested in the *Flateyjarbók* and *Eirspennill* redactions.⁴ Yet, while some of the *VL*'s Latin may have been known through the biblical quotations in Augustine's works, Astås has dismissed as highly unlikely the idea that the *VL* itself would have been known in medieval Iceland and sees no signs that the translator has used the *VL* as an independent text. Nevertheless, Astås does detect in some word pairs an effort to harmonise multiple source texts, possibly of a greater variety.⁵ The use of word pairs in passages where they reflect no known Latin precedent limits the applicability of this theory, and suggests instead the translator-compiler's own deliberation, raising questions regarding his use of style and his influences. The following will be an examination of the linguistic, stylistic, and theological questions posed by these word pairs.

³ Kirby, *Biblical Quotations*, 54.

⁴ For discussion, see John Sephton, trans., *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway* (London: David Nutt, 1899), ix-xiii.

⁵ Astås, *Studies*, 63.

3. iv. Approaches to Hendiadys

If a word pair is treated as a single unit of meaning, it could reflect the very strictest understanding of *hendiadys*, from *ἐν διὰ δύοϊν*, ‘one through two’: one concept expressed by two words. This, indeed, is the definition given in the Old Icelandic *4GT*:

Endiadis er sú fígúra e tveir sundrausir hlutir eru merktir
fyrir einn óskiftiligan hlut, eða einn óskiftiligur hlutr er settr
fyrir tveim skiftiligum hlutum...

Hendiadys is a figure in which two different things are written
for one indivisible thing, or one indivisible thing is set down
for two distinct things...⁶

Note that here the author describes the process of creating hendiadys in both directions, seemingly a reference to *paraphrasus*, discussed in Chapter 3. Though the term has historically been applied more broadly than is dictated by its etymology, this strict definition serves a cautionary function for further analysis: the one meaning of the two words could be something different from the sum of its components.

If the two words in a pair are meant to express one concept, then there are several ways one might look for their meaning. Lillas, in her study of similar word pairs in the Hebrew Bible, gives a thorough overview of the ways that these pairs can be interpreted using the pair, ‘loving-kindness and truth’, repeated throughout the Old Testament.⁷ I replace her Hebrew quotations throughout with Latin from the Vulgate, here *miser cordia et veritas*,

⁶ *4GT*, 12.

⁷ Rosmari Lillas, ‘Hendiadys in the Hebrew Bible: An Investigation of the Application of the Term’, PhD diss. (University of Gothenburg, 2012), 281-286

but retain her use of English translations from the *AV*. One interpretive method is to understand one of the two words as a modifier for the other, thus rendering *miser cordia et veritas* to be something more like either *veritas misericors*, ‘merciful truth’, or as *miser cordia vera*, ‘true mercy’, with some debate as to which of the words ought to become a modifier for the other.⁸ This is not unlike Astås’s suggestion that the second word in a pair be understood as a ‘continuation or a clarification of the first’, and he offers the example of *plenius* from *Speculum Historiale* 1.102.46 which is translated as *miklu framarri ok fulluligar* (‘much greater and fuller’) at *Stjórn* 104.10f.⁹ The difficulty that *Stjórn*’s repetition of pairs poses to a fixed interpretational principle like this is that in some instances the order of the two words within the pair is swapped, eg., *miskunn ok gipta* in *Stjórn* 117 and *gipt ok miskunn* in *Stjórn* 148, making it difficult to establish whether the first or second word should become the modifier without risking the literary value created by the pair’s repetition.

Another approach that Lillas examines is to treat one of the two words in a pair as essentially redundant, an option that may be especially relevant to pairs made up of two synonyms, as in *terra autem erat inanis et vacua*, ‘the earth was an emptiness and a void’ (Gen. 1.2) as well as to pairs of related but dissimilar nouns, as in *venite faciamus nobis civitatem et turrem*, ‘Come, let us make a city and a tower’ (Gen. 11.4).¹⁰ Though past scholarship has not applied this kind of reading to all of *Stjórn*’s pairs with regularity, past characterisations of the learned and florid styles as verbose hold these word pairs to be a stock example of that verbosity. Though essentially true, this characterisation often hints at an underlying sentiment that perhaps the wordiness of the learned and florid styles is unnecessary for meaning, the product of garrulous foreign influence corrupting a preferable native succinctness. Though unnecessary wordiness cannot be ruled out, neither can it be

⁸ Lillas, ‘Hendiadys’, 282.

⁹ Astås, *Studies*, 111

¹⁰ Lillas, ‘Hendiadys’, 281, 17.

diagnosed with certainty. As with similar word pairs in Hebrew literature, those in *Stjórn* must first be scrutinised for possible literary value.

The last category in Lillas's taxonomy relevant to this study is those pairs that ought to be interpreted as a single construct relation, for which Lillas uses the example of, 'dispute and judgement', from II Samuel 15.4, for the judgement of a lawsuit.¹¹ In *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* Fred Robinson addresses similar concerns in analysing compound words in Old English verse. He says that compounds like *wældeað* and *winedrihten*, made up of 'two elements [that] seem to refer more or less equally to the same referent', are not merely tautological; 'a *wældeað* is not the same as a death from natural causes, and a *winedrihten*, or lord-and-friend, is more than just a lord'.¹² This goes beyond the standard semantic classification of compounds into endo- and exocentric. A compound word and a pair of words linked in syndetic parataxis are two different things, and both things are found in *Stjórn*, for Old Norse-Icelandic, like Old English, shows great enthusiasm for compounding.¹³ But a word pair may pose similar semantic challenges for modern scholarship. So, for example, *gipta ok gæðska*, on which more below, may mean something beyond what is conveyed by 'favour' and 'blessing'. But this kind of interpretation must be made cautiously, for the fact that the two words are still two means that they easily can be treated as such at any time. In her overview, Lillas does not address the appearance of *miser cordia et veritas* in Psalm 84, in which the two *occurrerunt*, 'come together', but this instance does remind of the potential for fluidity between two words as an expression of one concept and as an expression of two.¹⁴ This fluidity may be one of the literary strengths of these pairs.

¹¹ Lillas, 'Hendiadys', 281, 17. I have not included the Latin here because, interestingly, Jerome seems to have adapted this tack long before Lillas, using only one word, *negotium*, 'business', to translate the Hebrew pair.

¹² Robinson, 'Appositive Style', 14-15

¹³ Indeed, *Stjórn* I has a high frequency of compound words that occur nowhere else (Astås, *Studies*, 61).

¹⁴ Psalm 84 in the Vulgate is Psalm 85 in the *AV*.

If we resume Lillas's example of *miseriordia et veritas*, we can find several examples of this fluidity in the Psalms. In Psalm 25 (25 in the *AV*), David makes two parallel requests to God: *dirige me in veritate tua...* ('lead me in your truth') in verse 5 and *reminiscere miserationum tuarum...* ('remember your mercy') in verse 6, before moving into an expression of assurance: *universae viae Domini miseriordia et veritas requirentibus testamentum ejus et testimonia ejus* ('all of the roads of the Lord are mercy and truth for those searching out his covenant and his testimonies'). If the two are understood to belong together in hendiadys, then the ability to use them separately is likely one of the literary benefits of hendiadys.¹⁵

3. v. Rhetorical Writings and the Bible

There are many different names given to repetition in the grammatical and rhetorical traditions: *anadiplosis*, *conduplicatio*, *congeminatio*, *geminatio*, *hendiadys*, *repetitio*, and for those instances in which word pairs are made specifically of synonyms, *synonymia*, which we discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁶ *Replicatio* is the term used by Hugh of St Victor.¹⁷ All of these vary in application from simple pairs of two words to entire parallel clauses, sentences, and passages. Bede's *De Schematibus et Tropis* shows that the use of Classical rhetorical categories for the exegesis of the Bible began early, for the Jarrow abbot selects passages

¹⁵ In this fluidity, Christian exegetes found cause for reflection. When in Psalm 84 (85 in the *AV*) *miseriordia* and *veritas* come together, a chiasmic parallel line then says, *iustitia et pax deosculatae sunt* ('justice and peace have kissed'). This became the groundwork from which first Jewish Midrash writers, then Christian allegorists, created the Four Daughters of God allegory, in which Truth, Justice, Peace, and Mercy are called upon to judge Adam after the fall. Justice and Truth want him punished, while Peace and Mercy want him spared. When they come to terms in their suit, *miseriordia* and *veritas* come together and *iustitia* and *pax* kiss. The two hendiadyses are shown to be merisms for the constituent parts of God's grace. For discussion, see Mattias Tveitane, 'The "Four Daughters of God" in the Old Norse "King's Mirror"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 4 (1972): 795–804.

¹⁶ *Anadiplosis*: Bede, *De Schematibus et Tropis* I.v.; Isidore, *Etym.* II.xvi, II.xxi.3; *conduplicatio*: *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* IV.xxviii; *congeminatio*: Bede, *De Schematibus et Tropis* I.v.; Isidore, *Etym.* II.xxi.3; *geminatio*: Cicero, *De Oratore* III.206; Quintilian, *Institutiones* VIII.v.3-24; *synonymia*: Isidore, *Etym.* II.xxi.6.

¹⁷ Hugh, *Annotationes in Pentateuchem* VII

from the Bible as examples of the tropes and figures in an effort to refute an alleged claim by the Greeks' to have invented them.¹⁸ It is probable, then, that some of the elements of Classical style identified in the Bible by Bede and others reflect genuine elements of Hebrew style that have survived the translation process. If biblical passages are deemed serviceable for the study of Classical eloquence, then it stands to reason that the patterns of repetition still observable in the Latin translation of the Hebrew text would influence medieval understandings of the otherwise Classical concepts that were used as an analytical framework.

Lillas's work on hendiadys shows that word pairs were indeed important in biblical writings. Another stylistic element that could likely fall under the label of *repetitio* is the repetition of words for thematic effect, a practice that Michael Buber and Franz Rosenzweig have called *leitwortstil*, 'leading-word style'.¹⁹ Michael Fishbane has argued that the entire Jacob narrative in Genesis is structured around *Leitwörter*, and Robert Alter has further observed the extent to which different characters are characterised by *Leitwörter*, such as Sampson by fire, Jacob by blessing and the colour red, Saul by his height.²⁰ Though Lillas does not use the term *Leitwörter*, she observes a similar phenomenon with the repetition of word pairs. This appears also to be a rhetorical practice employed by the translator-compiler of *Stjórn I*.

3. vi. *Hendiadyses and Leitwortstil*

I want to propose that some of *Stjórn I*'s word pairs serve a mnemonic function in linking thematically similar stories as a kind of verbal *leitmotif* comparable in function to – and

¹⁸ Clunies Ross, Margaret, trans. *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, xxxi.

¹⁹ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 116.

²⁰ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 116.

perhaps influenced by – the *Leitwörter* that Buber and Rosenzweig have observed in Hebrew narrative. This is demonstrated, for example, by the pair, *klungrar ok þornar*, ‘brambles and thorns’, which becomes a thematic pair characterising the cursed state of spiritual exile. This pair appears first as one of the consequences of his sin when Adam is exiled from Eden: *meðr þorn ok klungr skal hon þer ávaxta ok gróa*, ‘with thorns and brambles shall it [the earth] increase and grow for you’.²¹ Here the pair is a translation of either the Vulgate’s or Comestor’s *spinas et tribulos*, thus the pair here is no stylistic addition of the translator’s.²² But its four subsequent uses have no Latin precedents.

The translator-compiler rewords the curse that God places on Cain after the murder of Abel to include the conditions of the original Adamic curse that *man hon meðr klungr ok þyrni gróa þer ok óvaxta* (‘it [the earth] will grow and increase for you with bramble and thorns and will be unfruitful’), underscoring the link between the curses on father and son.²³ The pair’s next appearance is in an account of Tubal-Cain, the first smith, burning *þyrna ok klungrotta jörð*, ‘thorns and bramble-grown earth’, and bringing out from it rivers of metal.²⁴ The difference between this and the *HS*’s *fructices*, ‘fruits’ or ‘grain’ is noteworthy both for the greater believability of bringing metal out of earth than out of crops, and, if it reflects the translator-compiler’s own interpolation, then it may demonstrate a desire to preserve the conditions of Cain’s curse in the depiction of his descendants cultivating non-edible material from the cursed land rather than food from fertile land where Comestor does not.²⁵ Its next use is to provide a thematically fitting setting for Cain’s death at the hands of his descendant Lamech whose archery assistant mistakes Cain for a wild animal hiding *milli þorna ok*

²¹ *Stjórn*, 38.

²² Gen. 3; Comestor, *HS*, 9-11.

²³ *Stjórn*, 43. The word choice is nearly verbatim, but the order in which the weeds and the verbs appear within their pairs has been reversed from the original Adamic curse. This may have been mere accident or stylistic flourish but may also serve to alert the reader that there will be some difference between the two curses.

²⁴ *Stjórn*, 45.

²⁵ *HS*, 54-55.

klungra ('amidst the thorns and brambles').²⁶ The *Stjórn* I translator once again diverges in word choice from the *HS*'s *fructecta*, 'fruits' or 'grain'. This departure from his source has literary repercussions: where Comestor's Cain dies a melancholic death among the crops he can never harvest, *Stjórn* I's Cain dies a more overtly grim death set among the brambles that symbolise his cursed life.

The fifth and final instance of *þornar ok klungrar* in *Stjórn* I stands apart in that it appears in a story about Seth's descendants rather than Cain's. In the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham spots the ram that God provides in substitution for Isaac among the *þorna ok klungra*.²⁷ Though this setting is not unfaithful to the *HS*, in which the ram is found *inter vepres haerentem cornibus*, 'caught among the thorn bushes by its horns', the translator's decision to repeat the pair from the Adamic and Cainic curses rather than to translate the *HS* or Vulgate creates a thematic link to the curses. Before now, the word pair has been used primarily in *leitwortstil* to characterise the line of Cain, distinct from the line of Seth in that they are twice-cursed, but now the reader is reminded that the descendants of Adam's youngest son also live under Adam's curse. This appearance of the *þornar ok klungrar* contrasts its predecessors in an important way that hints at a reversal of the theme of Adam's exile: Adam is sent out from Eden into the thorns and thistles where he is doomed to die; Isaac's ram is brought in from the thorns and thistles to die so that Isaac can live. It also neatly parallels the story of Cain. The scenes of both Abel and Isaac involve the killing or near killing of a younger son linked typologically to the Christian New Covenant, Abel as the founder of the City of God and Isaac whom Paul calls the 'Child of Promise', by taking them out into the wilderness without disclosing the intent to kill them.²⁸ Isaac's near death features

²⁶ *Stjórn*, 47; *Scholastica Historia*, 55.

For further examination of the relationship of this story to Old Norse-Icelandic and Old English literature, see Heather O'Donoghue, 'What has Baldr to do with Lamech? The Lethal Shot of a Blind Man in Old Norse Myth and Jewish Exegetical Traditions', *Medium Aevum* 72 (2003): 82-107.

²⁷ *Stjórn*, 132.

²⁸ Gal. 4.

a blessing emerging from the *þornar ok klungrar* in the form of a beast that is killed in his stead. Cain's curse and death conversely show him receding into the *þornar ok klungrar*, which obscure his humanity and, consequently, his reflection of the *imago Dei*. He is then killed when he is mistaken for a beast.

3. vii. *Spiritual Readings*

In her analysis of the Mount Moriah sacrifice, Grønlie calls attention to a moment when the *Stjórn* I translator-compiler draws attention to a shift in the level of exegesis that he is presenting as he also shifts from a more rhetorical style to a low style: *Skal her nu um eína stund fra snua ok til sögunnar aptr huerfa* ('Now we shall turn from this for a while and return to the history').²⁹ This demonstrates that the translator-compiler was deliberate in aligning his style with exegetical purpose. What exegetical function, then, might he have intended by his varied uses of hendiadys? Already we see that they serve to tie together parallel narratives of curse and blessing, many of them tied specifically to the Cainite line, helping to demonstrate an understanding of these narratives as part of a unified historical whole. Since the whole is certainly the narrative of universal history, then it may be the case that they are also helping the narrative look forward to the climax of that history: Jesus's incarnation. This would make the word pairs a foundation for allegorical reading, that is, the second level of interpretation in Victorine teaching.

But Astås, asserting that the compiler omits non-literal readings of biblical material from the *Scholastica Historia* and *Speculum Historiale*, believes that the compiler had a firm preference for literal interpretation over spiritual and includes spiritual interpretation only 'in

²⁹ Grønlie, 'Frá því er Guð freistaði Abraham: Genesis 22 in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature', in *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honour of Kirsten Wolf* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 19; *Stjórn*, 197; translation, Grønlie's.

selected biblical passages where the literal [interpretation] turns out not to be satisfactory'.³⁰ That the compiler sought to emphasise the historical reading of the Bible is clear, but this does not necessitate downplaying spiritual interpretation to the degree Astås does. Astås's downplaying of spiritual interpretation is not unlike that of Beryl Smalley, who did the same thing but to a lesser degree.³¹ Grønlie instead draws attention to the importance that Hugh of St Victor placed on the historical interpretation of scripture as the foundation for other theological learning and the importance of mastering it before an allegorical reading can be attempted.³² Grønlie is more consistent here with Henri de Lubac, who clarifies Smalley's stance with nuance in much the same fashion that Grønlie does for Astås's.³³ That thematic links may have been strengthened by word pairs does not challenge the idea that the compiler preferred historical interpretation, but it does hint at a more intertwined relationship between interpretive levels.

One of the key tools for the allegorical reading is the relationship between the type, normally an Old Testament story, and the antitype, an event in the life of Christ or history of the Church that the type prefigures. Ecclesiastical art suggests that Christian typological readings of scripture may have developed a certain codified rigidity in some strains of medieval thought, perhaps learned and memorised not unlike a catechism. But there is also evidence that medieval thinkers continued to treat typology in much the same fashion as the Fathers who, according to Andrew Louth, regarded typology as 'more a habit of thought than a method or doctrine'.³⁴ Bede shows enthusiasm for finding types in everything, associating even David's question to Saul – 'am I as a flea to you?' – in I Samuel with Psalm 108's leaping locusts as a means of comparing them with Christ's 'leap' from the grave at the

³⁰ Astås, *Studies*, 120, 122

³¹ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 295.

³² Grønlie, 'Frá því er Guð freistaði Abraham', 4.d

³³ Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 59.

³⁴ Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*. (Downers Grove: 2001), xlviii.

resurrection.³⁵ When in the *Didascalicon* Hugh writes of the importance of learning scripture's historical interpretation first in order to help guide the allegorical interpretation, he may well be remembering students' enthusiastic but less than studious efforts to practice the allegorical reading in ways that he found unsatisfactory.³⁶ If one of the advantages of studying scripture by the letter is to provide a foundation for spiritual readings, then adding word patterns that encourage such readings to run in a particular direction may have been the translator-compiler's intention.

A speculative analysis of the *þornar ok klungrar*, then, might begin with St Paul commenting on the parallel between Adam, *qui est forma futuri*, 'who is a type of the one who will come', and Christ, asserting that *sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur ita, et in Christo omnes vivificabantur*, 'just as in Adam all are dead, in Christ all are made alive', creating a typological link between the two.³⁷ The barrenness symbolised by the *þornar ok klungrar* with which Adam is cursed contrasts the blessings of eternal life in Christ, perhaps suggested by the appearance of thorns and thistles in the Parable of the Sower.³⁸ Another parallel could be drawn between Adam being cursed to work among the *þornar ok klungrar* and the cursed state of Christ in his passion when he wears a crown of thorns.³⁹ Read in this way, Cain's death would be an interesting foil to the death of Höskuldr Hvítanessgoði in *Njáls saga*, the hagiographical themes of which are analysed by Andrew Hamer, who draws attention to the fact that the murder takes place while the victim is sowing his field, creating a link also to the

³⁵ I Sam. 24. 15-16; Ps. 108. 23; Bede, *On First Samuel*, ed. Scott DeGregorio and Rosalind C. Love (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 458.

³⁶ Hugh, *Didascalicon* VI. iii.

³⁷ Rom. 5; I Cor. 15

³⁸ Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8.

³⁹ Tertullian writes that the thorns of Christ's crown 'stood as a symbol of the sins that the soil of the flesh brought forth for us but that the power of the cross removed (*On the Crown* 14.3, cited in Andrew Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture*, Vol. I, p. 95). Though Tertullian is not known to have been circulated in Medieval Iceland or Norway, his influence is evident in other aspects of the medieval exegetical tradition, and a similar interpretation of the same symbol occurring independently is not unlikely.

Parable of the Sower.⁴⁰ In further enumerating the hagiographical elements of Höskuldr's death, Hamer draws attention to the fact that Höskuldr is Njáll Þorgeirsson's foster-son, and that because he is killed by Njáll's sons, his death has strong fratricidal undertones.⁴¹ Though Hamer is interested primarily in likening this story to the death of Stephen in the book of Acts, its parallels with the death of Cain here are not insignificant as Abel is the first martyr in the Old Testament and Stephen is the first in the New Testament. An inverted link between Cain, who murders his younger brother, and Christ also finds root in Pauline descriptions of Christ as an older brother rescuing his younger siblings from death, as well as in the link between Cain's status as a farmer and Christ's as a sower.⁴² The *Stjórn* I compiler's reassertion of the *þornar ok klungrar* in Cain's curse again serves to contrast the cursed and blessed states of the two older brothers. That Isaac is saved when God provides a sacrificial animal out of the barren landscape prefigures the Christian being saved by Jesus, the sacrificial lamb born of a virgin. Such analyses are speculative, but are, I hope, not far from the kind of thinking that the *Stjórn* I compiler and the Victorines sought to teach.

What follows is an analysis of the *Stjórn* I translator's use of word pairs that include the words *gipta* to mean 'grace' to show the ways in which they reflect an effort to describe differing levels of the knowledge of God's grace before and after conversion. These words, often translated as 'fate', 'fortune', or 'luck', appear throughout the sagas and have received prior scholarly analysis which has not given adequate attention to their usage in *Stjórn*, which is likely to reflect medieval audiences' understanding of these words' semantic ranges. This analysis will take into consideration all of the above concerns surrounding word pairs, style,

⁴⁰ *Njáls saga*, 280-281; Andrew Hamer, *Njáls saga and its Christian Background* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 169-171.

⁴¹ Hamer, *Christian Background*, 185-193.

⁴² Eg., *nam quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii eius ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus*, 'for those whom he foreknew he predestined to be made conformed in the image of his son so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers' (Rom. 8).

and *Leitwörter*, as well as some of the possible theological matters raised by a Victorine-influenced spiritual reading. I hope it will add something to the discussion.

3. viii. *Gipta*

We return our attention to *Stjórn* I for another more complex example. *Gipta* is defined as ‘good luck’ in Cleasby and Vigfusson’s dictionary and likely derives from a past participle form of the verb *gefa*, ‘give’. It is already the subject of academic discussion in studies of the *Íslendingasögur*, in which it and analogues like *auðna*, *gæfa*, and *hamingja* are conventionally used to indicate fortune or luck. Hallberg has argued that because these words are used primarily in stories about pagans they must necessarily be indicative of a kind of fatalism endemic to the pre-Christian Nordic world-view.⁴³ The theory he counters is that of Baetke who notes that the words are scarcely to be found in the ostensibly older Eddic and skaldic poetic *corpora*. Baetke compares *gipta* with cognates in other Germanic languages like Gothic *gibu* and Old English *giefu* which are used to translate the Latin *gratia*, *donum*, or *munus*.⁴⁴ He concludes from this that these ‘fortune’ words are used to indicate God’s providence.⁴⁵ Lönnroth synthesises Baetke’s and Hallberg’s stances, and also helpfully moves any dichotomy between pagan and Christian away from straddling an imaginary border between lexemes and into the theological fabric of the narrative. He observes that the uses of these and other words for ‘fortune’ are distinct from words like *miskunn* (mercy), *fyrirætlan* (design), and *likn* (mercy, healing), which he believes to be the vocabulary of the

⁴³ Peter Hallberg, ‘The Concept of *Gipta-Gæfa-Hamingja* in Old Norse Literature,’ *Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference* (1971): 145. Hallberg claims that these words are used only in stories about Pagans. Since this is not true, I have tempered his assertion here.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that Baetke may not have been in the right to call these cognates. While ON *gipta*, OE *giefu*, and Gothic *gibu* share the Proto-Germanic verb **gebaną* as a root and likely have similar meanings, *gipta* is a weak feminine *ōn*-stem, while *giefu* and *gibu* are both strong masculine *a*-stems. The medial *t* is likely the remnant the **-biz* suffix used to form nouns from verbs.

⁴⁵ Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 126.

‘clerical style’, and which do in fact indicate theological concepts like providence and divine mercy. Lönnroth concludes that *gipta*, *et al.* are used by the saga writers to describe what pre-Christian characters experience as fate or luck, but they are understood by medieval Christian authors to be within an ‘Augustinian world-picture’, ‘so that what the saga calls fate is *actually* dependent on God’s plan, and what the saga calls fortune is *actually* dependent on God’s grace’, as the Christian writers and early audiences of the *Íslendingasögur* would not have expected their pre-Christian ancestors to understand their own experiences as providential.⁴⁶ This creates a lexical distinction in the *Íslendingasögur* between the experience of grace under the Natural Law and in the fuller revelation of the Sixth Age, before and after the *siðaskipti*.

Although Hallberg’s article does make a brief note of *Stjórn* III’s use of *vikingr* to describe Goliath in its adaptation of I Kings (I Samuel in the *AV*), previous discussion on the subject of *gipta* has otherwise neglected *Stjórn*.⁴⁷ This may be because of *Stjórn*’s comparatively late composition date, but one of the positive results of its lateness is that its word choice may reveal something of how medieval audiences understood the words used in the sagas.

Gipta appears both by itself and in pairs as *Stjórn* I’s standard translation of *gratia*, suggesting that the translator saw *gipta* as in some form or fashion an expression of the concept of grace, perhaps as Baetke might have predicted. This does not preclude any pre-Christian connotations. Furthermore, that *gipta* is used as a component in various word pairs more often than it is used by itself suggests that the translator sought to differentiate between different modes of *gratia* by pairing it with different words. These modes seem to reflect distinction between pre- and post-conversion experiences of grace not unlike that which

⁴⁶ Lönnroth, *Critical Introduction*, 128.

⁴⁷ Hallberg, *Gipta-Gæfa-Hamingja*, 146.

Lönnroth detects between his ‘clerical’ and ‘luck-related’ *nexūs* in the *Íslendingasögur*, now made between pairs rather than individual words. In the following analysis I will examine *gipta*’s uses throughout *Stjórn* I in order to better grasp the translator-compiler’s understanding of the different modes of grace suggested by different pairs.

3. viii. a. *Gipta and the Offering*

Gipta’s first appearance in the *Stjórn* I narrative is in the story of Cain and Abel. After the brothers make offerings to God, Cain from his crops and Abel from his livestock, God favours Abel, causing Cain to envy his *gipta ok gjętzku* (normalised as *gæðska* from here), translatable as ‘luck’ and ‘goodness’, respectively. This pair and the sentence in which it occurs may be the translator’s innovation as they have no analogue in any of his known sources. Without Latin precedent, a full analysis of this pair as an expression of *gratia* must wait to be conducted by comparison to other uses of *gipta* and *gipta*-based pairs which are analysed below. For now, it is of literary importance that the word appears first in the context of an offering to God, as offerings are the context of *gipta*’s two solitary appearances in *Stjórn* I and are likely to have literary and theological implications for the word’s use.

Several of *Stjórn* I’s uses of *gipta* appear in scenes in which characters make offerings to God. I will use the term ‘type-scene’ to describe these and other repeated narrative structures. Robert Alter has popularised this term, borrowed from Homeric scholarship, for this purpose in his study of biblical narrative.⁴⁸ Although few medieval exegetes are likely to have considered the authorial intent of pre-Christian Hebrew scribes with the same intellectual framework that modern Hebrew scholars use, a keen eye for typological interpretation encouraged by Hugh and Richard of St Victor’s teachings is likely to have noticed recurring narrative motifs to which to apply Christian exegesis. Such typological

⁴⁸ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 47-62.

readings normally have a Christological focus, but because of *Stjórn*'s lack of New Testament for Christological interpretation to look forward to, this term from modern scholarship seems apt despite its anachronism.

3. viii. b. *Solitary Uses of Gipta*

Gipta appears by itself without a pair in *Stjórn* I on two occasions, both in examples of the offering type-scene. The first is in God's visit to Abraham at Mamre shortly before Isaac is born.⁴⁹ He appears to the patriarch in the form of three men whom Abraham invites to eat with him *ef ek hefir nökkura tíma giptu fundit ok fengit í þínu augliti*, 'if I have at any time found and grasped favour in thine eyesight'.⁵⁰ The meal he offers them is a sacrifice of a calf and of cakes made from three portions of grain. After this offering, the men tell Abraham that Sarah, now ninety years old, will give birth within a year's time.⁵¹

The second instance of *gipta* by itself is in the apocryphal story of Asenath, Joseph's Egyptian wife. Only briefly mentioned in the book of Genesis, Asenath's longer story originates in deuterocanonical efforts to rationalise and justify the marriage of one of the Jewish patriarchs to the ostensibly pagan daughter of an Egyptian priest. *Stjórn* I's redaction of this story is adapted from Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*, but free-standing Latin versions of the story are known to have existed and may have been known in Iceland.⁵² Its comparative lack of exegetical commentary as well as its length and Romance-like qualities invite comparison to the *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*, and it is worthy of

⁴⁹ *Stjórn*, 117.

⁵⁰ Incorporated in this account are arguments from Josephus and Eusebius respectively from the *Scholastica Historia* as to whether Abraham's visitors are God and two angels or three angels in *mannligum myndum*, 'human form'. Notably absent from the discussion is Ambrose's suggestion that they are a representation of the Trinity. See *On his Brother, Satyrus* 2.96, quoted in: Andrew Louth, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture*, Vol. II, (London: Fitzroy Dearbon Publishers, 2001), 61. Nevertheless, Abraham does address the three together with singular pronouns (*Stjórn*, 117-119).

⁵¹ This is the second time God has foretold Isaac's birth to Abraham, but it is the first time that Sarah is within earshot.

⁵² Richard Cole, 'Echoes of the *Book of Joseph and Aseneth*, Particularly in *Yngvars Saga Viðförla*.' *Saga-Book* 41 (2017): 5-34.

independent analysis. Here, though, it is of interest primarily for another instance of the offering type-scene.⁵³ Asenath retreats to a tower, evocative of Babel, Babylon, and the city imagery of past *gipta*-based divisions between the blessed and the cursed, after Joseph spurns her advances. Here she is visited by an angel who walks her through conversion rituals that allow her to be married to Joseph. She then offers the angel a meal, saying, *ef ek hefir nöckura giptu fundit ok fengit í þínu augliti*, ‘if I have found and grasped a certain favour in thine eyesight’, in wording very similar to Abraham’s invitation to God and the angels.⁵⁴ The meal she offers is of bread, wine, and oil, which does not closely parallel Abraham’s offering, but it does reflect some of the more lavish offerings required for cultic practice in the Tabernacle in Levitical law, evoking Augustine’s famous reflection on the Israelites plundering Egyptian wealth for use in their own worship.⁵⁵ The angel then requests that Asenath bring him a honeycomb, which angers her because she does not have any. He tells her to go look in her cellar where she finds, unexpectedly, a honeycomb and brings it to the angel. In its reflection of the Promised Land, the ‘land of milk and honey’, the honeycomb serves as a fitting symbol for God’s blessings, for after marrying Joseph Asenath will become the mother of two of Israel’s tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. The angel then serves her the bread and wine that she offered to him, telling her *nu atz þú lifs brauð*, ‘now you eat the bread of life’ and he anoints her with the oil that she provided in a scene prefiguring the Last supper and, therefore, the eucharist.⁵⁶

This use of *gipta* within the offering type-scene helps to illuminate the story of Cain and Abel, for Cain’s first sin is his refusal to divide his offerings correctly, giving to God only the spoiled yield from his crops where Abel offers the best of his flocks and like

⁵³ *Stjórn*, 209-211.

⁵⁴ *Stjórn*, 209.

⁵⁵ For the use of oil, bread, and gold in the Tabernacle, see Ex. 25-40 and Lev. 24. For Augustine’s discussion of Egyptian gold used in the Tabernacle, see *DDC* II.40.

⁵⁶ *Stjórn*, 209-210.

Abraham and Asenath receives God's *gipta ok gæska* in return.⁵⁷ Cain and Abel's sacrifices therefore provide both the first offering type-scene and the first use of *gipta* in *Stjórn* I.

Though neither brother explicitly requests that God accept his sacrifice, 'if he has found *gipta* in his eyes', the fact that Cain detects that Abel has indeed received God's favour adequately provides for the needs of the motif's structure.

Despite the decidedly beatific state of Eden, *gipta* is not used in reference to God's favour for Adam and Even before the Fall. Though too strong an argument from silence would be unsound, I wonder if *gipta*'s utility lies in its ability to mark out God's favour when it is given against the backdrop of humankind's lapsarian state brought about by Adam's disobedience. This is demonstrated in distinguishing those favoured by God from those who are not, as *gipta* in its subsequent uses sets Abel apart from Cain, Noah from the Cainites, the circumcised from the uncircumcised, Abraham from the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Asenath from the Egyptians, Moses from Jethro and the Midianites, the Christian from the non-Christian. That its first appearance is in a description of the founder of the City of God links it very directly to that *gratia* that God uses to redeem sinners through the Church.

3. viii. c. *Gipta ok Miskunn*

Of the pairs that include *gipta*, those most noteworthy in light of past discussion are those instances in which *gipta* is paired with what Lönnroth termed 'clerical words'. On three occasions in *Stjórn* I the pair *gipta ok miskunn* appears as a translation of the single Latin word *gratia*. The first is in a quote from Vincent of Beauvais's *SH* likening circumcision as established by the Abrahamic Covenant to Christian baptism in their relationship to God's *miskunn ok gipta* and in the similar practices of giving names to children in both rituals.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Stjórn*, 43-44.

⁵⁸ *Stjórn*, 117.

The second comes in a lengthy discursus on fasting punctuating the narrative at the end of Abraham's life, in which a supporting quote from Gregory's *Homilies* mentions the resurrected Christ calling all men to his *gipta ok miskunn*.⁵⁹ The third does not describe God's grace, so we shall return to it in a discussion of human grace below.⁶⁰ This pair would seem to blur Lönnroth's distinction between pre- and post-conversion experiences of *gratia* and act as a kind of tautological hendiadys more consistent with Baetke's theory. What I think may be more probable, though, is that this and other *gipta*-based pairs reflect a conceptual distinction similar to that Lönnroth observes in the *Íslendingasögur*, but that the distinction is felt more pronouncedly between different *gipta*-based pairs than it is between single words.

If indeed the extent that *gipta* represents grace-as-luck and clerical words represent grace understood as such, their combination in a pair may represent a narratorial gloss helping to explain the providential underpinnings of what may have seemed like luck to a medieval Icelandic audience. It is telling that these pairs occur only in narration and not in dialogue, suggesting a clear distinction between the experience of *gipta* by Old Testament figures and the exegesis of that *gipta* by the Christian translator. This pattern includes pairs that are not demonstrably translations from the Latin, such as when *gipta* appears together with *trú*, 'faith', in an elaboration on Exodus 18 not attested in available redactions of the Vulgate or the *HS* where the narrator disparages Moses, a man who *fullr var af gudligri tru ok giptu*, 'was full of Godly faith and luck', for taking advice from his heathen father-in-law, Jethro.⁶¹ This contrasts *gipta*'s use in narrative or direct speech to reflect the pre-Christian characters' experiences of *gratia*, wherein it appears twice by itself and once in the pair *gipta ok gæfa*, a pair of ostensibly pre-conversion synonyms both within the nexus of 'luck' words discussed by Hallberg and Lönnroth. Although there is a clear spiritual difference between

⁵⁹ *Stjórn*, 148.

⁶⁰ See footnote 67.

⁶¹ Ex. 18; *Stjórn*, 453.

pre-Christian figures in the Old Testament who interact directly with God and pre-Christian Scandinavians whose knowledge of God, if any, comes through the Natural Law, their respective experiences of God's grace are expressed with more or less the same lexicon, highlighting their typological relationship to each other and their similar prefiguration of and preparation for the Christian age. The use of *gipta* with clerical words provides an exegetical gloss that would be inconsistent with the style of the *Íslendingasögur* but that reflects a similarly providential view of God's presence in pre-Christian history in a fashion apropos for a study Bible.

3. viii. d. *Gipta ok Gæðska*

Neither the Vulgate nor the *Scholastica Historia* mention any quality translatable by this pair that is the explicit object of Cain's envy. There is an interesting ambiguity in Abel's *gipta ok gæðska*, for the fact that the word pair is the object of Cain's envy makes it unclear whether it is meant to reflect Cain's own identification of the nature of Abel's luck or the narrator's. That his understanding of God's grace might equal that of the Christian reader is in any case improbable due to the different levels of revealed knowledge available before and after the Incarnation, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that Cain discerns some element in his brother's fortune that is not mere luck. *Gæðska* is translatable as 'mercy', 'goodness', or 'God's grace' according to Cleasby and Vigfusson's dictionary, which should ostensibly mean that it is semantically similar to *miskunn*, yet it is used here instead of *miskunn* or another word of Lönnroth's 'clerical' nexus. There may be a purposeful distinction between God's grace as drawn from the narrative by the Christian exegete (*gipta ok miskunn*) and as perceived by Cain (*gipta ok gæðska*). Though there is no guarantee that the two words' etymologies reflect the way in which they were understood by the *Stjórn* I translator or those within his linguistic community, here they may still be noteworthy. That *miskunn*, literally

‘un-knowledge’, is often translated ‘mercy’ is fitting in that God’s mercy in a Christian theological context refers to an un-knowing of sins, and understandably would be one of the key elements of God’s *gratia* that a Christian scholar would read out of the Old Testament narrative in anticipation of the Incarnation. *Gæðska*, derived from the verb *gæða*, ‘to endow’ or ‘to enrich’, would be more consistent with the blessings of land and fertility that God offers his people within the Old Testament narrative. That the more prevalent dialogical choices of using *gipta* by itself or paired with another ‘luck’ word were also avoided suggest that Cain’s perception (if it is Cain’s perception) of Abel’s ‘luck’ is also distinct from what is otherwise expressed as the standard pre-Christian experience of grace-as-luck that Lönnroth discusses.⁶²

Though the use of *gæðska* in the story of Cain and Abel does not seem to be based on a Latin original, it does have an Old Norse-Icelandic precedent in *Veraldar saga (VS)*, in which the brothers offer their sacrifices and *af goðvilja ok gæðsku þá Guð fórnir Abel*, ‘out of goodwill and blessing then God favoured Abel’.⁶³ That this occurs in almost exactly the same part of the story suggests at least some shared tradition or source between *VS* and *Stjórn I*, and possibly that the *Stjórn I* compiler was familiar with *VS* and is here adapting an element of its lexicon but replacing *goðvilja* with *gipta* to better connect *gæðska* with the nexus of pairs he uses to express God’s grace, uniting his stories theologically. It is not immediately clear whether *VS*’s use of *goðvilja ok gæðska* is best understood as a quality of Abel’s or of God’s, and *VS*’s one other use of *gæðska* does not offer much clarification. It is in the story of the destruction of Sodom, in which God spares Lot *fyrir sakir gæðsku hans*, ‘on account of

⁶² Because Abel is the first martyr and, according to Augustine, the founder of the City of God, Cain’s demonstration of some kind of special perception, perhaps indicated by this unique instance of the pair *gipta ok gæðska*, just before killing him could form an interesting parallel with the *topos* of foresight or visions preceding important events tied to fate in the *Íslendingasögur*. It could suggest some distinct middle level of knowledge between the pre-*siðaskipti* experience of ‘luck’ and the Christian experience of grace.

⁶³ *Veraldar saga*, 9.

his goodness'.⁶⁴ Does this mean that Lot merited sparing by his own goodness, or that he was spared by God's largess? The former is perhaps a better reflection of the word's medio-passive structure than the latter. Whatever the author of *VS* may have intended, *Stjórn I*'s use of the word plainly refers to God's goodness, as I will show in the following close reading.

Because *gæðska* is not paired with *gipta* anywhere else in *Stjórn I*, the word pair *gipta ok gæðska* cannot be analysed further, but *gæðska*'s singular appearances are instructive. Most other instances of *gæðska* refer to those blessings manifested in fertility, three of which are in reference to the provisions of fertile land. Two of these describe Egypt's good harvests when Joseph interprets the Egyptian king's dream of seven fat cows as indicative of seven years of prosperity, and one of them in Jacob's prediction of the future blessings that the tribe of Asher will receive from the earth in the Promised Land.⁶⁵

Another instance is more complex but, I believe, consistent. It will first help to observe a lexical link between crops, childbearing, and the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge that Comestor makes in the *Historia Scholastica* in the curses placed on Adam and Eve. Eve, he says, is cursed with pain in childbearing *quia in fructu peccavit, in fructu suo punita est*, 'because in fruit she sinned, in her fruit she was punished'.⁶⁶ This parallels Adam's punishment, which reads, *terrae autem maledixit, quia de fructu terrae transgressio facta est*, 'the earth, moreover, was cursed, because with the fruit of the earth was his transgression committed'. The first sin and the punishments on both the woman and the man are linked by their relationship to fertility in the word *fructus*, and Comestor continues to use the word for both progeny and harvest.

Gæðska may have a similar semantic range. The instance of it by itself pertains to childbearing and appears at the beginning of the Exodus story.⁶⁷ The Egyptian king fears that

⁶⁴ *Veraldar saga*, 17.

⁶⁵ *Stjórn*, 234.

⁶⁶ Comestor, *HS*, 44.

⁶⁷ *Stjórn*, 248.

the Israelites living in Egypt will come to outnumber the Egyptians, so he commands two Hebrew midwives named Sephora and Phua (Shiphra and Puah in the *AV*) to kill all Hebrew boys upon delivery. The midwives disobey, telling the king – falsely – that the Hebrew women consistently gave birth before the midwives arrived. For this God rewards them by making them fertile (*fecundavit* in the *HS*, *frjóvaz* in *Stjórn* I) where, according to *Stjórn* I, they were once barren, a detail not present in Genesis.⁶⁸ The *Stjórn* I compiler includes commentary from Augustine and Gregory, both of whom struggle to rationalise the idea of God rewarding dishonesty. Gregory says that the midwives would have received *goðgirnd* ('goodness', 'kindness') and *gæðska* in everlasting life, but instead receive their newfound fecundity as *veraldlig verðkaup*, 'worldly wages', as a reward that is appropriately reduced to account for the sinful means of their good ends.⁶⁹ That which is a blessing of fertility in their earthly life is a mere worldly wage when compared to eschatological *gæðska*.

This link between the once barren midwives having children and the blessings of everlasting life is not explicit in the *HS* but is consistent with a pattern of Christian exegetical readings of the existing Old Testament theme of improbable pregnancies as signs of God's blessing. For example, Paul expounds Sarah's late-life conception of Isaac as a type of the New Jerusalem.⁷⁰ Hannah, whose son Samuel is instrumental in the rise of the Davidic dynasty, also conceives when she is believed to be barren.⁷¹ This pattern continues into the New Testament where Elizabeth, an elderly cousin of Mary's, who was thought to be barren, gives birth to John the Baptist, who predicts the coming of Christ and by baptising him inaugurates his earthly ministry.⁷² In each of these instances there is an important connection between the offspring of the once-barren mother and a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of

⁶⁸ *Stjórn*, 248; Ex. 1.

⁶⁹ *Stjórn*, 248.

⁷⁰ Gal. 4. 24-31.

⁷¹ I Kings 1 (I Samuel in the *AV*).

⁷² Gal. 4; I Kings 1-2 (I Samuel in the Authorised Version); Luke 1.

Heaven. The imagery is also used at the end of Psalm 112 (113 in the *AV*), in which God *conlocat sterilem in domo matrem filiorum laetantem*, ‘sets the sterile woman in a house, the joyful mother of children’, and in Isaiah 54 which begins a long eschatological promise to Israel with the promise that *multi filii desertae, magis quam eius quae habebat virum*, ‘many [will be the] children of the barren woman, more than of she who had a husband’. That God’s grace, *gratia*, is manifest in some measure of reversal of the original curses placed on Adam and Eve, whether in the blessings of the land or family, is a theme present throughout the Old Testament, with all of the blessings of the Promised Land of Canaan being a type of the Promised Land of the Kingdom of Heaven.

One use of *gæðska* could be understood as a more general sort of blessing, but taken together with its other appearances could also be construed as referring to God’s grace manifested in progeny as it is with the midwives. Noah is described as the only person *fullkominn í rettlæti ok gæðsku*, ‘perfect in righteousness and blessing’, and is contrasted with a wicked population whom he warns about *Guðs reiði ok pínu*, ‘God’s wrath and punishment’.⁷³ It is noteworthy that not only are the deluge’s victims the descendants of Cain, but that as in the story of Cain and Abel, *gæðska* is a quality that distinguishes the blessed from those who receive God’s *pína*, ‘punishment’, a word used several times in association with the curses placed on Cain and Lamech. Cain is cursed from the land, the Cainites are cleansed from it. It is Noah’s progeny, an expression of his *gæðska*, who will repopulate it.

There is one use of *gæðska* that I am not certain is consistent with the theme that I think unites the others. It is used in a description of Adam and Eve’s sinless state before the Fall wherein they are not ashamed of their nakedness for they were like children who *kenna eigi af gæðsku sins unga alldrs*, ‘know nothing on account of the blessing of their young

⁷³ *Stjórn*, 54.

age'.⁷⁴ Because this is part of a discussion of the relationship of sin to the reproductive organs, it may be relevant to the theme of fertility, but it is used particularly to describe the childlike blessedness of ignorance. Perhaps that ignorance is meant to be understood as an ignorance of reproduction and, therefore, of the progeny implied by other uses of *gæðska*. That the word here translates the *HS*'s very different *beneficiō aetātis* ('the benefit of age') does suggest deliberation on the compiler's part.⁷⁵ That a blessing of any sort could be understood as metaphorically representable by such imagery as is discussed here is not unreasonable, but I am not confident that the context in this instance is consistent with my reading of *gæðska* in its other appearances.

Nevertheless, a fertile, earthly sort of blessing is exactly what Cain, a farmer, might hope for God's favour to bring, and it is his covetousness of the fruit of the land that causes him to commit what the *Stjórn* I compiler says was his first sin, *at hann hellt eptir inu betra enn offraði Guði þau auks sem hvia vegum vāru fottroðin ok etin* ('that he held back the better [of his crops] and offered to God those portions which had been foot-trodden on the roads and eaten').⁷⁶ Both this sin and the later fratricide are motivated by a covetousness for earthly bounty that is stronger than his desire for righteousness, a preference for the type over the antitype, and Cain's punishment cuts him off from both:

Nu fyrir þessa sök mantu þólvaðr vera yfir alla jörðina hver er til þess rymði sik ok opnaði at hon tok ok svalg þitt broðurblood af sjálfs þins hendi. Eigi man hon gefa ne göra sinn ávöxt þann tima sem þu hefir hana unnit ok erfiðat. Helldr man hon meðr klungr ok þyrni gróa þer ok ávaxtaz. Sem einn vallari ok forflottamaðr mantu jafnan vera í veröldinni.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Stjórn*, 11.

⁷⁵ *HS*, 39

⁷⁶ *Stjórn*, 42.

⁷⁷ *Stjórn*, 42.

Now for this reason wilt thou be cursed over all the earth, which for this [reason] made room and opened itself to take and swallow thy brother's blood from thine own hand. It will neither give nor make its fruit at that time when thou hast tended it and toiled. But it will grow with brambles and thorns and it will not be fruitful. As a wanderer and an exile thou shalt ever be on the earth.

Cain's severance from the land and its fruits is part of a prominent theme in biblical narrative: Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden where they could eat the fruit of any tree, especially the Tree of Life, without toil; Moses and the recently freed Israelites are prevented from entering Canaan, the land of milk, honey, and gigantic grapes, and forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years after Moses disobeys the Lord; the Israelites are later punished for their wickedness through their exile from Canaan in Babylon. The land and its produce in each case prefigure the Kingdom of Heaven and its blessings. That each of these represents a cutting off from God is symbolised by the settings of exile, whether the barren wildernesses east of Eden and in the Sinai Peninsula or the sinful culture, barren of the fruits of righteousness, of Babylon. Cain's exile foreshadows both of these literal and moral settings, first in the curse placed upon the ground, then in his decision to establish the first earthly city, which the compiler calls the *andlig Babilon*, the 'spiritual Babylon'.⁷⁸ The premise of St Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, which the compiler summarises just after the murder, is that Cain is the founder of the City of Man, which the compiler calls the city of *dauðra manna ok fyrirdæmdra*, 'of dead men and the condemned', and Abel, the first martyr, is the founder of the City of God, the *himneska Jherusalem*, the 'Heavenly Jerusalem'.⁷⁹ The origin of the City

⁷⁸ *Stjórn*, 44.

⁷⁹ *Stjórn*, 44.

of Man as reflected by Cain's desire for *gæðska* lies in wanting earthly blessing for its own sake detached from the spiritual blessing of which it is a type; Abel is the true recipient of both.

Though the *Stjórn* I translator-compiler's consistency in uses of *gæðska* may not necessarily be his own innovation, it does not seem to reflect the word's uses in *Veraldar saga*. Kirby has suggested that the translator-compiler of *Stjórn* III may have included in his original work a translation of the Pentateuch, and that this now lost work may have been available to the translator-compiler of *Stjórn* I.⁸⁰ A possible influence here can be neither ruled out nor examined properly in the absence of an extant text.⁸¹ Its uniqueness within the network of other *gipta*-based pairs, which, as examined previously, demonstrate pre- and post-*siðaskipti* levels of the knowledge of God's grace, suggests that the mode of grace that Cain envies is in some way peculiar to him. This may indicate a middle level of knowledge between that indicated by *gipta* by itself and the *gipta ok miskunn* intuited by the exegete, or it may indicate a unique misunderstanding brought about by Cain's idolatrous desire for earthly blessing detached from righteousness.

3. viii. e. *Gipta ok Miskunn as Human Grace*

I wrote above that the pair *gipta ok miskunn*, when referring to God's grace, indicated *gratia* as understood in the full light of the Incarnation and as distinct from that understood under the Old Covenant, and that with this meaning it did not appear in direct speech. There is one instance of this pair used to indicate human rather than divine grace and that does appear in quoted speech, and that is in a translation of *gratia* from Genesis 33.8, in which Jacob returns to Esau seeking to find *gipta ok miskunn* from his brother in order to reconcile with him.⁸²

⁸⁰ Kirby, *Biblical Quotations*, 55.

⁸¹ A full comparison of the uses of *gæðska* in *Stjórn* I with those in *Stjórn* III is excluded here for space constraints.

⁸² *Stjórn*, 185

Because *gipta*'s connotations include 'favour' and because *miskunn*'s primary meaning is 'mercy', they are the understandable qualities that Jacob would ask from his brother after disenfranchising him of their father's blessing. Perhaps no further analysis is necessary. Yet Esau's *gratia* may have typological resonance with God's *gipta ok miskunn*, wherein the reconciliation between older and younger brother hints at Christ as older brother reconciling the sinner to himself. To the medieval Icelandic or Norwegian imagination there may further have been a similarly eschatological resonance with the story of Baldr and Höðr ruling together after Ragnarök.⁸³ Though distinct from the uses of *gipta ok miskunn* discussed above, it may not be unrelated.

3. viii. f. *Gipta and vin-based Compounds*

There is one set of *gipta*-based pairs that never refers to God's grace but that is thematically and lexically relevant. That is those including *vin*-based compound words for friendship. There are three in *Stjórn* I, one instance of *gipta ok vinátta* and two of *vinsæld ok gipta*. All of these pertain to the favour that Israelite characters curry from their Egyptian masters during their four-hundred year sojourn in Egypt that concludes Genesis and begins Exodus. *Gipta ok vinátta*, translated from *gratia*, is used to describe the favour Joseph wins from Potiphar while serving in his house.⁸⁴ Though Potiphar does imprison Joseph, it is later his favour for him that helps Joseph also to win favour from the Egyptian king which later results in his own increased wealth. If by spelling their names the same way the *Stjórn* I translator-compiler has conflated Potiphar with Potipherah – and it is not clear that he has – then it is Potiphar's favour, too, that leads to Joseph's marriage, linking his favour to the themes of progeny previously discussed.

⁸³ *Gylfaginning*, 53.

⁸⁴ *Stjórn*, 198; Genesis 39.4

Vinsæld ok gipta is used in God's command to Moses to instruct the Israelites to ask their masters, whom they have befriended, for gold and silver, and to take those gifts with them when they depart in the Exodus.⁸⁵ Where the Vulgate records the command twice, once when the final plague is threatened in Exodus 11 and once after it is visited in Exodus 12, the *Stjórn* I translator-compiler has chosen to repeat the command earlier in the story as part of the larger plan that God presents to Moses when he first commands him to return to Egypt to seek his people's freedom. The fact that this gold and silver is later used to craft the fittings for the tabernacle is one that St Augustine famously reflects on in *DDC*, opining that just as the Israelites put Egyptian gold to holier use, so too should Christians appropriate any truths found in the works of pagan philosophers.⁸⁶ Earthly possessions like gold and silver may not equate the blessings of God described by *gipta ok gæðsku* or *gipta ok miskunn*, but perhaps the degree by which they are lesser corresponds to the difference between the grace of the Egyptians and the grace of God and foreshadows their coming repurposing.

3. *viv. Conclusion*

In this chapter, I set out to show that hendiadys, a figure of speech that scholars frequently use to characterise the learned and florid styles, is not necessarily a marker of verbosity, but can, in fact, be a refined exegetical tool, one that can reflect its users' profound study of scripture and of the Classical tradition. *Stjórn* I's repeated use of the pair *þornar ok klungrar* reveals a careful scrutiny of the literary themes of biblical narrative, a thorough grounding in exegetical interpretation, and a desire to teach both of them through a subtle stylistic reworking of his sources. The translator-compiler's use of hendiadyses based on *gipta* and

⁸⁵ *Stjórn* 260

⁸⁶ Aug., *DDC* II.40.

related words reveals more sophistication yet, demonstrating a deep theological thought on the nature of grace and blessing, and inclusion and exclusion from God's covenant. This sophistication demonstrates that the translator-compiler understood these words to contain a greater range of semantic nuance than can adequately be described by scholarly efforts to divide vocabulary into 'Christian' and 'pagan' categories, showing that lexicographical studies can benefit from the study of style. Hendiadyses, far from being either indicators of verbosity or necessarily markers of a rhetorical florid style, are a stylistic element that can be used with a refined purpose of drawing narrative threads together. In the next chapter, we will turn from examining the minute uses of stylistic detail and back to broader conceptual themes to examine interactions between prose and verse. This will allow us to better understand the sometimes fluid borders between verse and high style and lay the groundwork for discussing high style in narrative in Chapters 5 and 6.

Verse, Paraphrase, and Oratory

4. i. Introduction

Scholars like Heather O’Donoghue and Sif Ríkhardsdóttir have observed that verse in Old Norse-Icelandic literature conveys a greater degree of emotionality than does prose.¹ This accords with our study of the Classical tradition for, in it, we have seen that verse was considered to be a form of the *sermo sublimis*, which the Classical rhetors instructed their students to use to move audiences. Because the subject of this thesis is prose style, it will not address the formal aspects of poetry like metrics. But the inclusion of both verse and rhetorical prose in the category of the *sermo sublimis* and the often-fluid boundary between them means that despite the formal difference between verse and high-style prose, stylistic variegation between prose and verse was still conceptually variegation between low and high styles. In this chapter, we will discuss the interactions between prose and verse that most impact religious narrative writings and the intellectual history of poetics that informs them.

The best-known interaction between prose and verse in Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular literature is in prosimetrum. Margaret Cormack has commented on the fact that prosimetrum in hagiographic sagas is exceedingly rare, at least in comparison with its prevalence in the *Íslendingasögur*.² The best-known example of prosimetric saint’s saga is *Guðmundar saga biskups* which, because of its Icelandic setting, occupies a generic place that is unlike the translated works we are examining in this thesis. More prevalent in the hagiographic genre, but still rare, are texts of the *opus geminatum* type, which offer their narratives twice: once in prose, and once in verse. As they survive in Old Norse-Icelandic

¹ Heather O’Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: 2005), 6-7.

² Margaret Cormack, ‘Poetry, Paganism, and the Sagas of Icelandic Bishops’, in *Til Heiðurs og Hugbótar: Greinar um Trúarkveðskap fyrri Alda*, (Snorrastofa: Reykholt, 2003), 33-51.

literature, the *opera geminata* are represented exclusively in religious writings, and they will therefore be useful to us as we navigate the interaction between prose and verse in religious saga narrative.

The *opus geminatum* is the quintessential expression of the Late Antique and early Medieval Christianisation of a rhetorical exercise called *paraphrasus*, from which we derive the modern English ‘paraphrase’. This exercise included the adaptation of prose texts to verse and verse texts to prose. Understanding the Old Norse-Icelandic *opera geminata* as the vernacular expression of a form of literature shared across the Latinate West will help us to better understand *paraphrasus* and its relevance to prose stylistics. As our example, we will analyse *Pétr's saga postula I and Pétr'sdrápa*, attested together in AM 621 4to (ca. 1450-1500), which together form one of the few surviving *opera geminata*, to see the didactic effects of repeating a narrative once in the academic style and once in the high style of verse. We will then return to *Stjórn* to see an example of *paraphrasus* woven into *Stjórn III*'s translation of the Book of Judges and set within reported speech. This example demonstrates the permeability of the border between verse and oratory. But first, we will contextualise this discussion by examining the place that verse held in the broader Liberal tradition of the Latinate West.

4. ii. Classical and Early Christian Views of Poetry

We have already seen that poetry was considered a form of the *sermo sublimis*, high style.

Conceptually, this conflation could be taken so far as not to distinguish between the two.

Ernst Robert Curtius writes that ‘antiquity did not conceive of poetry and prose as two forms of expression’ but that, rather, both were understood to be forms of ‘discourse’.³ He observes

³ Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 147.

that high style prose and poetry are conceptually both modes of *poesis*, and remarks that it can be difficult to distinguish between the two because of the various forms of formal admixture between them: prose could be poetic or rhythmic, poetry could bend metrical rules for stylistic effect. Latin *prosimetra* could be not only polymetric but feature complex mixtures between varying forms of poetry and between prose of high and low styles. ‘It is characteristic’, Curtius says, ‘of the Middle Ages’ unformulated but living feeling for art, that writers are fond of uniting and crossing these stylistic devices.’⁴ It is right to acknowledge this conceptual and formal fluidity, and we will see examples of it in Chapters 4 and 6. But while our distinction between prose and poetry puts a weight on their formal differences that may perhaps be anachronistic, some conceptual distinction between them is nonetheless apparent in the tradition.

A prejudice against poetry existed in Classical thought from the time of Plato, whose characterisation of poets as ‘lying’ is echoed intermittently down the centuries in the Western tradition despite Aristotle’s reframing and restoration of its value in *Poetics*.⁵ This prejudice, which appears long before the Church Fathers voiced their discomfort with rhetorical prose, is rooted not so much in the dangers of high style as it is in the poet’s role as the creator of fiction. This is perhaps most memorably stated by Augustine, describing his schooling in poetics in *Confessions: sed figmentorum poeticorum vestigia errantes sequi cogebamur* (‘but we were compelled to follow the erring footsteps of poetic fictions’).⁶ In the medieval period, Christians further associated the Classical poets both with pre-Christian gods and with sexual immorality. Ovid was especially guilty of both, but it is the latter that especially bothered

⁴ Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 151.

⁵ For discussion, see the critical introduction to Aristotle, *Poetics* (*Norton Critical Editions*), ed. David Gorman and Michelle Zerba, trans. James Hutton (W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), xix-xxv.

⁶ Aug. *Conf.* 1. 17; Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 147; Carl P. E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius, Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements 2 (New York, 1988), 16.

Bishop Jón Ögmundarson (d. 1121), the bishop of Hólar and titular character of *Jóns saga ins helga* (ca. 1300).⁷

The ineradicable place that hexameter poetry held in Latin curriculum ensured that the great poets like Vergil, Horace, and Ovid maintained an enduring presence in literary culture, and their works were interpreted and appreciated through the literary and linguistic categories taught by rhetoric. ‘Virgil must be accounted an orator no less than a poet.’⁸ This assists in conflating them as forms of the *sermo sublimis* as well as in the conflation of prejudices against them. Christian thinkers who wanted to preserve the literary benefits of Classical culture, then, were prompted to take up sometimes precarious positions of compromise. Aldhelm (d. 709) encourages the study of Classical poetry only for formal purposes, forbidding the study of their content, which is to say that he forbids that they be regarded as *auctores*.⁹ Hugh of St Victor considered poetry to be ‘merely a secondary appendage to the liberal arts, permissible for occasional relaxation but not in itself to be an object of serious study’.¹⁰

But some early Christian writers also express more positive views of poetry. Though we saw in Chapter 1 that Jerome sought to avoid high style in his prose, elsewhere he laments that he is unable to do justice to the poetry original to the Hebrew of Psalms, Job, or Ecclesiasticus in his prose Latin translations.¹¹ Jerome is also the likely originator of the (erroneous) belief that Hebrew, like Latin, poetry was composed in hexameters, a belief promulgated in the medieval period in Isidore’s *Etymologiae*.¹² What is more, Isidore believed that the very first poem in human history was composed by Moses after God

⁷ Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, eds., ‘Jóns saga ins helga’, in *Biskupa sögur I* (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritfélag, 1998), 211-212.

⁸ Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 148.

⁹ Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 46.

¹⁰ Hugh *Did.* III. iv.

¹¹ *PL*, 27, 223-24.

¹² Isidore, *Etymologiae* I. xxxix. 11.

destroys the Egyptian army in Exodus 15, the canticle that Hebrew scholars call ‘Song of the Sea’ and the Roman liturgy calls the *Cantemus Domino*. This places poetry’s origin in the hands of the same man believed to have written the Pentateuch, making it formally not only permissible but divinely inspired. This belief is referenced in the commentary materials in *Stjórn I*:

Eptir þessa hina haleitu iartegn ok frelsissigr. er gud hafði þeim gort ok gefit. dictadi Moyses fyrir gud(s) elskhuga ok componadi meðr sexfættu metri canticum. Cantemus domino. huers hin fyrstu uers meðr enn fleirum hefir sua mikit at þyða upp i norrænu.

After this sublime miracle and deliverance which God had wrought and given [to the Israelites], Moses spoke out of love of God and composed a canticle with a six-footed metre, the *Cantemus Domino*, the first verse of which with the others translate thus into Norse:

Christian Latinists repurposed the poetic teachings of the Classical tradition to create Christian Latin poetry, including the adaptation of biblical narratives into Latin hexameter epics, to which we will return shortly. These borrow much of their lexis and at times entire half-lines from Vergil.¹³ By claiming that hexameter had Mosaic origins, the repurposing of Classical poetry could be reimagined as a kind of reclamation of an originally biblical art form from Classical paganism instead of the Christianisation of a pagan art form. With this framework, even Donatus, who strongly disapproves of tropes, figures, and verbal ornaments

¹³ All three figures are shrouded in mystery. For a full discussion of their works and what little is known of their lives, see Roger P. H Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas*, (Toronto: London, 2017).

in prose, found himself able to praise the same techniques when they appear in the context of poetry, where he calls them ‘metaplasms’ instead of ‘barbarisms’.¹⁴

We saw in Chapter 1 that the grammatical, rhetorical, and poetic traditions inherited from Classical Latinity played a crucial role in the literary formulation of the native Scandinavian storytelling and poesy. Guðrun Nordal has argued that training in Latin poetics and skaldic versifying coexisted in the medieval Icelandic education system until the Reformation, and the editors of the seventh volume of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages (SPotSMA)*, *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, provide examples of Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic poems in both native and Latin metres.¹⁵ Snorri Sturluson and Óláfr hvítaskáld both claim a common origin for Old Norse-Icelandic poetry and Classical poetry by placing the Æsir’s origins in Troy. Though Snorri and the Grammarians do not cite Jerome or Isidore, their apparent belief that the Scandinavian poetic tradition might gain greater cultural legitimacy in Christianised society by a tie to the hexameter poetic tradition is likely to lie somewhere downstream of Isidore’s thought. In Einar Hafliðason’s (d. 1393) *Laurentius saga*, a biographical saga of Laurentius Kálfsson (d. 1331), we learn that the titular character had a penchant for composing hexameter poetry.¹⁶

The different patterns of prejudice against poetry and the Christian repurposing of it that we see in the Latinate world are all in evidence in the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus, which has led modern scholars to have differences of emphasis on the nature of Christianity’s relationship to the native poetic tradition. Cormack has on one occasion leaned toward the historic prejudice against the poets, suggesting that the Church sought to distance the Icelandic people from their poetic past, especially emphasising the tie between poetry and

¹⁴ Carlo Santini, “‘Kenningar Donati’”: An Investigation of the Classical Models in the Third Icelandic Grammatical Treatise’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1.2 (1994): 37-38.

¹⁵ *SPotSMA* 7, xlviiii.

¹⁶ Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, ed., ‘Lárentius saga.’ In *Biskupa sögur* I (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska forritfélag, 1998).

pre-Christian belief. She ties this to parallel prejudices against poetry in the inherited Classical tradition and its Northern reception, citing instances in the bishops' sagas where poetry is seemingly ranked as a skill inferior to preaching, which leads to priests being discouraged from reading Classical poets like Ovid. She cites similar attitudes toward poetry in other parts of the wider Christian world like Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁷ To her point, the Old Norse-Icelandic translation of Alfred's *Encyclopaedica et computistica* describes the works of Ovid as *skröksögur* 'false sagas', applying a well-known trope to the lying poet *par excellence*.¹⁸ But the opposite view is well-attested. The editors of *SPotSMA 7* demonstrate the Christian enthusiasm for poetry on the grounds of the sizeable corpus of Christian verse, indicated by the subtitle of their volume. Noteworthy is that AM 757 a 4to (B) contains a significant collection of Christian skaldic poetry together with a text of *TGT* and part of *Skáldskaparmál*, offering distinctly Christian poems to teach native poetic forms with the rhetorical conventions of the Classical tradition.¹⁹ We have already seen that Óláfr hvítaskald and other early grammarians made use of Classical grammatical and rhetorical categorisation to teach the native poetic tradition, and Óláfr's use of 'metaplasms' to praise rhetorical language in poetry and 'barbarism' to deride it in prose comes directly from Donatus.²⁰ Weber has gone so far as to argue that because biblical exegesis offered training in the interpretation of multi-layered narrative, the complexities of Skaldic poetry were eagerly

¹⁷ Margaret Cormack, 'Poetry, Paganism, and the Sagas of Icelandic Bishops', in *Til Heiðurs og Hugbótar: Greinar um Trúarkveðskap fyrri Alda* (Snorrastofa: Reykholt, 2003), 33-51. The editors of *SPotSMA 7* reject Cormack's stance outright on the grounds that it is predicated on a 'supposed paucity of vernacular verse in honour of saints', a claim that their own edition disproves (*SPotSMA 7*, xlv). But the other evidence she cites still helps demonstrate that both positive and negative attitudes toward poetry in Medieval Iceland demonstrate continuity with those of the broader Latin Christian West. Cormack's otherwise enormous role in shaping the study of Old Norse-Icelandic religious literature, both prose and poetry, would suggest that her view is not adequately expressed by this quotation.

¹⁸ Kristian Kålund and Natanael Beckman, eds, *Alfræði Íslenzk: Íslandsk encyklopædisk litteratur* (København: S.L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1908), 243.

Cf. also the use of this term in *Stjórn* (eg. Astås, 127, 131).

¹⁹ *SPotSMA 7*, xlix.

²⁰ For further analysis, see Carlo Santini, "'Kenningar Donati': An Investigation of the Classical Models in the Third Icelandic Grammatical Treatise.' *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1 2 (1994): 40.

incorporated into the artistic milieu of the medieval Christian present because of the perceived similarity of the interpretive skills they cultivated.²¹ It may be that the complex syntax of rhetorical prose could appeal to the same tastes that enjoyed Skaldic poetry, inviting further grounds for equation between verse and high style prose. Nevertheless, a clear distinction between prose and verse is formally required for an *opus geminatum*.

4. iii. Prose, Verse, and Paraphrase

The *opus geminatum* is a pair of texts, one in poetry and one in prose, which ostensibly treat the same subject, and which are meant to be read together. The form's popularity is owed in large part to the verse *Carmen paschale* ('Song for Easter') and prose *Opus paschale* ('A Work for Easter') of Sedulius (active in the first half of the fifth century). The *Carmen* first summarises the Old Testament and then tells the story of Christ's life and Passion in a harmonisation of the four Gospels; the *Opus* recounts the same material in prose. Aldhelm's (d. 709) *De Virginitate*, Bede's (d. 735) *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, and Alcuin's (d. 804) *Vita Willibrordi*, each consisting of both a verse and a prose retelling of the same subject, attest to the popularity of the genre in Anglo-Saxon England.²² Bede, describing Sedulius's and Aldhelm's works, gave the genre its name.²³ As is also true in prosimetrum, the formal aspects of the *opus geminatum* depend upon and reinforce a clear difference between poetry and prose, making the *sermo humilis* a sensible stylistic register to use.

²¹ Weber, 'Intellegere Historiam', 99-105.

²² Friesen's 'The *Opus Geminatum* and Anglo-Saxon Literature' is a helpful overview of the genre in this context.

²³ [Alcuin] *scripsit et de virginitate librum eximium, quem in exemplum Sedulii geminato opera, et versibus exametris et prosa composuit*, ([Alcuin] 'wrote an excellent book concerning the virginity, which he composed after the example of Sedulius in a twinned work, in both hexameter verses and in prose'). Translation from Friesen, 124.

Though the prose and verse components in *opera geminata* and similar works are clearly delineated from one another, the fact that one of the twin works is normally derived from the other means that they often have a sophisticated linguistic and rhetorical relationship to each other. Bill Friesen has asserted that the *opus geminatum* evolved out of *paraphrasus*, and as it is through *paraphrasus* that we will encounter other modes of poetic influence on prose style, too, it deserves some attention here.²⁴ Though similar in meaning with our noun, ‘paraphrase’, I have maintained the Latin here to reflect its technical use as a rhetorical exercise, intended not just for approximating the source text, but also for developing students’ individual styles in their own process of rhetorical *inventio*. *Inventio*, roughly understood as a ‘devising’ or ‘creation’, was, according to Rita Copeland, ‘comparable to the act of inventing one’s own argument out of already available materials’.²⁵ This held true whether those materials simply offered a starting point for *inventio*, as would, say, a *sententia* given by a teacher for the student’s exegesis, or an entire text to rework. *Paraphrasus* could involve the conversion of verse texts into prose forms, prose forms into verse, verse to verse or prose to prose. It also included translation, as the *paraphrasus* of texts from other languages into one’s own was understood as an especially useful means of developing eloquence. We will return to translation shortly. To begin with, it is the *paraphrasus* from verse into prose that will be of interest to our discussion of prose style. Quintilian recommends this practice to orators on the grounds that engagement with the high style of the poets would help students to develop their own rhetorical style.²⁶ Augustine had to paraphrase passages from the *Aeneid* in prose in school.²⁷

²⁴ Bill Friesen, ‘The Opus Geminatum and Anglo-Saxon Literature’, *Neophilologus* 95 (2011): 123.

²⁵ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 30.

²⁶ Quint. X, 5, 4.

²⁷ Aug. Conf, I, 17, 27; Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 147.

Copeland frames rhetorical translation and, by extension, *paraphrasus* in terms of the ‘appropriation’ and ‘displacement’ of source texts. Her terminology reflects the philosophical discussions of her time which will not concern us here, but its consequent heavy-handedness is useful for underscoring the contrast between the rhetorical paraphrast’s relationship to his sources and the demeanour of reverence that Christian translators in Jerome’s tradition or that of the medieval compilers demonstrate for their *auctores*, which we discussed in Chapter 2. In order to be repurposed for Christian educational purposes, the Classical process of paraphrastic *inventio* had to be realigned along the more reverent lines of Christian translation and compilation practices.

4. iv. *The Opus Geminatum*

The *locus classicus* for early Christian *paraphrasus* was the art of reworking biblical narrative of the *sermo humilis* into hexameter epics in the idiom of Virgilian epic. This, importantly, allowed the preservation of the formal aspects of Latin hexameter while avoiding prose in the *sermo sublimis*. Juvencus’s (fl. 330) *Evangeliorum libri*, a hexameter gospel harmony, is one of the first attested and may have been the originator of the form. Interestingly, Michael Roberts points out that when Juvencus composed his epics, Jerome had not yet translated the Vulgate and modelled a refined form of the *sermo humilis* for future Latinate Christian writers. The standard Latin Bible was still the *Vetus Latina (VL)*, whose low but inelegant style, he says, was seen as ‘an obstruction to the spread of Christianity among the educated classes’.²⁸ By the time of Sedulius’s *Carmen paschale* (a *paraphrasus* of biblical texts which was then paraphrased again into the *Opus*) and Arator’s (sixth century)

²⁸ Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*. ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and Monographs; 16 (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1985) 108.

De Actibus Apostolorum, the *VL*'s supersession by the Vulgate together with the Christianity's security as the imperial religion reduced the urgency of recasting biblical narrative in fashionable language, but it was fitting to supplement or, in extreme cases, replace, some of the pagan materials in the Classical curriculum with Christian alternatives. Their subject matter was *veritas* ('truth') while that of the great poets of antiquity was *mendacia* ('lies').²⁹ Their works became crucial to grammatical and rhetorical education in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, inspiring both other Latin works like the *Waltharius* and vernacular works like Old English *Exodus*, and Old High German *Heliand*.³⁰

Though there is no evidence that these texts were known in medieval Iceland, they establish the Christianised paraphrastic practices at work in the *opus geminatum* and in other forms of interrelated prose and poetry in the Latin West. That Sedulius's *Carmen paschale* and *Opus paschale* constitute one of the defining works of both the biblical epic and *opus geminatum* genres attests to their closeness. Their use of scripture as their source texts made their methodology for applying *paraphrasus* while remaining faithful to their sources especially important.³¹ Their *modus procedendi* was this: there is an irreducible core of the narrative that must be retained, 'but amplifications and omissions, provided they leave this essential substratum untouched, are quite compatible with the requirement of fidelity to the original'.³² From this initially established process was derived the reciprocal process of reducing an ornate poem to its irreducible core as prose text. This was achieved through the

²⁹ Juv. *Praefatio* 19-20; Sed. *Pas. car.* 1.22; Carl Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, 16.

³⁰ Carl Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements 2 (New York, 1988), 9-16;

Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series (Toronto, 2017).

³¹ For discussion, see Springer, *The Gospel as Epic*. Though Springer recognises the biblical epics as exercises in *paraphrasus*, he cautions against regarding 'paraphrase theory' as too central to their creation at the expense of other other intellectual exercises such as exegesis, homiletics, translation, and commentary. He suggests that despite their poesy, the writers of Bible epics likely viewed themselves as following more in the vein of Jerome than of the rhetors, despite their much freer use of *abbreviatio* and *amplificatio*. His difference of emphasis further supports the realignment of paraphrastic practice with Christian stylistic teachings.

³² Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase*, 107.

same virtue of *brevitas* that motivates the Christian *sermo humilis*; the distillation process that achieves it when paraphrasing a poetic work into prose is a form of *abbreviatio* called *percursio* ('running through').³³

By offering the two works together, the paraphrast could showcase both the historical qualities of his subject matter through the traditional vehicle of the *sermo humilis* and move his audience to spiritual reflection through the high style of verse, allowing not just different linguistic forms of the same material, but also modes of reflection on that material.

4. v. *The Opus Geminatum in Iceland*

It must be said that there is less evidence of the *opus geminatum*'s popularity in Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular literature than in the Latin literature of Late Antiquity or Anglo-Saxon England. Cormack has asserted that the formal genre likely did not exist there at all, but the editors of *SPotSMA 7* have identified at least two pairings of verse and prose narrative as *opera geminata* based on their attestation together in surviving manuscripts.³⁴ The first of these is *Pétrs saga postula I* (*PétSP I*) and *Pétrsdrápa*, contained together in AM 621 4to (c. 1450-1500). It is the pair of works most likely to have been intended as an *opus geminatum* and is, therefore, the one we will examine here. The second is the prose *Jóns saga postula* (the fourth saga of the Apostle John in Unger's edition, so from here *JSP IV*) which is compiled in AM 649 a 4to (ca. 1350-1400) together with extracts from three poems about the Apostle John, *Jónsdrápa* by Níkulás Bergsson, *Jónsdrápa* by Gamli kanóki, and *Jónsvísur* by Kolbeinn Tumason. The prose apparatus surrounding and explaining the verse extracts is

³³ Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase*, 115.

³⁴ Margaret Cormack, 'Poetry, Paganism, and the Sagas of Icelandic Bishops', 33-51; *SPotSMA 7*, xlv-xlix.

apparently the same compilatory voice that narrated the academic saga, so it is clear that the works are meant to be understood as part of the same presentation.

The question of whether or how many such works existed hinges in part on how the form is defined. Scholarship on the Latin *opera geminata*, as we have seen, defines the relationship between the twinned prose and verse works as a result of *paraphrasus*. In this relationship, Bill Friesen asserts, it does not matter which work was paraphrased from the other or whether they were composed by the same writer.³⁵ But the identification of *JSP IV* as an *opus geminatum* would suggest that the creation of one text through the *paraphrasus* of the other may also be a contested criterion: a pre-existing work in verse and a pre-existing work in prose could simply be compiled together. *JSP IV* reflects some of the tendencies of the *opus geminatum* and some of the *compilatio*. The editors of *SPotSMA* posit that *JSP IV* draws linguistic inspiration from the three poems included with it in AM 649 a 4to.³⁶ But it is also a *compilatio* that draws from the previous three versions of *Jóns saga postula*, making it unlikely that it was derived from one or more of the *drápur* through *paraphrasus* alone. The fragments of the three *drápur* preserved with the saga are written in praise of St John and do not recount any of his biography. We cannot know what the lost pieces once contained. It could be that one or more may once have contained a narrative of John's life from which the saga compiler drew through *paraphrasus*. But it could be that the pre-existing verses had no prior connection to the saga and that the compiler simply felt they were worthy of inclusion as a part of his compilatory activity. He may have wanted to create a *de facto opus geminatum* by compiling the verse and prose together. But it may be that the verses' high style formed a useful conclusion to John's biography, a climax in which John's life culminates in the audience being moved to praise for him through the high style of the *drápa*.

³⁵ Bill Friesen, 'The Opus Geminatum and Anglo-Saxon Literature', *Neophilologus* 95 9(2011): 124.

³⁶ *SPotSMA* 7, xlvi.

The question of whether it was ever a true *opus geminatum* is further complicated by the fact that there are verses from three different *drápur* rather than one, making a clear geminate relationship a less straightforward question.

JSP IV's peculiar construction raises another question about our ability to know how prevalent the *opus geminatum* form was. If any part of it were created through a paraphrastic relationship between prose and verse, that relationship is obscured not only by the loss of much of the *drápur*'s contents, but also by the accrual of compiled materials together. It appears that by the time our surviving manuscript attestations of the Old Norse-Icelandic *opera geminata* were being created, the popularity of the twinned work was running its course and being subsumed into later medieval practices like *compilatio*. The *SPotSMA 7* editors have speculated that many more of the surviving hagiographic *drápur* may once have had twinned relationships with prose texts as parts of *opera geminata*.³⁷

The best study arguing that a surviving saga and *drápa* may once have been an *opus geminatum* is Jonna Louis-Jensen's study of *Plácitusdrápa* and the different surviving versions of *Plácitus sága*, which tell the story of St Eustace (d. second century). She has demonstrated that the *drápa*, contained in the fragment AM 673 b 4to, has close linguistic ties to the A and C versions of the saga (*Pl. A* and *Pl. C*). She suggests that *Pl. A* and the *drápa* likely descend from the same translation, which was perhaps very similar to *Pl. A*, and that the scribe of *Pl. C* may have used the *drápa* as a paraphrastic source.³⁸ This could mean that the *drápa* could once have been the poetic twin in an *opus geminatum* with either the lost translation, *Pl. C.*, or each at different times. It may be that other hagiographic *drápur* were also parts of *opera geminata*, but that later scribes did not prioritise the preservation of the twinned relationship. Further work will need to be done to ascertain this, and it will depend

³⁷ *SPotsMA 7*, xlvii.

³⁸ *SPotSMA 7*, 180.

upon finding verbal correspondences between verses and prose texts that indicate a paraphrastic relationship between them.

The pairing of *PétSP I* and *Pétrsdraða* in AM 621 4to is by far the clearest surviving example of an Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular *opus geminatum*. David McDougall, who edited the *draða* for *SPotSMA 7*, sees a high degree of verbal correspondence between the two and believes *Pétrsdraða* to have been paraphrased from *PétSP I*.³⁹ It is therefore the one we will examine here. Using McDougall's work as a foundation, I want to discuss some of the different rhetorical purposes informing the use of verse and prose that we can see when the two are presented alongside one another.

4. vi. *Pétrrs saga I* and *Pétrrsdraða*

PétSP I is contained in number of manuscripts, but only AM 621 4to contains both the saga and the *draða*.⁴⁰ Let us first look at the saga, which is a *compilatio* containing materials from the four Gospels, Acts, Comestor's *HS*, Vincent's *SH*, and other sources.⁴¹ As in *PSP II*, its narration is largely in a low style and its commentary in the academic style, seldom venturing into the high style of rhetorical prose outside of reported oratory. It offers commentary both explicating the narrative and offering points where the narrative addresses significant theological controversy. See, for example, this gloss that the compiler adds when Jesus walks on water. Peter walks out on the water to meet him, but then begins to sink. Jesus stretches out his hand to pull Peter from the water, and they both get back in the boat:

³⁹ *SPotSMA 7*, xlvi.

⁴⁰ For a full catalogue of these manuscripts, see Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose* (Toronto, 2016), 314-315.

⁴¹ Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose* (Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Studies: Toronto, 2013), 314.

I þessum atburð skinn biartliga postolig trua, en herfiliga hneykiz villa Marcionis ok Manes, er fyrir þat sögðu Krist sionhverfing vera ok falsliga fæddan...⁴²

‘In this event shines brightly the apostolic faith and the error of Marcion and Mane is forcefully repulsed, because they said that Christ was a visual illusion and had been born falsely...’

A *sjónhverfing* (‘visual illusion’) could not have pulled Peter from the water. The compiler introduces many of his sources, citing their *auctores*. See, for example, the compiler’s introduction of Peter and his brother, Andrew, in the first chapter:

Hinn sæli Johannes ewangelista hefir þat upphaf at segia fra þessum bræðrum ...⁴³

The blessed John the evangelist has this origin to report about these brothers...

This gloss provides an etymology of one of Peter’s names, ‘Cephas’, in the saga’s prologue:

Cephaz þyðiz ok höfuð at sögn Ysidori byskups, ok heyra þessar allar merkingar storliga vel sælum Petro.⁴⁴

‘Cephas also means ‘head’ according to Bishop Isidore, and all of these meanings belong very well to the blessed Peter.’

⁴² *Postola sögur*, 5.

⁴³ *Postola sögur*, 2.

⁴⁴ *Postola sögur*, 2.

Glosses and commentary dwindle after Christ's resurrection, and the saga's narration largely becomes a lower style, perhaps reflecting the humility of its title character. Rhetorical speech becomes more prevalent after the ascension as the apostles' missionary work begins. As in *PSP I*, rhetorical prose largely features in rhetorical speeches and legal defences, many of them Paul's rather than Peter's. *PétSP* includes far more dialogue than either *PSP I* or *PSP II*, especially surrounding the apostles' evangelistic conversations and in court proceedings. Peter's exchanges with Nero and Simon *magus* are especially rich in dialogue.⁴⁵ Like the *PSP II* compiler, the *PétSP I* compiler shows an academic interest in the ways that his subject matter reflects the teachings of the Trivium, which lends these exchanges much the same framework of dialectic teachings that the *PSP II* compiler gives to Paul's encounter with Dionysius the Areopagite.⁴⁶

PétSP I's styles are worthy of a fuller study than space permits here. What is important to us is how the saga's prose compares with the verse of its companion piece, *Pétrsdrápa*. But it is important that we note the saga's academic style and structure so that we can see the distinct advantages they offer when it is paired with a poem even though in this instance it is unlikely that we are observing a prose text whose language was influenced by poetry. McDougall provides an extensive catalogue of verbal correspondences in his entry on the *drápa* in *SPotSMA 7*, which strongly suggests paraphrastic activity, but he believes the *drápa* to have been derived from the saga based on the latter's comparatively late date of attestation.⁴⁷ Though he gives no further evidence to his point, we might add that those parts of the saga compiled from the Gospels and Acts bear close enough structural correspondence to their Latin sources that it is unlikely that the syntactic irregularities of *dróttkvætt* functioned as an intermediary.

⁴⁵ *Postola sögur*, 98-104.

⁴⁶ Peter and Clement teach Faustinianus the Seven Liberal Arts on Cyprus, see Unger, *Postola sögur*, 56-58.

⁴⁷ *SPotSMA* 796-797.

Figurative language is rare in New Testament narration, so there is similarly little in *PétSP I*. The *PétSP I* compiler's desire to represent his sources accurately led him to include metaphor and simile, though, rather than to see them as extraneous to the low or academic styles. As we will see presently, in identifying these *figurae* as forms of high style, the *PétSP I* compiler also deemed them worthy of explication to avoid any obscurity in language. It is likely that the skald who composed the *drápa* also identified these *figurae* as tools of high style, and he included them in his own work but freed from their accompanying glosses. When the two works are paired together, then, the saga's commentary serves as exegesis of both the figurative language of the Bible and the poetic language of the accompanying *drápa*.

Let us consider some examples of glossed figurative language from the saga and its correspondences in the *drápa*. First consider Jesus's initial call to Peter and Andrew to become his disciples:

‘Komit til min, ok mun ek lata yckr heðan af verða fiskimenn manna.’ Þat er sva skilianda, at varr herra sagði sva, at ‘heðan af munut þit mennina veiða helldr en fiska.’⁴⁸

‘Come to me, and I will make you hereafter to be fishers of men.’ That is to be understood like that: that our lord said that ‘henceforth you shall pursue men rather than fish.’

It is true that this metaphor *fiskimenn manna* (‘fishers of men’) occurs in dialogue, but the compiler is determined to leave no unclear language unglossed. Its corollary passage in the *drápa* is the second half of stanza 15:

⁴⁸ *Postola sögur*, 4.

Hvellr nam Kristr að kalla:

‘Komið til vár af báru!

Þið skuluð menn í minni

Miskunn heðan af fiskja.’

Hvellr Kristr nam að kalla: ‘Komið til vár af báru! Heðan af í minni miskunn skuluð þið fiskja men.’

Christ proceeded to call with ringing voice: ‘Come to us [me] from the wave!

Henceforward by my mercy you two shall fish for men.’⁴⁹

Figurative language in narration is also glossed in the saga and echoed in the *drápa*. Here is a description of Jesus at the Transfiguration from the saga:

aasiona andlitz hans skein sem sol aa *lönd kuminnar upprisu*, klæði hans voru hvit sem snior, *biartari var hann en með nöckurri mannligri natturu væri likt*.⁵⁰

The appearance of his face shone like the sun *on the lands of the coming resurrection*, his clothes were white as snow, *brighter was he than was likely in any human nature*.

[All emphases added.]

⁴⁹ Text, prosification, and translation all come from David McDougall, ed., *Pétrs drápa*, *SPotSMA* VII: 808.

⁵⁰ *Postola sögur*, 7.

I have italicised the commentary material not found in the source text, Matthew 17.⁵¹ That the first simile, comparing Jesus' face to the sun, should invite a gloss at all may indicate a belief that all figurative language in Scripture represented *myrku figurar* rather than description and, accordingly, invited explication. But the compiler has aptly found theological significance, seeing in Christ's shining face a foreshadowing of the eschaton. By asserting a contrast between Christ's brightness and *mannligri natturu* ('human nature'), he emphasises what the transfiguration already indicates: that Jesus is both human and divine. This aptly glosses the second half of stanza 19 of the *drápa*:

Ásjónu guðs sýnir

Sól bjartari góligr

Sonr – gleði var sveinum –

Snjó hvítari að líta.

Góligr sonr guðs sýnir ásjónu bjartari sól, hvítari snjó að líta; gleði var sveinum.

The glorious son of God shows a face brighter than the sun, whiter than snow to behold; there was joy among the disciples.⁵²

When Peter asks Jesus how many times his followers ought to forgive those who have sinned against them, Jesus famously replies that where the law required one to forgive seven times, he admonished them to forgive seventy times seven times. The saga compiler, once again sensing figurative language lurking behind 'seventy times seven', sees a numerological

⁵¹ ... *et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix...* ('and his face shone as if it were the sun and even his garments were made as white as snow...').

⁵² McDougall, *SPotSMA* 7, 811.

relationship to the destruction of the temple, the seven ages of the world, and the seven days of the week.⁵³ Through the second of these, Jesus's response to Peter takes on eschatological significance, reflecting the eternity of Peter's role as keeper of the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. This event occurs in stanza 26 of the *drápa*. In stanza 25 Jesus instructs Peter to feed his sheep, a command that indicates the care he is to take of the church and, in stanza 27, the poet calls him *princeps postulanna* ('prince of the apostles') and explains the meaning of his name *Petrus* or *Cephas*, 'rock', indicating that he is the rock on which Jesus will build the church.⁵⁴ With the gloss now conferring eschatological significance on the command to forgive, these three stanzas together are given coherent unity as an expression of Peter's papal office.

The academic components of the saga now serve as commentary to the historical narrative and the figurative language contained both in it and in its companion *drápa*. The *drápa*, in its own way, reciprocates, providing an emotional commentary or rumination on the saga's historical presentation of Peter's life. Consider the highly emotive language of stanzas 42 through 46. Stanza 43 describes Peter's agony following his threefold denial of Christ the night before his crucifixion:

Sárfeinginn hug særir	Ástkennis fyrir innan
Sótt hjarðreka dróttins;	angr hjartrót um stangaz,
Eldi í gegn fyrir Gildan	meistara síns að misti
Gleði tárkveiktan steðja.	Mæatr kinnroða gætir.

⁵³ *Postola sögur*, 9.

⁵⁴ McDougall, *SPotSMA* 7, 817-819.

Sótt sætir sárfeinginn hug hjarðreka dróttins; eldi í gegn fyr Gildan steðja gleði
tárkveiktan. Angr stangaz hjartrót um ástkennis fyr innan, að mætr gætir kinnroða
misti síns meistara.

Anguish afflicts the pain-stricken heart of the shepherd of the Lord; it has kindled
through and through for the excellent [man] his anvil of joy [which has been] moved
to tears [heart]. Grief pierces the heart-roots of the teacher of love inwardly, because
the worthy possessor of shame [holy man] has lost his master.⁵⁵

This is unlike the presentation of Peter's denial in the saga, which speaks little of his anguish. Instead, once the denial occurs, the translator-compiler adds commentary from Augustine and from Pope Leo, speculating about the nature of Peter's guilt.⁵⁶ Pope Leo's commentary offers the nearest parallel to the *drápa*:

Nægðiz gratrinn, þar sem eigi þrotnaði goðvilinn, ok brunnr astarinnar þo af sekt
hræzlunnar.

The weeping sufficed, where the good will was not diminished, and the well of love
yet from the guilt of fear.

This may lay the conceptual groundwork for the skald's desire to dwell on Peter's weeping. If his weeping was a demonstration of a good will in the apostle that overcame his guilt for denying Christ, then it is worth elaborating on in such a way that draws the audience into the

⁵⁵ McDougall, *SPotSMA* 7, 834.

⁵⁶ *Postola sögur*, 14.

Apostle's emotional state. Stanza 44 is noteworthy for describing the internal flicker of repentance that begins a transformative process within Peter attested in none of the Gospels or in the saga. The way this manifests itself in the action of the saga is that Peter takes a walk just after his denial. This is extrapolated from Luke 22.62, *egressus foras* ('having gone out'), *þo*, as the saga makes clear, *greinir eigi guþspiallabok* ('though the Gospel book does not record it').⁵⁷ In the *drápa*, Peter's walk of repentance is drawn out and paired with descriptions of his emotional conflict as he remembers his boast that he would never abandon Jesus and Jesus's prediction that he would deny him three times.

Peter's joyful reunion with the newly resurrected Jesus begins at the end of stanza 46 and continues through 48.⁵⁸ Stanza 47 is especially poignant:

Þurkar þegn og styrkir	‘Feingin er líkn fyr laungu;
Þeingill skýja leingi,	lát af, sonr, að gráta!
Kveðr og kyssir síðan	Enn skalt fótspor finna
Kátr elsku munn vátan:	flest mín alt í þínu.’

Þeingill skýja þurkar þegn og styrkir leingi; kátr elsku kveðr og kyssir síðan munn vátan: ‘Líkn er fyr laungu feingin; lát af að gráta, sonr! Skalt enn finna flest fótspor mín alt í þínu.’

The king of the clouds dries [the eyes of] his follower and encourages him for a long time; joyful with love he greets him and then kisses the mouth wet [with tears]:

⁵⁷ *Postola sögur* 15.

⁵⁸ McDougall, *SPotSMA* 7, 837-839.

‘Mercy has long since been obtained; cease from weeping, my son! You shall yet follow in most of my footsteps all the way to martyrdom.’⁵⁹

The saga makes no mention at all of crying, of tears, or of Jesus drying Peter’s eyes when the apostle encounters the risen Lord. Here, the *drápa* adds emotional depth that the saga does not contain, but that allows for emotional rumination on the saga’s sparse wording. Each text provides a different form of reflection that compliments and references the other. The prose saga alternates between the low style and the academic style, while the accompanying verse can be understood as a shift into high style that draws the audience into Peter’s emotions and engages their own.

4. vii. *Paraphrase, Verse, and Oratory in Stjórn III*

Though few *opera geminata* survive in the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus, understanding their role within the broader Latinate West as the quintessential paraphrastic exercise helps us both to understand not only *PétSP I*, but also to appreciate subtler expressions of *paraphrasus* in other areas of stylistic variegation. We will return, now, to *Stjórn* and the translation of the Bible to see an example of *paraphrasus* in which the *Stjórn III* translator-compiler has made use of the fluid boundary between verse and oratorical prose in a speech made by the Israelite war chieftain, Gideon. We will also revisit the hendiadyses translated from *spinae et tribuli* (‘thorns and brambles’).

Let us first examine the passage in the Vulgate. After its introduction in Genesis 3, the pair, *spinae et tribuli*, first reappears in Judges 8. After defeating the Midianites at Gilboa in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, Gideon leads an army across the Jordan, the eastern

⁵⁹ McDougall, *SPotSMA* 7, 838.

border of the Promised Land, in pursuit of the survivors led by the fugitive chieftains Zebah and Zalmunna. His army grows hungry in the desert, and Gideon asks the rulers of the nearby city of Succoth for bread. When he is denied it, Gideon replies, *conteram carnes vestras cum spinis tribulisque deserti* ('I will grind your flesh with the thorns and brambles of the desert').⁶⁰ He returns to Succoth after defeating Zebah and Zalmunna and does as he promised.⁶¹

This episode reworks several key motifs established in the antediluvian generations of Genesis and used throughout the biblical narrative to contrast the lifestyles of the people of God from those outside the Covenant. The Israelites of Judges lead a largely pastoral lifestyle, their wellbeing easily threatened by the depredations of nomadic tribes, like the Midianites and Amalekites, and attacks launched from urban seats of power, represented in this story by Succoth, but felt most gravely in the form of greater powers like Egypt and Babylon. This precarious existence follows the archetype established by Abel, the herdsman, attacked by Cain, who becomes detached from the land as a wandering nomad as well as the founder of the first city. The narrator of Judges is therefore at pains to emphasise the Midianites' nomadic lifestyle: *cameli quoque innumerabiles erant sicut harena quae iacet in litoribus maris* ('their camels, moreover, were as innumerable as the sand which lies upon the shores of the sea').⁶² It is like Adam from Eden and like Cain from his fields that the Midianites are driven eastward out of the sacred *locus* of the Promised Land. It is also in the east that Gideon encounters the walled city of Succoth, just as the city of Enoch lay to the east of Adam, Seth, and the rest of Noah's lineage. Though the fact that Gideon is on a martial expedition and the fact that he adds the thorns and brambles into a threat of violence are new additions to the pattern, the components nevertheless hearken back to the primordial

⁶⁰ Judges 8.7.

⁶¹ Judges 8.16.

⁶² Judges 7.12.

themes of Genesis that were discussed in Chapter 3's analysis of the *þornar ok klungrar* hendiadys in *Stjórn* I.

When the *Stjórn* III translator-compiler translates' Gideon's threat to Old Norse-Icelandic, it is interesting to note that he breaks the hendiadys into two:

Þa mælti Gedeon. Þessor yðor svivirðingarorð skal æk grimmv giallda þann tima sem gvð drottinn minn hefir gefit i mitt valld hæiðingia Madian. sva at ek skal yðra hvð ellða knaliga með klvngrvm eyðimerkr oc yðvarn likam lyia með hvossvm hagþornvm.⁶³

Then Gideon said, 'For these disgraceful words of yours I shall pay a cruel recompense at the time when my Lord God has given Midian of the heathens into my power, so that I shall deftly kindle your hide with the desert's brambles and cover your body with sharp thorns.

Here, the translator-compiler has exercised *amplificatio* in his reworking of Gideon's threat, identifying the hendiadys as something important and expanding it into two clauses. In doing so here, he demonstrates the *paraphrasus* of low style into high style. It is possible, too, that he demonstrates the fluid boundary between oratory and verse, for though his speech here is not in a native Old Norse-Icelandic verse form, this particular method of *amplificatio* is inspired by poetics in the Old Testament.

I mentioned in the previous chapter that one of the useful features of repeated hendiadyses is that a writer can leverage the associations that they have taken on as a single unit and play with those associations through the selective separation of the two constituent

⁶³ *Stjórn*, 621.

words. The particular expression of that at work here is parallelism, one of the distinguishing features of biblical poetry.⁶⁴ In Hebrew poetry, two or more lines may exhibit parallelism that is semantic, syntactic, or both. Though debates exist on other facets of Hebrew poetry like rhythm, parallelism is especially important for our purposes because of the ease with which it carries over into translation, something that the hexameter meter of Latin poetry does not. It is also important to us because it is not unusual to see two of the synonymous nouns in parallel lines drawn from hendiadyses in Old Testament prose, creating an important kind of intertextuality between prose narratives in the Bible and biblical poetry. As an example of where *spinae* and *tribuli* have been used in parallel lines, I have chosen this prayer given in verse by the titular character of the Book of Job:

Si adversum me terra mea clamat
 Et cum ipsa sulci eius deflent
 Si fructus eius comedi absque pecunia
 Et animam agricolarum eius adflixit
 Pro frumento oriatur mihi *tribulus*
 Et pro hordeo *spina*
 Finita sunt verba Iob.⁶⁵ [emphasis added]

‘If my land should cry out against me,
 And with it, its furrows have mourned,
 If I have eaten of its fruits without payment,
 And have afflicted the sons of its farmers,

⁶⁴ For an overview of parallelism in biblical poetry and the scholarly discussion surrounding it, see Chapter 1 of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

⁶⁵ Job 31. 38-40.

Let *brambles* grow instead of wheat,
 And let *thorns* [grow] instead of barley.’
 So end the words of Job.

This practice, used with other hendiadyses throughout the corpus of biblical poems, was well-known to medieval Christians through the psalmody recited as part of the liturgy and formed an important part of exegetical analysis. The association of the Psalms with David, a musician, makes it probable that they were understood to be verse, though their metrics and other poetic features were not fully perceived through translation. Perhaps as a further effort to make Gideon’s speech poetic, the translator has used alliteration: *grimmv giallda* (‘cruel recompense’), *knaliga með klvngrvm* (deftly with brambles), *yðvarn likam lyia* (‘cover your body’), and *hvossum hagþornvm* (‘sharp thorns’).

By amplifying Gideon’s hendiadys into a pair of parallel lines, the *Stjórn* III compiler has refashioned Gideon’s speech into an *ex tempore* oration that imitates the stylistics of Old Testament poetry. Three things about this are important to us. The first is that it demonstrates the fluid border between poetry and oratory, a fact that will be important to us in the next chapter as we examine the ways in which high style is used to bring more emotional language into prose. The second is that though the *Stjórn* III translator-compiler has taken liberty with his translation, he has nevertheless tried to remain faithful to the kind of speech that a student of the Bible might expect of an Israelite. This is important for appreciating a third implication of this amplification, which is the way in which Gideon’s *ex tempore* poetic composition adds a new degree of resemblance between him and the heroic poets in the *Íslendingasögur*, who compose their verses *ex tempore*, sometimes in battle. The heroic composition of *ex tempore* poetry might be a distinctly Icelandic expectation, but here the Icelandic translator has still met that expectation within a framework of cultural and historical awareness,

amplifying Gideon's threat to reflect what he knew of biblical high style and, therefore, the kind of oratory he might have expected of an Old Testament hero. This reveals an interesting dimension to the way the Icelanders used the Christianised Classical conceptualisation of poetry to contextualise their own tradition. They learned from Snorri that their native verse was part of the same shared Trojan inheritance as the Greco-Roman hexameter tradition, and from Isidore that the hexameter tradition originated with Moses. But here, their native ideas of how poetry occurs within a prose narrative infiltrate their study of the Bible and their reception of the biblical narrative.

4. viii. Conclusion

By examining some of the interactions between prose and verse in translated literature, I hope to have established three things. The first is that the rhetorical exercise of *paraphrasus* was one of the more important practices that the Classical tradition offered to writers seeking to translate or adapt narratives into different styles, whether from one language into another or from one medium into another. As we move forward in our examination of style in other kinds of translated sagas, the principles of *paraphrasus* will become increasingly important, especially in the next chapter when we discuss the translation of French verse romances into Old Norse-Icelandic prose. The second thing we have seen is that where religious prose historical texts either in the low style or in the academic style focus their attentions on presenting historical facts or academic commentary, the verse paired with those texts makes a more extended examination of its subjects' emotions, just as one might expect from rhetorical or high style. Third and finally, we have seen that through *paraphrasus*, the *Stjórn* III translator-compiler has amplified Gideon's threat to the people of Succoth into a kind of oratory approximating what he knew of Hebrew verse. This may suggest that what we think

of primarily as a difference in form, a medieval Icelandic translator might instead have perceived as a difference between high and low styles. This conceptual fluidity between different modes of the *sermo sublimis*, oratory and verse, will become important in our next chapter when we see the translators of the *riddarasögur* use rhetorical prose to approximate the aesthetic of their verse sources. This use of oratory in storytelling will lay the groundwork for the homiletic storytelling that we will examine in Chapter 6.

Res Gestae

5. i. Introduction

The last chapter discussed the interaction between prose and verse as an interaction between low and high styles. This chapter will explore a different form of interaction between high and low styles, one that results from the confluence of divine narrative and secular narrative. The distinction between these is in some sense artificial: Christian theology can interpret all of history as part of the same narrative, as is demonstrated by Augustine's *DCD*. But historical materials that fall outside of the narrative books of the Bible and the history of the Church could be governed by different generic and stylistic conventions, and these conventions reflect different branches of the reception history of the Trivium. There are consequent implications for prose style that allow for greater use of the *sermo sublimis* in narration.

One of the most substantial introductions of rhetorical language into Old Norse-Icelandic prose composition came with the translation of French verse romances into Old Norse-Icelandic prose in high style. The earliest of these texts were produced not in Iceland but in Norway for the royal court, especially during the reign of Hákon IV Hákonarson (d. 1263). But many are contained in Icelandic manuscripts with Icelandic texts, and it has been suggested that they may have been altered by Icelandic scribes to suit Icelandic tastes.¹ They also inspired the production of indigenous Icelandic romances, and likely influenced the styles of other works composed on the island. The translation and imitation of the romances provided fertile ground for stylistic innovation and development in Old Norse-Icelandic prose composition that had a far-reaching rhetorical and generic impact on the wider corpus.

¹ Marianne Kalinke, *Norse Romance I: The Tristram Legend*, ix.

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of the *res gesta* (plural: *res gestae*), a mode of history writing that is distinct from the kind of religious history we have seen so far. It is within this conceptualisation of history that the *riddarasögur* and other courtly works were set. Where salvific *historia* was chiefly concerned with the acts of God, the *res gesta* was concerned with the great deeds of historical figures, often those involved with the court, like princes and knights, and these different interests result in a different engagement with the rhetorical tradition and, therefore, a different approach to style. I will show here that these are the result of the *res gesta*'s close relationship to the rhetorical concept of the *exemplum*, a narrative designed to illustrate an argument or a principle in an oration.

Because the conceptual borders between the *res gesta* and salvific *historia* are fluid, authors often creatively interweave their styles as the courtly lives of *res gesta* heroes overlap with themes and characters from religious history. This overlap is key to our study. We will examine it by studying two texts, *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats* and *Parcevals saga*. The first of these is a dialogue between between Josaphat, an Indian prince, and the hermit, Barlaam. In this interaction between the courtly world of the *res gesta* and the spiritual world of salvific *historia*, we will see an important development in the use of rhetorical narrative for religious purposes. In *Parcevals saga*, we will examine the ways in which the exhortative uses of the *sermo sublimis* are put to didactic use as Parceval's life, like that of Paul in *PSP II*, becomes a narrative of both intellectual and spiritual growth.

5. ii. *Two Modes of History*

The currents of intellectual history that undergird the *riddarasögur*'s stylistic characteristics can be framed within approaches to understanding and representing historical narrative that differed somewhat from the academic study of the Bible that we discussed in previous

chapters. Though there is a sense in which the Victorine approaches to history that have framed our discussion so far reformed the greater project of Christian historiography, there is also an important sense in which that reform clarified what had already been begun under the Church Fathers, which was to shift the focus of historical study from the *res gestae* ('deeds accomplished') by historical figures to the overarching narrative of salvific history, united by its focus on the works of God.² Because the *sermo sublimis*, when used in narrative, was used to praise characters within the narrative or their deeds, or offer them up as exemplars of virtue to the audience, the *sermo humilis* in Christian narrative stood out because of what its style asserted about history's noteworthy actors: God was worthy of praise rather than them. But where the writings of figures like Eusebius of Caesarea and Hugh of St Victor represent this latter approach to history, a medieval continuation of the former is expressed by more nationally focused histories like those of Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. c. 1155), Saxo Grammaticus (d. c. 1220), and pseudo-Dares Phrygius. The mode of historical thought presented in *res gestae* like these as well as much of the historical material in them form the backdrop to the similarly named *chansons de geste* ('songs of accomplishments'), that is, the romances.

We will see shortly that modern scholars have struggled to find a working definition for the romance genre, and it appears that late Antique and Medieval scholars had comparable difficulty distinguishing the *res gesta* from salvific *historia*. In addition to the prevalence of the *sermo humilis* in biblical narrative and a resultant preference for it in hagiographic writings, an important point of departure for the broader conceptual distinction appears to be Augustine's *DCD*. Augustine uses the term *res gesta* for Roman histories, distinguishing them from biblical history and calling them *vanissimas fabulas* ('empty

² For succinct summary of this distinction, see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 52-56. He uses the term *gesta Dei* ('deeds of God') to describe the salvific historical narrative. In order to maintain a more consistent usage of *gesta* in this thesis, I have not followed his example.

fables').³ This echoes the old Platonic sentiment toward poetry, and in light of the prominence of Vergil's *Aeneid* as one of the defining examples of both a *res gesta* and canonical Latin poetry, this is likely not coincidental. But the *DCD* and a similar work, Orosius's *Historia contra Paganos*, are both written to express the concepts of Christian history in answer to the claims of Roman history, and because of that are not strictly expressions of salvific *historia* in the appropriate *sermo humilis*, but instead are rhetorical defences of salvific *historia* that explain its concepts in engagement with the categories of the *res gesta*. When some of Christendom's best-known models for historical writing blur the distinctions between the two hypothetical categories, it can be difficult to assert a firm distinction between the two categories for their intellectual descendants. We will encounter noteworthy blurrings of the distinction between the two historical modes in this chapter. Nevertheless, Christian writings *contra* the *res gestae* helped to create some generic markers for the *res gestae*. Because their writings answered Roman history, particularly, Augustine and Orosius may have played a role in defining the *res gesta* by its *romanitas*. It is also unlikely to be accidental that much of the historical material present in medieval romances and *res gestae* is in some way tied to Roman history, often through Trojan lineages shared by the Romans, Britons, and, according to the Icelanders, the *Æsir*.

Scandinavia had two important centres of production for vernacular *res gestae*. The first was Iceland, which plays an important role in translating secular historical or pseudo-historical works like the fifth century *De Excidio Troiae (DET)*, and Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae (HRB)*, also attested as the *De Gestis Brittonum*, into Old Norse-Icelandic as *Breta sögur* and *Trójumannasaga*. We have already seen that the Icelandic Benedictines used claims of Trojan inheritance to garner legitimacy for the native poetic tradition by creating a link between it and the poetic and rhetorical traditions from the Classical world.

³ *DCD* VII. xviii.

The descent from Trojan refugees is a popular historiographical trope in the *res gestae*, featuring prominently in Geoffrey's *Historia* and in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Many of the *riddarasögur* are set in Arthurian Britain, and it is within this intellectual context that many of the *riddarasögur* and other courtly works are preserved as part of the historical legacy of what Gottskálk Jensen has called a 'wonderfully vague Asian paradise' that the Icelanders shared with many of the greatest powers in Europe.⁴ We have seen, too, the connections that this shared Trojan/Greek/Roman inheritance has with the study of language through the Liberal Arts.

The other of these two projects is that which began the translation of the *riddarasögur* and other courtly works like the romantic hagiographies, and that is the Norwegian court, especially that of Hákon IV, which had close ties to the Cistercians, themselves an offshoot of the Benedictines. Five of the surviving *riddarasögur* name Hákon as their commissioner: *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, *Ívens saga*, *Möttuls saga*, *Strengleikar*, and *Tristrams saga*.⁵ *Þiðreks saga*, which blends material from German and Scandinavian folklore with components of Arthurian history, is also believed to have been composed in Hákon IV's court and represents a fascinating effort to weave Scandinavian history into broader history represented by the *res gesta* narratives.

It has been suggested that Hákon hoped to bring a greater degree of sophistication to Norway's court by making it more like the courts of France and Anglo-Norman Britain, an aim that was likely aided by the Cistercians.⁶ The Cistercian order was carried from Angevin England to Norway around 1146 by Bishop Sigurðr of Bergen who, with the support of

⁴ Gottskálk Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey in Northern Iceland: A Benedictine Powerhouse of Cultural Heritage', *Religions* 12 (2021): 423.

⁵ Geraldine Barnes, 'Scandinavian Versions of Arthurian Romance', 202.

⁶ Paul Bibire, 'From *Riddarasaga* to *Lygisaga*: the Norse Response to Romance', in *Les Sagas de Chevaliers: Riddarasögur*, ed. Régis Boyer (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sarbonne, 1985), 55-76; Henry Goddard Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2014), 88.

Abbot Henry of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, established St Mary's of Lyse.⁷ A second Cistercian abbey, St Mary's of Hovedøya, was founded in Christiana Harbour around 1147, the daughter abbey of Kirkstead in Lincolnshire. Both abbeys maintained close ties to England. The 'Brother Robert' to whom *Tristrams saga* is attributed and the Abbot Robert to whom *Elis saga* is attributed are, in addition to possibly being the same person, thought by virtue of their name to have been an Anglo-Norman, and therefore possibly a Cistercian.⁸ There is also reason to believe that Saxo Grammaticus, whose *Gesta Danorum* is likely modelled on works like the *HRB* and *DET*, was himself a Cistercian.⁹

Jürg Glauser has posited that one of the unifying features of the romance genre is its 'focus on a royal universe, in which chivalric behaviour by individual knights is staged'.¹⁰ This is the world of the *res gestae*. But in Iceland and likely, too, in Norway, religious orders, who we might expect to be more interested in the salvific narrative of world history, played an important role in shaping and preserving the Northern romance tradition. Though many religious orders were present and influential in Bergen, including the Augustinians and Dominicans, the sometimes-fraught relationship between the religious and royal universes helped shape the literary identity of both the Benedictines and the Cistercians. St Dunstan (d. 988), the Benedictine Abbot of Glastonbury, was an important figure in the Benedictine Reforms in Anglo-Saxon England and is known for both his clashes with and his positive influence on the development of the English monarchy. These were recounted in various Latin *vitae* and an Icelandic Benedictine saga.¹¹ St Thomas a Becket (d. 1170), known for his martyrdom by the English King Henry II, was not technically a Cistercian, but spent two

⁷ Henry Goddard Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*, (Cambridge, 2014), 88; For a historical overview of the Cistercians at Lyse, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *De Norske Cistercienserklostre 1146-1264 Sett I Europeisk Sammenheng* (Oslo: Universitetsforl, 1977).

⁸ Leach, *Angevin Britain*, 88.

⁹ Leach, *Angevin Britain*, 88; Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Saxo og Geoffrey af Monmouth'. *Renæssanceforum: Tidsskrift for renæssanceforskning* 3 (Aarhus: 2007): 1-4.

¹⁰ Glauser, 'Romance', 300.

¹¹ For an overview, see Christine Fell's preface to her edition of *Dunstanus saga*.

years at a Cistercian abbey in Pontigny, and two of his more influential biographers, William of Canterbury (d. 1177) and Benet of St Alban's (d. 1183) were Benedictines. In Guðmundr Arason (d. 1273), the Benedictine bishop of Hólar, Iceland had its own religious figure representing tension between the religious life and earthly authorities. The consequent interplay of salvific history with the royal universe impacts the development of religious storytelling in the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus. This is especially evident in two ways. One is that it allows authors to explore the themes of two kinds of historical writing, salvific *historia* and the *res gesta*, as they come into contact and, sometimes, conflict with one another. The other is that, as these themes are explored, the styles associated with them intermingle, allowing translators, compilers, and authors fertile soil for creativity.

Our first example is *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats*, the story of a hermit named Barlaam who relates a series of parables and lessons to the young prince, Josaphat, which ultimately lead the prince to abandon the courtly life for the ascetic life. In their use of rhetorical style, Barlaam's speeches to Josaphat can be likened to Paul's speeches to the Lystrans and Athenians. Paul used rhetoric not only, as Augustine would advise, to persuade, but also because by speaking in a mode that reflected a teaching tradition that was cherished by his Greek audiences, Paul was exemplifying the principle he articulates in I Corinthians 9, whereby he behaves and speaks like the Jews when he preaches to them and like other Gentile groups when he preaches to them in an effort to make the Gospel understandable to them. Barlaam, similarly, relates his narratives to Josaphat in rhetorical speech, the language of the *res gesta* and, by extension, the courtly world in which Josaphat the character lives. Its noteworthy difference from Paul's speeches, though, is that by having Barlaam deliver narratives to Josaphat in rhetorical style, the saga writer is bringing the content of Christian history, normally given in the *sermo humilis*, into the *sermo sublimis*.

5. iii. *Exempla*

Barlaams saga ok Josaphats is a Christianised retelling of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. It takes the form of extended dialogue between the hermit, Barlaam, and the young prince of India, Josaphat (Buddha).¹² In it, Barlaam and Josaphat discuss both the royal and eremitic lifestyles, as well as a wealth of encyclopaedic knowledge that benefits a king. Josaphat is led to Christianity and takes up the eremitic life. This saga, too, is believed to have been translated into Old Norse-Icelandic at Hákon IV's court at Bergen.¹³ The legend likely originated in India and a text based on it was probably composed somewhere in Central Asia in the sixth century. This was eventually translated from a Georgian version called the *Balavariani* into Greek.¹⁴ From Greek it was translated into Latin as the so-called *Versio Vulgata* around 1170, probably at St-Denis in Paris, and various manuscript redactions attest that the work was especially popular among the Cistercians.¹⁵ Odd Einar Haugen suggests that it may be at the hands of the Cistercians that *Barlaams saga* was translated from the *Versio Vulgata* in the court of Hákon IV in Bergen. Its didacticism reflects the intertwining interests in church and state that would have concerned Christian royalty. But in the choice that faces Josaphat, it also reflects the tension between earthly power and the higher calling of asceticism, with the latter ultimately luring the Indian prince away from his position of earthly power.

Barlaams saga is an important place to begin our discussion because some scholars consider its style to be one of the earliest examples of the florid style. Ole Widding, whose

¹² For a thorough scholarly overview of the text, see Vera Johanterwage, *Budda in Bergen: Die altnordische Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019).

¹³ Odd Einar Haugen, 227.

¹⁴ Regula Forster, 'Buddha in Disguise: Problems in the Transmission of *Barlaam and Josaphat*.' In *Acteurs Des Transferts Culturels En Méditerranée Médiévale*, 180-91. Vol. 9. München: Akademie Verlag, 2013.

¹⁵ Franz Josef Worstbrock, 'The Latin "Versio Vulgata" of the Greek Novel of Legends of "Barlaam and Josaphat" On Tradition, Conception, Style', *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Sprache Und Literatur* (Tübingen) 142 (2020): 397-398.

work is foundational to defining that style, is among them.¹⁶ Widding's identification of the florid style by its use of rhetorical language, as we shall see, aptly describes the style of *Barlaams saga*. Magnus Rindal's description of the saga's style as 'learned', especially because of its use of parallelisms, places the saga conveniently within the mirk created by the current state of stylistic terminology, but reflects rhetorical practices nonetheless.¹⁷

Widding's attribution of the origins of florid writing to a Norwegian desire to follow European fashion also fits nicely with our present picture of Hákon IV's courtly literary project, as does the saga's setting in – or at least on the periphery of – the 'courtly universe'. Unger's subtitle for his edition, *en religiøs romantisk Fortælling* ('a romantic religious story') suggests, too, a stylistic or generic resemblance to the romances. This and the saga's popularity in northern Icelandic manuscripts make it well-positioned for a discussion of the relationship between the courtly style and narrower definitions of florid style that limit the term to the house style of the fourteenth-century North Icelandic Benedictine School.¹⁸

It is noteworthy in light of the dichotomy established in Chapter 1, in which the *sermo humilis* is used for narration and the *sermo sublimis* for oration, because much of its high style is used in dialogue between its title characters, especially in a series of narrative *exempla*. The *exemplum* is a short narrative used to illustrate an argument or a concept like a virtue. The Latin *exemplum* is used in the rhetorical tradition to translate the Greek *παράδειγμα* (*paradeigma/paradigma*), which means to put one thing alongside another.¹⁹ In Augustinian terms, the aim of the *paradeigma* is not to entertain (*delectare*), but to prove a case, therefore, to persuade (*flectere*).²⁰ Quintilian describes the *exemplum* as *id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id, quod intenderis, commemoratio* ('that which is a

¹⁶ Widding 'Jartegn og Mariú saga Eventyr', 135; Collings, *Codex Scardensis*, 143.

¹⁷ Magnus Rindal, ed., *Barlaams ok Josaphats Saga: Manuscript No. 6 Fol. in the Royal Library, Stockholm and the Norwegian Fragments* (Oslo: Society for Publication of Old Norwegian Manuscripts, 1980), viii.

¹⁸ It is attested in fifteen Icelandic manuscripts, all from the north. See Najork, *Mariú saga in Context*, 88.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.2.8, 19; Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 2. 23-24.

²⁰ Haugen, 'Exempla', 227. I have added Augustine's terminology.

deed accomplished, or accomplished so that it is useful for persuading what you intend).²¹ The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* defines the *exemplum* as the imitation of historical actions, preferably those either performed by named persons or related by them.²² Cicero, in *De Oratore*, encourages citing historical persons who are worthy of imitation (*imitatio morum ac vitae*) as *exempla*.²³ Donatus treats the *paradigma* in his chapter on tropes and figures, using examples from Vergil's *Aeneid*: *paradigma est enarratio exempli hortantis aut deterentis* ('a paradigm is a narrative of exhorting or deterring example').²⁴ The picture that emerges is that the *paradigma* or *exemplum* is a form of narrative used distinctly for exhortation. For our purposes, this means that the purpose of the *exemplum* provides a rhetorically motivated dissolution between the distinction we have made in which the *sermo humilis* is used for narrative and the *sermo sublimis* for exhortation. It is an instance of narrative that falls into Augustine's category of stirring audiences (*flectere*) and is therefore a suitable arena for the use of the *sermo sublimis*, marking an important step in the evolution of higher style narrative that is still contained within the older rules of the Christian rhetors.

Much of Barlaam's speech in the saga is designed for moving Josaphat to change the course of his life and entice him to monasticism. His *exempla* use higher style like Paul's sermons in *PSP I*, despite containing narrative, which we might otherwise categorise as *historia* and, therefore, expect to use low style. David McDougall notes that Barlaam's speech contains a number of phrases that are also common in the *IHB* and *ONB*. He believes that these had likely become stock phrases in Old West Norse homiletic language by the twelfth century.²⁵ This may provide further evidence that the translator saw Barlaam's

²¹ *Inst.* 5. 11. 6.

²² *Her.* 4. 49. 62.

²³ Cic. *De Or.* 3. 53. 204-05.

²⁴ *Ars Maior* 3. 6; Haugen, 'Exempla', 227.

²⁵ McDougall, 'Studies in Prose Style'. For *at líta miskunnaraugum* ('to see with the eyes of mercy'), see 332-337; for the compound *syndabyrðr* ('burden of sin'), see 471-472; for *heilsudrykk/hjalpardrykk* ('drink of health'), see 521-522.

exempla and other persuasive language as sharing oratorical and persuasive properties with the homilies.

A pioneering study of the *exempla* in *Barlaams saga* has been undertaken by Odd Einar Haugen. The saga contains twenty-four independent *exempla*, sixteen of which include explicit explanations. Haugen observes that the Latin *exemplum* and various related terms like *parabola*, *sermo*, and *narratio*, are not applied to *exempla* consistently in the *Versio Vulgata*, but observes some consistency in the terms the translator uses for different kinds of *exempla* in *Barlaams saga*: apologues, allegorical tales ending with a moral interpretation, are referred to as *dómisögur*, the New Testament parables as *sögur*, and the unique interpolations with the term *dómi*.²⁶ This, he believes, suggests that the translator had a clear conception of the different modes of exemplary story and is an important reminder that, when medieval translators engaged with their source text, they did so actively, using the intellectual tools with which their education provided them. The *dómisaga* is an interpolation that features narrative and a *skýring* ('explanation') or a *þýðing* ('interpretation'), but no citation of an authority. The *saga* is an interpolation that includes narrative, interpretation, and a citation of an authority; a *dómi* includes a narrative and an authority, but no interpretation.²⁷ *Barlaams saga* features seven unique interpolations, of which six are called *dómi*.²⁸

Because each *exemplum* includes an interpretation, an authority, or both, *Barlaams saga* resembles a *compilatio*. The Norwegian translator probably saw this resemblance and also saw his own activity as at least somewhat compilatory, for the saga includes interpolations that likely were not a part of its Latin source. Najork observes that this resemblance is strong enough that it could be the reason why it was later bound together with

²⁶ Haugen, 'Exempla', 232; Eriksen, 'Teaching the Quadriga', 231.

²⁷ Haugen, 'Exempla', 234.

²⁸ Haugen believes that the seventh, about the Apostle John, introduced instead by *fra postolum*, likely had its label altered by Icelandic redactors and asserts that the translator used the term consistently for this kind of interpolation. 'Exempla', 232.

Maríu saga and *JSB II*, both of which are *compilationes* and make use of the academic style, in AM 232 fol.²⁹ The stock phrases that *Barlaams saga* shares with the homily books and other vernacular *compilationes*, though not necessarily indicative of compilatory activity strictly understood, are nonetheless consistent with it.³⁰ Stefka G. Eriksen observes that ‘narratological elements such as the switch from narration to direct speech often mark the beginning of the various levels of interpretation’.³¹ This also reminds of a *compilatio*, in which the compiler tries to establish clarity in different modes of information and interpretation for his audience. This, too, makes *Barlaams saga* a useful starting point, for it will feature both narration in a rhetorical style and explanation in an academic style.

5. iv. *Barlaams saga: Flight from the Unicorn*

One *exemplum* tells the story of a man who runs from a unicorn but, frenzied by his fear of the beast, falls into a chasm. There, he hangs by both hands from a branch above a fire-breathing dragon. But while he hangs, two mice, one black, one white, gnaw away at his branch while four asps loom threateningly from the cliffside beside him. The man distracts himself with a few drops of honey that drip from the branch above him and grows oblivious to the perils around him.

Barlaam introduces the *exemplum* by first explaining a moral principle to Josaphat:

²⁹ Najork, *Reading Maríu saga*, 87. It should be noted that the number of *exempla* is reduced in the AM 232 fol. See Rindal, ed., *Barlaams Saga: Manuscript No. 6 Fol.*, 22-25

³⁰ McDougall, ‘Studies in Prose Style’, 150, 273, 336. The use of formulae in both homiletic idiom and translating practices invites further discussion of the relationship between orality, learned writing, and compilatory practices that lie beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is worth noting that McDougall observes formulae across *Barlaams saga*, *Maríu saga*, *JSB II*, and the homily books.

³¹ Stefka G. Eriksen, ‘Teaching and Practicing the Quadriga in Medieval Norway: A Reading of *Barlaams og Josaphats Saga*’, *Acta Ad Archaeologiam Et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 31 (2019), 236.

Slikan mala oc starflaun. taka þeir upp. Er slikum hofðingia þiona. Er bæðe er illviliaðr oc vdygr. Oc þo margslœgr fa þeir slikt skiptti a, er sik firra goðo raðe þa er þeir ællska hegoma heimsins Oc glœyma þurpt salo sinnar.³²

Such words and wages they take up who serve such a master who is both ill-willed and without virtue, and yet very sly, they take such division from him when they shun good counsel for themselves when they love the falsehood of the world and forget their need of their souls.

We will recall from Chapter 3 that one of the rhetorical exercises was to construct an oration from an aphorism or *sententia*. Here, Barlaam engages in this exercise by illustrating this principle with the following *exemplum*.

A man runs away out of *ræzlo oc otta*, ‘fear and anxiety’ (from here regularised to *hræzla* and *ótti*). This simple pair of words provides the *exemplum* with thematic structure. The story can be divided into four parts according to the repetition of all or half of the hendiadys. First, the man runs because of both *hræzla* and *ótti*. Out of *hræzla* alone he fails to notice where he is running and stumbles into a chasm.³³ After grasping the branch and seeing the dangerous animals around him, he experiences *ótti* alone and is paralysed into inaction. It is this inaction that leads into the third phase of the man’s behaviour, in which the hendiadys is repeated once more as he focuses his attention on the honey: *þa huarf fra honom oll su ræzla oc otte er hann hafðe aðri oc glæmdi hann þa ollu saman* (then all of the fear and anxiety which he had before disappeared from him, and he forgot them altogether).³⁴ Barlaam

³² Rindal, ed., 47.

³³ Rindal, ed., 47-48.

³⁴ Rindal, ed., 48.

then repeats in a catalogue all of the causes of the man's *hræzla ok ótti*, now unadorned as they trouble him no more.

After this initial hendiadys of fear but before its first component, *ræzla*, is repeated individually, Barlaam expresses the man's fear again, this time in alliterating hendiadys: *[h]ræddr ok hamstole* ('afraid and frantic'), then says that he runs *við rodd oc við rautan oc við grimleg læte dyrsins* ('because of the voice and because of the roaring and because of the ferocious behaviour of the beast').³⁵ Each new component in this tricolon has a greater number of syllables than the previous, helping to express the speed with which the unicorn gains on the man, with *grimleg læte* breaking the alliteration of the previous two as the unicorn gets nearer. In the following sentence, the main clause and the subsequent purpose clause are linked by alliterative verbs: *þa flyði hann* ('then he fled') *at forða ser* ('that he might save himself').³⁶

Following this rhetorical narrative, Barlaam gives the story's meaning. This explanatory passage largely resembles the academic style. We will recognise the cross-referencing formula *er fra var sagt* ('which were told before') from Chapter 2, as well as words like *merkir* ('signifies'). The explanation abounds with relative clauses giving the explanations of their antecedents: *Dyr þat er unícornus heitir. Þa iafna ec við dauða er iafnan fylgir mannenom: oc fysizt iafnan at luka lif/dagum mannzens* ('The animal that is called the unicorn: that I equate with death, which ever follows men and ever seeks to end the lifedays of man').³⁷ But a parallel isocolonic structure with repetitions of *iafnan* and *mann* and alliterating verbs (*fylgir* and *fysizt*) shows that even in his explanation, Barlaam (or the author) maintains some rhetorical flare, perhaps reflecting his continuing interest in persuading Josaphat.

³⁵ Rindal, ed., 47.

³⁶ Rindal, ed., 47.

³⁷ Rindal, ed., 48.

In the context of an encounter between the courtly and monastic realms, Barlaam uses ornate language to show Josaphat, a child of the courtly world, the greater desirability of the eremitic lifestyle. We will see shortly that rhetorical narrative is the language of courtly literature. In this, Barlaam is like Paul, speaking as a Greek unto a Greek and a Jew unto a Jew.³⁸ There is both a symbiosis and a tension between the courtly and monastic worlds: Barlaam first educates Josaphat to make him a better ruler, but later lures him away from it.

This tension is suggested by the saga's manuscript attestation in Iceland. It was bound together with the *Heilagra feðra æfi*, an Old Norse translation of the *Vitae Patrum*, a history of the lives of the Desert Fathers, in both AM 232 fol. (ca. 1290) and AM 668 4to (1400-1450).³⁹ In AM 668, it is also bound together with several short treatises on holding district assemblies, including one on perjury, as well as with *Konungs skuggsjá*. Its preservation in this mixture of secular and religious works shows *Barlaams saga*'s didactic applicability to both spheres of life and the importance of both those spheres to the proper maintenance of society. Barlaam's education of Josaphat shows the importance of monastic world exerting its influence on the courtly world to this end. Where the *Heilagra feðra æfi* presents holy men withdrawing from the political world to grow in holiness, *Barlaams saga* shows one man, Barlaam, emerging from the desert to offer the political world the holiness he has gained. It is not uncommon for romances to contain this theme: hermits exert their influence over knights and princes, and knights and princes occasionally withdraw to the eremitic life for spiritual renewal before returning to the courtly world. We will see in *Parcevals saga* shortly that some time spent in the eremitic life is a crucial part of young Parceval's education as a knight, and it concludes with his restoration to the world on Good Friday, the day of Christ's death, making his own eremitic exile analogous to a Lenten fast. But this interaction with the

³⁸ Romans 10.12.

³⁹ AM 232 fol. was written at Munkaþverá and kept there from 1290-1499, a monastic site in Northern Iceland, and therefore almost certainly Benedictine. See 'AM 232 fol.', *Handrit.is*, accessed 27 September 2023.

monastic world is only a part of a knight's or prince's education. Now, we will turn to the wider theme of didacticism that frames the entirety of his education and is one of the key themes of the *riddarasögur*.

5. v. Didacticism

Though *Barlaams saga* may feature exegesis on multiple levels, the chief purpose of Barlaam's teaching is Josaphat's moral instruction, that is, the tropological level of interpretation. This emphasis on the tropological interpretation of history appears to be one of the uniting features of the Norwegian courtly sagas. Among the most remarked-upon differences between the *riddarasögur* and their source materials is their overt didacticism. Paul Bibire has called them 'handbooks of secular ethics', suggesting that they were intended to illustrate aspects of courtly behaviour.⁴⁰ The broader corpus of Old Norwegian courtly literature included other works whose purposes were similarly didactic. The *Konungs skuggsjá* ('King's Mirror') is a work written for the education of Hákon IV's sons that depicts an extended dialogue between father and son on the question of how a Christian king should rule. It is compiled together with two other dialogues, *Pamphilus* and a fragmentary translation of a dialogue between Courage and Fear in AM 666b 4^{to} (c. 1270), which was probably made in south-western Norway or Bergen and could, therefore, have been made at the royal court or at Lyse.⁴¹ All three make use of narrative *exempla*, like *Barlaams saga*.

When the *riddarasögur* are considered together with these texts, their shared didacticism appears to be a unifying feature of the Old Norwegian courtly literary project. *Parcevals saga* is an especially salient example of this didacticism; Geraldine Barnes

⁴⁰ Bibire, 'From *Riddarasaga* to *Lygisaga*', 62.

⁴¹ Glauser, 'A Case Study', 9.

observes that the translator creates an interplay of narrative and commentary that effectively adapts Chrétien's *Perceval* into a *riddara skuggsjá*, a 'mirror for knights', noting the texts similarities to *Konungs skuggsjá* and other works in the *speculum* genre.⁴² The Norwegian courtly translations, then, offered together stories that extolled the virtues of correct royal and knightly behaviour, offering instruction to Hákon's court in the correct way to practice those virtues as he shaped his new more courtly society.

5. vi. Romance and Rhetoric

It is within this courtly and didactic context that we can turn to the *riddarasögur* to examine those elements of their styles that frame their presentation of the courtly universe and eventually come to impact hagiographical writings. For this, some discussion of the romance genre will be necessary with emphases on the impact that Classical rhetoric made on its development.

According to Jürg Glauser, there is no clear systematic definition of romance as a genre, and there are great difficulties with trying to create one to apply to the genre in the broader context of the Latin West.⁴³ They exhibit a diversity of subject matter, combining elements of multiple genres including *historia* and hagiography. As mentioned above, *Barlaams saga* could be taken as a romance. Romances were written in prose and in poetry, the latter in a variety of different metrical patterns, as well as in different languages, both Latin and vernacular.⁴⁴ They vary to such a degree that Glauser and Sif Ríkhardsdóttir

⁴² Geraldine Barnes, 'Parcevals Saga: Riddara Skuggsjá?', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 99 1 (1984): 50; Marianne Kalinke has cautioned that because *Parcevals saga* is attested in Icelandic rather than Norwegian manuscripts, some of its unique stylistic features, including the rhymed refrains that contain much of its commentary, may have been the work of an Icelandic redactor rather than its Norwegian originator. See Marianne E. Kalinke, editor. *Norse Romance I: The Tristan Legend*.

⁴³ Glauser, 'Romance', 304-305.

⁴⁴ A concise summary of the history of trends in subject matter – battles between the French and Saracens, the *matière de Bretagne*, and translated and adapted stories from Classical antiquity – is offered in E. F. Halvorsen, *The Norse Version of the Chanson De Roland* (Kobenhavn: E. Munksgaard, 1959) 11-13.

suggest they are better understood by their generic hybridity than by unifying characteristics.⁴⁵ Glauser asserts that as a result of this, no compelling definition has been put forward for the romances in their Old Norse-Icelandic context, either.⁴⁶

Our examination of style allows us to bypass some of the romances' more prominent generic ambiguities and to focus on those closest to our interests in the Liberal Arts and historical narrative. We have already introduced the didactic character of Old Norse-Icelandic courtly literature and, in the case of works like *Barlaams saga* and *Konungs skuggsjá*, noted the connection between their narrative *exempla* and Augustine's recommended use of the *sermo sublimis* to move audiences to action (*flectere*). Just as these texts' *exempla* tend to be framed as reported speech, so the narratives contained in the *riddarasögur* are framed as oratory by two of their most remarked-upon generic features: their use of prologues and epilogues, and their use of first-person narration.⁴⁷ This, together with their didacticism, made them a fitting genre in which to use higher styles.

The prologue as a framing device for the coming narrative is a defining feature of the romances both in the Old Norse-Icelandic and in larger European literary systems. Much scholarly ink has been spilled on the importance of the prologue and epilogue in French romances and in the broader romance genre, though much of that discussion lies outside the scope of this thesis. Important to our study is that the prologue originated in ancient Greek tragedy and from it was incorporated into traditional teachings on rhetorical speech. It was handed down through the later Latin tradition and known in Medieval Latin by the terms

⁴⁵ Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, 'Hybridity', in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, eds. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 37.

⁴⁶ Glauser, 'Romance', 304-305.

⁴⁷ Because *Parcevals saga* uses very little first-person narration, I will not address it extensively here. But for an overview of the different uses of the first person in the *riddarasögur*, see Ingvil Brügger Budal, 'Who is "I"? Translation of *riddarasögur* as a Collective Performance', in *Scripta Islandica: Isländska sällskapapets årsbok* 62 (Upsalla: 2011): 5-18.

prologus, exordium, proemium, and principium.⁴⁸ Cicero, in *De Inventione*, gives this definition of the *exordium*:

Exordium est oratio animum auditoris idonee comparans ad reliquam dictionem; quod eveniet si eum benivolum, attentum, docilem confecerit.⁴⁹

The *exordium* is an oration preparing the listener's spirit adequately for hearing the speech, which will happen if he makes him benevolent, attentive, and docile.

According to Tony Hunt, this formula 'recurs in almost every important treatise on rhetoric from Cicero to the theoreticians of the later Middle Ages'.⁵⁰ He and Keith Busby have both noted the importance of the Ciceronian tradition to prologues in French romance, especially the works of Chrétien de Troyes.⁵¹ Though the translators of the *riddarasögur* have at times adapted their sources' prologues, they generally retain the key elements of the *exordium*. When this is taken together with the *riddarasögur*'s remarked-upon didacticism, it seems likely that the sagas' translators were not simply adding didactic components to the sagas but are modifying them in accordance with the rhetorical components they perceived to have been part of their rhetorical structure.

Prologues and epilogues frequently include partial summaries of the romances' content and, important to our discussion, *sententiae*, aphorisms, the wisdom of which the romance will illustrate through narrative.⁵² Here we see an important conceptual link to the

⁴⁸ Though these terms were largely interchangeable by the early medieval period, there are times when they are defined distinctly. Their synonymity is sufficient for our overview, but for a full discussion of their similarity and difference, see Tony Hunt, 'The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue: Tradition and the Old French Vernacular Prologues', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* VI (1970): 8.

⁴⁹ *De inv.* I, xv, 20.

⁵⁰ Tony Hunt, 'Rhetorical Background', 3.

⁵¹ Tony Hunt, 'Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrestien de Troyes,' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* VIII 4 (1972): 320-44.

⁵² Hunt, 'Rhetorical Background', 3.

exemplum: the *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* says that that the writer uses an *exemplum* to *rem ornatiorem facit* ('renders his idea more distinguished').⁵³ The relationship between *sententiae* and romance narrative illustrates this practice, if with a different proportion of narrative to idea illustrated. Some overlap between the *exemplum* and the *res gesta* is ancient: the two terms are often used in descriptions of one another. Consider Quintillian's definition of the *exemplum*: *id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id, quod intenderis, commemoratio* (emphasis added) ('it is the commemoration of a deed accomplished or made useful for persuading what you intend').⁵⁴ Secular histories of the *res gestae* kind frequently describe their contents as worthy of praise and imitation, often using the word *exempla*.⁵⁵ For an early example, consider the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* ('The Deeds of the Divine Augustus'), an autobiographical epitaph to Caesar Augustus attested in both Greek and Latin in various locations throughout the Roman Empire:

Legibus novis latis complura exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro usu revocavi et ipse multarum rerum exempla imitanda posteris tradidi.⁵⁶

By passing new laws, I have restored to our usage many of the *exempla* of our ancestors, and I myself have handed down for posterity many *exempla* of things to be imitated by posterity.

⁵³ *Her.* 4. 62.

⁵⁴ *Inst.* 5. 11. 6.

⁵⁵ It could be in the spirit of the cultivated *sermo humilis* that Jerome chose to translate the title of Luke's *Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων* as *Actus Apostolorum* rather than *Gesta Apostolorum*.

⁵⁶ Ernst Diehl, ed., *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, reprinted 2021 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 12.

For the purposes of our discussion, this conceptual overlap provides us with a point especially relevant to style: the material regarded as fit for a *res gesta* or *chanson de geste* was often selected for its moral exemplarity.

We must bear this in mind as we recall two points from the previous chapters: that the tools of the Trivium were subsumed into the practices of exegesis and that translation was perceived as a form of *paraphrasus*. Exegetical practices were now a tool at the disposal of the inventive paraphrast as he reworked his sources in his own stylistic *inventio*. We saw in our discussion of the *opus geminatum* that although early Christian paraphrasts aimed for accuracy to their source texts' irreducible cores, apart from and before Christianisation, the broader Classical tradition framed translation as much in terms of difference with its sources as in similarity. Where the guiding principle of the Christianised practice may not have held theological mandate, its methodology remained, and paraphrasts engaging in more creative literary activity brought exegesis into their rhetorical exercise. The fact that the *riddarasögur* have a greater didactic tone than their sources can be understood as part of their paraphrast's interwoven use of liberal and exegetical tools in the creation of their own rhetorical *inventiones*. Consider this passage from the prologue to *Tristrams saga*:

En Bróðir Robert efnaði ok upp skrifaði *eptir sinni kunnáttu* með þessum orðtökum, sem eptir fylgir í sögunni ok nú skal frá segja.⁵⁷ [Emphasis added.]

‘And Brother Robert prepared and wrote down – *according to his own learning* – these words as they follow in this saga. And now they shall be told.’

⁵⁷ Jorgensen, ed., *Norse Romance I: The Tristram Legend*, 27.

It is possible, though uncertain, that by drawing attention to Brother Robert's *kunnáttu* ('learning') the narrator is trying to emphasise Robert's inventive role as paraphrast. This appears more likely when we consider Copeland's assertion that paraphrastic translation was an act of displacement, for among the things that Robert omits from his source, Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*, are Thomas's references to himself. But it is otherwise rare for the romance translators to name themselves.

That the *riddarasögur* are an example of *paraphrasus* is clear from the fact that they translate their verse sources into prose, one of the textbook paraphrastic exercises. This practice, in the words of Paul Bibire, was 'virtually complete and universal': there is no effort to imitate the ten-syllable assonanced form of the *chansons de geste*, the octosyllabic *lais* of Marie de France, or the rhymed couplets of Chrétien de Troyes' romances.⁵⁸ But where the paraphrast deriving a prose twin to a poem in the creation of an *opus geminatum* would strive to draw from his source its irreducible core, instead, the *riddarasaga* paraphrast uses rhetorical prose to approximate the 'feel' of poetry, or at least of the height of its style. The use of oratorical structures like the *exordium* and *exemplum* in the paraphrasts' sources as well as the relationship of the *res gesta* to rhetorical language meant that the *chansons de geste* were already framed as acts of oratory. They, like the *exempla* in *Barlaams saga*, then, offered a ready invitation to frame narrative in rhetorical language. Because rhetorical language was useful for exhortation, the paraphrast could creatively marshal it to his or his patron's didactic purposes.

We can see different modes of this creativity reflected in Eyvind Halvorsen's taxonomy of courtly styles. The first is 'the real court style', 'an ornate, strongly rhetorical,

⁵⁸ Bibire, 'From *Riddarasaga* to *Lygisaga*', 59. Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, 'Hybridity', in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, eds. Massimiliano Bampi, Carlyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 37. Bibire suggests that imitating the French romances' metrical would have required a re-organisation of Old Norse-Icelandic quantity that, though thought to have begun in the early thirteenth century, was unlikely to have been complete by the time that the translation tradition began. Bibire, 'From *Riddarasaga* to *Lygisaga*', 60.

and usually flexible and effective style,' marked by its use of rhetorical *figurae*. He identifies *Tristrams saga*, *Elis saga*, and the *Strengleikar* as examples of 'real court style' and praises the author of the *Konungs Skuggsjá* as 'by far the greatest master in this field'.⁵⁹ The second is 'translator's prose', which is also marked by *figurae*, but fewer of them, as well as by (unspecified) 'reminiscences of the language of the *fornaldarsögur*'.⁶⁰ Halvorsen says that *Karlamagnús saga* and *Þiðreks saga* exhibit this 'translator's prose'. He goes on to classify the styles of *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, *Ívens saga*, and *Parcevals saga* as intermediate forms between 'real' courtly style and translator's prose that are 'moderately rhetorical', suggesting perhaps more of a spectrum of styles using varying amounts of *figurae*.⁶¹ The picture that emerges is of a spectrum along which different courtly styles use greater or smaller amounts of rhetorical language. Halvorsen believes that translator's prose was likely produced by writers who 'simply weren't able to imitate the rhetorical style of the *Tristrams saga*', the stylistic model that he believes the others aspired to emulate.⁶² Perhaps this is true. But it may also be the case that different writers sought to develop their own styles in their own processes of *inventio*. Rather than discuss *Parcevals saga*'s success or failure to reproduce *Tristrams saga*'s rhetorical sophistication, our analysis will simply look at how it uses different aspects of rhetorical language to tell its story and, particularly, how the romance paraphrasts have used these elements of rhetorical language to shape their works for didactic purposes.

⁵⁹ Halvorsen, *The Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland* 10.

⁶⁰ Halvorsen, *The Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland* 10. Halvorsen's remarks about the *riddarasögur* imitating components of the *fornaldarsögur*'s prose style might be better understood together with Sif Rikhardsdóttir's observation that generic hybridity and indeterminacy characterise the *fornaldarsögur* much as they do the romances. See Sif Rikhardsdóttir, 'Hybridity,' in *A Critical Companion*, 31-46. She draws from Gottskálk Jensen's hypothesis that the *fornaldarsögur*'s styles were influenced by those of Latin pseudo-histories, that is, *res gestae*, like Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. See Gottskálk Jensson, 'Were the Earliest *fornaldarsögur* Written in Latin?', in *Fornaldarsögerne*, eds. Agnete Ney, Ármann Jakobsson, and Annette Lassen (Copenhagen: 2009) 63-79. All of these suggest an assortment of sources that the *riddarasögur* translators could have drawn from for stylistic *imitatio*.

⁶¹ Halvorsen, *The Old Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland*, 10, 19-20.

⁶² Halvorsen, *The Old Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland*, 10.

Before we proceed with this analysis, I will note Halvorsen's third form of courtly style, which he calls the 'late style', and associates with the court of Hákon V (d. 1319).⁶³ It is especially noteworthy to our discussion of learned styles in Chapter 1 because it is characterised by its close imitation of Latin syntax. Halvorsen is quick to warn us that this 'almost unreadable' style 'is not due to clumsiness on the part of translators', as Widding might have suggested.⁶⁴ He believes their knowledge of Latin was too good for this to be likely. Rather, their imitation of Latin syntax was a conscious stylistic affectation that suited the fashion of their day. He characterizes this style especially by its 'predilection for the present participle' which, as we have seen, is one of the components that both Nygaard and Widding observed most in their descriptions of the 'learned' and 'florid' styles.⁶⁵ Though the present participle may be more prevalent in the 'late style' than in other romances, it is nevertheless common in the earlier romances, especially when they are compared with the low style of the early saints' lives. For this thesis, then, we will treat Latinate syntax in Old Norse-Icelandic prose with some caution, as it could reflect a deliberate element of style, one that can be incorporated into the translator's or author's style to whatever degree suited his tastes, much as Augustan Romans both incorporated and imitated elements of Greek syntax in their Latin writings to develop their own styles. Halvorsen identifies *Clárus saga* and *Heilagra feðra æfi*, a translation of Jerome's *Vitae Patrum Sanctorum Ægyptiorum* as extreme examples of Latin affectation and, therefore, of the late style. In order to limit the scope of this thesis, we will not examine any works here whose syntax is as Latinate as these.

5. vii. *Parcevals saga*

⁶³ Halvorsen, *The Old Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland*, 10.

⁶⁴ Halvorsen, *The Old Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland*, 10.

⁶⁵ Kalinke, 'The Saga of Parceval the Knight', 221.

Parcevals saga together with *Valvens þáttur* are translated from Chrétien de Troyes's (d. 1191) *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, which contains the stories of both Perceval and Gawain, the latter incomplete. The provenance of *Parcevals saga* is not altogether clear. It is generally assumed that it, like many of the other *riddarasögur*, was translated in the court of Hákon IV, though the saga does not make that attribution. Furthermore, it has been suggested that, like *Tristrams saga*, it may have been the work of Brother Robert or a group of translators working with him, and it is sometimes included in a postulated 'Tristram group'.⁶⁶ It is attested exclusively in Icelandic manuscripts, none from before the fifteenth century. Marianne Kalinke has posited five stages of transmission for it and other sagas like it: (1) French Romance; (2) Norwegian translation; (3) Norwegian/Icelandic copy; (4) Norwegian or Icelandic revision; and (5) Icelandic recreation.⁶⁷ These stages, she notes, make it 'difficult, if not impossible, to judge which changes were made by the Norwegian translator' and which by later Icelandic scribes. We will not add to the discussion of *Parcevals saga*'s exact transmission process here.⁶⁸ What Kalinke's transmission theory means for our purposes is that, if even partially correct, there were multiple opportunities for scribal *paraphrasus* in the development of *Parcevals saga* as we know it now. Though the romances composed in Hákon's court had strong pre-existing didactic components, later scribes' contributions to such works may have served to draw out those themes in a manner reflective of tropological exegesis. Kalinke herself has suggested, for example, that *Parcevals saga*'s rhyming couplets – unique among the *riddarasögur* – may have been added by a later Icelandic scribe or scribes.

We should understand past efforts to classify the saga's style within this kind of transmission process. When Halvorsen positions it in a medial state between 'real' courtly

⁶⁶ Marianne E Kalinke, 'The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances', in *The Arthur of the North*, 98 (University of Wales Press, 2011): 99.

⁶⁷ Kalinke, 'The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances', 9.

⁶⁸ Kalinke, 'The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances', 9.

style and ‘translator’s prose’, he suggests that the fact that it does not share the complexity of *Tristrams saga* is reflective of the paraphrast’s less refined rhetorical skill.⁶⁹ But it may be the case that more selective application of rhetorical language better served the literary vision of either the initial translator or a later redactor.

I have selected *Parcevals saga* for analysis here because, of the surviving *riddarasögur*, it is one of the most clearly didactic, earning it Barnes’s label, *riddara skuggsjá*. In this thesis, we will not scrutinise *Parcevals saga*’s differences from Chrétien’s romance. Instead, as elsewhere in this thesis, we will examine its interactions between high and low styles and its didactic themes. But it is important to state that those themes existed in its source, Chrétien’s *Perceval*, which has been described as a *conte des bons conseils* (‘tale of good counsel’).⁷⁰ Its themes already pertain to its titular character’s education in chivalry and, in keeping with the medieval synthesis of knowledge, these have some expression in the way they interact with references to the liturgical year, as we shall see shortly. This didactic material provided the paraphrast(s) of *Parcevals saga* with ample material to rework and draw out with his own stylistic decisions.

5. vii. a. *Style and Exemplarity in Parcevals saga*

Parcevals saga is conspicuous among the *riddarasögur* in its lack of an introductory *exordium* and first-person narration. Instead, it begins with a brisk, succinctly worded introduction:

Svá byrjar þessa sögu at karl bjó ok átti sér kerlingu. Þau áttu son at einberni er hét Parceval. Þessi karl var bóndi at nafnbót, en riddari at tign. Hann hafði verit allra

⁶⁹ Halvorsen, *The Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland*, 10.

⁷⁰ Madeleine Pelner Cosman, *The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance* (Chapel Hill, 1966): 50-74.

kappa mestr. Hann hafði tekit kónungsdóttur at herfangi ok settiz síðan í *<ó>bygð, þvíat hann þorði eigi millum annarra manna at vera.

The story begins like this: there lived a man and he had a wife. They had a son, an only child, who was called Parceval. This man was a farmer by name, but a knight by rank. He had been the greatest of all warriors. He had taken captive in war a king's daughter and had later settled down in the wilderness because he could not risk being among other people.⁷¹

Kalinke has likened this to a folktale and, in its terseness, it also resembles the so-called 'popular style' often attributed to the classical *Íslendingasögur*. According to older scholarly frameworks for understanding style, it would be tempting to speculate that this is evidence of the text's Icelandic reworking but let us reserve that judgement and instead consider the storytelling role that lower style plays in the narrative's early stages.

Though we are told that Parceval's humble beginnings are something of a ruse to protect him from the dangers of the chivalrous life, he is nevertheless successfully brought up in simplicity, and low style fittingly accompanies this simplicity. His father's inability *millum annarra manna at vera* ('to be among other people') separates him from the royal universe of romance. During this stage, Parceval's life is not exemplary, but his family's secret nobility and his father's tutelage in archery, swordplay, and javelin throwing – not a part of Chrétien's poem – hint toward Parceval later embarking on a path to knighthood.⁷² The courtly world intrudes into Parceval's family's isolation when the boy encounters four knights, the fourth of whom tells him of Arthur's court and inspires him to set out his path of courtly development.

⁷¹ Text and translation taken from Kalinke, *Norse Romance* II, 108-109.

⁷² Hugh of St Victor would classify the use of arms within the Mechanical Arts. See Hugh, *Did.* II.xxii (p. 110 in VTiT): Armament as a mechanical art.

An important departure from Chrétien's romance occurs when Parceval leaves home and sets out for Arthur's court and his mother gives him a valedictory address. Barnes notes that in *Perceval*, his mother expresses her grief that her youngest son should wish to enter the chivalric life after all of the misfortune that has befallen their family because of that life before now.⁷³ Though she gives passing mention of their family history in *Parcevals saga*, her speech is focused more on her doubt in her son's skills, helping to establish the *skuggsjá*-like themes that Barnes discusses. This speech is pivotal, for although it itself includes no noteworthy uses of the tropes and figures of Classical rhetoric, it is made up predominantly of aphorisms, that is, *sententiae*:

‘Nú, góði sonr, ef guð hefr mál þitt til nokkurar giptu, þa líkz þú feðr þínum. Ver guðhræddr, trúr ok hollr þeim er þú þjónar, Haf þik eigi í heimsku áhlaupum. Haf þik frammi þar sem þér sé til lofs, en eigi til hróps. Fyrirlát þú með öllu rán, þvíat rán aflar guðs reiði. Ver væginn við alla men ok helzt við konur; ok þó at þik lysti til nokkurar konu, þá tak eigi Meira af henni nauðigri en einn koss.’

‘Now, dear son, if God should favour you with any good fortune, then you will take after your father. Be godfearing, true and loyal to those you serve. Do not take part in foolish attacks. Put yourself forward where it will be to your credit, but not where it will bring you disgrace. Utterly avoid unlawful plunder, because rapine incurs the wrath of God. Be compassionate towards everyone, and especially towards women. And even though you may desire some woman, take no more from her against her will than a single kiss.’⁷⁴

⁷³ Barnes, *Riddara skuggsjá?*, 52.

⁷⁴ Text and translation from Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 111.

We have discussed the *sententia*'s role in rhetorical training in Chapter 2: the proverb is given to the rhetorical student as a starting point for rhetorical *inventio* or *paraphrasus* through explanation. Parceval's journey after this will function as that response. The *sententia* is the *res* which in action will be *gesta*. The saga writer, in writing of Parceval's exemplary behaviour will, to quote the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *ornatorem facit*, 'renders it more distinguished.'⁷⁵ Where Parceval's growth into a knight is successful, it will serve to fulfil his mother's assigned *sententiae* in action while the language surrounding it will be correspondingly rhetorical, answering the *sententiae* as a rhetorical student might in his composition. As we shall see, Parceval's growth is hardly a straightforward answer. But this introduction, a humble setting with a rhetorical call to develop *sententiae*, would be undercut by the *riddarsögur*'s conventional *exordium*. Where an *exordium* establishes the courtly world at the outset of the narrative, here the audience is being drawn into the courtly world as Parceval is.

Parceval is not a model student. Let us consider one of the first uses of a rhetorical figure in the narration. This comes during Parceval's first appearance at Arthur's court. A young woman tells Parceval that *í öllum heiminum fæz eigi vaskara riddari en þú munt verða* ('in all the world will not be found a knight more valiant than you will prove to be').⁷⁶ This angers Kæi (Kay), Arthur's *ræðismaðr* ('steward'), who strikes the maiden and, in the process, knocks the king's fool into the fire. *Nú æpti fólit, er brent var, en mærin grét, er lostin var*. ('Now the fool, who had been burnt, screamed, and the maiden, who had been struck, wept').⁷⁷ Here we see a parallel clausal structure in which both the fool and the maiden are acted upon with a past participle and respond with actions in the preterite, and

⁷⁵ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. 4. 62.

⁷⁶ Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 116-117.

⁷⁷ Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 116-117.

these actions express needs that a virtuous knight might fill and, in filling them, become an *exemplum*. The high style of the narration, like Parceval's mother's *sententiae*, invites a chivalrous response. But Parceval is still young and foolish, and he does not address the injustice at all. *En sveinninn skundaði, þvíat engi meinaði honum, eptir rauða riddara* ('But, since no one hindered him, the boy hastened after the Red Knight').⁷⁸ The style remains low. Let us use this moment to make sense of Parceval's previous actions.

In Parceval's entry into the king's hall, his ignorance of courtly behaviour is played for comic effect. He rides his horse into the hall, causing the king's page to rush to meet him in such a hurry that he forgets to put down his carving knife. The king is struggling with too much anxiety (*áhyggju*) initially to respond to Parceval's brusque greetings and, until he explains why later, the audience can easily be led to think that it is because he is uncomfortable and annoyed with Parceval's behaviour. Yet both king and page manage to respond to Parceval courteously, underscoring the contrast between Parceval's uncourtly and their courtly manner.

Though comic, we are given a fleeting but poignant hint that Parceval's behaviour is not entirely faultless. When Arthur invites him to come down from his horse, Parceval answers, *Eigi sté sá af hesti sínum, er ek fann fyrir útan borgina... Ek vil eigi vera riddari, nema ek hafa öll vápn rauð* ('The man I met outside the castle did not get down from his horse ... I do not want to be a knight unless I have arms and armour all of red').⁷⁹ The man he met outside is, of course, the Red Knight, an enemy of Arthur's. Parceval has identified him as an *exemplum* and chosen to imitate him in Arthur's court. Importantly, the narrator has not framed the Red Knight with the rhetorical language of an *exemplum*, so there is discord between Parceval's ability to identify an *exemplum* and the narrator's. Underneath the

⁷⁸ Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 116-117.

⁷⁹ Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 114-115.

comedy of Parceval's uncourtly misbehaviour in Arthur's presence, then, lies the fact that he is imitating the behaviour of Arthur's sworn enemy. Though Arthur reveals that it is the Red Knight who has caused his *áhyggja*, not Parceval, the preceding appearance that it was Parceval united with the knowledge now that Parceval has been emulating the Red Knight strike a note of discomfort.

Though Parceval's imitation of the Red Knight is rooted in ignorance rather than malice, it nevertheless carries implications of sin. At the outset of the saga, well before the Red Knight's entry, Parceval's first encounter with the courtly world comes in the form of five knights and two ladies. Parceval, so struck by the beauty of the knights' arms and armour, asks the fourth if he is God. Even though the knight answers that he is not, Parceval persists in his misidentification, telling his mother *Ek hygg at ek hafa sét guð í dag* ('I think that I have seen God today').⁸⁰ We know from his interaction with the fifth knight, whom he gazes upon and asks about each component of his arms, that it is the beauty of the weapons that leads him to the misidentification, and he tells his mother that it is in order to gain his own weapons that he wants to visit King Arthur. This encounter hangs over Parceval's encounters with the Red Knight and with his demand that Arthur give him the Red Knight's armour. Consider the serpent's words to Eve in Genesis 3: *nequequam morte moriemini, scit enim Deus quod in quocumque die comederitis ex eo aperientur oculi vestri et eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum* ('you will not die in death. Indeed, God knows that on whatever day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be just like gods, knowing good and evil').⁸¹ Parceval's attitude toward the Red Knight is like Eve's toward God: a desire both to imitate and to supplant. Consider, too, Eve's observation *quod bonum esset lignum ad vescendum et pulchrum oculis aspectuque delectabile...* ('that the tree was good for eating

⁸⁰ Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 108-109.

⁸¹ Genesis 3. 4-5.

and beautiful to the eyes and delightful to behold') (Genesis 3.6). She is drawn by its visual beauty much as Parceval is drawn by the beauty of the Red Knight's armour. That all of this is contextualised within comically heightened depictions of Parceval's ignorance further hints at Adam and Eve's first disobedience, for he, like they, is drawn toward a greater understanding of good and evil. Perhaps this text also hints at this when Parceval asks a charcoal burner for directions to Arthur's court and learns that Arthur, his destination, is *glaðan eða hyggvan* ('glad and sad').⁸² But Parceval does not remain in Arthur's court, the locus of gladness and sadness, but instead departs from Arthur after failing to help the maiden and the fool. Consider, for comparison, the younger son in the parable of the Prodigal Son.⁸³ The son wants his father's inheritance while the father is still alive, implying that he wants the father's earthly wealth but no concomitant relationship with him. Parceval wants Arthur to give him the Red Knight's armour but is not yet interested in growing in knightly behaviour as a part of Arthur's courtly community.

Though Parceval's behaviour in the events surrounding the Red Knight is not exemplary and the style is, for the most part, not high, the saga writer nevertheless concludes the episode with the structural reminder of an *exemplum*. When news reaches Arthur that Parceval has defeated the Red Knight, he blames Kæi for driving Parceval away:

‘Þú hleyptir frá mér sveininum fyrr en hann hefði numit af riddaraligum íþróttum, þvíat ifanarlaust verður hann inn bezti riddari, ef hann kynni vápn at bera, þar sem nú kann hann ekki at, ok eigi þó at nauðsyn falli til kann hann sverði at bregða. Nú sitr hann á inum bezta vápnhest<i>, ok ef nokkurr gárungr girniz hest hans ok herklæði, þá mun hann skjótt fá drepit hann.’

⁸² Kalinke, *Nores Romance II*, 112-113.

⁸³ Luke 15.

*Sá er illa fallinn at berjaz,
er eigi kann vápnum verjaz.
Sá er vita vill sinn drengskaparleik,
þarf drengskap ok vaskleik. [Emphasis added.]*

‘You drove the boy away from me before he had learned the arts of chivalry. For he would without a doubt become the best of knights if he were to understand how to bear arms, about which at present he knows nothing at all, not even how to draw a sword, should the need arise. Now he is sitting on the finest warhorse, and if some prankster takes a fancy to his horse and armour, he will then be able to put an end to him quickly.’

*A man who cannot weapons wield
is ill-equipped to take the field.
A man who wants to test his manhood
needs manliness and hardihood.⁸⁴ [Emphasis added.]*

Arthur’s observations function not unlike an epilogue, offering a summary of events in the preceding passage. Parceval’s narrative trajectory has moved from the wilderness into the courtly world. Though he did not fully exhibit exemplary behaviour, in his first test his narrative trajectory grew from folktale-like structure into *exemplum*-like structure. Its conclusion is told in a courtly setting with the structural signs of a courtly narrative as he becomes a peripheral figure to the courtly world.

⁸⁴ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 120-123.

Important, too, is that Parceval's blundering introduction to the courtly world ends with two rhyming aphorisms, which I have italicised. Each of the two is a couplet whose constituent parts are linked by both rhyme and homeoteleuton. The two *sententiae* are linked to one another by their parallel use of *Sá er*, but they are antithetical to one another in their use of positive and negative language. The first describes that which will not go well for Parceval without training (*illa fallinn at berjaz, er eigi kann vápnum verjaz*); the second, the virtues that he will need to test. Because they look both backward at what Parceval is lacking and forward to what he might gain, Arthur's speech and the rhyming couplets also function as a prologue to the following events, describing the new state of danger and potential now confronting Parceval as he operates both on the periphery of the courtly world and on the periphery of exemplarity.⁸⁵

The saga writer tinkers with the rhetorical mechanisms of the courtly genre for a distinct literary purpose: Parceval's uncourtly and low-style introduction without an *exordium* progresses into Arthur's world as the author cautiously introduces elements of courtly language and rhetorical structure, concluding his entry with the disjointed patterns of an *exemplum*. This accentuates Parceval's haphazard arrival into the royal universe of romance, characterised in the broader corpus by rhetorical language. The oratorical framework and structure of the *exemplum* is deconstructed and used piecemeal to reflect the complexities of Parceval's growth, further illustrating the hybridity of the genre. It is this kind of freedom to repurpose the components of rhetoric and romance that we will observe when we begin our examination of the florid sagas in the next chapter.

⁸⁵ These may or may not be spoken by Arthur himself. Kalinke, in her edition, includes them within Arthur's quotation marks in her English translation, but ends his quotation just before them in the Old Norse text. The quotation marks are, in either case, her addition. It may be that the *sententiae* are meant to be understood as uttered by Arthur, in which case our first rhymed couplets, like examples of high style in the historical saints' lives, occur in reported speech. As this is not the case later in the saga, it may be that the paraphrast saw a spoken epilogue and moral as appropriate to this earlier stage in Parceval's development before he becomes fully a part of the courtly world.

5. vii. b. *Gormanz as Master*

The warning *sententiae* delivered in Arthur's court after Parceval has defeated the Red Knight also function as a thematic prologue to the following sequence, which is Parceval's tutelage under Gormanz, who teaches him to *vápnum verjaz* ('wield weapons'), the very thing that the rhyming couplets feared he could not. By educating him in the art of combat, Gormanz draws Parceval further into the courtly universe.

Before we discuss the means by which Gormanz educates Parceval and the rhetorical framing of his education, let us first contrast Gormanz's success incorporating Parceval into courtly society with the previous figures' failures to do the same. He succeeds in persuading Parceval to dismount his horse where Arthur and Ionet could not, and when Gormanz's servants then take his arms and armour, the event is marked by a simple but noticeable isocolon, *Pá tok annar... annar...* a soft hint that Parceval is gradually being incorporated into the courtly world. It is important, too, that what is taken away from Parceval are the trappings of his previous pseudo-*exemplum*, the Red Knight, whom he imitated when he refused to dismount for Arthur and his page, Ionet. It is also important that rather than being invited to put aside his imitation of the Red Knight as he is in Arthur's hall, he is acted upon by his new master, unclothed by his servants. Both invitations to dismount are followed by short examples of parallelism: Arthur's by Kæi's mistreatment of the fool and the maiden; Gormanz's by his servants' disarming him. Parceval responds to the first by ignoring the situation *þvíat engi meinaði honum* ('because no one hindered him'), to the second by obeying Gormanz's command to *hygg at vandliga* ('pay careful attention').⁸⁶ Gormanz is later able to reclothe Parceval as Ionet could not when Parceval was taking the Red Knight's

⁸⁶ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 124-125.

armour, persuading him to put aside his homespun for the proper finery of a knight. But before that, Gormanz delivers a foreboding bit of advice:

‘Allt má nema’, sagði hann, ‘ef maðr leitar við ok leggr hug á. En með því at þú hefir eigi fyrr sét at slíku farit, þá er þér engi skömm, at þú kunnir eigi. En nú síðan þú hefir þú skömm ok skaða ef þú neitar at nema.’

‘Everything can be learned’, said he, ‘if a man tries hard and puts his mind to it. But inasmuch as you have not seen such things done before, then it is no disgrace to you that you are ignorant of it. But now that you have seen it, you will incur disgrace and injury if you refuse to learn it’.⁸⁷

These two conditional sentences, ‘*En með... þá er þér engi skömm...*’, and ‘*En nú... þú hefir þú skömm ok skaða*’, are parallel in construction and antithetical in meaning. Where one offers alleviation from *skömm* (‘shame’), the second, warns Parceval of the potential for shame and adds greater heft to that shame by amplifying it into alliterative hendiadys: *skömm ok skaða* (‘shame and injury’). This foreshadows Parceval’s eventual failure to ask the Fisher King about the procession he witnesses in his hall.

The efficacy of Gormanz’s tutelage is also demonstrated by the change it brings about in Parceval’s use of speech. Here is his first greeting to Gormanz:

‘Þat kendi móðir mín mér, et ek skylda blíðliga heilsa yðr: guð signi yðr.’

⁸⁷ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance* II, 124-125.

‘My mother taught me that I should greet you politely, so: God bless you.’⁸⁸

When Gormanz asks how Parceval obtained his red armour, instead of recounting his defeat of the Red Knight, he first says that Arthur gave it to him. When he asks what Parceval can do with his arms and armour, Parceval says that he can take them off and put them on again, *svá sem hann sveinninn afklæddi þann er ek drap ok mik færði í...* (‘in the same way as the boy stripped the man I killed and put me into them...’).⁸⁹ When Gormanz asks how he killed the Red Knight, rather than answer, Parceval says that his mother taught him to be obedient to people of importance and to heed their counsel. He is, in short, eager to cite his *auctores*, much as a medieval compiler might. But under Gormanz’s teaching, he makes his first foray out of this compilatory mode of speech and into high style as Gormanz teaches him to ride his horse:

Alldri verður mér hugr fyllandi

Við engan þann er nú er lifandi.

Skal ek aldri vera flýjandi

Meðan ek em upp standandi.

Never will anyone living today

Overwhelm my mind in any way.

I shall never take to flight

*While I can still stand upright.*⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 122-123.

⁸⁹ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 124-125.

⁹⁰ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 126-127.

Here, he is growing from *compiler* to *rhetor*. Some facets of Gormanz's didactic methods indicate that he is acting within the intermediary stage between grammar and rhetoric.

Memorisation and recitation, such as Parceval demonstrates citing his past teachers, are key components of grammar; in rhetoric, the pupil uses his eloquence to express himself.⁹¹

Didactic dialogue, as we saw in our analysis of Paul's dialogue with Dionysius in *PSP II*, is a key part of the dialectic stage of learning in the middle, and dialogue is a key part of how Gormanz's lessons are presented to us.

Parceval's growth in both the martial arts and in eloquence is reminiscent of Hugh of St Victor's alignment of the mechanical arts with the Liberal Arts. The mechanical arts, including armament, were given to Mercury (the personification of wisdom) as a dowry from Philology (the personification of eloquence), because every human action serves eloquence through its union with wisdom.⁹² Parceval's education, then, may treat the mechanical rather than the liberal arts, but all human action is united to wisdom and, therefore, also to eloquence. Accordingly, as Parceval grows in mechanical wisdom, the saga writer illustrates his growth with greater eloquence.

Gormanz's means of securing Parceval's attention and to persuade him to submit himself to Gormanz's *sententiae* resemble those used by other romance writers in their *exordia*. When Parceval tells him that Arthur has made him a knight, Gormanz responds, *Guð þakki honum þat* ('God reward him for that'); when Parceval tells him of the skills he has learned so far, Gormanz responds, *Guð veit... þú ert mjök lofandi* ('God knows... you are greatly to be praised'); and when he learns of Parceval's mother's counsel, *vel sé móður þinni, er hún kendi þér heil ráð ok holl* ("A blessing upon your mother, that she gave you sincere and sound advice!").⁹³ The praise of the audience, the patron, or the audience through

⁹¹ Hugh, *Did.* I.xi.

⁹² Hugh, *Did.* II.xx.

⁹³ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 122-125.

their patron as part of an *exordium* is a trope called *ab iudicum persona* or *ab auditorum persona*.⁹⁴ When the prologues to other romances like *Tristrams saga* praise King Hákon IV for his patronage, they demonstrate this trope. By trying to win Parceval's *benevolentia* in the same way that a romance narrator would try to win his audiences, Gormanz is also drawing Parceval into the courtly world as would a romance narrator.

Also noteworthy is Gormanz's request of Parceval: *at þú trúir móður þinni ok mér* ("that you put your trust in your mother and myself").⁹⁵ This is, first, an expression of another Classical trope from the *exordium*, the *ab nostra* method of gaining the audience's *benevolentia*, in which the speaker asks the audience to put his trust in himself.⁹⁶ He can do this by praising himself but, if so, it must be without arrogance; Tony Hunt sees in this tradition the origins of many of the humility tropes used throughout the Middle Ages, though Keith Busby also detects subtle expressions of the speakers' pride in their work.⁹⁷ Gormanz's initial request that Parceval hold him in equal esteem to his mother suggests an important degree of humility. But importantly, toward the end of Parceval's study with him, Gormanz tells him:

‘Haf ekki þetta orðtak lengr at geta móður þinnar við framferðar þínar, þvíat þér verðr þat virt til fólsku.’

‘Do not use that way of speaking any longer, crediting your mother with everything you do, because that will be regarded as foolishness in you.’⁹⁸

⁹⁴ *De inv.* I, xvi, 22; *Ad Her.* I, iv, 8; *Quint.*, IV, I, 6; Tony Hunt, ‘The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue: Tradition and the Old French Vernacular Prologues’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* VI (1970): 8.

⁹⁵ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance* II, 124-125.

⁹⁶ Hunt, ‘Rhetorical Background’, 3.

⁹⁷ Hunt, ‘Rhetorical Background’, 3; Keith Busby, *Chrétien De Troyes, Perceval (Le Conte Du Graal)*. Critical Guides to French Texts; 98. (London: Grant & Cutler, 1993), 13.

⁹⁸ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance* II, 128-129.

Instead, he instructs him, ‘*Seg at sá höfðingi kendi þér svá er þik gerði riddara*’ (“‘Say that the lord who made you a knight taught you so’”).⁹⁹ Like the rhetorical paraphrast displacing his sources’ *auctor* in his own *inventio*, Gormanz has displaced Parceval’s mother, his first teacher, by refashioning Parceval, as formed by his previous education, into Parceval the knight. Gormanz redevelops Parceval’s pre-existing skills into more chivalric skills. He tells Parceval to credit him rather than his mother just after delivering to him a parting speech made up of *sententiae*, effectively ending an epilogue with an *ab nostra* acknowledgement of his pride in his work. Beginning with Arthur’s *sententiae* and ended with Gormanz’s own, Parceval’s time with Gormanz is packaged as an *exemplum* on both ends where his encounter with the Red Knight and introduction to Arthur’s court were not.

Parceval’s affirmation of his role in remaking Parceval as a knight comes just after it is represented by Parceval changing clothes:

Síðan klæddiz hann ok fyrirlét hin er móðir hans hafði gert ok gerði aldri betra skipti, ok þá síðan batt riddarinn spora á hægri fót honum. Svá var þá siðr at gera riddara. En aðrir riddarar herklæddu hann.

And so he dressed himself and laid aside the other clothes which his mother had made; and he never made a better exchange. Then after that the knight bound a spur on his right foot; it was the custom in those days to make a knight by doing that. And other knights armed him.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance* II, 130-131.

¹⁰⁰ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance* II, 128-129.

It is noteworthy in the context of the courtly universe that one of the materials available to him is some kernel of courtliness that Parceval gains through his heredity: He *hafði slíkan vápnaburð af kynfylgju ok náttúru sjálfs síns...* ('he had acquired such skill in bearing of arms as a family trait, and out of his own nature...').¹⁰¹ This hereditary skill is underscored by another rhymed couplet:

Góð náttúra er gott nemandi

þeim er at góðu eru kunnandi.

Gott kemr aldín af góðum viði:

svá er ok góðr máðr með góðum síði.

Good character brings a good return

For those who good things can discern.

Good fruit comes from a good tree:

So a good man has good habits naturally.¹⁰²

5. vii. c. *Eloquence and Wisdom in Parcevals saga*

More thorough analyses of *Parcevals saga*, Chrétien's *Perceval*, their themes, and their differences, have been written by other scholars. The portions of it that we have examined above will suffice for our purpose of seeing the way the paraphrast could adapt rhetorical structures to suit his literary purpose. But several comments on the overall structure of the saga are worth making so that we can see why the paraphrast found his source, *Perceval*, to be such a good canvas for rhetorical reflection.

¹⁰¹ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 126-127.

¹⁰² Kalinke, *Norse Romance II*, 126-127. The idea that courtliness is in some way hereditary is a motif that resembles the hagiographic trope in which saints have holy childhoods.

We have already noted Parceval's initial lack of courtly eloquence and his growth in eloquence as the saga progresses. Some of that development is carefully strung between two key dates on the Liturgical Calendar: Pentecost and Good Friday. It is during Pentecost that two of the knights Parceval defeats arrive at Arthur's court to tell Arthur of Parceval's exploits, first Gingvarus, then Klamadius, though more narratorial attention is given to the latter. Pentecost is a day associated with eloquence because it is the day the Church commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit, represented by tongues of flame above the heads of the Twelve Apostles, allowing them to miraculously speak the languages of all of the people gathered with them in Jerusalem from many nations.¹⁰³ This leads to a sermon from Peter, in which he calls all to repent and be baptised, moving many to incorporation as members into the Church.

This is an important day for Parceval's vanquished foes to be incorporated into Arthur's court for several reasons. The first, internal to the saga, is that Parceval charges Gingvarus and Klamadius to give their regards to both the maiden Kæi struck and the fool he knocked into the fire. Though he failed to behave in a courtly manner, to pursue justice, and to take action accompanied with high style narration before, he now redresses his wrong on the day of the Church Calendar that most represents eloquence. Klamadius's address to the king, fittingly, begins with a *sententia*:

Mik hendir þat at sönnu, sem mælt er,
at margr verður þat at segja,
er hann vildi gjarna yfir þegja.

Truly, it has befallen me as in the saying, that

¹⁰³ Acts 2.

Many a man is obliged to reveal

*What he would dearly have wished to conceal.*¹⁰⁴

Once again, tales of Parceval's exploits come before King Arthur and are performed in the courtly setting as if they themselves were an oratorical performance, a romance. Arthur then sends Klamadius to the upper chamber where the queen and her maids stay so that he can tell the maiden Kæi struck that Parceval has avenged her. He has Gawain accompany him, who

Með sinni kurteisi ok félagskap bætir hvern duganda mann, er við hann kendiz...

Who with his fine manners and good fellowship improves every worthy man who keeps company with him...¹⁰⁵

After the king's kinsman *bætir* ('improves') his manners, Klamadius is made a *handgenginn* ('officer') in the king's household *alla lífsdaga* ('all of the days of his life'), incorporated into the courtly world much as those listening to Peter were incorporated into the Church after being indwelled and bettered by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁶ The restorative ability of Parceval's education, with its united mechanical and Liberal Arts, is evident in Klamadius's full incorporation into the courtly world. Barnes observes, importantly, that in Chrétien's romance, Klamadius is not rehabilitated.¹⁰⁷ This change may reflect the Icelandic or Norwegian translator's desire to draw out the Pentecostal themes of this part of the saga.

Curiously, repentance is not yet fully in evidence in Parceval. Instead, it is when he leaves behind his beloved Blankiflúr to try to return to his mother and comes to the Fisher

¹⁰⁴ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 142-143.

¹⁰⁵ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 144-145.

¹⁰⁶ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 144-145; Acts 2.

¹⁰⁷ Barnes, 'Riddara skuggsjá', 60.

King, in whose presence his eloquence and learning fail him. But here, too, are reflections of Pentecost: the Fisher King gives Parceval a sword, a reminder, perhaps, of the Sword of the Spirit that makes up a part of the Whole Armour of God that Paul describes in Ephesians 6.¹⁰⁸ The King, like Peter and the other Apostles, is a fisherman. Parceval, like the Christians gathered at Pentecost, receives a meal in his company. Just as Peter called those gathered at Pentecost to repentance, so Parceval begins his five years of exile by vowing not to rest until he has learned the meaning of the procession that he neglected to ask about at the Fisher King's. His first task after leaving the Fisher King is to defend the young woman he kissed shortly after leaving his mother who now, because of that kiss, is tormented by her lord, who believes she has betrayed him. Klamadius's appearance before Arthur also hints at Parceval's repentance, for Parceval's failure to speak to the Fisher King was, in a sense, a failure in the rhetorical arts. Parceval finishes out his exile by going for confession to a hermit on Good Friday. Eloquence, which was marked out on Pentecost, led to wisdom, which is marked out by Good Friday. His quest toward wisdom, moreover, begins when Parceval learns his name.¹⁰⁹ Consider, too, that Eve's name is not given in Genesis until after she has eaten of the fruit and, therefore, gained knowledge. Bad luck follows Parceval along with his learning his name, much as it does Eve. It happens just after he fails to question the Fisher King.

The story of Parceval is well-suited to rhetorical embellishment because of its rhetorical themes. Rather than speculate, as Halvorsen does, as to whether the saga writer lacked Brother Robert's rhetorical skills, it is better to attribute his more cautious use of rhetorical style to his literary intention: Parceval begins his life outside the courtly world, and as he is educated in courtliness, the courtly language accompanying his education grows, signifying through its curated frequency Parceval's growth into his new knightly role, a role

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 6.

¹⁰⁹ Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance II*, 152-153

closely intertwined with his spiritual development and his growth in eloquence. The secular and spiritual aspects of his life are united and framed in the shared expression of the Liberal Arts.

5. viii. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the *res gesta*'s rhetorical heritage, its origins in Classical rhetoric and its medieval rebirth as a kind of oratorical performance, first in the French *chansons de geste*, then in translation as the *riddarasögur*. This oratorical form of storytelling, though motivated by secular historical principles, nevertheless comes into contact with the spiritual forces that Christian exegetes perceive to govern the workings of history, bringing their rhetorical trappings and higher styles into contact with the themes of salvific *historia*. Where this happens, we see narrative make use of high style in ways that do not occur in the previous sagas we have examined. *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats* contains storytelling in high style by framing it within Barlaam's acts of oratory, designed to persuade Josaphat away from the courtly life and into the eremitic. Many *riddarasögur* are similarly framed as oratorical performances, allowing their translators to use high style as part of their oratorical craft, one that overlaps with the traditional association of high style with exhortation. The author of *Parcevals saga* reinvents this presentation of the courtly world as one of oratory, though, by having Parceval begin life outside of both the courtly world and high style. As he learns how to interact with knightly society, both his own speech and that of the saga's narration become more eloquent, showing both his maturation as a knight and as a Christian. In my next chapter, we will return from the peripheries of religious history to the centre, from the courtly stage to the pulpit, to see how the oratorical framing of a story brings high style into religious storytelling.

The North Icelandic Benedictine School in the Fourteenth Century

6. i. Introduction

The Fourteenth-Century North Icelandic Benedictine School is well-known for writing in a style that Widding has called ‘florid’, and he has characterised that style by its use of rhetorical language. In this chapter, we will turn to the rhetorical florid style and its use in narration. I will posit that it is distinguishable from the academic style by the context in which it was meant to be recited: the academic style was meant for classroom instruction, while the florid style is meant for oratorical performance from the pulpit. We will take a close reading of *Mikjál's saga*, which is about the archangel, Michael, to see how it uses the trappings of oratory, snippets of verse, and high style prose to move beyond salvific *historia* and the *res gesta* and draw its audience into the otherworldliness of angelic encounters. But first, we will reassert a distinction between the academic and florid styles.

6. ii. Academic and Florid

We saw in previous chapters that scholars have had some difficulty maintaining clear semantic borders for the term ‘florid’ style, especially in distinguishing it from styles called ‘learned’, resulting in a tendency to use the two terms interchangeably and to regard all complex styles as ‘florid’. I want to begin this discussion by reasserting the distinction between the academic style defined in Chapter 2 and rhetorical prose narration, as seen in the ‘courtly’ style that we examined in Chapter 5. When the florid style is strictly defined, as we saw in Chapter 1, it is associated with deliberate rhetorical craft. In this sense, it is similar to the ‘courtly’ style. By identifying the language of glosses and commentaries as a distinctly

‘academic’ style, I hope to have offered one area of clarification. Yet it will be helpful to acknowledge that the seeds of confusion over how to use ‘florid’ are planted in both medieval and modern terminology, especially as we conclude this study by looking at the Fourteenth-Century North Icelandic Benedictines, who are commonly associated with florid writing. From an examination of this terminology, we will be able to identify some of the intellectual currents that informed a variety of medieval approaches to style.

The word ‘florid’ is itself unclear. Widding initially chose it because he believed that the prose style developed in Iceland contemporaneously with a style of flower painting in Norwegian churches.¹ This relationship was briefly questioned and then largely fell out of discussion.² Without it, ‘florid’ could reasonably be understood to mean one or both of two things. The first is its strict etymological definition, ‘flowery’, which would, when construed through Present-Day English idiom, correspond reasonably well with Nygaard’s and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s accusations of verbosity, levelled at all modes of style they call ‘learned’. This could be supported by the use of the Latin *flos* (‘flower’), from which ‘florid’ derives, in rhetorical writings as a metaphorical synonym for *figura* (‘figure of speech’), as in the title of Alberic of Montecassino’s *Flores Rhetorici*. It is also, though, used as a technical term by medieval compilers for the *auctores*’ quotations they have collated, evident in the term *florilegium* (‘a selection of flowers’), a Latin calque of the Greek *ἀνθολογία* (whence English ‘anthology’), referring to a gathering of select quotations rather than to ornate language. Recall Grímr Holmsteinsson’s preface to his version of *Jóns saga baptista* (*JSB* II), in which he explains his reasoning for including glosses for clarity:

¹ Ole Widding, ‘Dating *Rauðúlfs þátrr*’, *Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (1968): 115-21.

² Anthony Faulkes, *Rauðúlfs Þátrr: a Study* (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1966).

I annan stad truða ek. Ef obockfroðir monnum heyrði hans hin *fögru blom*. ok hinar *myrku figurur* at þeim mundu þær a þa leið onytsamar. sem gimsteinar ero svinum.³

[Emphasis added.]

Additionally, I believe that if unlearned men heard his [his source text's] *fair blooms* and *obscure figures*, to them they should be as useless to their formation as gemstones are to pigs.

This quote is commonly cited in descriptions of styles that use glosses (whatever they may be labelled).⁴ The *fögru blom* ('fair flowers') likely approximates the Latin *flores* as compilatory terminology, as indeed does *myrku figurur* (on which more shortly). It is therefore more likely to refer here to the glosses that Grímr has compiled to explicate John's biography than to 'flowery' language. When Grímr writes that one of his intentions is to provide a means of making holy subject matter more appealing than that of *skróksögur*, we might understand him to hope that audiences presented with the option of greater understanding – what St Paul may have called 'the renewing of [their] minds' – might prefer it to the aesthetic appeal of ornate language.⁵ Here, the academic style can be understood in antithesis to the rhetorical or courtly. But others have held that by rewriting the life of John the Baptist with *fögru blom*, Grímr had hoped to give it an aesthetic appeal comparable to the *skróksögur*. We will return to this possibility shortly.

³ *Postola sögur*, 849.

⁴ Natalie M. Van Deusen, 'The Dominican Connection: Some Comments on the Sources, Authorship, and Provenance of *Mortu saga ok Mariu Magðalenu*', in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113 (2014): 206-21; Daniel C. Najork, *Reading the Old Norse-Icelandic 'Mariu Saga' in Its Manuscript Contexts*, (Kalamazoo, MI, 2021); Bekker-Nielsen, Hans. 'On a Handlist of Saints' Lives in Old Norse.' *Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1962): 323-34.

⁵ ... *et nolite conformari huic saeculo sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri ut probetis quae sit voluntas Dei bona et placens et perfecta* ('and do not be conformed to this world but be reformed in newness of your mind so that you might prove that which is good and pleasing and the perfect will of God') (Romans 12.2).

The word *figura* presents similar – if no longer floral – difficulties that can add confusion to the distinction between ‘learned’ and ‘florid’. It can be used of many of the linguistic ornaments of logical and rhetorical teaching, a definition that could prompt us to embark on an examination of the teachings of the Trivium on prose or (in other contexts) poetic style. But it can also be used of components of biblical narrative that contain important spiritual meanings, especially typological relationships between the Old and New Testaments, the kind of thing expounded in explanatory glosses. Though it is my opinion that the descriptor *myrku* indicates that Grímr meant the latter – in language evocative of Augustine’s talk of obscure passages of scripture – the word’s applicability to the *figurae* of the rhetorical tradition could nevertheless lead us to imagine that Grímr means ornamentation.⁶ This doubtless contributes to the difficulty in applying terms like ‘learned’ and ‘florid’ consistently. What is more, the multi-valence of these terms may even have been significant in a time when the traditional tools of rhetorical analysis were subsumed into the practice of exegesis. Nevertheless, there are clear stylistic differences between the academic style, which uses *flores* and *figurae* in their compilatory and exegetical senses and the courtly style, which uses them in their rhetorical senses, as well as probable differences in the intellectual undercurrents informing those styles.

Interestingly, the association of the term ‘florid’ especially with the Fourteenth-Century North Icelandic Benedictine School is apt because of this terminological unclarity. What their works show us is that all three of the stylistic categories we have seen so far – historical, academic, and rhetorical – can be mixed for literary effect in a refined demonstration of what Ernst Robert Curtius calls the medieval love of stylistic variegation, and therefore contain *flores* of varied definitions.⁷ These three styles do not correspond

⁶ That both concepts are included within *figura*’s semantic range together with the fact that analogies between the two concepts are easily drawn may further prompt us to wonder whether the two definitions were necessarily viewed as mutually exclusive.

⁷ Curtius, *European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages*, 151.

directly to Augustine's aims of *docere*, *delectare*, and *flectere*; indeed, we have seen that each of the three shows some approach to following Augustine's advice on creating a *sermo mixtus*. But the Benedictine stylistic achievement is nevertheless essentially the application of Augustine's advice on stylistic admixture to these modes of vernacular prose style. In keeping with Augustine's advice, this admixture takes place in the pulpit, and it is in the pulpit that we have the pinch in the hourglass, where the stylistic influence of the sermon, the historical style, the academic style, and rhetorical storytelling come together and are mixed into a new stylistic *inventio*. Here, framing a narrative in the trappings of oratory, either within an *exemplum* or as an oratorical performance, allows a translator or writer a freer setting in which to use rhetorical styles in narration, much as the translators of the courtly sagas had. This had largely been avoided in other religious historical writings.

6. iii. *Historical Information*

We have seen in previous chapters that even before the rise of the florid school of writing in the Fourteenth Century, the North Icelandic Benedictines played an important role in shaping the Icelandic vernacular writing tradition, both prose and poetic. Their early works, like *Sverris saga*, helped to foster Chapter 1's distinction between the use of the *sermo humilis* for narrative and the *sermo sublimis* for oration. We saw in Chapter 4 that their historical interests also extended to the *res gesta*. They are known to have preserved and possibly created many of the manuscripts that contain Snorri's *Edda* and may have produced the Codex Regius (Reykjavík, GKS 2365 4to), our most expansive attestation of the poetic mythological tradition.⁸ Works in the Grammatical tradition, both the Grammatical Treatises

⁸ Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey', 423.

and Snorri's *Edda*, are also primarily attested in Benedictine manuscripts.⁹ The effort to contextualise the Skaldic poetic tradition within the larger Greco-Trojan tradition of Classical poetry shows that the Benedictines were interested not just in the preservation, but also in the justification of the native tradition within the imported Latin intellectual framework.

Gunnlaugr Leifsson's (d. c. 1218) *Merlínusþá* shows at least one effort at reframing literature from outside of Scandinavia within the now-justified Old Norse-Icelandic literary idiom.

Though the origins of the *opera geminata* we examined in Chapter 3 are uncertain, some of their manuscripts were preserved in churches in the Northern diocese and may have been produced there. The raw materials for Fourteenth-Century *inventio* were in place well before it.

We have an unusually clear picture of life at Þingeyrar Abbey in the early Fourteenth Century thanks in large part to Einar Hafliðason's (d. 1393) *Laurentius saga*, a biographical saga of Laurentius Kálfsson (d. 1331), who joined during the reign of Abbot Guðmundr (1310-1338) to lead its school and served as bishop of the Hólar diocese from 1324 until his death.¹⁰ From *Laurentius saga* we know of the bishop's theological disputes and of his efforts to hold Þingeyrar to what he believed to be an international standard for education, requiring that his monks conduct not only the mass, but also much of their daily routine, entirely in Latin. We know, too, that some of the laity living in the surrounding area whose lives were intertwined with that of the Abbey also adopted varying degrees of Latin.¹¹ Laurentius, as we saw in Chapter 4, is said to have been able to compose hexameter verse. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that we see the components of Latin syntax that Nygaard observes in what he calls the 'learned' style and the elements of rhetoric that Widding sees in the 'florid'.

⁹ For discussion, see Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey', 423.

¹⁰ Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey', 423.

¹¹ Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey', 423.

Through Bishop Laurentius's students, we have a rare glimpse into a corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature attributable to known, or at least probable, authors, all of whom were connected through their mutual involvement in Þingeyrar Abbey. These include the aforementioned Einar Hafliðason who, in addition to writing Laurentius's biography, also added entries to the *Loðmannsannáll* ('Lawmens' Annal') and translated *Atburðr á Finnmörk* ('An Incident at Finnmark') from Latin. Laurentius's own son by a Norwegian concubine, Árni, is known to have had a fraught relationship with his father because of his drinking habits, which may have led to his ruin or may have caused him to become a Dominican in Norway.¹² *Dunstanus saga*, translated from Adelard's *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, is attributed to him and, according to *Laurentius saga*, he was *hinn bezti klerkr ok versificator* ('the best cleric and versifier'), suggesting that he shared his father's love of poetry, possibly also hexameter.¹³

Perhaps the best-known today of the Fourteenth-Century North Icelandic Benedictines was Bergr Sokkason. His obit is uncertain, but he is last attested around 1345. Bergr, Laurentius, and Árni all three became monks and entered the monastery of Þingeyrar together in Lent, 1317. Bergr became prior of Munkaþverá in 1322, the same year Laurentius was elected bishop of Hólar, the northern diocese in which both Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá were situated.¹⁴ Bergr later became the Abbot of Munkaþverá from 1325-1334. *Laurentius saga* says that Bergr had both *skrifaðr* ('written') saints' lives in the Northern Tongue and also *samansetttr* ('compiled') them.¹⁵ This may suggest that he acted both as compiler and as author. Einar also praises Bergr for his scholarship, writing, singing, and eloquence. A manuscript variant praises him for his preaching.¹⁶ *Laurentius saga* says that Bergr is known

¹² Christine Fell, ed., *Dunstanus saga*, LXII.

¹³ *Bps* I, 850.

¹⁴ Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*', 345.

¹⁵ *Bps* I, 891; Christine Fell, 'Bergr Sokkason's *Mikjál's saga* and its Sources', *Saga-Book* 16 (1962-65), 354-71.

¹⁶ *Bps* I, 891; Fell, '*Mikjál's saga*', 355.

to have composed *margar sögubækr heilagra manna* ('many saga books on holy men'), yet only two surviving works contain explicit attributions to him, *Nikulaus saga erkibiskups* and *Mikjals saga*.¹⁷ He is credited with writing the C-version of *Guðmundar saga* and translating Gunnlaugr Leifsson's Latin biography of Óláfr Tryggvasson into the vernacular.¹⁸ Peter Hallberg has suggested that he may have been one of Medieval Iceland's most prolific authors.¹⁹

Modern scholars have made efforts to attribute other works to Bergr as well, such as the B-version of *Þorláks saga helga*, *Kirjalax saga*, and *Jóns þátrr biskups Halldórssonar*, and the B-version of *Jóns saga helga*, a biography of Jón Ögmundarson (d. 1121), the first bishop of Hólar, translated from a Latin life by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/19).²⁰ These attributions are made largely on the basis of stylistic similarity. But they run the risk of neglecting the possibility that what we perceive to be Bergr's style may have been a Benedictine house style used by Bergr and his students alike. Hallberg retracts his previous attribution of *Dunstanus saga* to Bergr, instead giving credence to the text's introduction which says that it was written by *broder Arne Laurencii* ('Brother Árni Laurentiusson'). Since Árni and Bergr appear to have been close, this prompts Hallberg to reassess his past attribution of sagas to Bergr. He states instead that, 'Árni was capable of imitating Bergr's language and style to such a degree that we have still no instruments sharp enough to distinguish safely between teacher and pupil.'²¹ This may prove similarly true for other students of Bergr's or Laurentius's.

Another danger of making Bergr so important to our modern identification of the North Icelandic Benedictine School's style is that we might be tempted to judge the quality of

¹⁷ *Biskupa sögur* I, 832; Peter Hallberg, *Stilsignalement Och Författarskap*.

¹⁸ Jensson, 'Þingeyrar Abbey', 423.

¹⁹ Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*',

²⁰ Hallberg, 'The language of *Dunstanus saga*', 332.

²¹ Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*', 345-346.

other works according to how well or poorly they emulate the ‘Bergr Style’. Christine Fell describes Árni Lárentiusson as failing to live up to his teacher’s refinement, criticising his ‘enthusiasm and carelessness [in] writing, [his] eagerness to display irrelevant knowledge, [and his] uncertain hovering between precise translation and rhetorical flourish’, suggesting that *Dunstanus* saga was ‘an early work, and may even have been an experimental one’.²²

This is not unlike Halvorsen’s belief that courtly sagas with styles in a medial position between the ‘real’ court style and ‘translator’s prose’ were failing to emulate Brother Robert’s style. Halvorsen and Fell may both be right. But we must be careful in using Bergr as a stylistic standard for a flourishing school of rhetorical craft. But in trying to define Bergr’s style, scholars like Hallberg have provided some of our most comprehensive descriptions of the North Icelandic Benedictine house style, and these remain invaluable to us whether they help us to discern individual authorship or not.

In this chapter, I will analyse *Mikjál’s saga*, the saga of Michael the archangel, which is attributed to Bergr. Fell notes that its assertion of Bergr’s authorship is at the end, not the beginning, and believes that the original was likely not explicitly attributed to him. The attribution is only included in the AM 657a-b 4to redaction, the only complete redaction, and not in the fragmentary 657c 4to. Fell believes that because his work was likely well-known, the attribution, though later, was nevertheless an accurate addition, but her observations leave sufficient room to question whether the work is Bergr’s.²³ The extent to which previous stylistic analyses of Bergr’s style could similarly apply to a Benedictine house style means that my analysis here will not necessarily depend on Bergr’s authorship.

²² Christine Fell, ed, *Dunstanus saga*, LXIV.

²³ Fell, ‘Sources’, 356.

6. iv. Previous Stylistic Studies

Hallberg establishes several linguistic criteria for attributing otherwise anonymous texts to Bergr Sökkason that, for our purposes, we will take as markers of the broader Northern Benedictine house style. Hallberg's arguments focus on vocabulary to a greater extent than the stylistic studies we have cited previously, which is perhaps consistent methodologically with his interest in Christian and pagan words that we saw in Chapter 5.²⁴ We will, by and large, not examine that vocabulary here. His earlier attributions of many otherwise anonymous sagas to Bergr are made largely on the basis of shared vocabulary, but also on the basis of similar syntactic patterns and uses of rhetorical flourish, so we will begin our discussion of the Benedictine style with these.²⁵

Two syntactic features are especially important to Hallberg. The first is a higher ratio of sentences that use a 'reverse word order', that is, verb-subject-object, as opposed to the more standard Germanic subject-verb-object, eg, *fór hann* instead of *hann fór*.²⁶ Where the 'usual' percentage of this word order in saga literature is between twenty and forty percent, in the Benedictine corpus, it is between fifty and seventy.²⁷ The second is the ratio of verbs in the historical present to those in the preterite. The sagas are already known for a high frequency of verbs used in the historical present, and it has commonly been suggested that

²⁴ Peter Hallberg, *Stilsignalement Och Författarskap i Norrön Sagalitteratur: Synpunkter Och Exempel*. Nordistica Gothoburgensia; 3. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968); Hallberg, 'Some Observations on the Language of *Dunstanus saga*: with an Appendix on the Bible Compilation, *Stjórn*', *Saga-Book* 18 (1970), 324-53.

²⁵ For a complete overview, see Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*'.

²⁶ Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*', 325-326.

²⁷ When reverse word order is used in the *Íslendingasögur*, it most commonly appears in independent clauses to 'add syntactic variety' to longer sentences, but seldom at the beginning of a chapter or clause. See Sigríð Valfells and James E. Cathey. *Old Icelandic: An Introductory Course* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 39-40. If its prevalence in Benedictine writings is to be considered a 'learned' affectation, grounds for it having been learned from Latin are limited. Though Latin's inflection allows its word order to be highly variable, its standard word order is, nevertheless, subject-object-verb. If any of Iceland's lost Latin literature drew from Hiberno-Latin, standard Goidelic word order, verb-subject-object, could have provided a model, but need not have.

these are used especially in instances of heightened drama.²⁸ But discounting *Dunstanus saga*, whose tense usage is largely loyal to its Latin source, the verbs in the other sagas that Hallberg analyses range between 56% (*Guðmundar saga*) and 85% (*Tómas saga*).²⁹ If other sagas use the historical present for heightened drama, it may be that the Benedictines used it with such frequency to create an unrelenting sense of immediacy in their works.

6. v. Bergr as Compiler: *Mikjál's saga*

In *Laurentius saga*, Einar uses both *setti saman* and *samansetti* to describe Bergr's work, indicating that much of that work was *compilatio*.³⁰ Bergr describes his own work with the hendiadys *skrifaðr ok samansetttr* ('written and compiled'), but primarily with *saman lesit*, and *samsetti*.³¹ But Bergr's compilatory work is distinct from the earlier academic sagas we examine in Chapter 2 in its rhetorical craft. I have chosen *Mikjál's saga* for analysis here because of its clear resemblances to hagiographic romance and because, in it, Bergr demonstrates a clear understanding of the different modes of history we discuss in Chapter 4.

In *Mikjál's saga*, Bergr draws together passages from various Old Norse-Icelandic and Latin sources, translating the latter. Many of these maintain their sources' different modes of prose style. Passages excerpted from *Duggals leiðsla* are very close to their source text; passages about Roland at the battle of Runzival are taken from *Karlamagnus saga*, the *Speculum Historiale*'s version of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and the *Chanson d'Aspremont*.³² Bergr has plainly been trained in the 'distinctive literary activity' of the

²⁸ Heather O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6-7.

²⁹ Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*', 327.

³⁰ *Bps.* I 832, 850.

³¹ Unger, C. R., ed., *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder* (Christiania: Trykt hos B.M. Bentzen, 1877), I 676/2, 677/4, 677/4, 713/6.

³² Hallberg, 'The Language of *Dunstanus saga*', 327; Christine Fell, 'Bergr Sökkason's *Mikjál's saga* and its Sources', *Saga-Book* 16 (1962-65), 365.

compiler, demonstrated by his preservation of different modes of style and his references to *auctores*. Christine Fell describes Bergr's activity this way: 'Bergr is drawing on all available sources, drawing together scattered references, and attempting to weld them into one *coherent whole*' (emphasis added).³³ Despite that similarity of *Mikjál's saga* bears to the *compilationes* we examined in Chapter 2, this effort at coherent unity represents an important development away from conventional compilatory activity, in which the compiler was responsible primarily for representing his *auctores* accurately, even if they contradicted or disagreed with one another. Bergr has embraced the influence that the compiler can wield through editorial practice and even exercised his own *inventio*, both in synthesising his sources and in recrafting their materials with his own stylistic adjustments to appeal to his audience.

6. v. a. Homiletic Storytelling

One of the first lessons to be gleaned from *Mikjál's saga's exordium* is that it was written to be performed from the pulpit: Bergr makes clear that he intends his saga for a lay audience as part of the observance of Michaelmas.

I nafni gręðara varss herra Jesu Kristi byriaz her litill bęklingr heilags Michaelis hofuðengils, til þess eina skrifaðr ok samansettr, at hann iafnlega lesiz æ messuðagh Michaelis *kirkiusoknar monnum* til skemtanar, einkanlega i þeim stöðum sem hann er kirkiudrottenn yfir, at því öllu sętari verðr hans minning i rettlatra manna hugrenning, sem firir þessa litlu ritning verðr ollum kunnari hans ágæta virðing.³⁴ [Emphasis added.]

³³ Fell, 'Sources', 357.

³⁴ C.R. Unger, ed., *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder* (Christiania: 1877), I, 676.

In the name of our creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, here begins a little booklet about St Michael the archangel which was written and compiled for this one reason, that it be regularly read on the day of Michaelmas for the entertainment of the *people of the congregation*, especially in those places over which he is church lord, that all his memory may become all the sweeter in the meditations of righteous men, as by this little text his glory and renown become better known.

Bergr intends the saga for the congregation's *skemtunar* ('amusement' or 'entertainment'), language evoking Augustine's use of *delectare* for the *sermo mixtus* and alerting us that we will see stylistic variegation in the text to come. Bergr states that he intends to be brief (*stutt*), evoking the standard rhetorical trope of the *brevitas*. A noteworthy departure from our previous categories of prose, though, is that Bergr also hopes that the saga will make Michael's memory *sætari* ('sweeter') to his listeners. This language suggests a more emotive focus than that of the academic sagas which are designed to provide greater intellectual understanding and so forego extensive emotive language, and more akin to the emotionality that we encountered above in *Pétresdrápa*. This marks a small but noteworthy stretching of religious prose into a literary sphere that was previously associated more with poetry. Just as we saw rhetorical prose used to adapt the feel of poetry in the translated *riddarasögur*, we will see here the categories of Classical rhetoric used to express the more emotional impact of narrative, moving audiences, as Augustine might have advised, in the context of the sermon.

Mikjál's saga takes an important step into romance-adjacent territory by borrowing and reshaping the rhetorical tropes of a courtly *exordium* for its prologue. Bergr demonstrates the *ad iudicium* method of gaining his audience's attention in his praise for Christ and for St Michael, his patrons, and also, in a noteworthy departure from the court romance, his

audience, the congregation.³⁵ The church, which we are given to understand is dedicated to St Michael, becomes rhetorically analogous to a court. This is decidedly unlike the academic sagas, which were designed for use in educational rather than ritual settings within religious houses and other centres of education like the cathedral school at Skálholt. *Mikjál's saga's* mixing of oratorical and historical writing is crafted for its liturgical setting.

6. v. b. *Extrahistorical Narrative*

Bergr demonstrates a keen awareness of the different modes of history and asserts the generic uniqueness of his own project:

... þessa frasaugn ma eigi birta með ættartølum iarðneskra manna sem annarra heilagra manna, eigi nofnum feðgena, eða rikdomi frænda, eigi upprunasögu mannzins eða frumvaxti tíða, þviat þvilikir hlutir allir geraz i heimi vörum; en kynferd Michaelis er eigi af dauðligum monnum helldr af eilifum guði, eigi þessarrar veralldar helldr himneskrar.³⁶

... this saga cannot be adorned with the genealogies of earthly people like other holy people, nor the names of [Church] fathers, nor ruling dynasties, neither the origins of the person nor the fulfilment of their days, because such things all happen in our world; but Michael's kin is not of mortal men, but rather of the eternal God, not of this world but of the heavenly.

³⁵ Perhaps the congregation can all be understood as patrons through tithing.

³⁶ *Hms.* I, 676.

Here, Bergr offers an overview of the historical genres in which *Mikjál's saga* ought not to be classified. The first two reflect the two primary forms of world history, salvific *historia* and the *res gesta: iarðneskra manna... heilagra manna* ('earthly men... holy men') and *nǫfnum feðgena... rikdomi frænda* ('names of the fathers... ruling dynasties'), but each mention them in the opposite order, creating a chiasm. The third, *upprunasögu mannzins... frumvaxti tíða* ('the birth of a person... the fulfilment of their days') is a merism (μερισμός), the use of two contrasting parts of a whole to refer to the whole, the whole here being a lifespan. Bergr uses this to demonstrate that his saga of Michael is not a conventional human biography.

Of course, Bergr's narrative necessarily takes place within historical time, but each appearance of angels within history is as something inherently not of history. This should be borne in mind when Fell observes that the saga says very little about Michael himself. She suggests that this, together with *Mikjál's saga's* brevity in comparison with *Nikolaus saga*, was due to Bergr's difficulty finding material that pertained specifically to the archangel.³⁷ There are moments when this feels likely. In the passage derived from *Duggals leiðsla*, there is no reason to suspect that Duggal's guardian angel is Michael and, what is more, Bergr's *skýring* for the episode – that all other angels are nothing apart from Michael – feels, at first glance, forced.³⁸ But Bergr's silence accords strongly with his statement about the angelic relationship to human history, which he has distilled from biblical parameters for describing angels.

The first of these parameters is the right relationship between worshipping God alone, in keeping with the First Commandment, and honouring angels. In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul encourages his readers to persevere in their faith and warns them against those who would distract them from it through *philosophiam et inanem fallaciam secundum*

³⁷ Fell, *Michaels saga*, 358.

³⁸ *Hms.* I, 690.

traditionem hominum secundum elementa mundi et non secundum Christum ('philosophy, empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ').³⁹ He expounds by asking that they let no one seduce them away from holding fast to Christ by *volens in humilitate et religione angelorum quae non vidit ambulans frustra inflatus sensu carnis suae* ('desiring asceticism and the worship of angels, walking with no purpose in the things he has not seen, puffed up by the sense of his flesh').⁴⁰ The cults of St Michael and other angels, then, ask the cultist to walk a challenging tightrope, asking that Michael's *minning* ('memory') *sætari verðr* ('become sweeter') without veering into a form of veneration that could risk drawing worship away from the Triune God.

The resulting balance between angelic reverence and monotheism is struck in accordance with themes drawn from biblical narrative, especially in observing angels' proximity to the holy spaces at the core of Israel's worship of God. The Ark of the Covenant, containing the two tablets on which the Ten Commandments are inscribed, has on top of it a propitiatory, or 'mercy seat'.⁴¹ When placed inside the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple, this was the seat of God's Presence, before which the priest went to atone for the sins of God's people. A golden effigy of a cherub was fixed on either side of the Mercy Seat, an image reflected later typologically when an angel sits at either side of Jesus's empty tomb.⁴² In both cases, angels are framing devices for the presence of God's mercy.⁴³ To borrow rhetorical language to describe this image, the angels create a kind of visual *inclusio*, or framing, for God's mercy. They also mark the thresholds to holy spaces. When Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden, the way back in is guarded by angels with a

³⁹ Col. 2. 8-10.

⁴⁰ Col. 2. 18-19.

⁴¹ Ex. 25.

⁴² Luke 24. 1-9.

⁴³ Or, in the case of the empty tomb, the pointed non-presence. If the tomb has become the typological heir to the Holy of Holies, then God's mercy is now no longer confined to the physical, but dwells in the living Christ. The tomb is nevertheless only a temporary typological heir to the temple, for Jesus casts himself as the *telos* of temple imagery when he tells the scribes and pharisees that should they destroy the temple, he will rebuild it in three days, referring to his resurrection (John 2. 18-20).

flaming sword.⁴⁴ This image is referenced in the angelic figures embroidered into the veil around the Holy of Holies, linking the exclusion of all Israelite worshipers apart from the high priest from God's mercy seat and the Decalogue with Adam and Eve's exclusion from Eden and from God's command not to eat of the Tree.⁴⁵ This is the curtain that is torn in two when Jesus is crucified, signifying the undoing of humankind's banishment. In each of these instances, it is important to note that angels themselves are, as Paul might have hoped, not themselves the objects of worship. They are framing devices for humankind's encounters with God. They frame both his glory and mark the borders of holy spaces.

A writer conscious of the angels' literary functions in the Bible might understandably depict angelic encounters as encounters with the borders between the earthly and the holy. Though the tradition has perhaps not provided Bergr with enough information about Michael himself, it has provided him with an understanding of that lack of information. Angels themselves seldom appear as the primary objects of intellectual interest. The most memorable case of an angel placing himself in the centre of attention rather than operating as a servant of God is Lucifer who, in doing so, becomes Satan. Michael's role in casting him out of Heaven, though less peripheral than those of the angels discussed above, is nevertheless an exercise in maintaining the borders of a holy space. The common depiction of Michael wielding a flaming sword reflects this shared role. This lends visual strength to the typological link between sword-wielding angels driving Adam and Eve, recently deceived by the serpent, from the Garden, and Michael driving Satan, in the form of a dragon, out of heaven. In this analogy, humankind, through Adam and Eve, are bound together with the serpent. By entering into a church building dedicated to Michael, the Christian enters into a church marked both by it being a space from which Michael keeps the devil and evil, but also a

⁴⁴ Gen. 3. 24.

⁴⁵ Ex. 26. 31-35.

space representative of the undoing of Adam and Eve's association with that evil. The celebration of Michaelmas, then, is a celebration of this framing, and so the *exempla* in *Mikjál's saga* are explorations of that framing, literary exercises in what today's scholars call liminality. Bergr's use of style, as we shall see shortly, reflects this. Though he describes his content as being outside of history, nevertheless, each of his *exempla* is drawn from history. Each describes an event when those within history are drawn closer to its borders and exemplifies angels' extra-historical nature.

The second parameter of angelic depiction in the Bible lies in their strangeness. This is captured forcefully in depictions of six-winged seraphim, four-headed *animalia* ('living creatures'), and blazing wheels covered in eyes.⁴⁶ When they appear in the Bible, they often greet mortals with, *ne timeas* ('do not be afraid').⁴⁷ But it is especially apparent in their paradoxical ability to be mistaken for mortal persons on the one hand and to their overwhelming otherworldliness when, instead, mortals are confronted fully with the atemporal intruding into the temporal. The clearest statement on angels being mistaken for people is in the Book of Hebrews (attributed to Paul during this period), in which the author asks his readers to continue to show love for one another and to show hospitality to strangers, for *per hanc enim latuerunt quidam angelis hospitio receptis* ('by this, though they may be unaware, some have received angels in their hospitality').⁴⁸ In narrative, when Lot offers hospitality to two angels in Sodom, the people of Sodom call them *viri* ('men'), and, what is more, the narrator soon emphasises and lends credibility to their misidentification by also describing the angels as men.⁴⁹ The paradox between the angelic ability to be either unnoticed or dumbfounding in their unknowability is captured in the differences between the

⁴⁶ Ezekiel 1.

⁴⁷ E.g., Mary *turbata est* ('was troubled') when Gabriel comes to her, and he responds with *ne timeas* ('do not be afraid'). Luke 1. 26-33.

⁴⁸ Heb. 13.2.

⁴⁹ Gen. 19. 1-22.

Gospels' accounts of Jesus's resurrection. In Mark, Mary, mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene simply see a man dressed in white.⁵⁰ In Matthew, the angel who rolls back the stone from Jesus's tomb is accompanied by an earthquake:

*erat autem aspectus eius sicut fulgur et vestimentum eius sicut nix. prae timore autem eius exterriti sunt custodes et facti sunt velut mortui. respondens autem angelus dixit mulieribus nolite timere ...*⁵¹

Moreover, his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him, the guards were terrified and became like dead men. But the angel, responding, said to the women, 'Do not be afraid...'

Bergr has shaped his relative lack of information on Michael and the angels in such a way that reflects the tradition's depiction of angelic encounters as liminal, uncanny, and inherently drawing our attention not toward the angels themselves, but to God. Chapters three through thirteen are made of up *exempla* that each demonstrate the otherworldly and extra-historical nature of angels as they enter temporal history. They are prefaced by two chapters that give an account of Creation that focuses especially on the angels, the turning of Lucifer and his demons and their resultant war against angelic forces led by Michael. The explanatory force of this section's academic style allows the audience to approach the

⁵⁰ Mark 16. 1-8. Note that despite his human appearance, the angel says, *ne timeas* 'do not be afraid', seemingly a standard angelic greeting. Note, too, that the women are afraid anyway, suggesting that the angel's human form does not necessarily alleviate the uncanniness of an angelic encounter. It is noteworthy in the history of Christian engagement with this kind of angelic encounter that in the *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice explains to Dante that the angels, like Michael and Gabriel, are permitted to be depicted in human form to accommodate the limitations of the human imagination. *Paradiso* IV. 47.

⁵¹ Matt. 28. 1-10.

exempla of the unknowable with some foothold of knowledge handed down from the *auctores*.

6. v. c. *Exempla*

The account of Creation ends with this introduction to the following section: *Hvar oss syniz vel fallit at setia eina dæmisögu af* ('Here it seemed suitable to us to set down an *exemplum*').⁵² We know the word *dæmisaga* from *Barlaams saga*: Bergr is telling us that what is to come is an *exemplum*. The first thirteen chapters of the saga are a sort of anthology of *exempla*, each concerning angelic intrusions into temporal history, especially clashes of angelic and demonic forces and the corresponding antithesis of Heaven and Hell. As they do in the *riddarsögur* and the courtly hagiographies, the *exempla* provide Bergr with a clear structural context in which to use rhetorical language for narration. Though Bergr has toyed with these rhetorical and stylistic structures, the fact that he has maintained them shows that he is very consciously engaging with them in his own stylistic *inventio* in an active engagement with the rhetorical tradition.

The first *dæmisaga* is the story of the Ethiopian ascetic, Abba Moyses, and Isidore, the saint with whom he shares a *kofi* ('cell') for a time in Egypt and who helps him to overcome his *saurlifi* ('unclean life').⁵³ Christine Fell says that text is translated from Jerome's *Vitae Patrum*, but loosely.⁵⁴ She sees no reason to imagine that Bergr consulted the Old Norwegian translation, *Heilagra feðra æfi*, and observes, too, that anything that Jerome left implicit, Bergr chooses to make explicit.⁵⁵ Perhaps this is because Bergr was not only translating the episode but adapting it into an *exemplum*.

The narrative begins in a simple, unadorned style:

⁵² *Hms.* I, 679.

⁵³ *Hms.* I, 279-280.

⁵⁴ Fell, 'Michaels saga', 361.

⁵⁵ For Jerome's Latin, see Le Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 73, 743-744.

Tveir heilagr feðr meðr abota nafnum bygðu i Egiptalandz eyðimorkum, annarr Moises en annar Ysodorus aboti.⁵⁶

Two holy fathers named abbot lived in Egypt's desert, one [called] Moyses and one [called] Isidore Abbot.

Moyses fears leaving Isidore lest he succumb to temptations. To help him understand the spiritual battle that rages in him, Isidore leads Moyses to the north window of his home:

Ok er Moyses gerir sva, litr hann i loptina daligan dioflaflokk akafliga til bardaga buna með æði ok reiði allt at hræra ok rifa ok særa, þat er firir vārð.⁵⁷

And when Moyses does this, he sees in the air a wretched devil-flock fiercely arrayed for battle with frenzy and anger, to stir and tear and hurt all that came before them.

The devils, creatures from eternity, burst into historical time, interrupting the historical style of the narrative of Isidore and Moyses with the intrusion of heightened rhetorical language, in this case, blurring the distinction between rhetorical prose and poetry. Three alliterative couplets, *litr* and *loptina*, *daligan dioflaflokk*, and *bardaga buna*, are followed by an alliterative triplet, *reiði*, *hræra*, and *rifa*. The first two couplets are each made up rhythmically of two dactyls, and the third of a dactyl and a trochee, which together make one hexameter line.⁵⁸ That the rhythm is interrupted by *akafliga til* adds to the feeling of the

⁵⁶ *Hms.* I, 679.

⁵⁷ *Hms.* I, 679.

⁵⁸ The final foot of a hexameter line is disyllabic, made up of one syllable that is stressed and one that can be either stressed or unstressed, and called an *anceps*. It can therefore be either a spondee (two stressed syllables)

devils' destructive character, emphasised further when the trochee (*buna*) gives way not to another hexameter line, but to the hendiadys *æði ok reiði*, featuring homeoteleuton and half-rhyme. This is linked by alliteration to the following tricolon of infinitive verbs, *hræra ok rifa ok særa*, which themselves make up a half-line of hexameter: two dactyls and a trochee. These three verbs follow their object, *allt*, a word order that is common in Latin but not standard in Germanic languages, and here is likely is an example of *dislocutio*. Only the first two of the three verbs alliterate and, what is more, they alliterate with the second word of the preceding hendiadys, *reiði*, which creates an alliterative chain that is broken by *særa*, conveying destruction both in its meaning and in its actual destruction of the alliterative pattern. Nevertheless, *særa* rhymes with *hræra*, and that rhyming pattern skips the middle verb, *rifa*. All of this contributes to the scene's disjointedness, in which broken rhythms misaligned with alliteration and rhyme create a cacophony matching the chaos of the gathering demonic hoard. That cacophony gives way to a final relative clause, *þat er fyrir varð*, distantly removed from its antecedent, *allt*, and similarly containing Latin verb placement at the end of the clause, another instance of *dislocutio*.

This sudden rise from low style prose to high style through verse to mark a dramatic encounter has no precedent in Jerome's Latin, but it is not unheard of in other Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular writings. The Battle of the Goths and the Huns in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* also uses high style to express heightened tensions as it depicts a clash of armies, moving from prose narrative to narrative in Eddaic verse.⁵⁹ The often-observed indistinction between prose and verse in some branches of the Classical tradition provides another perspective for contextualising this line, especially its brevity and metrical brokenness. It does not traditionally occur in hagiography in the *sermo humilis*, but its occurrence in an

or a trochee (one stressed, one unstressed). The Germanic preference for word-initial stress make a spondee unlikely.

⁵⁹ Gabriel Turville-Petre and Christopher Tolkien, eds, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1976), 51-67.

exemplum, again, provides Bergr with the rhetorical structure needed for using high style. I am currently unaware of other examples of hexameter verse in Icelandic before the Modern period, in prose or in verse.⁶⁰ As far as I can tell, none of *Mikjál's saga's* other *exempla* make use of this metre. Since we know that Bishop Laurentius was a hexameter enthusiast, Bergr's use of it here may not be entirely surprising. One wonders, though, who in his audience might have been learned enough in Latin to have appreciated it.

Latin hexameter formed a common enough part of standard medieval curriculum that a clear tie to any one poetic text is difficult to assert with confidence. But the apparent love of Ovid that Laurentius had to fight against [as we saw in Chapter 3] invites further speculation as to how the reception of hexameter in Iceland may have informed the audience's response to the hexameter description of the devils. Many of the stories in the *Metamorphoses* concern the interactions between the mortal and immortal and, in especially salient moments, the otherworldly strangeness of interactions with the immortal. Important, too, is that Laurentius's criticism of Ovid's works was their sexual explicitness, and it is implied that what Abba Moyses struggles with is the temptation of lust. When he first goes to Isidore for help, and before Isidore reveals the spiritual battle to him in the sky, Moyses says that he struggles with *fystum ok saurlifis*.⁶¹ According to the Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionary, *fýst* can, but does not necessarily, mean 'lust'. *Saurlifi* means, literally, 'unclean life', but the Cleasby-Vigfusson also gives it the connotation of 'fornication'. Moyses also struggles against a *saurlifis anda*, 'spirit of fornication'. Though it is far from clear, it may be the case that having the devils who tempt Moyses emerge visibly in broken hexameter reflects the temptation that Laurentius, and perhaps other Benedictines, associate with the great

⁶⁰ See Stefán Einarsson, 'Hexameter in Icelandic Literature', *Modern Language Notes* 68 (1953): 351–54.

⁶¹ *Hms.* I, 679

hexameter writers. The broken metre and cacophonous sounds form a grotesque parody of that art form and draw attention to the discordant evil of the spirits who work through it.

This is Isidore and Moyses' view from the north window. Medieval European tradition associated the North with Lucifer's realms, and this has echoes in vernacular traditions.⁶² In Old Norse-Icelandic mythological literature, North is the traditional direction from which comes evil or chaos: *Jötunheimr* lies to the mythological north.⁶³ It is perhaps noteworthy that Bergr has changed this; the *Vitae Patrum* has this as Isidore's and Moyses's view to the West, not the North. A lost manuscript variation is not impossible. But the Benedictine project of incorporating Iceland into salvific *historia* and its learned geography may quietly be fuelling the change. To most of Europe, Iceland lay to the uttermost West, *Thule ultima*, the opposite direction of *ad orientem*, the traditional direction of Christian prayer. Bergr's decision likely reflects this broader effort to disassociate Iceland and the West from negative connotations. No mention is made of *auctores*, though.⁶⁴ Here, Bergr reinvents. It is worth observing that, in contrast, the Old Norwegian translation of the *Vitae Patrum* retains Jerome's western location for the devils.⁶⁵

The next view that Isidore shows to Moyses is the view from the east window, *ad orientem*:

Moyses litr þa otaululiga flokka ok fylkingar heilagra engla skinandi ifir solar geisla.

Var þesse herferð himneskra krapta sva veglig, *at eigi mæ orðum skyra*, ok eptir þetta talar Ysodorus til Moysen...⁶⁶ [Emphasis added.]

⁶² Fell, 'Michaels saga', 361.

⁶³ See, e.g., Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1982), 7.

⁶⁴ Fell observes that *Mikjál's saga* makes fewer explicit mentions of its *auctores* than *Nikulaus saga* (Fell, 'Sources', 357). It could be that Bergr felt that narratorial asides slowed his presentation. This would mark an interesting devolution of compilatory practice when the roles of compiler and preacher are hybridised.

⁶⁵ 'Littu i vestrid ok siaz um,' ('"Look into the west and see"'). *Hms.* II, 499.

⁶⁶ *Hms.* I, 680.

Moyses sees that unspeakable flock and ranks of holy angles shining above the sun's rays. This clash of the heavenly powers was so magnificent *that words cannot explain it*. And after that, Isidore said to Moyses...⁶⁷

The angels are described with the hendiadys, *ótaululiga flokka* and *fylkingar heilagra engla*. It is important, too, that hexameter, though it is among the greatest literary art forms, is still lesser than the angels who, in contrast, are *sva veglig, at eigi mæ orðum skýra* ('so glorious that they might not be described with words').⁶⁸

Bergr's assertion that the angels defy verbal description is also a reassertion that his subject matter is not the stuff of temporal history easily grasped by human understanding.⁶⁹ This is his own addition to Jerome's text, but it works together well with his loyalty to Jerome in making Isidore's explanation of the battle an act of *ex tempore commentaria* rather than a narratorial *skýring*, blending his compilatory role with his storytelling role. His use of *skýra* is a nod to the established format of a *dæmisaga*. We saw in our discussion of *Barlaams saga* [in Chapter 4] that a *dæmisaga* contains both a narrative *exemplum* and a *skýring*. By first asserting that to *skýra* is not possible, then promptly presenting a *skýring* in Isidore's reported speech, Bergr is playfully engaging with the established structure of the

⁶⁷ The angels are described as *ifir* the sun. I have translated this literally as 'above', which is consistent with Jerome's use of *super lumen solis*. The translator of the Old Norwegian *Vitae Patrum*, who normally follows the Latin more strictly, has taken this to mean *solu biartari* ('brighter than the sun')(Hms. II, 499). In the medieval conception of the Seven Heavens, the sphere above that of the sun is that of Mars, ruled over by the angelic beings called 'virtues', part of the second angelic hierarchy. Though neither the Old Norwegian *Vitae Patrum* nor *Mikjál's saga* retain it, Jerome tells us that the angelic host is indeed the *caelestium virtutum exercitum* ('the army of the heavenly virtues').(Le Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 73, 743-744). Though Bergr has not retained this identification, if he is normally freer in his translation than the Norwegian translator of the *Vitae Patrum*, it is probable that he chose *ifir* understanding Jerome's *super*, rightly, as a marker of higher heavenly location rather than superior brightness. Perhaps he has not retained explanatory comment because it would not suit his rhetorical purposes to wade into the academic style at this point. The devils, traditionally, occupy the sublunary sphere. Michael and the archangels are associated with the sphere of Mercury, so Fell may be correct that Bergr was working from a lack of information. But if Michael's feast day was in the Fourteenth Century as it is now, the feast of Michael and All Angels, then this material may still be relevant to Michael liturgically.

⁶⁸ Hms. I, 680.

⁶⁹ Hms. I, 680.

dæmisaga. He avoids offering a *skýring* himself in narration, maintaining a compiler's distance from asserting his own *auctoritas*, yet using the structural language of the *dæmisaga* to alert his audience that Isidore is an *auctor* in a way that requires neither a formulaic citation (e.g., *svá segir Ysidorus*) or shift in narratorial style. This will change as Bergr proceeds through other *exempla*, in which the *skýring* following an angelic encounter may be through a character's speech, may be through his narration, or may use a character's speech as an introduction to further explanation from Bergr. But this passage establishes the pattern of having an angelic vision in some mode of elevated speech – or an event elevated beyond what speech can convey – with an explanation in the academic style.

After Isidore's *skýring*, Moyses returns home strengthened and encouraged in the renewed knowledge of Christ that he has gained from the vision. This is when Isidore's *skýring* gives way to Bergr's own, an explanatory epilogue in the academic style in which he asserts that these are the angelic forces that Christ uses to strengthen his people and inviting his audience to hear how he does this with more *liosri dæmisoghu* ('clear *exempla*').

Through its stylistic shifts, the angelic battle provides perhaps the clearest *exempla* of Bergr's claim that the angels are something from outside of human history and understanding, laying an important stylistic foundation for the coming catalogue of *exempla* and, after them, the histories of Michael's shrines. The following *exempla* demonstrate some variety in their style. In the passages that he has compiled from *Duggals leiðsla* and *Karlamagnus saga*, Bergr retains the rhetorical narration that we observed in other courtly works. But as a creative compiler, he has woven their styles into his work with some coherence, framing them as *dæmisögur* so that they and their high styles serve to exemplify his depiction of angelic interaction in the world as something passing our normal understanding of history.

6. v. d. Monte Saint'Angelo

At the end of his final *exemplum*, the story of Roland's death at the Battle of Runzival from *Karlamagnus saga*, Bergr indicates that he now means to move out of the structure of the *exemplum* and into *historia*:

En æ hvern haett til kom i fyrstu dyrkanligt hatiðarhalld hins sælazsta Mikhaelis, eptir þvi efni sem skrifat finnz i latinu mali, er byrianda þessu næst i guðs nafni.⁷⁰

And the manner in which the glorious veneration of the most blessed Michael first came about, according to the material found written in the Latin language, will now begin in God's name.

So begins a history of Michael's shrine at Mount Gargano. Through the succession of *dæmisögur* preceding it, Bergr quietly establishes several important principles for understanding his rhetorical narration that will now carry through into his history. Though angels defy historical categories, when they enter into *historia*, historical style is insufficient for containing them, and when mortals enter the realm of angels, they are thrown into an otherworld of rhetorical narration. Where the angels strengthen God's people, those people are raised up out of historical style and into rhetorical, made *exempla* for Bergr's audience. So begins the history of Michael's shrine at Mount Gargano.

The initial temple site is built by Michael himself. Much as he categorises angelic history in antithesis to modes of temporal history, Bergr describes Mount Gargano, a *ffalls-hvirfill* ('mountain whirl', or 'rock spiral', a likely distinctive shape of mountain top), in a

⁷⁰ *Hms.* I, 693.

series of antitheses against his audiences' preconceived notions of how beautiful spaces of worship ought to look:

Þetta musteri er eigi prýtt eða pentað, telgt eða tiiglsett, helldr er þat skrytt engiligri
 aast ok alvoru, fataekt i formi en hardla rikt i himneskum krapti.⁷¹

That temple is neither ornamented nor painted, carven nor tile-set, rather it boasts
 angelic love and truth, impoverished in form but greatly rich in heavenly might.

Bergr uses alliterative couplets of past participles, *prýtt eða pentað*, *telgt eða tiiglsett*, to describe church aesthetics of mortal design before shifting to a couplet of alliterative nouns, *aast ok alvoru*, to describe not the aesthetic but the substance of Michael's handiwork. The shift from participles (ornamented, painted, carven, set with tiles) to nouns (love and truth), conveys the shift from a church that is acted upon by mortal craftsmen to a church that is itself a wellspring of theological virtues. Bergr continues the theme of contrast between physical appearance and spiritual reality when he says that Mount Gargano is *fataekt i formi* ('impoverished in form') but *hardla rikt i himneskum krapti* ('greatly rich in heavenly might'); both descriptions have an adjective postmodified by a prepositional phrase beginning with *i* ('in'), creating a syntactic parallel. Here, the alliteration of *fataekt* and *formi*, adjacent to each other in syndetic parataxis, resembles the alliteration of the couplets that describe the aesthetic of mortal-built churches. But *rikt* and *krapti*, describing the contrasting spiritual reality of the mount, rely on their modifiers, *hardla* and *himneskum* for their alliterative link. Redirecting this small component of verbal ornament away from the words conveying spiritual substance in a clause designed to contrast that substance to the mount's

⁷¹ *Hms.* I, 693.

appearance serves Bergr's theme well: their significance is inherent in their meaning but drawn out by rhetorical craft. Bergr uses this sequence of antitheses and alliterative patterns, a cultivated *sermo sublimis*, to draw his audience's attention to the sublime hiding in what appears to be mundane. This pairing of high style with seemingly mundane subject shows a use of paradox at once opposite in practice but similar in effect to Auerbach's description of the *sermo humilis*. Bergr uses rhetorical language to convey that Mount Gargano, though a geographical point in the historical world, is a touchpoint between the extratemporal and the temporal, no doubt a part of its draw for pilgrims looking to experience the eternal.

Bergr continues:

Þetta hið mæta musteri smiðaði Michael i einum fiállzhvirfli eigi með uppreistum veggium eða hári þekiu, helldr er þat sem einn hellir klappaðr i biarginu, ok því er nu sva vordit, at Michael ann meira hiartans musteri en hafu steinsmiði, mæira sanri goðfysi en skygðum pilęrum eða vænum glergluggum.⁷²

That excellent temple Michael built in a single rock-whirl, not with upraised walls or high roof, rather as a cave chiseled into the rock, and that is why it has now happened that Michael loves more the temple of the heart than the altar made from stone, more true goodness than polished pillars or fair glass windows.

This excerpt begins with what Hallberg might call 'reverse word order', that is, with the subject, *Michael*, following its verb, *smiðaði*. But it inverts standard Germanic word order beyond this by beginning with the verb's object, *þetta hið mæta musteri*, creating a *dislocutio* that continues to draw the audience's attention to Mount Gargano. Bergr continues to contrast

⁷² *Hms.* I, 693.

the natural mountain shrine to his audience's expectations of a highly ornamented church building (polished windows, smooth pillars) before using that contrast to create an analogy between the mount and the godly human heart. This analogy will inform the rest of the history that he narrates. In his concluding remarks to the saga, Bergr says:

Mikhael þyðiz hverr sem guð, þviat sva opt sem nokkut geriz i dasamligum krauptum með kristninni, er þar tilsendr Mikhael af guði, at bædi megi vel skilia af nafni ok verki, at þat er guð aflar ma engi iafnb(i)oða.⁷³

Mikhael means anyone who is like God, because so often as one does something in glorious strength with Christianity, Michael is sent there by God, so that it might well be understood by name and work, that what God does, no one can equal.

Though Mount Gargano is majestic and is an important site where the temporal and eternal meet, it is, ultimately, an *exemplum* for the human heart, which is the true *locus* of worship. All of the heroes of Mount Gargano who demonstrate this are to be understood through this lens. They, like the audience who heed Bergr's teachings and who cultivate *sanri goðfysi*, are themselves in two worlds, in *historia* and eternity. Bergr tells us that Michael is sent by God to show that all those who perform works *i dasamligum krauptum* ('in glorious strength') have been assisted by Michael, showing us that all of the feats he describes in high style as *res gestae* are performed by the grace of God.

⁷³ *Hms.* I, 711.

6. v. e. *The Discovery of the Shrine*

After this rhetorical expression of the creation of Michael's *ffalls-hvirfill*, Bergr begins his story of the human construction of the shrine at Mount Gargano in a style that is more recognisable as mortal *historia*: *Sepontum heitir borg* ('there was a city called Sepontum'), a formulaic introduction in the low style.⁷⁴ This introductory portion of the narrative concerns one of Garganus's bulls who is lost. One of his servants finds it and, in frustration, means to shoot it with an arrow, but the arrow glances off the bull. The townsfolk are surprised and ask Bishop Sepontum what it means, and he orders a three-day fast in order to ascertain the answer.

Though not all his sentences show the refined simplicity of the *sermo humilis* as in, e.g., *PSP I*, Bergr's style here nevertheless avoids most of the tropes and figures of rhetorical language as he details the series of events that lead to the shrine's construction. This contrasts neatly with the rhetorical language he used to describe the miraculous *ffalls-hvirvill*. Seemingly mundane *historia* is taking place on a stage that, unknown to its inhabitants but known to the audience, is a miraculous setting.

Before miracles begin and Michael appears, though, there is one subdued use of rhetorical language, and that is in Bergr's description of the riches of the wealthy man, Garganus, after whom the mountain is named. Bergr gives a catalogue of his belongings in hendiadyses, *hann atti marga hiorð, naut ok sauði, svin ok yxn, gømul ok yngri* ('he owned many herds: cattle and sheep, swine and oxen, old and young'), the last of which is a merism.⁷⁵ This catalogue has pronounced rhetorical effect in demonstrating Garganus's wealth, tying back nicely to the antitheses between wealthy church buildings and the aesthetic simplicity of the holy *ffalls-hvirfill* and alerting the audience that a contrast is coming. The

⁷⁴ *Hms.* I, 693.

⁷⁵ *Hms.* I, 695.

sustained simplicity of Bergr's style when Garganus's bull is uninjured matches the visual simplicity of the *ffalls-hvirfill*. The catalogue's lack of alliteration may have helped prevent it from standing out as too pronouncedly rhetorical in the vernacular and allowed Bergr the benefit of rhetorical effect without sacrificing too much of his historical aesthetic.

Rhetorical structure, if not language, increases when the Sepontans ask their bishop the meaning of the miracle of the bull at the cave. The bishop then seeks to learn *hvat þetta allt saman hefir at þýða* ('what that all together might signify').⁷⁶ We will recognise that *þýða*, like *skýra*, is one of the terms for explaining that Haugen identified in the structure of an *exemplum*.⁷⁷ Bergr is once again subtly weaving vestigial forms of the *exemplum* into his *historia* by having one of his characters request a *þýðing*. This is then followed by the first reported speech in the story of Mount Gargano, when the bishop calls the Sepontans to three days of fasting and holding prayers. Michael does soon come in response to this, exemplifying what Bergr says in his conclusion, that ... *sva opt sem nokkut geriz i dasamligum krauptum með kristninni, er þar tilsendr Mikhael af guði...*⁷⁸

On the third night of the vigil, Michael appears to the bishop in a vision, one of the characteristic means of seeing an angel.⁷⁹ Michael comes to the bishop, *birtiz i syn gofugligr herra með himneskri birti andlitzins ok liomandi fegrd klæðanna* ('shining in a glorious vision, a lord with heavenly brightness of face and clad in shining beauty').⁸⁰ This introduction, though not as ornate in its description as the heavenly battle that Moyses observes or Duggal's vision, nevertheless presents Michael as otherworldly, and is followed the angel's *þýðing*. Michael addresses the bishop *talandi til hans sem her ma heyra* ('speaking to him as might now be heard').⁸¹ One might argue that using both *talandi* and

⁷⁶ *Hms.* I, 694.

⁷⁷ Haugen, 'Exempla', 232-234.

⁷⁸ *Hms.* I, 711.

⁷⁹ *Hms.* I, 694.

⁸⁰ *Hms.* I, 694.

⁸¹ *Hms.* I, 694.

heyra is repetitive and verbose. But in emphasising both Michael's act of speech to the bishop and the audience's understanding, Bergr is highlighting Michael's coming explanatory power. He is also probably referencing Augustine's *sic dic ut audiam* ('so speak that I might hear').⁸²

Michael's speech is more explanatory, more academic, than rhetorical, *þviat eigi ma iarðnesku hugskoti liost verða þat stormerki* ('because no earthly thought process would be able to illuminate that great wonder').⁸³ Much as Gabriel appears to explain the coming of Christ, God incarnate in mortal flesh, to Mary and Joseph, so Michael, in the bishop's dream, appears to explain the potency of Mount Gargano, another touchpoint between the eternal and temporal. Michael's explanation for the miracle is this:

vitið æn ifa, at þetta er gort með minum vilia, þviat (ek) Mikhael hqfuðengill, er iafnan stendr i augliti guð(s), hefir skipat, at sa staðr i fiallinu skal vera hreinn ok heilagr, frials af allri sorgan ok bloðsuthelling, mer til dyrkanar valdr æ iarðriki; villda ek syna með þesso takni, at ek er ver(n)dari staðar þess ok ælitari allra goðra hluta, þeira (er) þar gerazt með rettri tru ok goðfysi.⁸⁴

... know without a doubt that that has been done with my will, because I, the archangel Michael, who stand ever within the eyesight of God, have arranged that that place upon the mountain shall be clean and holy, free from all sorrow and bloodshed, chosen for my adoration upon the earth; I wished to show with this token that I am defender of this place and the seer of all good things, of those which are done with true faith and goodness.

⁸² Aug. *Conf.* I. IV.

⁸³ *Hms.* I, 695-696.

⁸⁴ *Hms.* I, 695-696.

This contains the explanation that Michael lay behind the miracle with the bull and a reassertion of Bergr's claim that Michael lies behind those deeds done in faith, but also introduces the theological idea that Michael stands forever in God's eyesight, which Bergr decides requires further explanation. How, he asks, can Michael be both in God's eyesight and present at Sepontum speaking to the bishop? *En þessi spurning verður auðvelliga leyst* ('But this question can be answered easily').⁸⁵ Bergr begins this short *commentaria* with a rhetorical flare.⁸⁶ He then proceeds to explain that angels do not share God's properties like omnipresence, and does so with rhetorical *repetitio* to help his audiences remember:

ok þo at þeir se eigi *i öllum stöðum*, þa er hann þo þeim nalægr *i öllum stöðum*, ok því mega (þeir) hvergi fara fra hans augliti.⁸⁷ [Emphasis added.]

('and although they are not in all places, yet he is near to them in all places, and they might therefore never venture far from his eyesight').

Ensuring that his audience does not attribute God's properties, aspects of what make him worthy of worship, to angels is consistent with Paul's admonishment to avoid the worship of angels.⁸⁸ But in asserting that angels are before the face of God wherever they go, Bergr's *þýðing* adds theological depth to his description of the mountain's spiritual potency, for Michael's favour is shown to be a conduit to God's own presence. After the bishop's vision, the Sepontans journey up the mountain and find a natural grotto with doors facing North and South. They worship there but are not yet permitted inside the space.

⁸⁵ *Hms.* I, 695-696.

⁸⁶ *Hms.* I 695-696.

⁸⁷ *Hms.* I, 695-696.

⁸⁸ Col. 2. 18-19.

6. v. f. *The War with the Neapolitans*

The arrival of the Neapolitan army prompts the bishop of Sepontum to call for another three-day fast, and this behaviour of devotion is contrasted with the Neapolitans, who spend that time *i leikum storum ok þjonostum guða sinna* ('in great games and services to their gods').⁸⁹ The contrast between the Sepontans' devotion to God through Michael and the Neapolitans' devotion to their gods evokes Bergr's previous battle-themed *exempla*. The battle preparations of mortal Christian and pagan forces evokes the battle between the Franks at Saracens at Runzival, in which we learned that Michael enabled Roland's victory, and the battle, too between the angels and demons, for here the Neapolitans' gods are almost certainly the latter through the *interpretatio Christiana*.

Sem her er komit, at hvarirtveggio eru bunir til atgongu, sia kristnir menn, at þoka mikil liðr niðr ifer hæsta hlut fiáll(z)inzs Gargani, her med heyra þeir gnyreidir miklar, þvilikt sem pipri fiállit allt, en ut af þokunni fylgia elldingar sem orfar gloandi fram i flokk Neapolitarum, sva at engi hlif ma við standa.⁹⁰

As it happened that each of the two sides were prepared for the clash, the Christian men see that a great fog moves down over the highest part of the Mountain of Gargano, and with this they hear a great riding of wind (i.e., thunder), as if the whole mountain quivers. And out of the fog follows lightning like glowing arrows into the Neapolitan flock, so that no protection could withstand [them].

⁸⁹ *Hms.* I 695-696.

⁹⁰ *Hms.* I, 698-699.

Either an explanatory account, a description followed by Bergr's qualification that the event cannot adequately be described by words, or a surreal, otherworldly account using high style may have fit the context of a true *exemplum*. Here, in *historia*, Bergr gives his audience a description of the natural miracle instead, qualifying it only with the simile, *þvilikt sem pipri fiallit allt* ('as if the whole mountain quivers'). But in keeping with his vestigial *exemplum* structure, Bergr does offer a *skýring*:

Fylldiz vel aa þeim degi spasaga Davids, er hann tok sva til ordz at lofa guð: *Qui facit angelos suos spiritus et ministros suos flammam ignis.*⁹¹

Fulfilled well upon that day was David's prophecy that he began to speak to praise God: [now in Latin:] *Who makes your angels winds and your ministers a flame of fire?*

This quotation accomplishes several things. First, it provides an explanation to the audience that angelic power is at work. In choosing an explanatory quotation from a biblical *auctor*, it provides that *skýring* with an especially significant degree of authority and elevates this event not only to the otherworldly but into the category of prophecy fulfilment. By referencing the methodology of biblical exegesis, Bergr creates a much stronger link here to the primary narratives of salvific *historia* than he has done in his *exempla*, reinforcing Mount Gargano's importance as a touchpoint between the deeper parts of the *historia* his audience inhabits and angelic extra-temporality. In citing a psalm, he has also woven in not just high style, but poetry. Though Jerome did not make the Vulgate's psalms metrical, they were widely known to be poems, and David, whom Bergr cites here, was known to be a poet. What is more, they

⁹¹ *Hms.* I, 698-699, quoting Psalm 103 (104 in the AV) in the Vulgate. This psalm is also quoted in Hebrews 1.7.

are canonical praise poems, and by explicitly stating that David *tok sva til ordz at lofa guð* ('took to words/began to speak to praise God'), Bergr not only lifts his explanation into poetry but draws his audience into praise poetry that would be familiar to them from the daily office. Here, the account of Michael's miracle draws the audience into the experience of praise through high style much as the *vita* of St John draws the reader toward the praise language of its concluding *drápur*, as we saw in Chapter 3. This moment is the stylistic climax of the story. High style is not sustained as the Neapolitans flee or are destroyed, but after the Sepontans send envoy to the Pope to ask that he consecrate Mount Gargano, it is little surprise that Michael makes his third and final appearance to the Sepontan bishop to tell him that this is unnecessary, because he has already consecrated the mountain shrine.

6. vi. Conclusion

Even if the scarcity of materials was the external cause for so few mentions of Michael, there is nevertheless an internal cohesion in Bergr's presentation of those materials. Bergr has used a succession of *exempla* to demonstrate the Christian tradition's uncanny categorisation of angels as incomprehensible to build his audience's understanding of their miraculous nature before narrating to them the history of a unique intersection between angelic eternity and temporal history at Mount Gargano. By speaking of the importance of knowing this history at any church consecrated to St Michael, Bergr tacitly invites his audiences to view any such church – possibly the one in which they are worshipping – as another such space, a point of contact between the historical and extra-historical.

Widding once identified a refined rhetorical craft as the thing that separated the florid style from other modes of learned style. In this chapter, we have seen the rhetorical structures that characterised the courtly sagas at work in hagiographical saga: the *exemplum* and the oratorical framing. We have even seen Bergr play with the fluid boundary between rhetorical

prose and verse as he includes a carefully chosen bit of prosimetrum. These rhetorical tools permit Bergr to turn what is otherwise a work of *historia* (whatever his objections) into a canvas for stylistic *inventio*, designed to move his audiences to the veneration of a saint by raising both their intellectual understanding of Michael and the angels and moving them emotionally. Bergr's florid style cannot be dismissed as verbosity, but rather demonstrates a mastery of the various forms of style that we have examined throughout this thesis.

Conclusion

This thesis reframes the discussion of Old Norse-Icelandic prose style in two important ways. First, it brings existing scholarly discourse on Old Norse-Icelandic prose stylistics into fuller conversation with the intellectual history of a long educational tradition, one that connects medieval Icelandic and Norwegian writers both with their contemporaries on the continent and with their predecessors in Classical Greece and Rome. This allows us to move away from seeing stylistic simplicity and complexity as expressions of nativity and learnedness and to see the depth of learning that undergirds a variety of styles that we can then divide into a more precise taxonomy, including low, high, florid, academic, and courtly. Secondly, it broadens past discussion of prose styles beyond simply identifying and categorising texts according to style to discuss, too, the importance of variegation between styles within a single text. This allows us to move beyond past uses of style as a means of dating a text or asserting that it had foreign influence and instead to appreciate style and its variegation as key aspects of the translator, compiler, or author's literary craft.

In the foregoing chapters, I have delineated the different modes of prose style in Old Norse-Icelandic religious narrative and sketched their relationships to different modes of historical conceptualisation by discussing the intellectual history of style and the study of history within the Christianised Liberal Arts tradition. Chapter One offered an overview of the Christian reception of the Classical distinction between the *sermo humilis* and the *sermo sublimis* and their resemblance to past scholarly efforts to define the learned style and the popular style. We saw instead that the earliest Old Norse-Icelandic prose preferred the *sermo humilis* for narration and the *sermo sublimis* for oratory, establishing stylistic variegation as one of the key interests of this thesis. Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Six all examined different forms of stylistic variegation. Chapter Two examined the interplay between narrative in the *sermo humilis* and commentary in the academic style. Chapter Three focused

especially on one element of style, hendiadys, to illustrate the careful Old Norse-Icelandic study and imitation of biblical style and the relationship between style and biblical exegesis. Chapter Four examines the differences between prose and verse, arguing that narrative in verse offers its audience an emotional insight into narrative not afforded by the traditional levels of exegesis as they are conveyed in the *sermo humilis* or the academic style, but which is closely related to the purposes of Classical rhetoric. By examining the spiritual themes in courtly literature, Chapter Five showed that framing a narrative in the trappings of oratory, either within an *exemplum* or as an oratorical performance, allowed the writer a freer setting in which to use rhetorical styles in narration, which had largely been avoided in other types of religious historical writings. Chapter Six examined the florid style of the North Icelandic Benedictines, characterised by its rhetorical framing and its carefully crafted variegation of multiple styles.

Augustine asserted that the chief aim of a Christian rhetor was to present truth in the most compelling language possible. This, as I stated in my introduction, is why this thesis has focused on religious narrative, the contents of which have a clearer connection to theological conceptions of truth than do the subjects of other genres. But this distinction, as we saw in our discussion of the *res gesta*, is somewhat artificial, for Augustine himself asserts that all of history is sacred history. It is with this fact in mind that we can return to Turville-Petre's much cited dictum: 'the learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it'.¹ If medieval Christians saw style as intertwined with a profession of truth, then 'how they said it' cannot be so easily separated from what they said. The style in which history is presented is itself a statement about that history.

My hope is that the findings in this thesis will be useful additions to the evolving discussion on religious narratives' place in the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus. The fuller

¹ Turville-Petre, *Origins*, 142.

relationship that Turville-Petre asserts is a three-stage model in which 1) learned works like hagiographies are first translated, 2) they inspire the development of the *konungasögur*, and 3) the *konungasögur* in turn inspire the creation of the *Íslendingasögur*.² Jonas Wellendorf has criticised this model for being unidirectional, citing more recent research by Siân Grønlie and Carl Phelpstead that demonstrates instead that interactions between all three genres were an ‘ongoing creative process of generic interaction and change’.³ This thesis raises questions about how sagas in more secular genres like the *Íslendingasögur* might also be analysed in terms of the Trivium and biblical exegesis. Could the relationship between prose and verse in saga prosimetrum be conceptualised in terms of low style and high style? Could sagas that are stylistically uneven like *Fóstbræðra saga* be thought of in terms of narrative and commentary? What might similarities in stylistics reveal about how the Icelanders and Norwegians viewed their own histories? Far from being just a verbal aesthetic exchanged through influence, stylistics reveal a comprehensive intellectual framework for understanding history and are a vehicle through which generic interaction and change take place.

² Turville-Petre, *Origins*, 231.

³ Jonas Wellendorf, ‘Ecclesiastical Literature and Hagiography’, 4; Carl Phelpstead, *Holy Vikings: Saints’ Lives in the Old Icelandic Kings’ Sagas*. Tempe, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007, 195-224; Grønlie, ‘Saint’s Life and Saga Narratives’, *Saga-Book* 36 (2012), 24.

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