

**Incite, Seduce, Martyr:
Female Verbal Power in the Texts of AM 226 fol.**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2025

Word Count: 102,911 (including approx. 4,500 words of translations)

Abstract

This thesis analyses the female voice and its ability to influence men within the collection of translated Old Norse texts in the manuscript AM 226 fol. Using translation and speech act theory, I compare the portrayals of female verbal power within *Stjórn*, *Rómverja saga*, *Alexanders saga*, and *Gyðinga saga* against the source material, revealing a specific interest in, and condemnation of, women's verbal influence. Taking a manuscript rather than a text or genre as its focus, this thesis combines literary study with insights from New Philology.

Chapter One presents a re-evaluation of the definition of the inciter woman, informed by the study of translated texts. Demonstrating that current scholarly taxonomies of women's words do not accurately represent the Old Norse corpus, I propose a new definition and model for the inciter woman, arguing against the necessity of vengeance.

Chapters Two through Five then use this model to consider the commands, incitements, and seductions of select female figures within AM 226 fol. Chapter Two analyses how Eve is framed as an inciter woman, bringing Original Incitement to mankind. Chapter Three examines how figures like Jezebel follow in the footsteps of their inciting protoplast, while also considering the different portrayal of royal commands. Chapter Four then examines whether seduction could be considered a type of incitement. Analysing the speech acts of Delilah and Cleopatra, this chapter instead reveals a specific Old Norse trope of the seductress that is distinct from that of the inciter woman. The final chapter turns to more positive

depictions of incitement, analysing figures like the Maccabean mother, who goads her sons towards martyrdom for their faith. These moments present a quite different picture of female verbal power from the rest of the manuscript, where the male translator lingers over the destructive effects of women's weighty words.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was fully funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) scholarship, in association with a Clarendon scholarship and a Lincoln College Kingsgate scholarship. I am very grateful to the AHRC, the Clarendon Fund, and Lincoln College for providing the means that made this thesis possible. I am also grateful to the Viking Society, the Confederation of Scandinavian Studies, and the English Faculty at Oxford, who all provided funding for travel that facilitated parts of this research.

For providing academic and personal support throughout this process, my greatest thanks must go to my supervisor, Siân Grønlie, whose insight and expertise has been invaluable. Special thanks go to my college advisor, Harriet (Hattie) Soper, who went above and beyond to support me through thick and thin. Thanks also to the other Old Norse professors at Oxford for their encouragement and direction: Gareth Lloyd Evans, Carolyne Larrington, and Heather O'Donoghue.

I have been lucky to be surrounded by a wonderful community of Old Norse postgraduate students while at Oxford, notably Ashley Castelino, Emma (Em) Horne, Mary O'Connor, Grace O'Duffy, Pablo Scheffer, Olivia Elliot Smith, and David Bond West. Special mention, of course, goes to Katherine Beard, Clare Mulley, and Eugenia Vorobeva, who have been with me right the way through. It has been an honour to work beside them all.

I am thankful to everyone that has shared feedback or encouragement with me at academic events and conferences. This support has been invaluable to my research. Special thanks go to Tiffany Nicole White and the Norse Hagiography Network.

For insightful academic discussion, I am especially grateful to Jonas Zeit-Altpeter and David Bond West, who have also helped with some of the more challenging English translations within this thesis (though any mistakes are, of course, my own).

For endless personal support, special thanks go to Jonas Zeit-Altpeter.

My final thanks go to my family, especially my parents, Christina and Christopher Bradley, for all their support.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Introduction to AM 226 fol. and its Contents.....	11
Selected Methodological Comments	40
Structure and Overview	53
Chapter 1 - The Inciter Woman: A New Model	57
Scholarly Definitions of the Inciter Woman.....	58
Egging on the Edge	62
The Incitement Antitype?.....	74
New Boundaries.....	87
A (New) Model.....	95
Conclusion: Regardless of Vengeance	97
Chapter 2 - Eve: Original Incitement in the Fall of Man	99
Eve's Persuasion in the Source Material	103
Eve's Persuasion in <i>Stjórn</i> I.....	108
Incitement in Other Old Norse Fall Stories.....	133
Conclusion: Original Incitement.....	146
Chapter 3 - Evil Egging and Aristocratic Authority: Royal Woman and their Speech Acts	148
Jezebel	150
Athaliah: Jezebel's Daughter.....	202
Arsinoe IV	213
Conclusion: Mother, Daughter, Princess, Queen.....	241
Chapter 4 - Poisonous Serpents and Whorish Toads: Seductive Speech Acts	244
Seduction: Definition, Theory, and Scholarship	246

Delilah	254
Cleopatra VII	278
Further Poisonous Snakes and Toads in Old Norse Literature	316
Chapter 5 - Warm Counsel: Female Incitement in Scenes of Martyrdom.....	325
The Maccabean Martyr-Mother.....	328
Jephthah's Daughter	355
John Hyrcanus' Mother	365
Conclusion: Holy <i>Hetzerinnen</i>	375
Conclusion	377
List of Illustrations.....	383
Bibliography.....	383

Introduction

Adam ate the apple.

Eve ate Adam.

The serpent ate Eve.

This is the dark intestine.

– Ted Hughes, 'Theology'

Classical and biblical stories are not fixed, unchanging entities, but dynamic tales that transform in fresh ink. Religious interpreters, translators, authors, poets, playwrights, and historians alike all breathe new life into the ancient tales, sometimes developing or distorting the subject they represent. Each new iteration of these old and familiar stories is inextricably entangled with its contemporary cultural mores, even if the events it narrates are not radically changed. Such texts are thus artefacts of their time, and important objects for study. Although the retellings of classical and biblical stories from the modern period (by writers like Hughes, Shakespeare, and Milton) have long been studied and celebrated, the renarrations from the medieval period are often overlooked.

This is especially true in Old Norse scholarship, which, until recently, has focused almost entirely on texts deemed to be 'unique', 'native', or even 'indigenous' to medieval Iceland and Scandinavia. All these terms are either incorrect or problematic. For example, recent scholarship (notably Siân E. Grønlie, 2017) has demonstrated that even sagas telling stories of Icelandic history have been influenced by 'foreign' literature. Furthermore, the words 'native' and 'indigenous' are entangled with global discourse on colonialism and empire,

carrying specific, loaded meanings that do not accurately represent the situation in medieval Iceland and Norway (see Philip Lavender, 2021). Finding a word to accurately describe the body of literature supposedly ‘unique’ to the medieval North is so difficult perhaps because the separation between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ literature is largely a modern invention undercut with twentieth-century national concerns that does not reflect the realities of the corpus.¹

The supposedly ‘native’ literature has, however, remained the focus of most scholarship exploring the Old Norse corpus, until recently. There is currently a rising tide of academic interest in Old Norse translations and adaptations of Latin and continental literature.² There is increasing recognition of the value of translations; as Sif Rikhardsdottir (2012, p. 3) puts it: ‘translations are a unique medium for observing [...] cultural transformations as they capture in essence the encounter between two distinct and separate cultural traditions and the subsequent effort at literary adaptation’. This thesis builds upon this vein of scholarship stressing the value of Old Norse translated texts.

¹ See also Sif Rikhardsdottir, 2012, esp. pp. 2–3, 164; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2012, esp. p. 208; Siân E. Grønlie, 2017, esp. pp. 15–16.

² Studies that focus on the importance of translated material within the Old Norse corpus include Jonatan Pettersson, 2012; Sif Rikhardsdottir, 2012; Grønlie, 2017; Massimiliano Bampi and Stefanie Gropper, 2024.

Studies of Old Norse translated texts, which are growing in number, include Ian J. Kirby, 1976–1980; 1986; Marianne E. Kalinke, 1990; 2017; Reidar Astås, 1991; Stefanie Würth, 1998; David Ashurst, 2009; Kirsten Wolf, 2013; Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, 2014; Daniel C. Najork, 2021; Grønlie, 2024. In this list, I have focused on book-length studies relevant to the content of this thesis.

This problematic category of ‘foreign’ or translated Old Norse literature is often further segregated into groups or genres, sometimes loosely or inaccurately defined.³ The genre classifications used for Old Norse material today are, for the most part, modern constructions that are continually criticised and amended in an attempt to better represent the corpus.⁴ This thesis, however, does not investigate a specific genre or text, but rather a manuscript, AM 226 fol., which contains four texts from across the lines of modern genres. This study thus examines religious, classical, and biblical translations together, taking a fresh approach to literary analysis inspired by New/Material/Artefactual Philology.

At the core of New Philology is the belief that a literary work cannot be separated from its material parts: the manuscripts that hold it.⁵ The New Philological movement has gained significant popularity within Old Norse scholarship since the 1990s, having widespread effects on editorial practice and literary studies.⁶ Old Norse scholarship within

³ For example, in the ‘Taxonomy of Genres’ that concludes *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ‘Saints’ Lives’ are listed as a separate genre to ‘Hagiography’ (even though these words are synonymous) and the latter is said to include ‘a variety of genres of religious nature’ (Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdottir, eds, 2020, pp. 315–316). Though this puzzling taxonomy appears to reflect a desire to separate the hagiographies that can be considered ‘sagas’ and those that cannot, the result is an inadequate categorising of Old Norse religious material.

On hagiography as a genre, see Grønlie, 2017, pp. 2–8.

⁴ See, for example, Grønlie, 2017; Bampi, Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdottir, eds, 2020.

⁵ The foundational work in English on New Philology is the 1990 Special Edition of *Speculum* edited by Stephen G. Nichols.

⁶ On New Philology in Old Norse studies, see Wolf, 1993b; Patricia Pires Boulhosa, 2005, esp. pp. 5–42; Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 2005; Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, eds, 2010; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2012; Eriksen, 2014; 2017; Kate Heslop and Jürg Glauser, eds, 2018; Lena Rohrbach, 2018; Najork, 2021.

this movement emphasises codicology within literary analyses, questions the concept of a singular ‘author’, and draws manuscript collections into considerations of genre and textual classification. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2020a) has written on both the benefits and complications of considering manuscript collections in discussions of genre; manuscripts provide evidence of medieval views towards the interconnectedness of texts, as scribes and patrons select what to collect in one codex. In his New Philological study of *Maríu saga*, Daniel C. Najork (2021) considers not only the material elements of the saga’s manuscript witnesses but also the other texts within these manuscripts to illuminate his study of the saga. In his conclusion, Najork (2021, p. 133) highlights some manuscript collections that would benefit from a New Philological or manuscript-centred approach, including AM 226 fol.⁷

This thesis takes up this call to arms for a study of AM 226 fol.; it is probably not, however, the kind of analysis imagined by Najork (2021, p. 133). This thesis is not a strictly New Philological study of AM 226 fol., and it does not cover many of the overarching themes of the manuscript. In this way, it differs from many prior studies investigating one medieval manuscript, which usually take ‘a more holistic approach’ (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2012, p. 210). Instead, this thesis uses literary analysis to consider one specific theme (female verbal

For studies more sceptical towards New Philology in Old Norse studies, see Sverrir Tómasson, 2002; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2009; Richard Cole, 2018.

⁷ Other Old Norse studies that take a manuscript, rather than a specific text or genre, as the focus for study include Lucy Grace Collings, 1969; Rowe, 2005; 2008; Merrill Kaplan, 2011. See also the survey in Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2012, pp. 209–212, and the introductions within editions of manuscripts (e.g., Christopher Sanders, 2000).

power), analysing its depiction at significant moments within the manuscript compilation. In this way, this thesis takes a type of literary study that would not be unusual if applied to an individual text or a specific genre but instead applies it to a manuscript and the texts it contains. This study is thus inspired by, but not operating specifically within, the New Philological movement.

The present thesis thus presents a primarily literary study of female verbal power, using AM 226 fol. as a case study. The main focus, then, is gender. There is already a wealth of research investigating gender within Old Norse literature and society, creating a rich picture of the complexities of gender in the medieval period.⁸ Many of the literary studies of gender, however, consider only specific genres (usually those considered ‘native’) in their analyses.⁹ Though scholars have discovered much from studying genres like the *Íslendingasögur*, as Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 8) writes, ‘In order to develop an accurate and comprehensive picture of medieval Icelandic ideas about women, it is [...] necessary to examine all of the extant sources’. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s book, which argues for a more inclusive approach to the corpus when analysing gender, significantly

⁸ Significant (book-length) studies include Rolf Heller, 1958; Judith Jesch, 1991; Helga Kress, 1993; Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, 1995; Jenny Jochens, 1995; 1996a; Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, eds, 2002; Sandra Ballif Straubhaar, 2011; David Clark, 2012; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013; 2020b; Gareth Lloyd Evans, 2019; 2020; Jennifer Hurd, 2021.

⁹ For example, R. Heller (1958) and Evans (2019) focus exclusively on the *Íslendingasögur*. Clark (2012) considers the poetic and prose eddas, *Íslendingasögur*, and *samtíðarsögur*. Jochens (1996a) has a somewhat wider scope, also considering the *fornaldarsögur*, *konungasögur*, and some *riddarasögur*.

broadens the collection of texts and genres considered within literary scholarship on women. Her study, however, necessarily has limits, as she ‘restrict[s] the analysis to secular prose, leaving out religious material and myths’ (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 141). This is not the only exclusion. Although Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013) does analyse the *riddarasögur*, many of which can be considered translations,¹⁰ she does not consider the wealth of other translated material (like learned texts and classical translations), nor does she note this as an exception to her rule of genre inclusivity. This aligns with wider scholarly tendencies to omit without comment the ‘foreign’ or translated material, as if it does not truly belong to the Old Norse corpus.

Though translated texts are ostensibly easy to dismiss when considering specifically Nordic ideas of gender, as mentioned above, translations are not stale reproductions of literary works but creative renderings that not only reinvigorate but also recreate texts in a new context. In Rita Copeland’s (1991, pp. 6-7, 94) seminal study of vernacular translations from Latin, she notes that even ‘primary’ translations, which ‘define their purpose in terms of service to a source text’ rather than ‘through rhetorical models of invention’ (as do the secondary), nevertheless ‘orient [their] practice towards a self-sufficient or independent discourse, using the original as a model against which to discover and define new textual

¹⁰ See, for example, Kalinke, 2017.

idioms'.¹¹ Creation, discovery, and development are at the heart of translation, even when translators themselves attempt to resist it.

This thesis began not with a discussion of translations but of retellings, rewritings, and renarrations. This reflects recent research into translation as 'renarration' or '*Renarrativierung*'. The English term was coined by Mona Baker in her scholarship on narrative theory and translation studies (2014; republished in 2020). Baker (2020, p. 175) writes, 'Translation is [...] understood as a form of (re-)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it re-narrates in another language' (Baker's emphasis). The German term emerged seemingly independently in the edited collection *Renarrativierung in der Vormoderne* (Glückhardt, Kleinschmidt, and Spohn, eds, 2019). Glückhardt, Kleinschmidt, and Spohn (2019) and Achim Aurnhammer (2019) define the term *Renarrativierung* and discuss its demarcations; their work overlaps in several ways with that of Baker (2014; 2020), though regrettably no scholar in the volume acknowledges her important contributions. This volume, nevertheless, demonstrates the relevance and importance of *Renarrativierung* for medieval and Old Norse studies and broadens the scope beyond translation.

According to *Renarrativierung in der Vormoderne* (2019), renarration or (more strictly, if awkwardly in English) renarrativisation encompasses a variety of narrative transformations

¹¹ For a systematic application of Copeland's theories to Old Norse material, see Pettersson (2009), though I disagree with the dichotomy he constructs between the translator as 'mediator' and 'independent text-producer' (e.g., pp. 5, 260).

including genre change, paraphrase, expansion, retelling, medium change, and translation.¹²

Sabine Heidi Walther (2019) demonstrates the benefit of the term for Old Norse studies, where it is revealed to be a valuable tool to analyse not just translated texts, but all kinds of saga, which rework older (oral) narratives. The volume, however, does not engage in translation theory beyond a few notes that translations could be renarrations.¹³ Further research into medieval translation as renarration is needed, since the relevance of the term becomes increasingly conspicuous when studying Old Norse translations, and thus throughout this thesis. The texts within AM 226 fol. create new narratives for old stories by compiling viewpoints, reframing the narrative, adding Nordic literary tropes and flourishes, and sometimes even altering important plot points.

When viewing translations as renarrations, their relevance to the study of gender becomes obvious; careful study can reveal insights into the literary and social environment in which they were created, in much the same way as with non-translated literature. Although the stories in Old Norse translations about the lives of women are not necessarily Nordic, it is possible to discern elements and attitudes of the target culture (into which the text is translated) in the treatment of the source material (from which the text is translated). With the growing recognition of the importance of the Old Norse translations, there have been

¹² See Thorsten Glückhardt, Sebastian Kleinschmidt, and Verena Spohn, 2019; Achim Aurnhammer, 2019.

¹³ See Aurnhammer, 2019, pp. 52-53; Glückhardt, Kleinschmidt, and Spohn, 2019, pp. 19-20; Sabine Heidi Walther, 2019, pp. 182, 189, 191-192.

some studies of gender in certain texts,¹⁴ but the historical neglect of translated material within the Norse corpus has left many of the discoveries within these texts unearthed. The female figures discussed within this thesis are all un- or under-studied within Old Norse scholarship.

There are many issues relating to gender that this thesis could have taken as its focus, which would have been illuminated through the study of AM 226 fol. Due to space limitations, this thesis focuses upon the female voice, and more specifically upon how women within the text use it to influence men. Old Norse scholarship has repeatedly emphasised the power of the female voice within the literary corpus.¹⁵ Since, as Natalie M. Van Deusen (2019, p. 100) summarises, ‘women ha[d] authority in the private sphere, and men in the public’, in order for women to influence the public sphere, they first had to influence men. As Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 10) writes, ‘In this context, the primary tool available to women is their words’. This thesis thus explores the various techniques used by the women within

¹⁴ For book-length scholarship on texts or manuscripts containing translated stories of women, see Wolf, 1997a; 2011a; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000; 2020; Natalie M. Van Deusen, 2019. Articles or book chapters specifically analysing the depiction of gender in Old Norse translated material include Janet Schrunck Ericksen, 1998; Randi Eldevik, 2002; F. Regina Psaki, 2002; Kerry Shea, 2002; Grønlie, 2006; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2008; Erin Michelle Goeres, 2014; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 2016; Natasha A. J. Bradley, 2022. The only book- or thesis-length study of this type that I am aware of is Miranda Joanne Hodgson, 2006, though she considers the Old Norse material alongside texts in Old English and Anglo-Latin. Many studies of translated texts that are broader in scope nevertheless contain some discussion of gender or the status of women and men; for example, Kalinke, 1990; 2008; 2017; Astås, 1991; Grønlie, 2017; 2024.

¹⁵ On the female voice, see Goeres, 2014; Van Deusen, 2019, pp. 98-112; Hurd, 2021; and the numerous studies on incitement introduced and discussed in Chapter One.

AM 226 fol. to influence men with their speech (incitement, command, urging, seduction), as well as the literary portrayal of these techniques by the (presumably male) writers, translators, compilers, and scribes that had a hand in the creation of the texts (see discussion below).

The topic of women's verbal influence is chosen for two reasons. The first is that the female voice is repeatedly emphasised within the texts of AM 226 fol. Close comparison with the source material demonstrates how the Old Norse versions draw attention to women's ability to verbally influence men at many points throughout the manuscript. The verbal power of the female characters thus appears to be a particular concern underwriting the texts within this study.

The second reason for this choice of theme is that it presents the opportunity to clearly demonstrate the importance of considering translated texts together with the more mainstream sagas in scholarly analysis. Despite the substantial prior research into the female voice in genres like the *Íslendingasögur*, this thesis progresses scholarly understanding of women's verbal power when considering the same theme within the texts of AM 226 fol. While most scholars of gender have moved away from extensive consideration of topics like incitement (a major subject of study twenty-to-thirty years ago), the scholarly debates have not been resolved (and certainly not with consideration of the full corpus). This thesis thus aims to not only shed light on this topic of the female voice within Old Norse literature, but

also to encourage the questioning of conclusions drawn in past scholarship that excludes translated material while claiming to represent the whole corpus.

In this introduction to the background and main themes of this thesis, I have interwoven discussions of translation, philology, and gender. Stitched together, these concepts form the background of this study of AM 226 fol. Though much more could easily be written about each of these concepts and how they weave together in this study, I wish to keep the focus of the thesis upon the textual analysis of the contents of AM 226 fol. As Gideon Toury (2012, p. 180) neatly puts it in his discussion of translation theory, ‘if we hold up research until the most systematic methods have been found, we might never get any research done’. Therefore, this thesis shall now turn to AM 226 fol. and its contents, providing an introduction to each of the texts, followed by selected comments on the specific methodological approach taken in the analysis of this thesis.

Introduction to AM 226 fol. and its Contents

The codex AM 226 fol., housed at the Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen, is a manuscript collection containing four texts: *Stjórn*, *Rómverja saga* [the Saga of the Romans], *Alexanders saga* [the Saga of Alexander the Great], and *Gyðinga saga* [the

Saga of the Jews].¹⁶ The texts (in their AM 226 fol. versions) are linked by their historical focus: they narrate the story of human history from Creation, which opens *Stjórn I*, to the death of Pontius Pilate, which closes *Gyðinga saga* and thus the manuscript.¹⁷ Along the way, various stories are told from the Old Testament, apocrypha, and classical literature, which are considered together as human history, rather than separated into different disciplines as they are today.¹⁸

Four scribes had a hand in creating the text of the manuscript, though most of the codex was written by one hand only (fols 1-61vb, 70ra-117ra, 117rb:9-158ra, and 158rb:5-41).¹⁹ Two different hands wrote fols 117rb:1-8 and 158rb:1-5, in *Rómverja saga* and *Gyðinga saga* respectively.²⁰ These parts of the manuscript were written in the fourteenth century. Kirsten Wolf (1993a; 1995, pp. xv-xvii) argues that fols 70r-158r are slightly earlier than fols 1-61v, dating the former to the 1350s and the latter to the 1360s (following Stefán Karlsson, 1967, pp. 19-21). In the latter half of the fifteenth century (or the beginning of the sixteenth),

¹⁶ For detailed discussion of this manuscript, see C. R. Unger, 1862, p. x; Stefán Karlsson, 1967, pp. 19-21; Astås, 1991, pp. 29-35; 2009, i pp. xxxviii-xli; Wolf, 1993a; 1995, pp. xv-xxix; Würth, 1998, pp. 139-148; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2007, pp. 108-114; Lene Liepe, 2009, esp. pp. 75-94; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. xxxvi-xxlvii; Stefan Drechsler, 2021, esp. pp. 90-92, 97-116; Grønlie, 2024, esp. pp. 4-10, 68-69; Entry: 'AM 226 fol.', *Handrit*.

A helpful summary of the manuscript's main features can be found in Drechsler's (2021, p. 26) table of the Helgafell manuscripts.

¹⁷ See Astås, 1991, p. 33; Würth, 1998, pp. 139-140; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2007, p. 110; Drechsler, 2021, p. 92; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 4, 68-69.

¹⁸ See Würth, 1998, pp. 139-140, 143.

¹⁹ See Wolf, 1995, pp. xv-xvi; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii; Entry: 'AM 226 fol.', *Handrit*.

²⁰ See Wolf, 1995, p. xiv, and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. xxxvii, xlv-xlvi.

however, a fourth and final scribe wrote fols 62ra-69vb; this contains the text called *Stjórn* II.²¹

The manuscript was produced at the Augustinian house of canons at Helgafell in Iceland.²² Stefan Drechsler (2021, p. 116) writes, ‘It is likely that AM 226 fol. was produced for Helgafell itself, and that it was intended to be used to educate young pupils about world history up until the birth of Christ’. Grønlie (2024, p. 7), however, questions Drechsler’s restriction of the audience to youths, due to the advanced theological discussions within *Stjórn* I particularly. Her view seems to align with Stefanie Würth’s (1998, p. 148) proposal that the manuscript was intended ‘zum Studium, d.h. als Informationsquellen für Geschichtswissen, für den Unterricht und als Nachschlagewerke’ [for study, i.e., as information sources for historical learning, for teaching and as reference works]. The manuscript was thus likely used by young and old alike at Helgafell. Since the manuscript was created within a monastery for the use of canons, I assume it was written by and for men: a significant point for the present study discussed further below.

The manuscript contains many illuminated initials; Matthías Þórðarson (1931, p. 340) has identified the illuminator as Magnús Þórhallsson, who also worked on *Flateyjarbók*.²³ Three of the AM 226 fol. illuminations depict women: Jacob and Rebekah on fol. 34v;

²¹ See Unger, 1862, p. vi; Kirby, 1986, pp. 52, 56; Astås, 2009, i p. xl.

²² See Ólafur Halldórsson, 1966, pp. 41-42; Astås, 2009, i p. xxix; Liepe, 2009, esp. pp. 119-126; Drechsler, 2021.

²³ See also Liepe, 2009, pp. 123-124, and Drechsler, 2021, esp. pp. 92-116.

Solomon and a woman, perhaps Bathsheba or the Queen of Sheba, on fol. 96v; and ‘an angry woman with headgear’ (Entry: ‘AM 226 fol.’, *Handrit*) on fol. 97r.²⁴ Unfortunately, however, none of the figures selected for analysis within this thesis are portrayed visually within AM 226 fol.

Two leaves have been lost from the codex (after fols 98 and 99); the lacunae disrupt the story of II Kings, which is significant for the analysis of Jezebel in Chapter Three. There are a few marginal additions: most notably, a woman’s name (Auðni Benediktsdóttir) has been written in runes on fol. 95r, discussed further below.²⁵

Stjórn

AM 226 fol. begins with *Stjórn*.²⁶ *Stjórn*, which translates to something like ‘guidance’ or ‘rule’, is the name given to the collection of biblical translations that treat the material from Genesis to the end of the Books of Kings.²⁷ Historically, AM 226 fol. was called *Stærri Stjorn*

²⁴ See Liepe, 2009, p. 78; Drechsler, 2021, pp. 104–106; Entry: ‘AM 226 fol.’, *Handrit*.

²⁵ See Grzegorz Bartusik, 2019b, pp. 148–149, and Entry: ‘AM 226 fol.’, *Handrit*.

²⁶ For detailed analyses of *Stjórn*, including in-depths discussions of its parts, dating, sources, manuscripts, and style, see Unger, 1862; Gustav Storm, 1886a; 1886b; Didrik Arup Seip, 1956; Christine Elizabeth Fell, 1973; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1961b; Selma Jónsdóttir, 1971, pp. 49–72; Dietrich Hofmann, 1973; Sverre Bagge, 1974; 1990; Kirby, 1980, ii pp. 84–85; 1986, pp. 51–69; 2000, pp. 287–290; Wolf, 1990a; 1991c; Astås, 1991; 1992; 2009; J. Ericksen, 1998; Lars Wollin, 2001; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2007; Elise Kleivane, 2018; Grønlie, 2019; 2022a; 2024, esp. 4–10; David Bond West, 2023, esp. pp. 130–162.

²⁷ On the naming of *Stjórn*, see Unger, 1862, p. iii; Kirby, 1986, p. 51; Astås, 1991, pp. 5–7; Kleivane, 2018, pp. 119–120; Grønlie, 2024, p. 4.

The four books of the Bible today known as I-II Samuel and I-II Kings were in the Vulgate version called I-IV Reges [Kings]. This can cause some confusion in modern scholarship on the Vulgate.

[the major *Stjórn*] (in comparison with *Minnr Stjorn* [the minor *Stjórn*], AM 228 fol.).²⁸ This nickname likely emerged because AM 226 fol. was (and remains) the only surviving manuscript containing all parts of *Stjórn*. These terms are now obsolete, since they do not accurately describe the extant manuscripts of *Stjórn* (of which there are many) and negate the importance of the other texts within AM 226 fol.²⁹ It is, nonetheless, worth noting that the biblical translations within *Stjórn* take up the majority of AM 226 fol.: 1v-110ra, versus 110ra-157v for the rest of the texts.

Stjórn is best considered in three or four parts: independent works with different dates, transmission histories, and styles of translation and compilation. According to C. R. Unger's classification (1862, pp. iv-vii), *Stjórn* consists of three parts: *Stjórn* I (*Stj* pp. 3-453) translates from Genesis to Exodus 18, *Stjórn* II (*Stj* pp. 455-521) from Exodus 19 to the end of Deuteronomy, and *Stjórn* III (*Stj* pp. 522-1214) from Joshua to the end of the Books of Kings.³⁰ Reidar Astås (1991; 1992; 2009, i p. xxxi) proposes that the translation of Joshua in

The *Stjórn* translation ends at the close of II Kings (according to the modern designation) or IV Kings (according to the medieval). This thesis uses the modern names of these biblical books: I-II Samuel and I-II Kings.

²⁸ See Storm, 1886a, p. 244, and Astås, 1991, p. 5.

²⁹ The tendency to consider AM 226 fol. as a/the *Stjórn* manuscript is unfortunately still prevalent. The title for the manuscript on Handrit (Entry: 'AM 226 fol.'; Handrit's emphasis), for example, is '*Stjórn etc.*', and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, p. cc) concludes her introduction to *Rómverja saga* by writing, 'The high mark for *Rómverja saga* was its incorporation into the *Stjórn* compilation [AM 226 fol.].' Though *Stjórn* is evidently a very important text for Old Norse studies, so too are the others within the manuscript, which deserve more than to be dismissed as supplements to *Stjórn*.

³⁰ The references here and throughout are to Astås' (2009) edition of the text (abbreviated *Stj*).

AM 226 fol. (and its copy in AM 225 fol.) should be considered separately as *Stjórn* IV (*Stj* pp. 523-583),³¹ due to its different use of sources from the rest of *Stjórn* III as well as from the translation of Joshua in other manuscripts.

Stjórn I is a complex text that translates and compiles biblical material from various sources: primarily, the Vulgate Old Testament, Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HSG*, *HS*), and Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale* (*SH*).³² There are also, however, additions from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* (*GLitt*), *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (*GMan*), and *De civitate Dei* (*Civ*), and Isidore's *Etymologiae* (*IE*), among others (see Astås, 1991, pp. 83-84, and Grønlie, 2024, pp. 9, 139-140). The compilation techniques within *Stjórn* I have been analysed thoroughly by Astås (1991, pp. 63-115) and Grønlie (2024, pp. 139-170); they are discussed further in Chapter Two. Within *Stjórn* I, there are also three sections that depart from the text of the Pentateuch: a translation of Durandus's *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* with additions from Jacobus' *Legenda Aurea* (*Stj* I pp. 72-79), a description of the world and its natural phenomena (*Stj* I pp. 100-156), and a sermon for the first Sunday of Lent (*Stj* I pp. 213-239).³³

³¹ Astås prints the Joshua translation of *Stjórn* III and *Stjórn* IV side-by-side in his edition.

³² On the various sources of *Stjórn* I, see, in particular, Astås, 1991, pp. 69-84; 2009, i pp. cxxiii-cxxviii; Grønlie, 2024, esp. pp. 9, 139-140.

³³ On these sections, see Astås, 1991, pp. 51-62; 2009, i p. xviii-xix; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 139-140.

Stjórn I likely dates to the early fourteenth century;³⁴ it is extant in three vellum manuscripts (AM 225 fol., AM 226 fol., and AM 227 fol.), in six loose leaves in AM 229 fol., and in the fragment NRA 60 A, as well as in numerous paper manuscripts.³⁵ AM 225 fol. is a close copy of AM 226 fol., made before *Stjórn* II was added; the manuscript also includes the *Vitae Patrum*.³⁶ The *Stjórn* I text of AM 227 fol. is incomplete due to damage and missing leaves. Unger (1862) bases his edition of *Stjórn* I upon AM 226 fol., whereas Astås (2009) uses AM 227 fol., with additions from AM 226 fol. to fill in the missing material.

Stjórn I begins with a prologue that claims it was commissioned by King Hákon Magnússon (*Stj* I pp. 3-5). The authenticity of the prologue has been fiercely debated, since it informs scholarly understanding of the dating, provenance, and context in which *Stjórn* I was written.³⁷ This debate around the prologue is not, however, immediately relevant to this thesis, which is focused upon the manuscript AM 226 fol. rather than the original work. AM 226 fol. was written in Iceland for monastic rather than royal use, after the death of King Hákon Magnússon.

³⁴ See Kirby, 1986, p. 53, and Grønlie, 2024, p. 4.

³⁵ See Seip, 1956, pp. 11-13; Selma Jónsdóttir, 1971, pp. 50-52; Kirby, 1986, pp. 51-52, 121-126; Astås, 1991, pp. 29-35; 2009, i pp. xxxv-cxxi; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 24-28.

³⁶ See Unger, 1862, pp. x-xi.

³⁷ See Unger, 1862, pp. iii-iv; Storm, 1886a, pp. 251-252; Seip, 1956, pp. 9-11; Selma Jónsdóttir, 1971, pp. 54-64; Astås, 1991, pp. 11-14, 46-51; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 28-32; Kleivane, 2018, p. 136; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 4-9, 140-143.

Stjórn II is only extant in AM 226 fol., written no earlier than the late fifteenth century on one quire of eight leaves inserted into the manuscript.³⁸ It is primarily a translation and condensation of the biblical books in their Vulgate version from Exodus 19 to the end of Deuteronomy. Many biblical passages are omitted, and there are few extra-biblical insertions, contrasting the compilatory nature of *Stjórn* I.

Scholarly opinion on the provenance of *Stjórn* II is quite varied. Some scholars (Unger, 1862, p. v; Ian J. Kirby, 1986, pp. 56-60; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 32-35; Astås, 2009, i pp. xx-xxii) propose that it is the earliest part of *Stjórn*, written in the early thirteenth century, while others argue it is far later, composed in the fourteenth (Gustav Storm, 1886a, p. 253) or fifteenth century (Elise Kleivane, 2018, pp. 141-144), around the time it was added to AM 226 fol. This variance results from differing opinions on the overall provenance of biblical translations in the medieval North. Kirby (1986, esp. pp. 51-73) argues that there was a complete vernacular translation of the Pentateuch ‘and in all probability the remainder of the Old Testament historical literature’ (Kirby, 1986, p. 72) available in the early thirteenth century, of which *Stjórn* II is a surviving fragment. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2007) and Kleivane (2018, pp. 120-141), however, consider *Stjórn* I and *Stjórn* III not as unfinished projects or fragments of larger translations, but as complete ‘part-Bibles’, which were common on the continent. The addition of *Stjórn* II ‘is the result of a late medieval tendency towards

³⁸ On *Stjórn* II, see Kirby, 1986, pp. 56-60; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 24, 32-35; Astås, 2009, i p. xx-xxii; Kleivane, 2018, pp. 117, 141-144.

a new idea of the Bible as a more fixed text' (Kleivane, 2018, p. 144). AM 226 fol. can thus be considered not only as a collection of world history, but also as an important artifact in emerging medieval views towards biblical texts (see Kleivane, 2018, p. 144). This thesis follows Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2007) and Kleivane (2018) in considering the various parts of *Stjórn* as originally independent works,³⁹ though of course examining them together as a collection in AM 226 fol.⁴⁰

Stjórn III in AM 226 fol. translates from the Book of Judges to the end of the Books of Kings. In other manuscripts of the text, however, *Stjórn* III begins with the Book of Joshua. *Stjórn* III is primarily a translation of the Vulgate, though there are some insertions from Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HS*) and Richard of St Victor's *Liber exceptionum* (*LE*), among others (see Kirby, 1986, pp. 61-62; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, p. 35; Astås, 2009, i pp. xxii-xxvi). It is more expansive than the *Stjórn* II translation, from which several biblical passages are omitted, but it contains far less commentary than *Stjórn* I.⁴¹ *Stjórn* III is thus a more straightforward translation of the Vulgate, though the renarration nonetheless provides many fascinating elements for literary study.⁴² Grønlie (2024, p. 13) even argues that 'In *Stjórn*

³⁹ This approach has also been used by Astås (1991) and Grønlie (2024).

⁴⁰ To reflect the independence of each part of *Stjórn*, I always note which part I am quoting from or referring to with roman numerals. The absence of roman numerals indicates I am referring to the overall collection of texts known as *Stjórn*.

⁴¹ See Kirby, 1986, pp. 60-62; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, p. 35; Astås, 2009, i pp. xxii-xxiv; Kleivane, 2018, esp. pp. 117-120; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 210-244.

⁴² See, for example, Grønlie, 2024, esp. pp. 210-244.

III, [...] we can talk not just of a translator, but of a saga author: one whose work rivals *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna* in its rich texture and imaginative power'. This might explain why the first production unit of AM 226 fol. (fols 70r-158r, according to Wolf, 1993a; 1995, pp. xv-xvii) included *Stjórn* III but not *Stjórn* I: *Stjórn* III, *Rómverja saga*, *Alexanders saga*, and *Gyðinga saga* together are four saga-style renarrations of classical and religious history.

Scholars generally agree that *Stjórn* III was written in the thirteenth century, but there is much debate about whether it was written before or after the *King's Mirror*,⁴³ which dates to c. 1250-1260 (see Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, p. 37). *Stjórn* III and the Old Norwegian *King's Mirror* have several shared passages; Storm's (1886b) proposal that the *King's Mirror* borrowed from *Stjórn* III was initially widely accepted until Dietrich Hofmann (1973) and Sverre Bagge (1974) independently argued that *Stjórn* III relies upon the *King's Mirror*. The debate upon the direction of the influence is not resolved,⁴⁴ but it is beyond the scope of this study.⁴⁵

There has been some suggestion that Brandr Jónsson wrote *Stjórn* III (if not all parts of *Stjórn*),⁴⁶ but this has been all but disproven by Wolf's (1990a) thorough comparison of

⁴³ See Unger, 1862, p. vii; Storm, 1886a, pp. 247-251, 256; 1886b; Hofmann, 1973; Bagge, 1974; Kirby, 1986, pp. 62-69; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 36-39; Kleivane, 2018, pp. 118-119; Astås, 2009, i pp. xxvi-xxxii; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 5-8.

⁴⁴ See Kirby, 1986, pp. 64-65, 169-181; Bagge, 1990; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 36-39.

⁴⁵ The *King's Mirror* is discussed in Chapter One in comparison with *Stjórn* I, but none of the shared passages between *Stjórn* III and the *King's Mirror* are considered in this thesis.

⁴⁶ See Finnur Jónsson, 1772, i 2.4.8.5:370-371; Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 1863; Peter Hallberg, 1977, pp. 244-250; Kirby, 1986, pp. 66-69.

Stjórn III and *Gyðinga saga*. Several vellum manuscripts and fragments containing *Stjórn* III are extant: AM 225 fol., AM 226 fol., AM 227 fol., AM 228 fol., AM 229 fol., AM 335 4to, AM 617 4to, Thott 2099 4to, NRA 60 B-C, and Holm Perg 36 I 4to.⁴⁷ There are also various paper manuscripts and fragments.⁴⁸ Unger (1862) uses AM 228 fol., the oldest of the *Stjórn* manuscripts, as the basis for his edition of *Stjórn* III, using AM 227 fol. and then AM 226 fol. to fill in missing text. Astås (2009), however, uses AM 227 fol., with additions from AM 226 fol., AM 228 fol., and AM 225 fol. Despite the focus on AM 226 fol. here, the other manuscripts of *Stjórn* III are important, particularly for the study of Jezebel (whose story in AM 226 fol. is disrupted by lacunae) in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Stjórn IV is the name sometimes given to the translation of the Book of Joshua in AM 226 fol., which follows Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HS*) with some additions from the Vulgate.⁴⁹ It is far shorter than the corresponding text in *Stjórn* III, which translates the Vulgate.⁵⁰ The only other vellum manuscript containing this version of the text is AM 225 fol., the direct copy of AM 226 fol.⁵¹ There has been less scholarly debate on the provenance of *Stjórn* IV. Though Storm (1886a, pp. 252-253, 255, 256) initially dated it to the mid-

⁴⁷ See Selma Jónsdóttir, 1971, pp. 49-52; Kirby, 1986, pp. 51-52, 121-126; Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 24-28; Astås, 2009, i pp. xxxv-liii.

For a stemma, see Astås, 2009, i pp. lxiii-cxxi.

⁴⁸ See Selma Jónsdóttir, 1971, pp. 51-52; Kirby, 1986, pp. 123-126; Astås, 2009, i pp. lvii-lxi.

⁴⁹ See Unger, 1862, p. xiv; Storm, 1886a, pp. 252-253, 255, 256; Fell, 1973; Kirby, 1986, pp. 61, 64, 104-107; Wolf, 1991c; Astås, 1992; 2009, i pp. xxxi.

⁵⁰ On the style and translation technique of *Stjórn* IV, see Wolf, 1991c and Astås, 1992.

⁵¹ See Astås, 1992, p. 55.

fourteenth century, suggesting it was added to AM 226 fol. to fill the gap between the Pentateuch and Judges, it is now generally dated to around the same time as *Stjórn* III (see Didrik Arup Seip, 1956, pp. 17–18, and Wolf, 1991c, p. 152), in the thirteenth century, with Kirby (1986, pp. 61, 64) suggesting it is the older of the two translations.⁵²

A major point of debate about the *Stjórn* collection is its country of origin: can the work be considered Icelandic or Norwegian? Unger (1862, pp. iii, x, xiii) trusts the prologue and believes that there is an ‘i Norge skreven Original’ (Unger, 1862, p. x) [original written in Norway] behind the text of AM 226 fol. Storm (1886a), however, suggests that, while *Stjórn* I and *Stjórn* III are Norwegian, *Stjórn* II and *Stjórn* IV are Icelandic. In Seip’s (1956, esp. pp. 15–16) introduction to his edition of the Icelandic manuscript AM 227 fol. (which contains *Stjórn* I and III), he considers the text to be *A Norwegian Version of the Old Testament Transcribed in Iceland*, as his title demonstrates. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1961b), however, challenges Storm’s argument that *Stjórn* III is Norwegian, demonstrating that its ostensibly Norwegian linguistic features are not unusual in Icelandic works. He highlights instead certain features that point to Icelandic authorship. Later, Selma Jónsdóttir (1971, pp. 13–45) studies the illuminations of AM 227 fol. and concludes that they are influenced by English rather than Norwegian manuscripts, as had previously been thought. This leads her to question whether there was an ‘i Norge skreven Original’ (Unger, 1862, p. x) [original written in

⁵² See also Astås, 1991, p. 11.

Norway] behind *Stjórn*. In her thorough analysis, Selma Jónsdóttir (1971, pp. 49-72) questions the validity of the prologue and concludes that *Stjórn* is probably Icelandic. Neither Kirby (1986) nor Astås (1991; 2009) adopt this view, though both admit that *Stjórn* II is based on an Icelandic original (Kirby, 1986, pp. 56-58; Astås, 2009, i p. xx-xxii). Kirby (1986, pp. 65-66) argues that *Stjórn* III was written by an Icelander living in Norway. There continues to be fierce debate (often along national boundaries) about whether *Stjórn* as a whole, or any of its parts, can be considered Icelandic.⁵³ Consensus (outside of Norway) seems to be leaning towards Icelandic authorship for all parts of the work, as reflected in Grønlie's (2024) recent book analysing *Stjórn*. Much like Seip, Grønlie outlines her view on the origins of *Stjórn* in the title to her book: *The Old Testament in Medieval Icelandic Texts*.⁵⁴

This thesis does not seek to add anything to the debates (national or otherwise) on *Stjórn*'s origins, focusing instead on one manuscript and the text it contains, though for the sake of candour I will admit to being in the Icelandic camp. With the focus on AM 226 fol., which is certainly Icelandic, this thesis considers the context for the texts to be the Icelandic house of canons at Helgafell in the 1350s-1360s.⁵⁵

Stjórn is evidently a fascinating collection of translations, with a rich history and complex relationships to other Old Norse texts, preserved in an arresting collection of

⁵³ See, for example, Jakob Benediktsson, 2004, pp. 28-39; Sverrir Tómasson, 2012, pp. 121-125; Grønlie, 2024, esp. pp. 5-10.

⁵⁴ See also Grønlie's (2024, esp. pp. 5-10) discussion of *Stjórn*'s provenance.

⁵⁵ There is unfortunately not enough space to explore the later addition of *Stjórn* II in this thesis.

manuscripts, many of which are beautifully illuminated. Amongst the various potential avenues for scholarship into *Stjórn*, however, its potential for literary study has been mostly overlooked until recently.⁵⁶ Grønlie's monograph (2024) and collection of articles (2006; 2019; 2022a) demonstrate the rich potential for literary approaches to the texts of *Stjórn*. In Kleivane's (2018, p. 146) book chapter 'There is More to *Stjórn* than Biblical Translation', she writes that 'When translated [Scripture] became interpretation'; it 'could be used to comment on and aid the understanding of most aspects of human life'. Though I agree with this statement, it does not make *Stjórn* 'More [...] than Biblical Translation' (Kleivane, 2018). Biblical translation (as with all translation) is a highly interpretative practice that can reveal the mores of the culture or the values of the translator that renarrates it; this was especially the case in the medieval period. *Stjórn* is valuable not because it goes beyond biblical translation, but because it *is* biblical translation. As such, it is a significant subject for literary study.

Despite the manuscript focus of the present study, it is not anti-edition. In fact, it relies heavily upon editions for all quotations of text. Until Astås' edition was released in 2009, the only edition of the *Stjórn* collection available was Unger's 1862 version. Astås' critical edition is a major improvement, but it has its faults; indeed, its first volume was

⁵⁶ Notable exceptions include Fell's (1973) study of the Joshua translation of *Stjórn* III in comparison with Old English biblical translations, J. Ericksen's (1998) examination of gender and lust in the Fall story of *Stjórn* I, and (arguably) Astås' (1991, pp. 117-148) analysis of the theology of the compiler.

reviewed negatively by Sverrir Tómasson (2012). Sverrir Tómasson (2012, p. 124) criticises Astås' editorial choices: 'He does not describe each MS in orthographical or palaeographical detail [...] This is regrettable, for that would have saved him from taking too many orthographical variants in the footnotes'. Sverrir Tómasson (2012, pp. 125-127) also points out several examples of unfortunate errors in the edited text. Despite this scathing review, I would defend Astås with the words of Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2012, p. 19): 'we must be more tolerant of different types of editions. There are many ways to edit texts and the contents and the extent of the accompanying luggage, commentary et cetera can vary greatly'. Astås can be forgiven (and perhaps even thanked) for providing extensive variants in the edition rather than additional material in the introduction. These variants are particularly useful for this study, which focuses on the text of AM 226 fol. rather than Astås' main manuscript, AM 227 fol. Using these variants, I can get very close to the text in my chosen manuscript. Though the editorial mistakes are unfortunate, they do not prevent a reader proficient in the language from accessing the text. Astås' edition is in many ways far superior to Unger's, and it probably deserves a better critical reception than it received, despite its faults.

This thesis thus uses Astås' edition of *Stjórn* for all its quotations. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations represent the AM 226 fol. text as represented by Astås: this is either a combination of the main manuscript edited by Astås (usually AM 227 fol.) with the AM 226 fol. variants, or, when Astås uses AM 226 fol. as his main text, it is simply Astås' transcription.

Comparison of Astås' edition with the manuscript itself is beyond the scope of this thesis, though I have occasionally consulted the manuscript where the edition is unclear. When it has been necessary to quote the text from another manuscript, Astås' edition is again used (following relevant variants), and the quoted manuscript is noted in the citation.

Rómverja saga

In AM 226 fol., *Stjórn* is followed by *Rómverja saga*, an Old Norse renarration of the history of the Roman Republic. *Rómverja saga* translates and compiles various Latin works, though it is known primarily as a translation of the works of Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus) and Lucan (Marcus Annaeus Lucanus).⁵⁷

Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (1994–1997, pp. 203–204; 2010, p. lxxvii) helpfully divides the saga into six parts based on its sources. The saga begins with a translation of Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum*, followed by a passage providing some historical details and character introductions to prepare the reader for the next part: the translation of Sallust's *Conjuratio Catilinae*. Next, there is a brief description of Roman political history as an introduction to Lucan's *Pharsalia* (or *Bellum Civile*), followed by a prose translation of Lucan's unfinished epic. To finish the story, *Rómverja saga* ends with a passage describing the conclusion of

⁵⁷ For detailed analyses of *Rómverja saga*, exploring its sources, manuscripts, dating, and style, see Rudolf Meissner, 1903; 1910; Jakob Benediktsson, 1980; Hofmann, 1986; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 1986–1989; 1994–1997; 2010; Würth, 1998, esp. 13–37; 2005, esp. pp. 164–165; 2009; Liepe, 2006; Svala Lind Birnudóttir, 2017; Bartusik, 2019a; 2019b; Bradley, 2022; Kathleen Cruz, 2024.

Caesar's battles in Rome and a very brief description of the events that follow, up until the foundation of the Roman Empire and the birth of Christ.

The three main source texts for *Rómverja saga* are obvious. However, since numerous manuscripts containing different versions of these works (particularly Lucan's epic) were in circulation in the medieval period, scholars have attempted to determine the exact source text used for the translation, as well as to identify any other possible sources for the saga.⁵⁸ Þorbjörg Helgadóttir's (1986-1989; 1994-1997; 2010, pp. lxxvii-cxxvi) thorough research for her edition provides a useful guide to the likely sources, highlighting manuscripts and editions of texts that are as close as possible to the original source. She identifies the closest surviving manuscript of Sallust to be the tenth-century Codex Parisinus 10195 (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 1986-1989; 1994-1997, pp. 204-206; 2010, pp. lxxvii-lxxx).⁵⁹ For the Lucan source, Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (1994-1997, pp. 206-207; 2010, pp. lxxx-lxxxiii) singles out four manuscripts that bear the closest resemblance to the Old Norse text: Codex Parisinus 7502, Codex Bruxellensis 5330-32, Codex Vossianus XIX F. 63, and Codex Vossianus XIX Q. 51.⁶⁰

The sources for the linking and framing passages in the saga are, however, more evasive. Rudolf Meissner (1910, pp. 305-306) proposes that one source for the passage

⁵⁸ See Meissner, 1903, pp. 660-672; 1910, pp. 152-159; Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, pp. 18-22; Hofmann, 1986; Würth, 1998, pp. 20-23; Bartusik, 2019a, pp. 109-112; 2019b, pp. 19-21, 24, 193-206.

⁵⁹ See also Meissner, 1910, pp. 152-156, and Würth, 1998, pp. 20-22.

⁶⁰ See also Meissner, 1910, pp. 156-157, and Würth, 1998, pp. 22-23.

connecting the Sallust translations is a commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia*, specifically, something close to the manuscript Codex Berolinensis Nr. 34. Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, p. lxxxiii) agrees but adds that the source *scholia* must have been more extensive than that within this manuscript, highlighting Arnulf of Orleans' twelfth-century commentary as an example of a longer commentary collection. There are, however, still parts of this linking passage for which no source has been identified.⁶¹

The text linking the Sallust and Lucan translations and the passage concluding the saga are based upon an *accessus*, or introduction, to Lucan's text; this *accessus* must have contained a *summa historiae*, which describes the essential background information about Roman history to contextualise the epic (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. lxxxvi). This framing text has been the focus of significant scholarly interest,⁶² since it appears to have parallels in *Veraldar saga*, *Clemens saga*, and the account of world history in AM 764 4to, all of which Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. lxxxix-cviii) helpfully prints side-by-side in her introduction. In her accompanying analysis, Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. lxxxvi-cxii) concludes that each of these texts independently uses a common source: an Old Norse

⁶¹ See Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. lxxxiii-lxxxvi.

⁶² See Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, pp. 20-22; Hofmann, 1986; 1997, pp. 59-71; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 1994-1997, pp. 210-213; Würth, 1998, pp. 175-176, 178; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000, esp. pp. 164-166; Bartusik, 2019b, pp. 171-177.

This section is particularly important for this thesis as it contains part of the story of Cleopatra, analysed in Chapter Four.

translation of an extended *summa historiae*.⁶³ This conclusion has been challenged by, for example, Grzegorz Bartusik (2019b, pp. 176-177), who prefers Jakob Benediktsson (1980, pp. 20-22) and Hofmann's (1986; 1997, pp. 59-71) view that an older version of *Rómverja saga* was used as the source for AM 764 4to, *Veraldar saga*, and *Clemens saga*. This allows Bartusik (2019b, pp. 149, 174) to widen the proposed readership of the saga to include, for example, the nunnery at Reynistaður. Although an explicitly female readership would naturally be of interest for a study of gender, if the nuns working on or with AM 764 4to did read a version of *Rómverja saga*, it was certainly not the version preserved in AM 226 fol., which is at times shorter than the corresponding text in AM 764 4to, with significant wording differences.⁶⁴ This thesis thus maintains its view of an (intended) male readership for the text of AM 226 fol.

There are a few other minor sources, outlined by Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. cxiii-cxxii).⁶⁵ There has also been significant speculation on the sources and provenance of two later additions to one manuscript of the saga, AM 595 a-b 4to, connecting (or perhaps separating) the two Sallust texts.⁶⁶ These passages are sometimes called *Upphaf Rómverja I*

⁶³ See also Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 1994-1997, pp. 210-213.

⁶⁴ See Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁵ See also Meissner, 1910, pp. 224-235, and Hofmann, 1986, pp. 137-151.

⁶⁶ See Meissner, 1903; Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, pp. 9-13, 18-20; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 1994-1997, pp. 213-214; 2010, pp. xv, xxix-xxxiii; Würth, 1998, p. 25.

(fols 29v–30r) and *Upphaf Rómverja II* (fol. 30v), and they have been considered separately from the main text of *Rómverja saga*.⁶⁷

Rómverja saga was initially written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, though scholars debate the exact date of authorship.⁶⁸ Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (1994–1997, p. 214; 2010, pp. cxciv–cxcv) suggests that the saga was written in the Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar, compiling already-extant Old Norse translations of the sources that probably had an educational purpose. *Rómverja saga* was, however, reworked and significantly shortened at a later date; ‘When this took place is not possible to determine’ (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, p. cxcviii). The saga is thus preserved in two main versions: an earlier and a later redaction.⁶⁹

The earlier version is extant only in AM 595 a–b 4to: a manuscript dating to 1325–1350 that is poorly preserved and contains several lacunae, particularly in the latter half.⁷⁰ It is unlikely that this version of the text was used in the creation of the later redaction, since

⁶⁷ Konráð Gíslason (1860, pp. v–vi) prints them separately in his edition; Meissner (2010) excluded them from his edition entirely; and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (*Róm* pp. 224–229) includes them both but notes that *Upphaf I* is an addition.

⁶⁸ See Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, pp. 22–24; Hofmann, 1986; Würth, 1998, pp. 35–37; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. cxciv–cxcv; Bartusik, 2019b, pp. 204–206. Meissner’s (1910, p. 160) dating of the saga to the late thirteenth century is no longer considered viable.

⁶⁹ See Meissner, 1910, pp. 132–137; Jakob Benediktsson, 1980, p. 7; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, xv–xlix.

⁷⁰ See Meissner, 1910, pp. 132–134, 138–148; Jakob Benediktsson, 1980; Würth, 1998, p. 15; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. xv–xxxv; Bartusik, 2019b, pp. 141–145.

Meissner (1910, pp. 148-152) has identified that the later version is often closer to the Latin originals than the text of AM 595 a-b 4to. The later redaction is found in several manuscripts and fragments, both vellum and paper, including the object of the present study, AM 226 fol.⁷¹ Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, p. lxxvi) believes this manuscript contains the entirety of the later redaction of *Rómverja saga*, and thus uses it for her semi-diplomatic edition. This thesis quotes from Þorbjörg Helgadóttir's edition (*Róm*). None of the episodes discussed in this thesis are extant in the earlier version within AM 595 a-b 4to.

There has been much scholarly interest in the style and literary features of *Rómverja saga*.⁷² The sources combined by the saga are written in a mix of verse and prose, and they display quite contradictory views towards some of the characters; Lucan, for example, heaps poetic praise onto Pompey and slanders Caesar, whereas Sallust is pro-Caesar.⁷³ In *Rómverja saga*, however, these authorities are merged into one coherent prose text: a feat that has necessitated several changes and alterations to the originals. There are also numerous features of *Rómverja saga* that do not result from the unusual combination of sources but instead seem to reflect changing interests in the saga's various parts. For example, Meissner (1910, pp. 162-170) has identified the special interest given to speeches and Latin rhetoric, particularly in

⁷¹ See Meissner, 1910, pp. 134-137; Würth, 1998, pp. 16-19; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. xxxvi-lxxvi; Bartusik, 2019b, pp. 146-155.

⁷² See Meissner, 1903; 1910, esp. pp. 159-287; Würth, 1998, esp. pp. 24-35; 2005, pp. 164-165; 2009; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. cxxvi-cc; Bradley, 2022; Cruz, 2024.

⁷³ See Meissner, 1910, pp. 225-270; Würth, 1998, p. 30; 2009, p. 164.

the earlier redaction, and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. clxx-clxxxix) has closely compared (where possible) the translations within the earlier and later redactions. Würth (1998, p. 254), furthermore, argues that the earlier redaction of *Rómverja saga* was used as a model for later translations, like *Alexanders saga*.⁷⁴

Alexanders saga

In AM 226 fol., *Rómverja saga* is followed by *Alexanders saga*, a prose translation of Walter of Châtillon's twelfth century epic: the *Alexandreis*.⁷⁵ The saga narrates the story of Alexander the Great and his many military conquests across the world. The saga will only be dealt with briefly here. As *Alexanders saga* contains few female characters, who are not explored in much depth, it is only discussed occasionally within this thesis. The inclusion of the male-centred *Alexanders saga* within AM 226 fol. demonstrates that the roles and depictions of women were not of high importance when the texts were selected for inclusion in the compilation.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ See also Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. cxvii-cxviii.

⁷⁵ For detailed analyses of *Alexanders saga*, see Unger, 1848; Finnur Jónsson, 1925; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1961a; Jón Helgason, 1966; Hallberg, 1977; Wolf, 1988; Würth, 1996; 1998, esp. pp. 100-118; 2005, pp. 167-168; Ashurst, 1997; 1998-2001; 2000; 2002, pp. 82-91; 2009; Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, 2009; Pettersson, 2009; David Ashurst and Francesco Vitti, 2011; Alenka Divjak, 2014; Kim P. Middel, 2014; Richard North, 2021.

⁷⁶ Compare with, for example, the manuscript AM 764 4to (*UH*). Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2000, p. 143) writes of this manuscript, 'The selection of biblical passages in 764, with its gallery of female characters, reflects the audience for which they were in all likelihood intended: novices, women and girls, at the convent of Reynistaður'.

As this study hopes to demonstrate, however, when scenes involving women were written into the manuscript, concerns and anxieties about female routes to power reveal themselves.

Alexanders saga was originally translated in the mid-thirteenth century; as with *Stjórn*, there has been some debate about whether this took place in Iceland or Norway.⁷⁷ A longer version of the saga is preserved in the vellum manuscripts AM 519 a 4to (from c. 1280) and AM 655 XXIX 4to.⁷⁸ The saga was at some point shortened, and then transmitted alongside the later redaction of *Rómverja saga*.⁷⁹ This is the version found in AM 226 fol., as well as AM 225 fol., Holm Perg 24 4to, and various paper manuscripts.⁸⁰ The shorter version is also accompanied by *Bref Alexandri Magni*, a late thirteenth or early fourteenth century translation of *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.⁸¹ In AM 226 fol., the epilogue to *Gyðinga saga* (discussed further below) names Brandr Jónsson as the translator of both *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga*

⁷⁷ See Unger, 1848, pp. vi-vii; Finnur Jónsson, 1925, pp. i-ii; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1961a; Jón Helgason, 1966, pp. vii-xix; Würth, 1996, pp. 290-296; 1998, pp. 117-118; Ashurst, 2009, pp. 26-27, 31-33; De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009, pp. 7-8; Ashurst and Vitti, 2011, pp. 315-317.

⁷⁸ See Unger, 1848, pp. vii-xii, xiv-xv; Finnur Jónsson, 1925, pp. iii-xiii; Jón Helgason, 1966, pp. xix-xxvii; Würth, 1998, pp. 101-103; De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009, pp. 6-9, 19-163; Pettersson, 2009, pp. 34-36; Ashurst and Vitti, 2011, pp. 317-318.

⁷⁹ See Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. cxcviii-cxcix.

⁸⁰ See Unger, 1848, pp. xii-xiv, xv; Finnur Jónsson, 1925, pp. ix-xiii; Jón Helgason, 1966, pp. xix-xxvii; Würth, 1998, pp. 101-103; De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009, pp. 6-7, 8-9; Pettersson, 2009, pp. 34-36; Ashurst and Vitti, 2011, pp. 317-318.

⁸¹ See Unger, 1848, p. xiii; Finnur Jónsson, 1925, pp. xvii-xx; Pólv Skárup, 1991; Würth, 1998, pp. 145-147; Ashurst and Vitti, 2011, pp. 322-323.

saga; there is much debate about the authenticity of this epilogue, particularly its comments on *Alexanders saga*.⁸²

Since the older and longer version of *Alexanders saga* is extant in an almost complete form in AM 519 a 4to, this version has been the focus of both scholarly and editorial work. The long version is particularly fruitful for the study of translation techniques in the medieval North, since the text in AM 519 a 4to is believed to be very close to that of the original translation, and it is close in time to when Walter of Châtillon originally wrote the *Alexandreis*.⁸³ Unlike with *Rómverja saga*, the short version of *Alexanders saga* remains unedited.

All four editions (Unger, 1848; Finnur Jónsson, 1925; Jón Helgason, 1966; Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, 2009) of the saga focus primarily or exclusively on the text of AM 519 a 4to: only Finnur Jónsson (1925) includes variants from other manuscripts, but his apparatus is minimal. Since there is no edition of the saga in AM 226 fol. available, I use the most recent edition (De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009) but compare the text against the version in AM 226 fol. using the digital facsimiles on *Handrit.is*. De Leeuw van Weenen's (2009) edition provides in print a facsimile transcription of AM 519 a 4to, but the accompanying CD-ROM

⁸² See Unger, 1848, pp. vi-vii; Finnur Jónsson, 1925, pp. i-ii; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1961a; Jón Helgason, 1966, pp. xxvii-xxix; Hallberg, 1977; Wolf, 1988; Würth, 1996, pp. 291-296; 1998, pp. 117-118; De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009, pp. 7-8; Ashurst and Vitti, 2011, pp. 315-317.

⁸³ See Würth, 1996, pp. 298-301; 1998, p. 107; Ashurst, 2009, p. 26; De Leeuw van Weenen, 2009, p. 7; Pettersson, 2009, pp. 23-29.

includes three levels of transcription (facsimile, diplomatic, and normalised) alongside other resources.⁸⁴ Since the orthography of AM 519 a 4to is not of interest here, I quote from the normalised edition (*Alex.norm*), noting the folio on which the complementary text is found in AM 226 fol. All comments on *Alexanders saga* in the main body of this thesis have been cross-checked with AM 226 fol. to ensure they accurately represent the content of this manuscript.

Gyðinga saga

The final text within AM 226 fol. is *Gyðinga saga*, which renarrates various stories of Jewish history.⁸⁵ Würth (1998) considers *Gyðinga saga* in her study of the pseudo-histories, or

⁸⁴ De Leeuw van Weenen (2009, p. 2) acknowledges, ‘the lifespan of a CD-ROM is still a largely unknown quantity’. The CD-ROM aspect of De Leeuw van Weenen’s edition presented many challenges in this study, written only sixteen years after its release. None of the laptops on which I have written this thesis have had a disk drive for reading CD-ROMs. Many of Oxford’s libraries claim to have loanable disk drives for readers, but whenever I enquired, there were never any available. Most of the libraries’ computers now also do not have disk drives. I therefore had to hunt down the appropriate equipment to be able to access the CD-ROM content. I then struggled with the interface, perhaps partly because I was using an unfamiliar library computer. Many of the help links were no longer live. I was therefore reliant on the PDF files of the diplomatic and normalised texts, since I was unable to make the more interactive elements work. Though digital techniques certainly present rich opportunities for editing texts, De Leeuw van Weenen (2009, p. 2) was right to question the lifespan of the CD-ROM.

⁸⁵ On *Gyðinga saga*, including its sources, manuscripts, authorship, provenance, style, and treatment of Judaism, see Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881; Storm, 1886a, pp. 253-256; Einar Ol. Sveinsson, 1961a; Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 1964, cols 378-379; 1985; Jón Helgason, 1975; Howard Martin, 1975; Annabelle Flores Fersch, 1982; Kirby, 1986, esp. pp. 75-79, 105-106, 121-126; 2000, pp. 290, 292, 297; Wolf, 1986; 1987-1988; 1988; 1990a; 1990b; 1991a; 1991b; 1991c; 1995; Würth, 1998, esp. pp. 82-99; 2005, pp. 166-167; Thomas N. Hall, 1999; Ashurst, 2011; Cole, 2015a, esp. pp. 174-231.

Antikenromane, alongside *Rómverja saga*, *Alexanders saga*, *Trójumanna saga*, and *Breta sögur*.⁸⁶

Due to the saga's biblical associations, however, it is also often considered alongside *Stjórn*; its use of sources in particular draws comparison with *Stjórn* III and *Stjórn* IV.⁸⁷ The saga thus rests uneasily between the lines of modern genres but is quite at home in the AM 226 fol. compilation.

The use of sources throughout the saga suggests a tripartite structure.⁸⁸ The first part primarily translates the First Book of Maccabees, with additions from II Maccabees and Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HS*). The second part is based on Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*; it tells the stories of John Hyrcanus and his family, Roman rule over Judaea, and the dynasty of Herod. The third and final part renarrates the life of Pontius Pilate, with an addition about Judas Iscariot. Hans Bekker-Nielsen (1964, col. 379) initially proposed that this part is based upon Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, but Jón Helgason (1975, p. 362) instead argues that *Gyðinga saga* and the *Legenda* have a common source: the so-called *Historia Apocrypha* used by Jacobus.⁸⁹ Throughout all parts of the saga, Flavius Josephus' *Antiquitates*

⁸⁶ See also Würth, 2005, p. 167, and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, p. cc.

⁸⁷ See Storm, 1886a, pp. 253-256; Kirby, 1986, pp. 75-79, 105-106, 121-126; 2000, pp. 290, 297.

⁸⁸ See Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881, pp. v-vii; Storm, 1886a, pp. 253-255; Fersch, 1982, pp. vii, x-xvi; Kirby, 1986, pp. 75-76, 105-106; Wolf, 1986, pp. 47-48; 1990b; 1991c, pp. 152-153, 154-166; 1995, pp. lxxxviii-c; Würth, 1998, pp. 86-93.

⁸⁹ See also Jón Helgason, 1975, pp. 361-364; Fersch, 1982, pp. xi-xii; Kirby, 1986, pp. 75-76; Wolf, 1986, pp. 48-51; 1987-1988, pp. 240-244; 1990b, pp. 150-151; 1995, pp. xcvi-c; Würth, 1998, pp. 91-93.

Judaicae (*AJud*) and *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJud*) have been suggested as additional sources;⁹⁰ Wolf (1995, p. xcii), however, argues that influence from Josephus came through an intermediary source, like a more extensive version of Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* than that available in modern editions. No source has been identified for some of the historical details throughout the saga.⁹¹ Thomas N. Hall (1999), however, suggests Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* as a possible source for Herod's burning of Jewish genealogies (*Gyð* 30:148).

The saga ends with a summary of Jewish history (for which there is no clear source)⁹² and an epilogue naming Brandr Jónsson as the author of both *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga saga* (*Gyð* 39:219-220).⁹³ Although the attribution of *Alexanders saga* to Brandr Jónsson is often dismissed, many scholars do accept him as the author of *Gyðinga saga*. Wolf (1995, p. lxxxiii), for example, writes, 'As there are no other documents extant or no other evidence to prove that anyone else wrote GS [*Gyðinga saga*], one is obliged to place some credence in the testimonial of the epilogue'. The epilogue also implies that the translation of *Gyðinga saga* was made at the request of the Norwegian King Magnús Hákonarson. These details, combined

⁹⁰ See Storm, 1886a, pp. 254-255; Jón Helgason, 1975, p. 360; Fersch, 1982, pp. xiv-xv; Wolf, 1990b, pp. 144-145, 148, 152-153; 1995, pp. xc-xcii, xcv-xcvi, c.

⁹¹ See Fersch, 1982, pp. xv-xvi; Wolf, 1990b, pp. 146-149, 152-153; 1995, pp. xcii-xcv, xcvi-c.

⁹² See also Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881, pp. vii; Wolf, 1986, p. 51; 1990b, p. 153; 1995, p. c.

⁹³ On the epilogue and the provenance of *Gyðinga saga*, see Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881, pp. vii-ix; Storm, 1886a, pp. 253-256; Einar Ol. Sveinsson, 1961a; Fersch, 1982, pp. viii-ix; Kirby, 1986, pp. 75-79; Wolf, 1986, pp. 51-53; 1988; 1990a; 1991c, pp. 154-166; 1995, pp. lxxxiii-lxxxvii, ci-cxxxviii; Würth, 1998, pp. 98-99; Ashurst, 2011, pp. 134-136; Cole, 2015a, pp. 193-213.

See also the discussions of authorship for *Alexanders saga* listed above.

with linguistic and literary aspects of the saga itself, suggest original composition in the mid-thirteenth century, perhaps during Brandr Jónsson's stay in Norway in 1262-1263. This thesis, however, does not name Brandr Jónsson as the saga author in its analysis. Due to the New Philological tilt of this study, the object of focus here is not the (re)constructed work and its original author/translator, but the text version extant in AM 226 fol. This was written down almost a century after Brandr Jónsson's death in 1264.

Like *Rómverja saga* and *Alexanders saga*, *Gyðinga saga* is extant in a long and short redaction, though the earlier, longer version is only preserved in fragments in AM 655 XXV 4to and AM 238 XVII fol.⁹⁴ The shorter version is preserved in AM 226 fol., AM 225 fol., AM 229 fol., and several paper manuscripts.⁹⁵ Wolf's (1995, pp. lxiv-lxvii) comparison of the extant versions of the long and short redactions concludes that the text in AM 226 fol. has been reduced by about one-third. Wolf (1995, p. lxvii) suggests that this shortening was mostly done by one redactor, who worked sometime in the first half of the fourteenth century.

The first edition of any part of *Gyðinga saga* was made by Unger, who printed only the third part in his collection of *Postola sögur* (1874, pp. 151-159). He called the text *Saga af Pilatus*. Although the text was later edited in full (under the name *Gyðinga saga*) by

⁹⁴ See Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881, pp. xiii; Einar Ol. Sveinsson, 1961a, pp. 239-242; Jón Helgason, 1975, p. 344; Wolf, 1986, pp. 45-46; 1991a, p. 190; 1995, pp. xiii-xiv, xxxiii-l, lxiii-lxvi; Würth, 1998, pp. 83-84.

⁹⁵ See Guðmundur Þorláksson, 1881, pp. ix-xiii; Jón Helgason, 1975; Martin, 1975; Kirby, 1986, pp. 121-126; Wolf, 1986, pp. 45-46; 1991a; 1995, pp. xiii-xxxiii, l-lxxxii; Würth, 1998, pp. 84-86.

Guðmundur Þorláksson (1881), it is still often separated into its various parts in scholarly analysis.⁹⁶ Storm (1886a, p. 255) even argues that the different parts have different translators, with Brandr Jónsson only producing the Maccabees translation.⁹⁷ After comparing the stylistic features of each part of the saga, however, Wolf (1995, pp. ci-cxxxviii) concludes that they were originally written by the same man (presumably Brandr Jónsson), but perhaps at slightly different times due to certain dissimilarities. Wolf (1995) prints the saga as one unit in her parallel-text edition which includes a semi-diplomatic transcription of all textually significant versions of the saga, as well as a suggested source. Jón Helgason (1975) has also produced an edition of one paper manuscript containing a fragment of the final part of the saga. This thesis quotes from Wolf's transcription of the text in AM 226 fol.

While *Gyðinga saga* renarrates Jewish history, it is important to remember that it was translated by a Christian and transmitted by Christian scribes. In his study of Jews in the medieval North, Richard Cole (2015a, esp. pp. 220-231) identifies and analyses the 'philo-Semitism' within *Gyðinga saga*; a word which can in simple terms be defined as 'the eulogising or identification with Jews' (Cole, 2015a, p. 39).⁹⁸ The Christian writer behind *Gyðinga saga* (which Cole names as Brandr Jónsson) treats the Jewish people with sympathy and their customs with interest in the saga. Philo-Semitism, however, is still problematic; as Cole

⁹⁶ See Kirby, 1986; 2000; Ashurst, 2011.

⁹⁷ See also Bekker-Nielsen, 1985, and Kirby, 1986, p. 76.

⁹⁸ For an extensive investigation and definition of the term, see Cole, 2015a, pp. 174-177.

(2015a, p. 177) writes, ‘By no means should philo-Semitism be regarded as entirely benign. Even though it is not slanderous, like any ethnically oriented mode of thought it is still fallacious’. This tension between Jewish subject, Christian translator, and philo-Semitism informs the analysis of *Gyðinga saga* within this thesis, particularly in Chapter Five, which analyses the Maccabean martyrs.

Selected Methodological Comments

The present thesis examines the depiction of female verbal power within the texts of AM 226 fol. primarily through close literary analysis. Informed by translation theory, this thesis compares the Old Norse translations against modern editions of the source material. Herein lies the first methodological difficulty to be discussed here: the exact sources of the texts under examination have not survived to the modern day.

Source Material

I have outlined above the scholarly debates surrounding the sources for the texts within AM 226 fol. Throughout this thesis, I am guided by this scholarship on the closest possible sources available and, particularly, the best editions in which to access this material. Nevertheless, as many of the source texts (for example, Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica* and Lucan’s *Pharsalia*) were widely circulated in numerous different versions in the medieval period, modern

editions often fail to exhibit the variety of the medieval textual tradition. As Jonas Wellendorf (2011, p. 322) writes, in this type of study, ‘An imminent danger exists, therefore, that the investigator will eventually make statements about differences and similarities between two or more isolated texts that might not have a direct relationship with each other’. While this ‘danger’ may well be ‘imminent’ (Wellendorf, 2011, p. 322), it is not so omnipotent that this methodological approach should be feared or shunned. One might recall Toury’s (2012, p. 180) comment that, if waiting for (near-)perfect methods to examine translations, ‘we might never get any research done’. It can be said with almost certainty that we will never have the exact source texts used by the Old Norse translators in medieval Iceland and Norway, though future research and editorial work will hopefully bring us ever closer to the sources. Thus, in order to examine the potential differences between source and target text for these translations, a certain level of ambiguity must be accepted. Every statement made within this thesis about the addition, omission, or alteration of material in the Old Norse translation must therefore consistently be underscored with the understanding that this is *as far as can be discerned with current resources*. This, in many ways, is not too different from the caveat behind all scholarship, which is constantly being challenged and updated as new editions, resources, and ideas come to light.

When analysing material for which the source is particularly elusive or ambiguous (like the classical subjects considered in Chapters Three and Four), I search beyond the

sources suggested in previous scholarship. This is not necessarily in the hope of identifying new sources, but rather to exemplify the possible ideas or traditions that might have been available to the translator. The texts of AM 226 fol. can then be compared against these circulating ideas about female figures and their stories, rather than against specific texts. This approach illuminates not only the Old Norse translator's practice, but also possible medieval traditions that have not yet been studied.

Writers and Readers

The study of these Old Norse translations is complicated not only by the (lack of) extant source material, but also by the loss of the original translation. This is one of the concerns raised by Wellendorf (2011, pp. 321-322) for this type of study. While the long version of *Alexanders saga* is believed to be quite close to the original translation, perhaps only one step removed (see Würth, 1996, pp. 300-301; 1998, p. 107), the same cannot be said of the texts within AM 226 fol. The manuscript includes the short version of all the sagas, which have been not only copied but also redacted. The texts of *Stjórn* all have such complex transmission histories it is difficult to determine how far each is from the original translation, but I do not assume that they are close to it. New Philology is helpful here, since this theoretical movement reduces the importance of any supposed original work. A scholar does not need to (re)construct what might have been in the original translation to analyse the texts, the focus can instead be on the extant witnesses.

This approach can, however, cause some complications when writing literary scholarship, since the dismissal of a (re)constructed archetypal work simultaneously disregards the concept of a singular original ‘author’. As Elizabeth Ashman Rowe (2005, p. 394) neatly puts it, ‘manuscripts are the products of multiple consciousnesses of authors, scribes, illuminators, correctors, annotators and other readers engaged in a process of multiple rewritings, with each as likely to contest the meanings asserted by the others as to support them’. For the purposes of this study, it is not important to distinguish between the different renarrations made by each contributor (a task that may well be impossible) or to engage in debates about authorship in the medieval North.⁹⁹ The focus is instead upon the contents of AM 226 fol., considered as a summation of various processes of translation, renarration, compilation, redaction, and text production.

When writing a literary study, however, (especially one that compares a translation against a source text) something or someone must be ascribed the agency behind the text production and the changes that have taken place between source and target text. This agency could be an author (named or unnamed), but this is problematised by the New Philological approach. Alternatively, agency could be ascribed to the text itself (e.g., ‘*Stjórn* adds/*Rómverja saga* omits/*Gyðinga saga* changes...’) or the problem avoided altogether by rendering everything in the passive (as I have attempted thus far before introducing the

⁹⁹ On medieval authorship and writing practices in Iceland and Scandinavia, see, for example, Slavica Ranković and others, eds, 2012, and Eriksen, 2014.

approach for the rest of the thesis). These options are, however, inelegant or problematic in their own way. I have therefore decided to use the word ‘translator’ to denote the agency behind the texts of AM 226 fol. This word must in all cases be interpreted as a catch-all term that includes all the ‘multiple consciousnesses’ (Rowe, 2005, p. 394) that have contributed to text production: translators, compilers, redactors, and copyists.¹⁰⁰ I also occasionally use the word ‘compiler’, with the same broad, encompassing meaning, when discussing situations that appear to be the result of compilatory rather than translatory activities. This reads more naturally, though it must be noted that it is not an attempt to distinguish between the actions of the translator(s) and compiler(s). The term ‘translator’ is not ideal, as it risks undermining the variety of text-production practices it hopes to represent, but it is the best solution I have at present.

The term ‘translator’ is used to describe the agency behind all the texts within AM 226 fol.; the individual sagas and parts of *Stjórn* are not distinguished in this use of terminology. This is to acknowledge the unity of the manuscript, in which all texts (except *Stjórn* II) share at least a scribe. This scribe would have had the final say on the contents of each text within AM 226 fol. Therefore, although all sagas and each part of *Stjórn* have distinct textual transmissions, and thus are the products of very different collections of

¹⁰⁰ A similar approach is taken by Ashurst (2009) in his study of empire in the *Alexanders saga* of AM 519 a 4to.

‘consciousnesses’ (Rowe, 2005, p. 394), they are tied together by at least the final stage of text production, as they are written into AM 226 fol.

As the manuscript was written at the Augustinian house in Helgafell, it is assumed that the scribe is male. Although recent research reveals the possibility that women were involved in textual production in the medieval North (see, for example, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000), the evidence for this is so sparse that it can be assumed that most, if not all, the ‘consciousnesses’ (Rowe, 2005, p. 394) behind the texts studied here are male.¹⁰¹ I thus assume male authorship and use male (singular) pronouns to represent the ‘translator’.

As discussed above, the manuscript was intended to be read by men, most likely those in the house of canons in which it was written. Though the intended readership was therefore male, there is evidence that the manuscript was read by at least one woman before it was collected by Árni Magnússon. The name ‘Auðni Benediktsdóttir’ appears in the top margin of folio 95r, written in runes. Bartusik (2019b, pp. 148-149) has suggested that this female scribe is Arnfríður Benediktsdóttir, the aunt of Magnús Björnsson, who owned AM 226 fol. in the early seventeenth century. Although the reasons this scribe wrote her name in runes on folio 95r, above the translation of II Samuel 24, remain obscure, her inscription becomes a kind of speech act,¹⁰² asserting the presence of female readers in the manuscript’s history.

¹⁰¹ Wolf (2006, p. 291), for example, writes in conclusion to her study of potential female scribal activity, ‘it seems to have been, at least in Iceland and England, altogether outside the scope of women to concern themselves with writing’.

¹⁰² On speech act theory, see the discussion below and Chapter One.

Though this manuscript was written by and for men, women have and (as the present author demonstrates) continue to engage with AM 226 fol.

Selection and Analysis of Subjects

AM 226 fol. is brimming with female figures deserving of literary analysis: far too many to discuss adequately within one thesis, even with the focus on one specific theme. This thesis thus selects moments for analysis where the female voice appears to be particularly emphasised within the Old Norse translation. This method is common in Old Norse studies; Jenny Jochens (1991a, p. 3) writes, ‘we need to fly like hawks, surveying the entire landscape [...] and diving for details when they appear’. This thesis dives towards specific verbs. Within the texts of AM 226 fol., verbs like *eggja* [to incite] (or its noun form *áeggjan* [incitement]) and *lokka* [to entice] appear at significant moments in which women influence men using their voice. It therefore seems pertinent to focus, for the most part, on the scenes in which these words appear. This thesis can thus be considered an *eggja* hunt through AM 226 fol.

The approach here, however, is quite different from that of Jochens (1991a, p. 3); while her hawk dives only for ‘details’, this thesis drills down deeply at moments that glisten. Many of the female figures within the texts of AM 226 fol. have never been studied in Old Norse translation; those which have been analysed previously still do not have a body of scholarship comparable to that of figures within the *Íslendingasögur*, for example. It therefore seems pertinent to go beyond the selection of dispersed surface details relevant to the female voice

and instead investigate in more detail the women who speak in these important moments. This thesis thus presents a more holistic analysis of the female figures it selects for study, though the focus is always upon that figure's verbal power and its interpretation within and beyond the narrative.

Where possible, the analysis offers some comparison between the depiction of the female figure and her speech act in AM 226 fol. and other extant (edited) versions of the story. In his analysis of New Philology and its drawbacks, Cole (2018, p. 525) writes, 'in divorcing the manuscript from the Neo-Platonic form of the work, we risk [...] sealing our manuscript off from the relationships it might otherwise enjoy as one constituent among other textual witnesses'. Though the focus in this thesis is upon one specific manuscript, other versions of the texts can inform and contextualise the version studied here. For example, in Chapter Three, the analysis of Jezebel and her incitements is enriched by consideration of other manuscripts containing *Stjórn* III, which helps fill in the gap left by a missing folio and demonstrates the differences between the depiction of Jezebel in AM 226 fol. and other surviving versions. In many places, however, it has not been possible to compare the depictions more widely, as the version in AM 226 fol. is the only account of the section in question that has survived and been edited. For example, in *Rómverja saga*, the text detailing Arsinoe IV and Cleopatra VII's stories (analysed in Chapters Three and Four respectively)

does not survive in the earlier redaction of the saga in AM 595 a-b 4to. In cases like this, the focus remains solely on AM 226 fol.

Due to the lack of Old Norse scholarship for many of the figures selected for analysis here, I frequently rely upon classical and biblical scholarship, which considers either the historical women (where relevant) or the depiction of the figures in the source texts. The use of this scholarship generally increases as the thesis progresses, since some of the figures analysed in the earlier chapters (e.g., Eve, Jezebel, and Delilah) have already been considered by Old Norse scholars (most pertinently, Grønlie, 2024). Figures like Cleopatra, the Maccabean mother, and Jephthah's daughter, appearing later in the thesis, have never been studied in Old Norse translation.

Sex and Gender

Old Norse texts (generally) contain within them a cisnormative, binary view of sex and gender. Though some scholarship rightly draws attention to the moments in the literary corpus where such binaries are challenged, this is not the focus of the present work. The study of trans* identities and trans*ness is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Carol Clover's (1993) one-sex model has become famous enough to deserve a note here. Clover (1993, p. 380) argues that there is a gendered dividing line, not between male and female, but instead between 'able-bodied men (and the exceptional woman)' and 'a kind of rainbow coalition of everyone else (most women, children, slaves, and old, disabled, or

otherwise disenfranchised men)'. This model, while offering an interesting new perspective on views towards sex and gender in the medieval North, has been widely criticised and convincingly refuted by, for example, Gareth Lloyd Evans (2019, pp. 10-26; 2020, esp. pp. 60-62). Clover's model also does not accurately describe the binary glimpsed within the manuscript AM 226 fol.: though men are often weak (like King Ahab, explored in Chapter Three) and women often exceptional (like the Maccabean mother analysed in Chapter Five), their fundamental sex and gender distinctions are maintained. This thesis thus does not use Clover's one-sex model in its analysis of the texts in AM 226 fol.

Verbal Power

This thesis uses the word 'power' in line with the framework laid out by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, esp. pp. 8-9), based on the work of Max Weber (1978a; 1978b). The word 'power' is thus used 'in the broadest possible sense as every imposition of a person's or group's will, in every conceivable range of situations [...] whether this imposition meets any opposition or not' (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 8). Power over others, for which Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir uses M. Weber's (1978b, p. 38) concept of *Herrschaft* or 'domination', can be achieved in various ways:

This kind of power does not have to be in any way socially sanctioned [...] Coercion may or may not be necessary to accomplish domination; force can be achieved not just with physical threat [...] However, the dominated person or group might also comply because they consider this to be in their best interest, based on a purely rational assessment of advantage [...] Conversely,

obedience can be habitual; people obey commands without challenging them simply because they are used to so doing. (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, pp. 8-9)

Since Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013) has already analysed concepts of power in her study of women in Old Norse literature, this thesis does not engage with ideas about power beyond the acceptance of this model. It is worth noting, however, that in Jean Baudrillard's theories of seduction, used to aid the analysis in Chapter Four, Baudrillard (1979, esp. pp. 64-71; trans. Brian Singer, 1990, pp. 44-49) considers seduction to be a force of influence distinct from power. Using Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's/M. Weber's broad definition of power, however, this distinction is considered unnecessary for the present purposes.¹⁰³

In the analysis of female verbal power, this thesis relies heavily upon speech act theory, particularly John R. Searle's (1979, pp. 1-29) taxonomy of speech acts. Speech act theory was popularised by J. L. Austin in a series of lectures delivered at Harvard University and published posthumously as *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin's fundamental premise is that speech can be considered an action: 'to say something is to do something' (Austin's emphasis, 1975, p. 12). Austin (1975, esp. pp. 1-11, 67-164) tries to distinguish between verbal utterances that do not act (the 'constatives') and those that do (the 'performatives'), but Sandy Petrey (1990, p. 22) argues that 'the constative is in all its features assimilable to the performative'. Austin, Petrey (1990, p. 22) argues, knew this in some way: '*How to Do Things*

¹⁰³ Baudrillard's ideas of seduction have also been widely criticised, as discussed in Chapter Four, though they are nevertheless useful for the purposes of this thesis.

with Words ruthlessly and relentlessly challenges what it discovered'. All speech can thus be considered a speech act.

In his final lecture, Austin (1975, pp. 148-164) distinguished between five categories of speech act: 'verdictives', 'exercitives', 'commissives', 'behabitives', and 'expositives'. These categories have been criticised by subsequent scholars, and Austin (1975, p. 151) himself admits their insufficiency. In Searle's (1979, pp. 1-29) second book on speech acts, he introduces a new taxonomy with five different classifications: 'assertives', 'directives', 'commissives', 'expressives', and 'declarations'. Although Searle's work certainly has its faults, most notably its unyielding emphasis on intentionality, his taxonomy is nonetheless still an effective system for classifying speech acts.¹⁰⁴ It is thus employed throughout this thesis to analyse the speech acts of women in AM 226 fol. Searle's category of the directives is particularly useful here, since 'they are attempts (of varying degrees [...]) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (Searle, 1979, p. 13). It is primarily through directives that the female figures within the manuscript advocate for themselves and (attempt to) sway the actions of men.

Speech act theory has been applied to literature by scholars including Petrey (1990) and J. Hillis Miller (2001), who investigate how theories ostensibly designed for the 'real

¹⁰⁴ See Sandy Petrey, 1990, pp. 59-60.

John R. Searle's taxonomy is used extensively in, for example, Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, eds, 2008.

world' can be used in a literary context. Old English and Old Norse texts have also been investigated through the framework of speech act theory.¹⁰⁵ Its most in-depth application to Old Norse material is in Eric Shane Bryan's (2021) monograph on discourse in Old Norse literature. Bryan (2021) systematically analyses a selection of the most well-known episodes from the sagas, using techniques from pragmatics and linguistics. Bryan's analysis, however, focuses on the *Íslendingasögur*, with no consideration of Old Norse translated texts. Though Bryan does consider questions of gender and power (2021, esp. pp. 45-68, 171-195), this is not the focus of the monograph. Whilst Bryan's (2021) contributions help to inform the analysis of this thesis, particularly in Chapter One, the theory, corpus, and conclusions in this thesis differ markedly from those of Bryan.

Literary Constructions

The runic inscription discussed above presents the only real female voice in the manuscript AM 226 fol. This thesis does not examine real female voices, but literary constructions of speaking women made by and for men. In this way, it is interested more in how female voices are perceived to affect men than in women's voices in their own right. This contrasts the approach of scholars such as Erin Michelle Goeres (2014) and Jennifer Hurd (2021), who search for authentic women's authorship in Old Norse translations and poetry respectively.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Jucker and Taavitsainen, eds, 2008; Eric Shane Bryan and Alexander Vaughan Ames, eds, 2020; Eric Shane Bryan, 2021.

This thesis thus does not intend to comment on the historical reality of women in the medieval North, though literature will inevitably reveal aspects of the society that creates it.

Structure and Overview

This thesis examines the various verbal techniques used by female figures to get power over men in a variety of contexts. Due to the prevalence of female incitement within Old Norse literature (and, indeed, AM 226 fol.), the image of the inciter woman is an essential part of the present analysis. Therefore, before considering the figures depicted within AM 226 fol., Chapter One presents a necessary (re-)examination of the literary trope of the inciter woman. Scrutinising existing scholarship, this chapter reveals that current definitions of the inciter woman are unnecessarily restrictive. Using Searle's taxonomy of speech acts, I present a new model for the inciter woman with a broader scope. Reducing the emphasis upon aspects like vengeance and feud, which are genre markers of the *Íslendingasögur*,¹⁰⁶ the revised definition of this female trope allows scholars to consider appearances of the inciter in a wider variety of texts and contexts, including the translated material. The subsequent chapters both rely upon and justify this new model, demonstrating how female goaders who do not incite for vengeance or blood-feud might nonetheless inform scholarly understanding of this popular female trope.

¹⁰⁶ See Bampi, Larrington, and Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, eds, 2020, p. 315; Russell Poole, 2020, p. 272.

Chapter Two begins the exploration of the female figures in AM 226 fol. with the depiction of Eve in *Stjórn* I: the first woman depicted in the manuscript. Focusing specifically on the moment in which Eve convinces Adam to eat the fateful fruit, I demonstrate how the Old Norse translator has depicted female incitement as an essential part of Original Sin, compiling and editing his source material to blame the Fall of Man in large part on female verbal power. This chapter also examines Eve's temptation in other Old Norse accounts, considering especially the Fall story in the Old Norse *King's Mirror* (*Kgs* pp. 75-78, 78-84) and the simile comparing the soul to Eve in the *Debate of the Body and Soul on a Saturday Evening* (*ViðrLaug* p. 286).

Following the overwhelmingly negative depiction of female incitement that opens the portrayal of gender in the manuscript, Chapter Three considers three other female inciters who seem to echo Eve's speech act: Jezebel and Athaliah in *Stjórn* III and Arsinoe IV in *Rómverja saga*. These evil eggers are linked not only by their speech acts but also by their royal statuses, as all in some way occupy positions of political power. This chapter thus analyses how status affects speech acts, and how commands (to subordinates) and incitements (to lovers or husbands) are treated differently by the Old Norse translator. A hierarchy of speech acts begins to emerge.

Chapter Three also reveals how love and emotion can be important aspects of female influence. Investigating this further, Chapter Four considers (verbal) seduction: a technique

through which women can manipulate men's emotions and desires to convince them to take action. This chapter focuses on Delilah in *Stjórn III* and *Alexanders saga* and Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga* and *Gyðinga saga*, though other seductresses are also drawn into the analysis. Both figures use speech acts as part of their seductions, and the translator draws attention to the explicitly verbal elements of their influence. I therefore investigate whether seduction can be considered as a type of incitement within the broader definition of the model proposed in Chapter One. The speech acts of the seductresses, however, are depicted very differently to those of the inciter women, suggesting that the seductress and the inciter should be seen as two distinct images of female verbal influence. The analysis also reveals a specific trope that appears to depict and denigrate the seductress in a variety of Old Norse texts. The seductress is not merely an inciter who also appeals to the hearer's sexual desire; she is a poisonous snake that men shun and vilify.

The final chapter turns to examples of more positively coded female speech acts, focusing specifically on the context of martyrdom. Though AM 226 fol. contains no hagiography, there are nonetheless moments in which women sacrifice themselves, with the help of their speech acts. Returning to a focus on incitement, this chapter analyses the predominantly positive depiction of three unnamed women who goad men as a method of self-sacrifice: the Maccabean mother and John Hyrcanus' mother in *Gyðinga saga* and Jephthah's daughter in *Stjórn III*. This chapter reveals that, despite the overwhelmingly

negative depiction of the female voice in AM 226 fol., the Old Norse translator was willing to depict female verbal power positively in specific circumstances: notably, when female figures value obedience to God or the greater good above their own lives.

This thesis began with a verse from Hughes' poem *Theology*, which presents a version of the Fall story that subverts traditional gender mores. In the poem, this is declared to be the true story, with the biblical version being 'a corruption of the facts' (*Theol* p. 32). This poem thus encapsulates many of the themes that appear throughout the analysis of this thesis: women are said to have more power than men (being above them in the poetic food chain) and yet men are shown to have the ultimate power: that of the narrative, which they rewrite to blame women for men's faults. This male anxiety towards female power emerges throughout AM 226 fol. when female figures use their voice to influence men and define their own story. The male translator, however, wields the ultimate power, twisting the stories of innocent victims (e.g., Samson's first wife) and powerful queens (e.g., Jezebel) and renarrating them as destructive feminine forces. Analysing the depiction of a variety of female figures within AM 226 fol., this thesis reveals the power of the female voice not only within the narratives, as women influence the male figures around them, but also over the Old Norse translator, whose work betrays a consistent concern with women's capable words.

The Inciter Woman: A New Model

The trope of the inciter woman, perhaps the most well-known female image in Old Norse literature, is central to the discussion of female verbal power.¹⁰⁷ The inciter woman (also called the whetting woman, the female goader, or, in German, *die Hetzerin*) influences men's actions through the power of her voice, gaining access to legal, political, and physical spheres in which women were not traditionally permitted. Despite the clear relevance of this trope to the topic of this thesis, many of the female figures within AM 226 fol. who goad men to act do not fit within the definition of the inciter woman in most modern scholarship. Consequently, this thesis begins with a critical re-examination of the definition of the inciter woman using speech act theory, proposing a new model for understanding this infamous trope.

Through the analysis of modern scholarship on the inciter woman, this chapter reveals how a requirement of vengeance or violence has crept into scholarly definitions without due scrutiny. This chapter then investigates the validity of this requirement, first examining a selection of figures on the fringes of current definitions. The examples are taken primarily from the *Íslendingasögur* to demonstrate that it is not only the figures within Old Norse translations (as explored in the rest of this thesis) that challenge the trope's modern demarcations. After arguing that vengeance should not be the demarcating line of the inciter

¹⁰⁷ The inciter woman is considered as a literary motif throughout this thesis. There is, however, a short discussion of her potential historicity at the end of this chapter.

woman trope, this chapter considers what *should* be included in the definition, proposing three conditions. A (new) definition is then presented, which better represents the textual accounts of the inciter woman. This updated model expands the trope outwards, allowing more goading women to be analysed alongside the vengeful inciters, but without losing the boundaries that separate incitement from other female speech acts.

It is hoped that this model will be a useful tool for scholars analysing female verbal power across Old Norse literature. Though it informs the analysis of all genres, the model is particularly relevant for studies that do not focus on the *Íslendingasögur*, since texts outside this genre are less reliant on narrative patterns of feud and vengeance. This new model will be used throughout the thesis to inform the study of female verbal power in AM 226 fol.

Scholarly Definitions of the Inciter Woman

The inciter woman has been discussed extensively in scholarship. There was a particular boom in interest within English-speaking academia during the 1990s and 2000s, in which scholars attempted to determine, in particular, if the figure represents a historical reality and whether saga authors depict her positively or negatively.¹⁰⁸ Despite this interest in the inciter woman, the definition of the figure has never received in-depth discussion. Many scholars do not

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, William Ian Miller, 1983; 1990, pp. 212-213; Jochens, 1986; 1987; 1995, pp. 174-175; 1996a, pp. 132-215; Jesch, 1991, pp. 188-191; Else Mundal, 1994; Zoe Borovsky, 1999; S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002; Carol Clover, 2002; Clark, 2009; 2012.

provide a definition of the trope, assuming the reader has a pre-existing understanding of the *Hetzerin*. This is true for shorter discussions and passing references to the inciter woman (e.g., William Ian Miller, 1990, pp. 212-214; Clover, 1993, p. 383; Jochens, 1995, pp. 3, 58, 174-175), as well as in-depth analyses of incitement (e.g., Else Mundal, 1994; Zoe Borovsky, 1999; Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, 2002). As will be shown, however, there is some variance between the definitions given by scholars, when they are provided. There does not yet appear to be a stable scholarly understanding of what constitutes an inciter woman, and what divides her from other speaking figures.

The foundational study of the *Hetzerin* was a chapter in Rolf Heller's (1958) monograph on the depictions of women in the *Íslendingasögur*. Although Heller focuses on the potential historicity of the *Hetzerin*, the section of his chapter most heavily cited is the initial introduction of the figure: 'Nicht weniger als 51 Fälle können wir verzeichnen, in denen eine Frau zur Rache hetzt oder den Mann zur Tat treibt' (R. Heller, 1958, p. 98) [We can record no fewer than fifty-one cases in which a woman incites revenge or drives a man to action]. Heller discusses many of these cases in his chapter, and lists them in his *Sachregister* (1958, p. 154) [Index].

R. Heller (1958, p. 98) here presents two options for the *Hetzerin*: she is a woman who either incites revenge ('zur Rache hetzt') or drives a man to action ('den Mann zur Tat treibt'). This second option provides space for figures who incite for reasons other than vengeance.

The German noun ‘Tat’ can refer to a wide range of actions, both positive and negative; it is defined in Duden (1999, ix p. 3860) as ‘etw[as] was j[e]m[an]d tut, getan hat; Handlung’ [something someone does, has done; action]. Its first example of use in Duden (1999, ix p. 3860) is ‘eine edle, selbstlose, kluge, böse T[at]’ [a noble, selfless, clever, evil deed]. The word does, however, more frequently describe negative actions, as evidenced by its list of collocates in the *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (DWDS, Entry: ‘Tat’).¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, allowing ‘Tat’ its full semantic range, Heller’s definition of the inciter woman includes figures who drive men towards a variety of actions, which may or may not relate to violence, vengeance, or evil. Some examples of *Hetzerinnen* given by Heller support this broad definition, as explored below.

Subsequent scholarship often relies upon R. Heller’s definition of the inciter woman.¹¹⁰ For example, Clover (2002, p. 16) gives no definition of the *Hetzerin* other than a quotation from Heller. Despite this ostensible homage to Heller, the English summaries of his work appear to distort the definition. Jochens, for example, writes:

The German scholar Rolf Heller has used the word *Hetzerin* to designate the role of the female instigator, who by goading and nagging forced an often reluctant husband to *evil deeds of crime and revenge* [...] he has found fifty-one

¹⁰⁹ Negative collocates like ‘schrecklich’ [terrible] and ‘grausam’ [cruel] are more numerous than positive ones like ‘heroisch’ [heroic] (Entry: ‘Tat’, DWDS).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, W. I. Miller, 1983, p. 181; Jochens, 1986, p. 39; 1996a, pp. 182, 191-192; Jesch, 1991, p. 188; Clover, 2002, p. 16; Clark, 2009, p. 25; 2012, p. 142; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 17.

cases of the *Hetzerin* motif, in which a woman urged a man *to take revenge*, almost always with terrifying success. (Jochens, 1986, p. 39; emphasis my own)

Jochens places considerable emphasis on the necessity of vengeance and evil in the definition of the inciter woman: an emphasis not found in Heller's definition. She is not alone in this; most scholars now interpret the *Hetzerin* as a woman who incites only for bloody vengeance.¹¹¹ Sometimes, Heller is cited as the source of this explicitly vengeful definition (e.g., W. I. Miller, 1983, pp. 180-82; Clover, 2002, pp. 16-17; David Clark, 2009, p. 25; 2012, p. 142). Subsequent scholarship thus appears to have narrowed Heller's definition to create a restricted view of the *Hetzerin* as a violent and vengeful figure.

Aside from R. Heller, I have found three scholars who allow female goaders to have motivations beyond revenge. Judith Jesch (1991), though focusing mostly on vengeance, discusses inciters from wider medieval sources that goad for violence but not necessarily vengeance (e.g., the *Davae* in Abbo of St Germain: Jesch, 1991, p. 105). Mundal (1994, p. 9) notes that women who goad for peace should not necessarily be considered 'opposed' to those who do so for vengeance. Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir gives a definition of the goading woman that is very close to Heller's: 'Bæði með orðum og athöfnum hvöttu þær syni, feður, frændur, eiginmenn og vini til dáða, eða hefnda' (Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, 1995, p. 190) [Both with

¹¹¹ See, for example, Jesse Byock, 1982, pp. 94-95, 256-257; Jochens, 1987, p. 100; 1996a, e.g., p. xi; W. I. Miller, 1990, p. 212; Borovsky, 1999, pp. 16-17; Carolyn Anderson, 2002, p. 421; S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002, p. xii; Forrest S. Scott, 2002, pp. 233, 239; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, 2002, p. 282; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, pp. 10, 15; Ali Frauman, 2019, p. 270.

words and actions they incited sons, fathers, male relatives, husbands, and male friends to action, or to revenge]. The word *dáð* is defined in Sverrir Hólmarsson's modern Icelandic-English dictionary (1989, p. 101) as 'great deed, achievement', highlighting the potential positive actions that such figures can incite men to perform. Later, however, Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (1995, p. 196) states that the purpose of egging is to achieve justice, implying a vengeful or at least reparatory aspect to incitement. Nonetheless, these scholars are in the minority in allowing the inciter woman motivations beyond revenge.

Issues with this restricted definition of the inciter women have been identified by some scholars. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 24), for example, writes, 'The role of the female inciter is much more complex than most scholars allow'. In the rest of Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's work, however, she adopts a definition of incitement that forefronts revenge. Though the restricted definition has been adopted almost unanimously by scholars, the textual evidence appears to tell a different story.

Egging on the Edge

Old Norse literature is filled with female figures who incite with vengeful motives: some famous examples include Þorgerðr and Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga* (*Laxd* ÍF 5 53:161-162, 60:179-180), Hildigunnr in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (*Nj* ÍF 12 116:289-292), and Guðrún in *Guðrúnarhvøft* and *Hamðismál* (*Edd* ÍF ii 402-413). Though incitement does play an important

role in honour-based feud cycles within certain Old Norse genres,¹¹² there are also numerous women who whet men to take actions unrelated to revenge and blood-feud. Such women exist on the fringes or even outside a definition of the inciter woman that necessitates revenge. The following re-evaluates a selection of female goaders who are not obviously connected to vengeance and blood-feud. Such women are numerous, so this study is limited to those whose classification as inciters has previously been contested in scholarship: Hallfríðr in *Finnboga saga* (*Finnb* ÍF 14 37:321-22), Gyða in *Grettis saga* (*Gr* ÍF 7 7:17), Ástriðr in *Víga-Glúms saga* (*Glúm* ÍF 9 8:26-27), Bjargey in *Hávarðar saga Ísfrðings* (*Háv* ÍF 6 5-9:308-321), and the working women in *Finnboga saga* (*Finnb* ÍF 14 7:263-264). Speech act theory is used to determine whether these non- or ambiguously vengeful inciters should be excluded from the *Hetzerin* trope.

The first three figures discussed here (Hallfríðr, Gyða, and Ástriðr) are included in Heller's list of *Hetzerinnen*. Their place in this trope was subsequently questioned by Jochens (1996a, pp. 192, 283), who argues that they can be 'eliminate[d]' (Jochens, 1996a, p. 192) from the count of inciter women. Jochens only devotes an endnote (1996a, p. 283) to these inciters on the edge of her definition of the *Hetzerin*; they are considered in greater depth here.

¹¹² On the use of goading in feud plots, see Byock, 1982, pp. 92-97, 256-257, and Jesch, 1991, pp. 188-191.

Hallfríðr

In *Finnboga saga* (*Finnb* ÍF 14 37:321-22), a mother, Hallfríðr, urges her husband Finnbogi to go out and protect their son, Gunnbjörn. Finnbogi knows that Gunnbjörn is in a dangerous situation, but he does not take action until his wife speaks to him:

Hallfríðr spurði um daginn, hvar Gunnbjörn væri. Finnbogi kvað hann farit hafa til leiks. Hon kvað slíkt undarligt at láta son sinn fara svá einsliga í hendr óvinum sínum, – ‘við slíka ójafnaðarmenn sem at eiga er.’ (*Finnb* ÍF 14 37:321-322)

[Hallfríðr asked during the day where Gunnbjörn was. Finnbogi said that he had gone to the games. She said that it was extraordinary that he let his son go thus alone into the hands of his enemies, – “to deal with such unjust men as they are.”]¹¹³

Finnbogi agrees with her and immediately leaves to search for Gunnbjörn. Finding him amidst a fight, Finnbogi kills his attackers. His action is clearly caused by his wife’s words. Jochens (1996a, p. 283) writes of this scene that ‘Hallfríðr’s worried question to Finnbogi as to the whereabouts of their son hardly qualifies [as an inciting scene]’. Hallfríðr, however, is more than a worried mother; she clearly criticises her husband’s decision in a way that urges him to search for the boy. This may protect her son rather than endanger him (contrasting more traditional whetting women like Guðrún in *Guðrúnarhvot* and *Hamðismál: Edd* ÍF ii 402-413), but her action is still one of incitement. She uses her words to drive a man to take an action; the lack of vengeance as a motivator does not change the speech act itself.

¹¹³ All translations, unless clearly referenced, are my own.

While Hallfríðr's initial question may have been a simple query about Gunnbjörn's location, the statement that follows is an indirect speech act that urges Finnbogi to protect their son. Searle (1979, pp. 33-34) writes that indirect speech acts have both a primary (non-literal) illocutionary act and a secondary (literal) illocutionary act.¹¹⁴ In Hallfríðr's speech, the literal or secondary illocutionary act is a statement of opinion: she tells Finnbogi that she thinks his actions are unwise or, at least, extraordinary. The non-literal or primary illocutionary act is a directive: Finnbogi should correct his mistake by protecting Gunnbjörn. Jochens' argument (1996a, p. 283) is based only on the literal illocutionary act. It would, however, be difficult to read Hallfríðr's speech, which boils down to 'our son is in danger', without the implied imperative 'go and save him'.

The female speech act is clearly the driving force behind Finnbogi's actions: he knew of Gunnbjörn's whereabouts before the conversation, but he did not take action. The inclusion and placement of this domestic scene also indicates that Hallfríðr's speech should be interpreted as the impetus that spurs on Finnbogi: it appears in the middle of a fight sequence, disrupting the action. It is unlikely the saga author would have moved the narrative away from a dramatic fight just to relay the speech of a worried woman. This tense domestic drama thus depicts a wife driving forth both her husband and the narrative action using her words.

¹¹⁴ On indirect speech acts, see also J. L. Austin, 1975, pp. 32-34.

Hallfríðr's speech is clearly far more than a 'worried question' (Jochens, 1996a, p. 283) when both its illocutionary acts are considered. Jochens' dismissal of the non-literal illocutionary act, both here and in the below example of Ástríðr, is particularly problematic since Bryan (2021) has demonstrated the significance of 'indirect aggression' in Old Norse literature. Bryan (2021, p. 51) writes, 'the implicature of indirect aggression adds to the ferocity of a verbal attack'. Furthermore, Bryan (2021, p. 68) notes that there is 'a general principle that indirectness in speech reflects strength, while directness signals a position of weakness'. The indirectness of Hallfríðr's speech thus adds to its power. Finnbogi's response, agreeing with her directly (*Finnb ÍF* 14 37:322), perhaps signals his weaker position. Hallfríðr's speech is thus a powerful goading of her husband. Using R. Heller's broader definition, Hallfríðr can be considered a *Hetzerin*, as she drives a man to act, even though she is motivated by maternal care rather than revenge.

Gyða

In *Grettis saga* (*Gr ÍF* 7 7:17), Gyða urges her husband to care for two fatherless boys during the winter. Gyða's speech act is described in just one line: 'hann tók við þeim fyrir áeggjun Gyðu, konu sinnar' (*Gr ÍF* 7 7:17) [he took them in because of the incitement of Gyða, his wife]. This is the only mention of Gyða within the saga. Gyða uses her power of speech to successfully convince her husband to take an action; in doing so, she earns a place in the narrative. The words *eggja* [to incite] and *áeggjan* [incitement] are regularly used to depict

scenes of female incitement (as well as elsewhere, as explored below). The verb form carries the definition ‘to egg on, incite, goad’ (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 117). As Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 17) notes, within scenes of female incitement, these words can replace direct speech: ‘Sometimes the words of incitement are not reported – the saga author simply states that a certain character incited (*eggja, hvetja, frýja*) someone else’. The noun used here thus perhaps demonstrates that an incitement has taken place: a woman has goaded a man to take an action. Though this action is not revenge, but rather a compassionate act of care, we have in *Grettis saga* a woman using her verbal power to successfully influence a man, complying with the broader view of R. Heller’s definition.

Ástríðr

In *Víga-Glúms saga* (*Glúm* ÍF 9 8:26-27), Ástríðr speaks to her son Glúmr to ask him to work on their hayfields; after this, he takes bloody vengeance against their neighbour. Jochens writes of this scene:

Less clear is Ástríðr’s dealings with her youngest son [...]. On the surface her only direct request is a suggestion that he get out of bed and go to work, words that in themselves hardly justify the epithet. Her son understands the hidden agenda, however. (Jochens, 1996a, p. 283)

Jochens questions Ástríðr’s place in the incitement trope based on her motives, rather than the resulting action (which is clearly vengeful). This Searlean focus upon intention

nevertheless misses a more important part of her speech: the primary (or non-literal) illocutionary act.

Ástríðr's speech can be divided into three parts. First, Ástríðr wakes Glúmr and tells him to work: 'Ástríðr kom enn at máli við Glúm einn morgin ok vakði hann ok bað hann skipa til verks' (*Glúm ÍF 9 8:26*) [Ástríðr came to speak with Glúmr one morning and woke him and asked him to arrange the work]. She then compares Glúmr's unfinished hayfields to those of Sigmundr and Vigdís, who have completed the season's work (*Glúm ÍF 9 8:26*). Finally, reminding her son that the field is unrightfully owned by Sigmundr, she adds, 'ok fóru þau Sigmundr ok Vigdís snemma í morgin til akrs Vitazgjafa, ok munu þau vel hyggja, er þau hafa akrinn, er vér ættim, ef at réttu fœri' (*Glúm ÍF 9 8:26-27*) [and Sigmundr and Vigdís went out early in the morning to the field Vitazgjafi, and they must think it well that they have the field which we should have by rights].

Ástríðr thus begins by instructing her son to work: this is a direct urging, though there is currently no indication of vengeance. After this, Ástríðr begins her indirection. Unfavourably comparing Glúmr's work on the farm with that of his rivals (the literal illocutionary act), Ástríðr urges her son to act (the non-literal, but primary, illocutionary act). At this point, however, Ástríðr still seems to be urging Glúmr to work on his own field, shaming him through negative comparison. In the third and final part of her speech, however, Ástríðr brings up the landownership dispute, revealing the true primary illocutionary act of

the entire speech. While, on the literal level, Ástríðr is only speculating about what their neighbours might be thinking or feeling, the primary illocutionary act is an incitement to resolve the dispute.

Ástríðr does not directly state her desired resolution, but it can be inferred from Old Norse legal customs to be either legal proceedings or blood vengeance. Since they have already unsuccessfully attempted legal action, violent vengeance is the next logical step in the saga world. Searle (1979, pp. 31-32) writes, ‘In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information’. In this case, there is more than enough ‘mutually shared background information’ (Searle, 1979, p. 32) for Glúmr to interpret his mother’s speech act as an incitement to blood vengeance. This final statement changes the primary illocutionary act of Ástríðr’s entire speech to Glúmr. Her earlier instruction that he go to work is transformed into a forceful (vengeful) incitement; using ‘indirect aggression’ (see Bryan, 2021, pp. 45-68), the *verk* (*Glúm ÍF* 9 8:26) [work] she demands from her son is revealed to be revenge.

Even with a narrow definition of the *Hetzerin* as a vengeful figure, Ástríðr still clearly belongs to this trope; so why does Jochens question her place? Is it only the ‘mutually shared background information’ (Searle, 1979, p. 32) that blood vengeance is required that makes Ástríðr an inciter woman? If Ástríðr only wanted her son to get up and work on the field, her

speech act would fundamentally remain the same: an indirect speech act, with a primary and secondary illocutionary act. There would be no significant change, from a speech act perspective, if the ‘mutually shared background information’ (Searle, 1979, p. 32) was not about a past wrongdoing but the disappointing state of work on their own farm. The comments on their neighbours farmwork would remain an indirect urging through negative comparison and shame. The speech act thus remains the same regardless of vengeance. Ástríðr, too, would still be a woman who uses her voice to urge a man to act: an inciter woman, according to the broader definition.

Bjargey

Two of the examples that R. Heller discusses in his *Hetzerin* chapter also have an ambiguous relationship to revenge, although Jochens (1996a, p. 283) does not challenge their designation as inciters in her endnote. They are worth examining here, to provide further examples of non-violent or non-vengeful whetting women and to further interrogate the revenge boundary.

Bjargey is the driving force behind the action of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (*Háv* ÍF 6 5-9:308-321), which centres on the vengeance-taking for her son, Óláfr, who was killed unjustly by Þorbjörn. R. Heller (1958, p. 112) writes, ‘Sie veranlaßt ihn dreimal – in abgewogener Steigerung –, die lähmende Niedergeschlagenheit nach des Sohnes Tod abzuschütteln, und ruft ihn mit dem letzten Male zur Rache’ [She (Bjargey) induces him (Hávarðr, her

husband) three times – with increasing intensification – to shake off the paralysing despondence after their son’s death, and calls on him the last time to take revenge]. Although it is only the last of Bjargey’s three speech acts that goads for violent and vengeful purposes, R. Heller considers all three to be incitements, using the German verb *veranlassen* [to make someone do something] (Duden, 1999, ix p. 4178) to describe them all. In her first two incitements, Bjargey goads her husband to acquire financial compensation for the murder (*Háv ÍF* 6 5-6:308-310). She only resorts to urging vengeance, in the form of blood, once these legal options have been exhausted (*Háv ÍF* 6 9:319-321).

Regardless of the motivations, Bjargey three times uses her speech to get Hávarðr out of bed (where he has lain for a year due to his immense sadness) and to take action. With her first speech act, she successfully incites him to confront Óláfr’s killer, Þorbjörn, and demand compensation (*Háv ÍF* 6 5:308). Although Bjargey’s speech act successfully achieves its goal, Hávarðr’s does not, and he is refused satisfying compensation (*Háv ÍF* 6 5:308-309). Hávarðr then returns home and makes no further attempts until Bjargey again incites him, this time to attend the *alþingi*, garner support, and make their case once again (*Háv ÍF* 6 6:309-310). Hávarðr does exactly as his wife asks, and events transpire as she predicts (*Háv ÍF* 6 7:310-315). The compensation is again refused. The third and final time Bjargey goads, it is for vengeance. As with her earlier incitements, Bjargey convinces her husband to get up and take action using her words (*Háv ÍF* 6 9:319-321).

This egging-on has a noticeably stronger physical reaction in Hávarðr than his wife's earlier incitements: after her goading, 'Hávarðr var þá inn sprækasti ok skorti ekki gongu' (*Háv* ÍF 6 9:320) [Hávarðr was then very sprightly and walked without a limp]. This newfound physical virility might suggest a difference between her final incitement (for violence) and her earlier two goadings (for financial negotiations). However, blood vengeance notably requires more physical prowess than asking for compensation. At the *alþingi*, Hávarðr is even able to do some of the necessary work whilst in bed! The different physical response thus does not seem to relate to the woman's speech act, but to the differing physical requirements of the task demanded. There thus seems to be no tangible difference between Bjargey's speech acts other than their motivations. All three of Bjargey's urgings can therefore be considered incitements (in line with R. Heller, 1958, p. 112), regardless of whether the motivation is financial compensation or blood revenge.

Unnamed Working Women and an Unruly Bull

The final example of ambiguously vengeful incitement to be discussed here is from *Finnboga saga* (*Finnb* ÍF 14 7:263-264). In this short scene, a mischievous bull disrupts the work of the female servants of the farm at Eyri. The women approach the unusually strong twelve-year-old boy, Urðarköttr (since his father, Ásbjörn, is away at the *alþingi*), and incite him to do something about the bull. They declare: 'ertu þar, inn ragi Urðarköttr, ok er sem engi maðr sé, þar sem þú ert, þó at nökkurs þurfi við' (*Finnb* ÍF 14 7:263) [are you there, the cowardly

Urðarköttr? It is like there is no man where you are, even if there is need of something]. Humorously, Urðarköttr refuses to help unless they ask nicely, inverting the usual expectations of incitements, which frequently involve insults rather than positive persuasion. Once the women ask politely, he fights the bull and kills it. R. Heller (1958, p. 117) writes, 'Handelt es sich dabei auch nicht um eine Rache, so ist doch das humorvolle Spiel mit dem bekannten und beliebten Motiv offensichtlich' [Even if this is not an act of revenge, the humorous play with this popular and beloved motif is obvious]. Despite the lack of vengeance, Heller still considers the scene as belonging to and even toying with the inciter woman trope. The women's work is presumably much easier following the death of the unruly bull; they have thus used their voice to advocate for their own needs and to drive a man to act in their interest. This non-vengeful incitement is considered by R. Heller alongside the vengeful goaders of Old Norse literature.

There are evidently numerous examples of inciter women who currently totter on the edge of scholarly definitions of the *Hetzerin*. Due to the limited definition used by many scholars, there are likely many inciter women with non-vengeful motivations in the corpus that have thus far been overlooked. As the analysis of these five non- or ambiguously vengeful figures has shown, a restricted definition of the inciter woman as one who urges only for blood vengeance does not reflect the literary sources and the speech acts contained within them; such a definition limits our view of female incitement in Old Norse literature.

The Incitement Antitype?

Despite definitions of the inciter woman focusing exclusively on vengeance, scholars have noted the presence of women within the Old Norse literary corpus who advise or encourage men to take peaceful rather than violent or vengeful action. For example, following her analysis of the inciter woman, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 25) considers ‘her less discussed counterimage, the wise woman, who advocates peace rather than violence’. Although Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s work draws important attention to female figures who urge men for peaceful ends, she sets up such women as the antitype to the vengeful inciters. This aligns with Clark’s (2009, pp. 38-42; 2012, pp. 158-163) discussions of peaceful goaders, whom he calls the ‘anti-inciters’. The terms ‘wise women’ and ‘anti-inciters’ are investigated here to determine whether the vengeful inciters must be considered the opposite of the wise or peaceful urgers, or if they might all be better represented by a broader definition of the inciter woman.

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, pp. 25-45) focuses on ‘advice’ and ‘advice-giving’ in her discussion of ‘wise women’; in this context, however, ‘advice’ encapsulates two different types of speech act. Some women give men general advice or wisdom (without requesting, suggesting, or demanding a certain action), while others give advice to urge men towards a specific action. This distinction is important for analyses of female verbal power; women in the latter category are actively manoeuvring events through their advice to bring about their

desired conclusions. The speech acts of such women are also far closer to those of the *Hetzerinnen* than those of the women whose advice does not push a specific agenda.

Incitement: The Speech Act

It is first pertinent to determine the category of speech act to which incitement belongs. In Austin's classification of speech acts (1975, pp. 148-164), urging is among the 'exercitives'. In Searle's (1979, pp. 1-29) more advanced taxonomy, incitement falls into the category of the 'directives': 'The illocutionary point of these consists in the fact that they are attempts (of varying degrees [...]) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (Searle, 1979, p. 13).

Searle summarises this classification as follows:

$$! \uparrow W (H \text{ does } A) \quad (\text{Searle, 1979, p. 14})$$

The arrow represents the 'direction of fit', which is 'world-to-words' (Searle, 1979, p. 14): the speaker aims to change the world to make it fit their words, rather than to accurately represent it (which would be a *words-to-world* direction of fit). The letter *W* represents the sincerity condition of 'want (or wish or desire)' (Searle, 1979, p. 14), since the speaker has a desire for some action to result from their speech. The items in brackets describe the 'propositional content', which is 'that the hearer *H* does some future action *A*' (Searle, 1979, p. 14). This formula perfectly describes scenes of female incitement: a woman uses a speech act to get the (male) hearer to take an action she wants; her intention is to make the world (the man's

actions) match the words she speaks. As the following example will demonstrate, this formula also describes the speech acts taking place in some scenes of female advice-giving, which have thus far been viewed as the antithesis of incitement.

Advice as Directives

In *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, Hringr's unnamed wife urges her husband to act peacefully towards king Gautrekr, threatening him with dishonour should he betray his friend (*HG* 3:59-60).¹¹⁵ When Hringr announces his decision to go against his former friend, his wife criticises his plans in a lengthy speech, part of which reads:

Óvitrliga talar þú [...] Ger svá vel, herra, at eigi finnist í þínu brjósti sú greymennska, at þér vilið svá niðr fella ok undir fótum troða svá marga góða hluti sem hvárr ykkar hefir við annan gert. Haldið, herra, við Gautrek konung með þryði ok drengskap uppteknum góðvilja með ást ok fullkomnum friði, ok tén eigi fyrir vándra manna orðróm svá góðs manns vináttu. (*HG* 3:59-60)

[You speak foolishly [...] Do so well, lord, that such bitchiness cannot be found in your heart that you wish to tear down and trample underfoot the many good things which you have done for each other. Lord, uphold your past goodwill towards king Gautrekr with bravery and courage, with love and true peace, and do not destroy such a good man's friendship for wicked men's words.]

The advice of Hringr's wife clearly urges him to change his mind and take a specific action: maintaining peace with king Gautrekr. This speech act follows the formula Searle presents for directives. The direction of fit is world-to-words (she intends to make her husband's actions

¹¹⁵ This is discussed by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, pp. 34-35.

fit her words) and the sincerity condition is want (she wants her husband to act peacefully). The propositional content is that the hearer (Hringr) takes an action (peace and reconciliation with Gautrekr). This speech act is clearly a directive: the same type used by the women who goad for vengeance.

There are, of course, differences between advising and urging. Searle touches on this in his explanation of the distinction between illocutionary point and illocutionary force: ‘the illocutionary point of requests is the same as that of commands: both are attempts to get hearers to do something. But the illocutionary forces are clearly different’ (Searle, 1979, p. 3). There is certainly a distinction between suggesting a certain course of action (as an adviser might) and demanding it. In the above example of Hringr’s wife, however, she very clearly demands that her husband act peacefully, just like the vengeful inciters who demand violence and retribution. The ‘advice’ (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 35) of Hringr’s wife is evidently a forceful directive. Though the directness of the speech act might lack the ‘indirect aggression’ (Bryan, 2021, pp. 45-68) discussed above, this is not unusual for inciter women in the corpus (see, for example, *Nj ÍF* 12 38:100-101) and does not seem to detract from the queen’s powerful demand.

Though Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 35) acknowledges the ‘forcefulness of the queen’s language’, she attempts to distinguish Hringr’s wife from the (vengeful) inciter women by suggesting that her speech lacks the emasculatory insults typical in whetting

scenes. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 35) writes that ‘the word *greymennska* [...] compar[es] the king to a lowly dog if he breaks his vows (rather than calling him unmasculine)’. The queen does, however, clearly threaten her husband’s masculinity.

The word *greymennska* is a compound of *grey* [dog] and *mennska* [human nature]; the term literally means ‘the nature of a dog’. To be more precise, however, *grey* designates a female dog. Like the modern English word ‘bitch’, *grey* is both the technical term for a female dog and a derogatory insult (Entry: ‘grey’, ONP). For example, the word is used as an insult in a *kviðlingr* in *Íslendingabók* (*Íslb ÍF* 1 7:15), when Hjalti declares, ‘grey þykki mér Freyja’ [I think Freyja is a bitch]. His speech is punished with three years of outlawry. Calling someone a *grey* is certainly a charged insult; it is even listed in Norwegian law codes (*NgL* i 196:70) as a *fullréttisorð* [gross insult requiring full personal compensation] (see J. S. Love and others, 2020, pp. 109, 130). The translation of *greymennska* given above is ‘bitchiness’: a word purposely chosen to convey both the insult and the connection to female dogs. Comparing the king to a *female* dog, Hringr’s wife insults her husband’s masculinity. The use of the adverb *níðr* [down] shortly following the word *greymennska*, might also recall the *níð* insults, which ‘invoke and describe the complete polar opposite of manliness: the so-called *níðingr*’ (Evans, 2019, p. 24).¹¹⁶ Although the word used by Hringr’s wife is definitely not *níð* or *níðingr*, its

¹¹⁶ On the use of *níð* insults by inciter women, see Frauman, 2019.

similarity to these insults and its proximity to the masculine threat of *greymennska* might evoke emasculatory undertones.

Furthermore, Hringr's wife encourages him to act with 'prýði ok drengskap' (*HG* 3:60) [bravery and courage] by choosing the peaceful path. The word *drengskapr* denotes 'behaviour fitting a "drengr"' (Entry: 'dreng(s)skapr', ONP), with *drengr* meaning 'a bold, valiant, worthy man' (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 105). *Drengskapr*, although usually translated as 'courage' (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 105), thus literally means 'manly behaviour'. The urging of Hringr's wife is thus inextricably tied up with masculine threat. If loyalty to king Gautrekr is manly, then Hringr's current course of action is unmasculine. Should Hringr ignore his wife's words, he will be no better than a *grey* or *níðingr*.

Hringr's wife gives her husband little choice if he wishes to retain his masculinity: he must obey her urging. The same technique is employed by many of the vengeful inciters. In fact, I can find no solid distinction, from a speech act perspective, between the urgings towards violence and those towards peace: both consist of a forceful directive using similar literary conventions, like emasculatory insults, to drive a man to act. Whether urging for violence or peace, these female figures use the same speech act: incitement.

Advice as Assertives

There are, nevertheless, some women in Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's category of 'wise women' whose speech acts cannot be considered directives and thus are distinct from the

inciters. Such women give advice to men without encouraging them towards a specific action.

This often involves women giving general knowledge or life advice to men.

One clear example of this can be found in the eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál* (*Edd ÍF* ii 313–321), when Sigrdrífa instructs Sigurðr in the use of runes and speaks gnomic wisdom. The poem is worth exploring here since it offers a clear contrast with the aforementioned directives of Hringr's wife, though it is important to note that there is an additional layer to the advice in *Sigrdrífumál*. Within the narrative space of the poem, Sigrdrífa offers advice and knowledge to her lover; as wisdom poetry, however, the advice is perhaps also intended for the reader/audience.¹¹⁷ This discussion will focus upon the speech acts as they function within the narrative.

Sigrdrífa gives advice to Sigurðr without encouraging him to take a certain action.

This is obvious in stanzas such as:

Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna,
 ef þú bjarga vilt
 ok leysa kind frá konum;
 á lófa þær skal rísta
 ok of liðu spenna
 ok biðja þá dísir duga. (*Edd ÍF* ii 315)

[You shall know helping runes if you wish to help and deliver children from women; they shall be cut on the hands, and clasped on the joints, and then the *dísir* invoked for support.]

¹¹⁷ On wisdom poetry, see Carolyne Larrington, 1993, and Brittany Erin Schorn, 2017.

The conditional phrase demonstrates that Sigrdrífa is passing on knowledge, rather than enforcing a specific behaviour. Sigrdrífa most likely does not expect Sigurðr himself to help with childbirth, at least not imminently. This speech act thus cannot be a directive, like that of Hringr's wife.

This speech act instead belongs to Searle's (1979, p. 12) category of the 'assertives': 'The point or purpose of the members of the assertive class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition'. This aligns with the stanza quoted above; the speaker (Sigrdrífa) is attesting to the truth of her statement about the use of runes (even though she is, according to archaeological evidence, incorrect: see Carolyne Larrington, 1993, p. 88). Searle (1979, p. 12) represents the assertives as follows:

$$\vdash \downarrow B(p) \quad (\text{Searle, 1979, p. 12})$$

The arrow denotes the words-to-world direction of fit. Searle (1979, p. 12) writes, 'the psychological state expressed is Belief (that p)', where p can represent a range of possible propositional content. In the stanza above, the propositional content is that certain runes used in a specific way will help with childbirth; Sigrdrífa *Believes* this to be the case. Sigrdrífa uses her voice to represent, rather than shape, the world (specifically, the magical and mythological world of this poem). Sigrdrífa's advice is thus assertive rather than directive.

The second half the poem, listing gnomic wisdom, however, appears to toy with the boundary between directive and assertive. Each stanza begins with the line ‘*Þat ræð ek þér þriðja* (it) fyrsta/annat/þriðja’ (*Edd ÍF* ii 318) ‘I advise you firstly/secondly/thirdly’, etc. For example:

*Þat ræð ek þér þriðja
at þú þingi á
deilit við heimska hali,
þvíat ósviðr maðr
lætr opt kveðin
verri orð en viti. (Edd ÍF ii 318)*

[I advise you thirdly that at the *alþingi* you do not quarrel with a foolish man, because an unwise man often speaks worse words than he knows.]

This refrain fits perfectly with the syntactical structure Searle posits for the directives: ‘I verb you + you Fut Vol Verb’ (Searle, 1979, p. 22). However, there is an important literary context to consider here. The speech act theories of both Austin and Searle are made in an attempted abstraction from the literary, focusing exclusively on the supposedly ‘real’ language used in day-to-day life.¹¹⁸ Later theorists have convincingly demonstrated that speech act theory can and does apply to literary speech acts;¹¹⁹ however, in some cases, as here, the formulas proposed by Searle do not necessarily hold true in literary contexts.

¹¹⁸ See Austin, 1975, p. 22, and Searle, 1994, pp. 637-667.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Jacques Derrida, 1988; Petrey, 1990; J. Hillis Miller, 2001. For an application of speech act theory to Old Norse literature in particular, see Bryan and Ames, eds, 2020, and Bryan, 2021.

In the wisdom poem *Hávamál* (*Edd ÍF* i 345–350), several stanzas begin with a similar refrain to that in *Sigrdrífumál*: ‘Ráðumk þér, Loddfáfnir, | at þú ráð nemir’ (*Edd ÍF* i 345) [I advise you, Loddfáfnir, that you take my advice]. Later in the poem (*Edd ÍF* i 352–355), the advice is numbered like in *Sigrdrífumál*. The refrain is thus part of a literary tradition within wisdom poetry. Although it is possible to read a light directive in both poems, with the speakers encouraging Sigurðr or Loddfáfnir (whoever that might be)¹²⁰ to behave like good men, the stanzas also function to list general knowledge about desirable male actions and attributes. In this way, the advice in both poems can be read as belonging to the assertive category, using this literary refrain to describe the world rather than shape it. The psychological state appears to be *Belief* rather than *Want*, as the speakers express their confidence in the truth of their statements about good behaviour. Larrington (1993, p. 51) writes of the refrain in *Hávamál*, ‘The colloquy form emphasises that didacticism is [the] guiding mode’. The propositional content is not that ‘*H* does *A*’ (Searle, 1979, p. 14), but that the hearer (or reader/audience) learns something.

Even if this section of advice is interpreted as a directive, the illocutionary force is clearly different from the speech act of Hringr’s wife. Sigurdrífa does not emphatically urge Sigurðr towards a specific course of action but instead provides a list of suggestions. The difference in the speech acts is also evident in the dramatic irony that emerges when the poem

¹²⁰ On Loddfáfnir’s identity, see Schorn, 2017, pp. 64–67, 74–78.

is considered within its larger narrative context. If Sigurðr had followed Sigrdrífa's advice to, for example, be wary of women and drink-spiking, the tragedy of the Völsung cycle might have been avoided. Perhaps if Sigrdrífa had incited Sigurðr to act using forceful directives, rather than giving him general life advice with assertives, their story might not have ended in tragedy.

There are numerous examples in the sagas of women speaking their wisdom using assertives rather than directives. For example, in *Völsunga saga* (*Völs* 27:46), Brynhildr uses assertives to explain the meaning of Guðrún's dreams, predicting the coming violence. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, pp. 29–30) lists Brynhildr in this scene as an example of a 'wise woman' with 'Innate Intelligence'. Brynhildr does not urge or encourage any action. Unlike Hringr's wife, she does not forcefully demand peace; both women instead allow the tragedy to unfurl, at great personal cost.

Against the Antitype

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's category of 'wise women', then, includes women who use two distinct types of speech act: directives and assertives. The former is the same type used by the vengeful inciters, while the latter is clearly different. Categorising the women who give general good advice with the women who urge men towards peace thus does not accurately represent what is happening from a speech act perspective. Instead, it would make more sense to group together the women who use directives to urge men towards a specific action,

regardless of its nature. Such women could be considered under one, broader category of the inciter woman. They would then be seen as separate from the women who give general advice to men without urging them towards a specific action (insight-er women?).

There are similar issues with Clark's term 'anti-inciters' (Clark, 2009, p. 38). The prefix 'anti-' implies that these women are doing the opposite of incitement, which might be some passive acceptance of men's will. Women who urge men to take a peaceful course of action participate in the same, not the opposite, type of speech act as the vengeful inciters. There thus seems to be no need to set up the vengeful and non-vengeful figures as opposites, or to create a separate category to denote them. Returning to a definition akin to R. Heller's, women who urge for both peace and blood-feud, as well as a whole range of other actions, can also be considered inciter women.

Establishing peaceful inciters as the antitype to the wise inciters obscures the urgings of women who do not quite fit in either category. This is an issue that has been identified, but not resolved, by Bryan (2021, p. 185) in his chapter on gender and speech acts in Old Norse literature. Attempting to use the categories proposed by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir for his study of various speaking women in *Gísla saga*, Bryan (2021, p. 185) writes that the saga 'stands as a kind of transitional narrative, or hinge, between these two types of speakers'. However, opposites do not typically have a connecting 'hinge'. Bryan (2021, p. 185) adds that one figure he analyses 'may readily fit into the peace-seeking category of female speakers, but

the rest is unclear'. Bryan's analysis, though not explicitly interrogating the categories presented by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, nevertheless reveals their flaws. Having two separate categories of urging women, which are set up as opposites, does not accurately capture the varieties of speaking women, even in *Gísla saga*. My analysis, focusing specifically on definition and taxonomy, reveals how these categories do not reflect the speech acts depicted in the corpus.

One final issue with using the term 'Wise Women' to denote figures who urge men to take peaceful action is that it creates a potentially false separation which encodes peaceful behaviour as 'wise', in contrast to violent or vengeful behaviour, which, as the 'counterimage' (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 25), must therefore be *unwise*. Although, as Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 40) notes of the *fornaldarsögur*, 'counsel that promotes peace and stability receives narratorial approval', it is not always wise to incite for peace and unwise to urge for vengeance in the sagas. As W. I. Miller (1990, p. 213) writes, 'inciters rarely advocated aggressive action when such action was not at least arguably a rational way of proceeding'. When Bjargey goads Hávarðr three times in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (*Háv* ÍF 6 5-9:308-321), her first two incitements are for peaceful conflict resolution. When these attempts prove futile, she then incites Hávarðr to take bloody vengeance. Bjargey does not switch from a wise woman to an evil *Hetzerin* when she eggs on her husband to violence. Quite the opposite: Bjargey shows her wisdom in that further attempts to seek compensation

would not be fruitful, resulting only in fresh embarrassment for her husband. She is keenly attuned to the practicalities of the situation: aware that her husband is an old man and physically incapable of overcoming the youthful Þorbjörn alone, she first ensures the support of her brothers and their youthful sons (*Háv ÍF* 6 8:315-318). The incitement to revenge is not a demonstration of women's bloodlust or 'cold counsel',¹²¹ but rather a necessary step wisely taken with careful consideration. Bjargey never loses her wisdom, even as she incites for revenge.

Current models that separate the inciter and the wise woman based on their motivations therefore do not accurately represent the uses of female verbal power within Old Norse literature. From a speech act perspective, peaceful inciters are not the 'counterimage' (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 25) of the *Hetzerin*; nor are they 'anti-inciters' (Clark, 2009, p. 38). The female figures (whether goading for vengeance, peace, or otherwise) all partake in the same type of speech act: the directives. There is need for a new model to examine female speech acts within the Old Norse corpus.

New Boundaries

If vengeance is not viewed as the defining characteristic of the inciter woman trope, other demarcations must be considered. Though I have demonstrated that female incitement is

¹²¹ On this seemingly proverbial phrase, see S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002, pp. xi-xii.

closely connected to the directive class of speech acts, it would be incorrect to denote all female figures who speak directives as inciters. I therefore propose three other conditions that should be included in the definition of the inciter woman: gender, status, and literary conventions. These conditions are intended as guidelines to provide clarity when distinguishing the trope from other speech acts, but there is not enough space here to consider all the potential nuances of incitement.

Gender

The inciter woman trope has traditionally depicted only the urgings of women directed at men (assuming a gender binary, as discussed in the Introduction). It is important to maintain this distinction, whilst acknowledging that goading takes place outside these gendered parameters. It is notable, for example, that the word *eggja* [to incite], which is commonly connected to the inciter woman trope, appears to be used more frequently to describe men urging other men in battle than to denote women urging men. Taking the five sagas *Egils saga* (*Eg* ÍF 2), *Grettis saga* (*Gr* ÍF 7 1-290), *Laxdæla saga* (*Laxd* ÍF 5 1-248), *Eyrbyggja saga* (*Eb* ÍF 4 1-184), and *Brennu-Njáls saga* (*Nj* ÍF 12) as a sample study, I have found forty-three uses of the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* in the prose of these texts.¹²² Of these forty-three cases, thirty-three describe men urging other men, while only nine denote women inciting men.

¹²² For simplicity, I have not included compound nouns formed with *áeggjan* in this study, and I only count occurrences in the main text of the Íslenzk Fornrit editions.

One instance in *Eyrbyggja saga* (*Eb ÍF* 4 27:69-70) is ambiguous: following the incitement of Þorgerðr (a woman), Arnkell declares that there is now no need for Vermundr (a man) to incite him. Incitement is thus performed by both genders. Male-to-male incitement is seemingly more common than female-to-male whetting. Though rare, there are even some instances of female-to-female incitement, particularly between mother and daughter: for example, Grímhildr incites Guðrún to marry Atli in *Völsunga saga* (*Völs* 34:63-64).¹²³

Same-gender incitement, however, has very different power dynamics to the type of urging described in the *Hetzerin* trope. Incitement is a method by which women gain access to spheres of influence that typically belong only to men. Jochens (1996a, p. 175), for example, writes, ‘Providing women direct access to the otherwise exclusively male world of revenge and feud, female whetting was basically a political tool’. Though Jochens only focuses on vengeful incitement here, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir broadens this:

The public sphere was the realm of (high-status) males: men took part in local and national assemblies, legislation, blood feud, travel, trade, and other business, where women had no official role [...] In this context, the primary tool available to women is words. (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, p. 10)

Whether goading for violence or peace, the woman asserts her influence within a male domain otherwise inaccessible to her. Most same-gender incitement does not function this way.

Women were not, however, the only figures excluded from certain activities. W. I. Miller (1990, p. 212) writes of cases in which male-to-male incitement in the sagas provides

¹²³ On this episode, see Katherine Marie Olley, 2022, pp. 129-130.

an entrance into otherwise inaccessible spheres of power: ‘Old men goaded their sons [...], servants both male and female goaded their masters [...], and thingmen goaded their chieftains’. He argues that ‘What was common to all inciters was not their sex but their dependence on the men they incited’ (W. I. Miller, 1990, p. 212). In this way, he perhaps prefigures Clover’s one-sex model, grouping ‘slaves, and old, disabled, or otherwise disenfranchised men’ (Clover, 1993, p. 380) together with women. Using Evans’ (2019, pp. 15–26) model of saga masculinities (and the framework of hegemonic masculinity), however, the differences between this type of male-to-male incitement and female-to-male incitement emerge. Although old men, servants, and subordinates do not conform to the dominant mode of masculinity in the saga world, as Evans (2019, p. 17) writes, ‘deviation from the masculine ideal does not invariably imply feminisation’. Though Clover (1993, pp. 380–387) groups old men and women together in her model, Evans’ (2019, pp. 78–83) considers them separately.

Both the sex and gender of the speaker influence the incitement scene. Many of the literary conventions associated with the motif (see below) are explicitly gendered, such as the location and timing of the whetting (see Borovsky, 1999, pp. 15–17), the insults or threats to the hearer’s masculinity (see Ali Frauman, 2019), and the use of lament (see Clover, 2002). Although men can perform roles traditionally assigned to women, Evans (2020, p. 74, Evans’ emphasis) notes, ‘the sexed body *is* of significance to the performance of gender in the sagas’. This is especially true for certain conventions of incitement, like insults to masculinity.

Frauman (2019, p. 285) writes, ‘The whetting woman makes herself a mirror for reflecting the incited party’s *níð* behaviour’. Women, with a physically female body, occupying a social role designed for women, utilise their femaleness in incitement scenes in ways in which old men and male servants, for example, cannot. Much more could be said on this topic, but since the focus of the present study is upon women’s verbal power, further discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The trope of the inciter woman should therefore be considered as separate from instances of male-to-male and female-to-female incitement. The exclusion of same-gender urgings from this trope is not to dissuade scholarship; far from it, I hope I have emphasised that such incitement is understudied despite its common occurrence in the corpus. Same-gender incitement can and should still be analysed and brought into dialogue with the *Hetzerin* motif, but this trope should remain distinct. The inciter woman trope should thus be limited to instances in which women speak directives to men to gain access to spheres of influence they are excluded from due to their gender.

Status

The relative statuses of the speaker and listener are also important considerations for classification. This is one of the conditions that Searle (1979, pp. 5-6) considers in his taxonomy of speech acts, noting how this will affect directives in particular: it determines ‘the difference between a request and an order’ (Searle, 1969, p. 70). A queen speaking a directive

to a servant is very different from a wife speaking a directive to her husband. The directives given by a woman in a position of power to her inferiors are considered commands that conform to and reinforce conventional power imbalances. Incitement, however, is so fascinating because it appears to suspend typical power dynamics, forcing the man to obey the woman. The inciter woman trope must therefore exclude instances in which women speak directives to their servants or subordinates.

Literary Conventions

There has been lively scholarly debate around the literary conventions associated with the inciter woman, exploring their potential origins, applications, and narrative effects. These conventions include but are not limited to: an incitement at mealtime (Borovsky, 1999, pp. 17, 34), lamenting to encourage action (Clover, 2002), the use of bloody tokens (W. I. Miller, 1983), direct speech, criticism of a man's decision or inaction, accusations of cowardice, and threats to the hearer's masculinity. Additionally, the woman sometimes sets up a planned goading scene, and there are specific words like *eggja* and *hvetja* [to incite] that indicate an incitement is taking place (though they are not exclusive to the *Hetzerin* trope, as explored above). These conventions are important signals that a figure is performing as an inciter woman, and they should thus be acknowledged in the definition.

These conventions can be considered a kind of literary 'communal ratification' (Petrey, 1990, p. 68, interpreting Austin) of incitement. This strengthens the definition of the inciter

woman by moving it away from the Searlean emphasis on intentionality inherent in his category of the directives.¹²⁴ Instead of relying upon an interpretation of the intention of a fictional figure, the inclusion of literary conventions in the definition of the inciter woman focuses instead upon the context: whether the figure is depicted in a similar way to other *Hetzerinnen* in the corpus.

The conventions present a palette from which the saga author can draw when painting inciter women: it is not a checklist of essential conditions. Some inciter women will thus be depicted with only one or two of these conventions while others might be described with several. For example, Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga* (*Laxd* ÍF 5 60:179-180), who is often cited as a quintessential *Hetzerin*, uses bloody tokens, sets up an incitement scene, and insults the hearers' manliness, but the incitement does not occur at mealtime, and she does not lament. Since inciters need not be depicted with all the conventions to qualify for the *Hetzerin* trope, it is not a concern that some of the literary conventions (e.g., producing bloody tokens) might be inappropriate for use in incitements towards peace. There may even be some conventions that are used primarily in incitements towards peace that have yet to be uncovered since research has focused almost exclusively on the conventions of the vengeful inciters.

Most of these literary conventions, however, can be used in scenes of incitement regardless of the motivation, offering an opportunity to reaffirm the decision to remove the

¹²⁴ Searle's strong emphasis on intention in speech act theory has been criticised extensively by, for example, Derrida (1988) and Petrey (1990, pp. 59-69).

vengeance requirement from the definition of the inciter woman. All the examples of non- or ambiguously vengeful goaders discussed in this chapter incorporate one or more of the literary conventions listed above, for example, criticism of the listeners' decisions, threats to masculinity (or promises of masculinity should they act accordingly), planned goading scenes, and the use of words like *eggja* [to incite] or *áeggjan* [incitement]. The literary conventions of incitement remain roughly consistent even when the end goals (revenge, violence, peace, compassion) of the speech act vary. This encourages the use of a broader definition of the inciter woman.

Revenge should perhaps even be placed into this category of literary conventions associated with the *Hetzerin* trope, making it an optional trait rather than a defining necessity. It is possible to consider the inciters who use a specific convention somewhat independently from those who do not, while still acknowledging the unity of the overall trope. This has been done, for example, with the inciters who use bloody tokens (see W. I. Miller, 1983). In this new model, vengeful inciters can thus still be analysed separately, when necessary, but they are nevertheless always tied to the wider, rich tradition of female goaders who urge men for a range of reasons. This allows for holistic analyses of female incitement, in line with the textual sources, without barring narrower studies of specific traits or types of inciters.

A (New) Model

Following the analysis within this chapter, I propose the following definition:

The inciter woman is a literary trope (with debated historicity) within Old Norse texts in which a female figure uses a directive speech act to urge, goad, or drive a man of equal or higher status to take an action. The incitement is depicted with certain literary conventions, and the end goal of the urging varies, ranging from vengeance and violence to peace and compassion.

This definition builds upon those of R. Heller (1958, p. 98) and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (1995, p. 190), as well as the ideas of Mundal (1994, p. 9). It is therefore not ‘new’ in the strictest sense, though it differs from these scholars, who nevertheless focus on incitement’s role in blood-feud and legal proceedings, in that it de-centres revenge from the incitement trope. Revenge becomes optional rather than necessary or even typical. This reflects the similarities of the speech acts rather than the differences in the resulting action; the focus remains upon the woman’s actions rather than the man’s. The definition thus presents a more comprehensive view of female incitement, enhancing rather than restricting scholarly understanding of the whetting trope.

Removing the requirement of vengeance, violence, or generally negative consequences from the definition of the inciter woman, however, exposes issues with the terminology used to describe her. The labels currently used to denote the trope (inciter

woman, goading or whetting woman, *Hetzerin*) appear to suggest encouragement towards violent or morally questionable actions. According to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the verbs ‘incite’, ‘goad’, and ‘whet’ have primarily negative or violent collocates.¹²⁵ ‘Incite’ has ‘violence’, ‘hatred’, and ‘riot’ (Entry: ‘Incite’, COCA). ‘Goad’ is somewhat more neutral, but still has ‘fight’, ‘angry’ and ‘violent’ as frequent collocates (Entry: ‘Goad’, COCA). The word ‘whet’, with the meaning of ‘to incite, instigate, egg or urge *on*’ is now ‘*Obsolete*’ (Entry: ‘whet v.’, OED; OED’s emphasis). Its only major use in English today, as confirmed by COCA, is in the phrase ‘to whet [my/someone’s] appetite’. Its other significant definition is ‘to sharpen’ (Entry: ‘whet v.’, OED), often regarding knives, thus also implying violence. In German, *Hetzer* carries mostly negative collocates: ‘Spalter’ [dissenter], ‘gewissenlos’ [unscrupulous], ‘Brandstifter’ [*lit.* arsonist, *fig.* one who maliciously incites conflict], ‘antisemitisch’ [anti-Semitic], and ‘rechtsradikal’ [right-wing extremist] (Entry: ‘Hetzer’, DWDS). The words currently used in scholarship to describe this trope thus have explicitly negative and often violent or criminal connotations. This nomenclature contrasts the (new) definition I propose.

This might suggest the need for a new name, with more neutral terminology, for the inciter woman: an urger, encourager, or driver, for example. This would, however, create a

¹²⁵ The analytical tools of the British National Corpus (BNC) are not as advanced as those of COCA. I therefore use the American corpus in my analysis, but I have manually checked that the entries in the BNC follow the same trend as those in COCA.

divide from previous scholarship on the *Hetzerin*. This new model is designed to build upon, rather than break from, current research on this trope, demonstrating how it can be enhanced with a widened scope. I therefore continue to use the traditional nomenclature, though I favour the more neutral verbs ‘urge, goad, drive’ in my definition.

Conclusion: Regardless of Vengeance

This chapter has revealed various issues surrounding the definition of the inciter woman in scholarship to date, proposing a new model that better reflects the textual evidence. Focusing on speech acts rather than revenge, this model more comprehensively represents the variety of inciter women in the Old Norse corpus, who are depicted with the same literary conventions as they goad men towards acts of violence, vengeance, restraint, compassion, and peace.

This updated definition has various applications for the study of Old Norse literature. No longer defining the women who incite for peace in opposition to the vengeful goaders, the definition opens avenues for re-evaluation of the female figures within the *Íslendingasögur*. It also facilitates the study of the inciter woman in texts outside this genre, which do not centre on vengeance and feud-cycles. The speech acts of women in texts like the hagiographies, learned translations, and the *riddarasögur* can thus be brought into dialogue with the vengeful inciters of the *Íslendingasögur* to more holistically analyse this trope.

The new definition might even encourage reconsideration of the trope's historicity. With the de-centring of revenge, scholars no longer need to search for a historical reality in which women urge their male kinsmen towards bloodshed and vengeance. Instead, the presence of real women in medieval Iceland and Scandinavia who used their voice to encourage male relations to act according to their wishes is enough to present some evidence of historicity. Sceptics of the historical reality of the vengeful inciter might find it easier to accept the reality of the trope when it is not restricted to revenge, blood-feud, or the legal sphere. It is not hard to imagine that, when women were unable to act or make a decision themselves, they would use their verbal power to bend men's actions to their will. Perhaps the prominent vengeful eggers in the sagas emerged from this historical reality.

The following chapters now turn to the texts of AM 226 fol., demonstrating the value of this definition for the study of figures in *Stjórn*, *Rómverja saga*, and *Gyðinga saga*. The chapters both use and justify the new model, revealing how the Old Norse translator depicts specific figures as inciters even though they are usually not motivated by revenge. Certain chapters also test the new conditions proposed for the model, examining situations in which women of varying status speak directives to men and cases where the translator uses different literary conventions to depict speaking women. In this way, these chapters continue to test the boundaries of the inciter woman trope, while analysing its use by a translator working with Christian and learned material.

Eve: Original Incitement in the Fall of Man

It is fitting for this study of the female voice in AM 226 fol. to begin with the first woman in biblical history (and thus the manuscript): Eve.¹²⁶ The first of humankind to Fall into sin by eating the forbidden fruit, and the first woman to lead a man astray, the figure of Eve haunts the gender mores of each period she touches. Old Norse writers and readers were not immune to the allure of Eve; her story is explored extensively in *Stjórn* I, where her depiction recalls the *Hetzerin* trope. Drawing attention to her voice, the Old Norse translator uses Eve to demonstrate how women's words can influence men, painting female verbal power as an essential part of Original Sin and the Fall of Mankind.

The Fall story was exceedingly popular in the medieval period; there are multiple extant works in both Latin and the vernacular depicting the Fall, investigating the relationship between Adam and Eve, and exploring the themes of temptation, punishment, and deception. Many of these medieval Falls have been analysed extensively in scholarship.¹²⁷ Some such Fall stories, including an Old French play, Old English poetry, and Latin biblical commentaries, will be touched upon in this chapter. The focus, though, is upon Old Norse material.

¹²⁶ There is a brief mention in *Stjórn* I of the possibility that another woman (Lilith) preceded Eve, but only to argue that this is a misinterpretation of Genesis 1.27 (*Stj* I p. 51). This argument is taken from the *Historia Scholastica* (HSG 18:35-36).

¹²⁷ See, for example, Michael E. Stone, 1992, esp. 84-123; Eric Jager, 1993; Brian Murdoch, 2000; 2009; John Flood, 2010. The body of scholarship on medieval Fall stories is immense; I have listed here the most significant monograph-length studies only.

Several texts in the Old Norse language tell, or at least reference, the story of Adam and Eve. There has been no comprehensive study of Old Norse Fall stories; collation and comparison of such texts is beyond the scope of this thesis. It must suffice to note that, in addition to biblical translations of Genesis (*Stjórn* I and AM 238 XIX fol.), there are also retellings of the first couple's story embedded in other texts (e.g., the *King's Mirror: Kgs*), renarrations of apocrypha about Adam and Eve's life after the Fall (e.g., the Old Norse *Quest of Seth*),¹²⁸ and shorter references to the figures and their story (e.g., see Kirby, 1976–1980, i pp. 5–7; ii p. 231).¹²⁹ Although there is a wealth of material on Adam and Eve in the Nordic vernaculars, this study focuses on the depiction of Eve within the texts of AM 226 fol., of which she is mentioned in two: *Stjórn* I and *Alexanders saga*. In the latter, her story is only briefly referenced when describing decorations on the tomb of Darius' wife (*Alex.Norm* 4:48; AM 226 fol., 136vb),¹³⁰ but in *Stjórn* I there is a substantial retelling of the Fall story, perhaps the most extensive version in Old Norse.

¹²⁸ See Tiffany Nicole White, 2022.

¹²⁹ Kirby's list of references cannot, for our purposes, be considered complete, since he 'does not include general references to well-known incidents from the Bible which, it may be assumed, the reader of the Norse texts would have no difficulty in recognising' (Kirby, 1980, ii p. 231). The Fall story is certainly well-known and recognisable; thus, there is no comprehensive collection of references to the Fall in Old Norse texts.

¹³⁰ The translator notes that both Adam and Eve were deceived (using the verb *svíkja*) by the snake, *ormr* (*Alex.Norm* 4:48; AM 226 fol., 136vb).

The *Stjórn I* account of the Fall is rich, fascinating, and especially complex. Though select scholars have analysed this section of *Stjórn I*,¹³¹ it remains filled with analytical potential: fruit that scholars have yet to taste. Unlike with the other female figures analysed in this thesis, whose stories are shorter and rarer in Old Norse translation, this analysis will take quite a narrow approach to the Fall story, zoning in upon the moment in which Eve convinces Adam to eat the fruit. This scene is, of course, influenced by other aspects of the Fall story (and beyond) in *Stjórn I*, which will also be discussed here. There are, however, far too many fascinating aspects of the *Stjórn I* story of Adam and Eve to include here; the following analysis therefore focuses on the features most pertinent to a study of the female voice.

Beginning the study of AM 226 fol. with Eve means the analysis must start with the most convoluted passage of the most challenging text within the manuscript: the Fall story of *Stjórn I*. *Stjórn* is, of course, a compilation as well as a translation: nowhere is that more evident than in *Stjórn I*, which incorporates far more biblical commentary than other parts of *Stjórn* (see the Introduction). Even within *Stjórn I*, the story of the Creation and Fall of Man stands out; the translator incorporates more commentary than he does for any of the other biblical stories.¹³² The Fall story is thus perhaps the most complex section in all of *Stjórn*.

¹³¹ Astås, 1991, esp. pp. 106, 126-131, 138, 145, 147-148; J. Ericksen, 1998; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 152-160.

¹³² On the integration of commentary material in the Genesis 1-11 section of *Stjórn I*, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 139-170.

The challenge in comprehending *Stjórn* I might in part be due to the difficulties inherent in interpreting the biblical story. The Fall story of Genesis 3 is notably sparse, as is the account of Creation, of which there are seemingly two separate, sometimes contradictory narratives (Gen 1-2).¹³³ Eve is not mentioned again in the Old Testament after her expulsion from Paradise and the birth of her sons, Cain and Abel. As Carol Meyers (2012, p. 1) writes, ‘Only in the writings of early Judaism and Christianity, in the last centuries BCE and the first centuries CE, do Eve and Adam emerge into the mainstream of religious literature and theological discussion’. From this point on, however, as the story of Creation and the Fall became central to gender relations, numerous writers produced their own interpretation of the story of Genesis. In the New Testament (e.g., I Tim 2.11-15, where Eve’s Fall is used to evidence why women should not have authority over men)¹³⁴ and ancient and medieval theological writings (e.g., the works of Augustine), new interpretations emerge that cloud and sometimes supplant both modern and medieval readers’ knowledge of the Genesis material. Some details commonly remembered today about the Fall story are not actually from Genesis: for example, there is no mention that the fruit Eve eats is an apple, nor is there any explicit suggestion that the snake is the devil in disguise. Nonetheless, these interpretations influence

¹³³ All references to biblical books in this thesis refer to the Vulgate.

¹³⁴ For an analysis of the impact of this passage on medieval Icelandic preaching practices, see Van Deusen, 2019, pp. 98-112.

readers' reception of Genesis.¹³⁵ The translator of *Stjórn* I is then faced with not just one version of the Fall, but multiple different accounts of a story that is pivotal to ideas of gender, sin, and redemption in Christian culture. In the process of compiling these accounts, he produces a Fall story that is multifaceted, complex, and at times even contradictory.

To manage this complexity, this analysis begins with an overview of the source material compiled into the Fall story of *Stjórn* I, with a tight focus on Eve's persuasion of Adam, as well as other details pertinent to the discussion of the female voice. Following this, I analyse the depiction of female verbal power in *Stjórn* I's Fall story, comparing it against wider Old Norse material dealing with Adam and Eve. Through this significant biblical story, that has had an undeniable influence on gender mores throughout history, the *Stjórn* I translator depicts not just Original Sin but also Original Incitement.

Eve's Persuasion in the Source Material

The Fall story in the Vulgate begins at Genesis 2.17, where God tells Adam that he must not eat from one tree in Paradise. God then creates the woman from Adam's rib (Gen 2.21-22). Shortly afterwards, there is a conversation between this woman and a trickster snake (Gen 3.1-5). There is no mention of Adam's whereabouts as this conversation takes place. The

¹³⁵ See Alice Bach's (1997, p. 4) discussion of 'doxa' and the effect of the 'doxic version' on readers of the Bible.

snake tells Eve that she would not die upon eating the fruit of the forbidden tree but rather gain the godly ability to discern between right and wrong (Gen 3.4-5). Following this, one biblical verse describes how Eve eats the fruit and convinces Adam to do the same: ‘vidit igitur mulier quod bonum esset lignum ad vescendum et pulchrum oculis aspectuque delectabile et tulit de fructu illius et comedit deditque viro suo qui comedit’ (Gen 3.6) [the woman thus saw that the tree was good to eat and beautiful to the eyes and delectable to behold, and picked of that fruit and ate and gave it to her husband who ate]. As Anne W. Stewart (2014, p. 46) writes, ‘The esteem, worth, and role of women is at stake in the interpretation of this verse’. The action described in this verse, in a mere three words, ‘deditque viro suo’ (Gen 3.6) [and gave it to her husband], is the focus of this chapter.

After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve’s eyes open: ‘aperti sunt oculi amborum’ (Gen 3.7) [the eyes of both were opened]. They realise their nakedness and cover themselves (Gen 3.7). When God comes to visit, Adam and Eve hide from him; in the resulting dialogue between God and Adam, God realises that they have eaten the forbidden fruit (Gen 3.8-11). Adam instantly blames Eve (and by extension God, for creating Eve), declaring, ‘mulier quam dedisti sociam mihi dedit mihi de ligno et comedi’ (Gen 3.12) [the woman, who you gave to me as a partner, gave me (fruit) of the tree and I ate]. When God confronts the woman, she blames the snake for his deception (though, it is worth noting that the snake does not say

anything untrue):¹³⁶ ‘serpens decepit me et comedi’ (Gen 3.13) [the serpent deceived me, and I ate].

God then announces punishments for the transgression (Gen 3.14–19). For the snake and the woman, He gives no reason as to why each of these punishments is chosen, thus leaving ample room for interpretation. God first curses the snake, forcing it to slither on the ground forever, and sets up eternal hatred and oppression between snakes and women (Gen 3.14–15). The woman is punished with painful childbirth and forced obedience to man. Adam is condemned to physical labour; the earth will no longer give him what he needs freely, but he will have to work to sustain himself until he dies (Gen 3.17–19). Here is the infamous phrase: ‘pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris’ (Gen 3.19) [you are dust, and to the dust you will return].¹³⁷ Unlike with Eve and the serpent, God explains why Adam is punished: because he listened to the *vox* [voice] of his wife and ate from the forbidden tree (Gen 3.17). After the sentences have been served, Adam names the woman Eve, ‘eo quod mater esset cunctorum viventium’ (Gen 3.20) [because she was the mother of all living (people)]. The rest of Genesis 3 concerns their expulsion from Paradise (Gen 3.21–24).

¹³⁶ See Susan Niditch, 1992, p. 14.

¹³⁷ In *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I pp. 57, 59), the translator appears to favour the word *mold* [mould, earth, dirt, dust] as a translation of *pulvis* [dust] in this phrase. Since *mold* is cognate with modern English ‘mould’ (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1975, p. 434), this makes for rather humorous reading for English speakers: ‘þu ert molld *ok* i molldina mantv aprt hverfa’ (*Stj* I p. 59) [you are mould, and to the mould you will return].

The biblical account presents the bare but essential bones of the Fall story. It is, however, only one of the sources compiled in *Stjórn* I. The translator also incorporates material from Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HSG*), Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale* (*SH*), Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (*IE*), and Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (*GMan*) and *De Genesi ad litteram* (*GLitt*). The incorporation of these texts into *Stjórn* I, and the effects of this on theological reading techniques, is analysed extensively by Grønlie (2024, pp. 139-170).¹³⁸ Grønlie (2024, p. 169) calls the first part of *Stjórn* I 'a patchwork of different sources', and notes that 'it seems to have been more important to the compiler to accommodate a full range of glosses than to create a continuous narrative'. *Stjórn* I is a scholastic 'melting pot where nothing melt[s]' (to borrow a phrase from Tony Kushner: *AinA* i 1:1). Sometimes the translator names his source, but often he does not, writing in continuous prose a passage compiled from several sources.¹³⁹ The translator's technique when compiling this material is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to note that the resulting text blends narrative (mostly from the Vulgate) together with theological commentary, creating a weaving and at times inconsistent account of the Fall. In order to accurately and holistically analyse the depiction of female verbal power in the Fall story of *Stjórn* I, it is important to consider all these seemingly separate sections of the story together.

¹³⁸ On the use of sources in *Stjórn* I more generally, see also Kirby, 1986, pp. 52-56, 72-73, and Astås, 1991, esp. pp. 69-115.

¹³⁹ In a conference presentation, Grønlie (2022b) helpfully called these 'marked' and 'silent glosses' respectively.

Various details relating to the Fall are taken from each source text, a selection of which I shall briefly introduce.¹⁴⁰ Details about the Fall of the Angels and the connection between Lucifer and the serpent in Paradise are taken from the *Speculum Historiale* (*SH* 1.10:5) and the *Historia Scholastica* (*HSG* 3:9-11, 7:18, 22:39-40). Both Vincent of Beauvais (*SH* 1.42:16-17) and Peter Comestor (*HSG* 24:42-45) also include a list of the sins committed by each of the players in the Fall, though the number and nature of the sins included differ in each of these texts: a challenge the Old Norse compiler must navigate. The translator also includes an etymology of the name ‘Eve’ from Isidore (*IE* i VII.vi.5) and various details from Augustine’s (*GLitt* esp. 9.3-11:271-281) comments on sexuality and its manifestations in the Fall story.¹⁴¹ The incorporation of this commentary material significantly affects the depiction of the female voice in *Stjórn* I.

Writing on one specific section of *Stjórn* I’s Fall story, Grønlie (2024, p. 156) comments, ‘the polyphony of critical voices threatens to drown out the dialogue between God and Adam’. The voices of male interpreters as well as male characters dominate the Old Norse version of this story. This thesis, however, is interested instead in the female voice, which might not shout as loud as those of the men who interpret her, but nonetheless looms large in the narrative.

¹⁴⁰ For general introductions to the commentary material used as a source for *Stjórn* I, see Unger, 1862, pp. vii-ix; Kirby, 1980, ii pp. 6-9, 12-13; Astås, 2009, i pp. cxxiii-cxxviii.

¹⁴¹ See Astås, 1991, p. 128; J. Ericksen, 1998, esp. pp. 200-202; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 152-154, 157.

Eve's Persuasion in Stjórn I

Describing Eve's persuasion of Adam, the translator includes extra details taken from biblical commentaries, but in the process of translation he gives the passage a specifically Nordic flair. In *Stjórn I*, Eve 'tok þá eitt epli af æ uexti þers sama tress ok átt. ok gaf sidan bonda sinum þar af. eggiandi hann til eta eigi sidr' (*Stj I p. 53*) [then took an apple from the fruit of this same tree and ate. She afterwards gave one to her husband, inciting him to eat no less]. The translator here begins with the relatively plain description, from Genesis 3.6, of Eve taking, eating, and giving to Adam the fruit, rendered here as 'epli' (*Stj I p. 53*), which can mean 'apple' or 'fruit' more generally. Afterwards, however, the translator adds an explanation of how Eve convinces Adam to transgress with her, perhaps taking inspiration from Peter Comestor (*HSG 23:40-41*). This additional clause introduces a speech act into the description of Adam's Fall.

In the Vulgate account, Eve is never depicted speaking to Adam, only God (Gen 3.13) and the serpent (Gen 3.2-3). In fact, aside from Adam's naming of Eve as a 'virago' (Gen 2.23) [woman], and the ensuing discussion of woman's place (Gen 2.23), the only interaction between the protoplasts before the Fall in the Vulgate is when Eve gives Adam the fruit, an action described only with the verb *dare* (Gen 3.6, 3.12) [to give]. When God chastises Adam, however, He criticises him for listening to the *vox* (Gen 3.17) [voice] of Eve, indicating that a speech act had taken place. In the Old Norse, however, a verb that explicitly denotes speech

(*eggja*) is introduced at this pivotal moment of interaction between the protoplasts. The Old Norse translator demonstrates how the first woman causes the Fall of her partner not by *giving* but by *speaking*.

Eve's speech act is not rendered directly in this translation (a topic returned to below). While the lack of direct speech here might suggest the compiler's lack of interest in Eve's words, the verbs and nouns used to describe the speech act suggest otherwise. As noted in the previous chapter, the verb *eggja* is connected with the trope of the inciter woman; though the speeches of *Hetzerinnen* are often rendered directly, they are frequently described only with words such as *eggja* and *hvetja* (both meaning 'to incite'). This is exactly what happens in the *Stjórn* I Fall story, suggesting that Eve's persuasion here can be read as an incitement in line with the inciter woman trope outlined in Chapter One.

Eve's speech act certainly belongs to Searle's category of the directives (1979, pp. 13-14). The propositional content is *want/wish/desire*, since it can be presumed that Eve wants Adam to eat with her (though, as discussed in the previous chapter, intention is a contentious subject in Searle's work). The propositional content is that the *Hearer*, Adam, performs the Action of eating the fruit ('*H* does *A*'; Searle, 1979, p. 14). The direction of fit is clearly *world-to-words*, because, through the speech act, Eve directs Adam to do something. Eve shapes the world with her words more so than most speech acts: her directive changes the course of all (biblical) world history, bringing about death, sin, and suffering for all mankind.

This is not the only mention of Eve's speech act in *Stjórn I*; it is referenced several times in the following narrative and theological discussion. The translator uses the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* to describe Eve's speech act in three more instances (*Stj I* pp. 56–57), drawing increasing attention to the concept of incitement. The verb *eggja* or its noun form are the most frequently used words in *Stjórn I* to describe Eve's actions.

Often the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* are chosen to translate some idea of encouragement or persuasion present in the source text, but sometimes they are added to the *Stjórn I* account without precedent in the immediate source material. In the aforementioned example, the translation of Genesis 3.6, the idea of Eve persuading Adam comes from the *Historia Scholastica*: 'Comedit deditque uiro suo, forte premonens uerbis persuasibilibus' (*HSG 23:40–41*) [She ate and gave it to her husband, strongly admonishing him with persuasive words]. Although the idea of Eve's persuading speech act has precedent in the source material here, the translator's decision to render it with the verb *eggja*, which elsewhere renders the directives of inciter women, suggests a conscious framing of Eve's act as incitement.

In the translation of Genesis 3.17, the translator includes the noun *áeggjan* where there is no explicit mention of a directive in the Vulgate account. In this verse, God explains his reasons for punishing Adam: 'quia audisti vocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de ligno' (Gen 3.17) [because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree]. In the Old Norse, this is translated as follows: 'Fýrir þann skýlld at þu hlýddir ordum konu þinnar ok æ eðian. ok

dirfdíz at etá af þi tre' (*Stj* I p. 57) [For this reason that you listened to the words and incitement of your wife and dared to eat from the tree]. The *orð* [words] of Eve, which the translator takes from the Vulgate account, need not represent a directive; they could instead indicate an assertive, an expression that 'commit[s] the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition' (Searle, 1979, p. 12). Eve might have declared, 'I ate the fruit, and I didn't die!', without suggesting, encouraging, or commanding Adam to do the same; hearing these words, Adam may have decided to eat, without external persuasion.¹⁴² In the Old Norse translation, however, Eve's urging and even inciting nature is explicit, with the addition of the noun *áeggjan*. Kirby (1986, p. 54) notes that the *Stjórn* I compiler 'delights in the doubling of words' when translating the Vulgate, though he adds that 'Some doublings are apparently made [...] because one of the words represents the Vulgate and the other the Old Latin text of the Bible'. The word doubling in the translation of this biblical verse, however, does not appear to be from *Vetus Latina*;¹⁴³ it seems instead to stem from the translator's desire to emphasise the female verbal power at play in the Fall story.

¹⁴² One of the reasons given for Adam's transgression in *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I p. 53) is that he believed they would die immediately upon eating the apple: a belief that Eve's postlapsarian life disproved.

¹⁴³ Of the sixty-nine versions of Gen 3.17 collated in the *Vetus Latina Database* (Entry, 'Genesis 3.17'), only two add any further detail to the nature of Eve's words: Picture 34 (CAr ant 1,47) mentions Eve's *consilium* [counsel], and Picture 67 (VIC-M 1,508-513) references women's *fraus* [trickery, deception]. It is therefore unlikely, though not impossible, that the translator used the word *áeggjan* to translate a detail from the Old Latin Bible.

The other two instances in which Eve's action is described using the verb *eggja* or its noun form do have some precedent in the source texts, though the translator chooses to include and emphasise the idea of destructive female directives. The verb appears in the list of Eve's sins compiled from Comestor and Vincent (*Stj* I p. 56; explored below) and again when describing Adam's sins (*Stj* I p. 57). In the latter, the translator also uses a different verb (*lokka*) that suggests persuasion, enticement, or perhaps even seduction. It is worth exploring this verb further as it is also used in AM 226 fol. to describe the speech acts of Samson's seductresses, analysed in Chapter Four.

The Old Norse translator takes material from Vincent's *Speculum Historiale* to describe the difference between the sins of Adam and Eve because of their different motivations for eating the fruit. Adam, the translator notes, did not transgress as severely as Eve because he did not aspire to divinity: 'helldr lokkadiz hann eptir hennar æ eggían. sua sem af nõckurum of miklum uínattu goðuilia. ok eptir lætí. fyrir þui at hann ugdi at hon mundi stýgguz uidr ef hann æti eigi eplít er hon bar honum' (*Stj* I p. 57) [rather he was enticed by her incitement, as if by the goodwill and pliancy of some great friendship, because he feared that she would be offended if he did not eat the fruit that she gave him]. The content of this line, including the depiction of a fearful Adam unable to stand up to his wife, comes from the source material (*SH* 1.42:17), but the translator interestingly modifies the depiction of the female speech acts.

Vincent begins his exploration of Adam's sins by stating that he was not seduced, and therefore he did not desire divinity (*SH* 1.42:17). The Old Norse translator omits the first statement, and even inserts a verb associated with seduction (*lokka*) as he describes the cause of Adam's transgression. Vincent says that Adam was 'quadam amicabili benevolentia illectus' (*SH* 1.42:17) [enticed to a certain extent by the benevolence of friendship]. In the Old Norse, however, Adam is said to have been enticed (using the verb *lokka*) by Eve's incitement (*Stj* I p. 57); the inclusion of both *lokka* and *áeggjan* here again emphasises Eve's speech act. The word *lokka*, meaning 'to allure, entice' (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 397), appears to carry sexual connotations, suggesting seduction.¹⁴⁴ While it initially seems that the translator intends to depict Eve as a seductress, he later clarifies that this is certainly not the case (*Stj* I p. 58). Switching to material from Augustine to explain that from Vincent, the compiler writes, 'Enn eigi leiddiz hennar lockan af likamsíns girnd. edr munuð at þi sinní. huerrar er hann kendi eigi fyrr en hann hafdi etít eplít' (*Stj* I p. 58) [but he was not led by her enticement of bodily desire or lust at that time: things that he did not know before he ate the fruit]. The temporal statement 'at þi sinní' (*Stj* I p. 58) [at that time] demonstrates the translator's awareness of the usual sexual connotations of *lokka/lokkan*, but he is stating that they do not apply (or were not effective) in the prelapsarian world. This line is translated from Augustine (*GLitt* 11.42:378), from a passage which refers to his earlier argument that there was no

¹⁴⁴ On female-to-male seduction in AM 226 fol., see Chapter Four.

prelapsarian lust (*GLitt* 9.3-11:271-281). Before the Fall, Adam thus could not have been enticed by a sexual seduction; instead, it is Eve's incitement that convinces him to transgress.

Since the word *lokka* in the description of the Fall cannot represent sexual seduction, it seems instead to be used as a synonym for *eggja*. In the aforementioned line, 'lokkadiz hann eptir hennar æ eggían' (*Stj* I p. 57) [he was enticed by her incitement], the word appears to be used to avoid repetition of the word *eggja/áeggjan*, whilst also providing an opening for a discussion of the origins of lust, which Janet Schrank Ericksen (1998) argues is a particular concern for the translator. The verb's potential for use as a synonym for *eggja* can also be seen earlier in *Stjórn* I in AM 226 fol., when *lokka* and *eggja* are used in parallel clauses to describe the deeds of God (*Stj* I p. 39). The verb *lokka* therefore also appears to denote the act of urging, or even inciting, in *Stjórn* I.

Eve's speech act in *Stjórn* I is thus a directive that is primarily described with verbs and nouns indicating urging and inciting. Of these, *eggja* and *áeggjan*, in particular, are commonly associated with the *Hetzerin* in the wider corpus. There are also some additional conventions of incitement used to describe Eve's persuasion of Adam, which strengthen the connection between the vernacular depiction of the biblical figure and the Old Norse trope of the inciter woman.

Eve's speech act is obviously connected to food, since she goads Adam to eat the fateful fruit. Alice Bach (1997, p. 183) writes that this is part of a biblical trope in which

women give men ‘dangerous food’. Bach (1997, p. 183) writes, ‘Within male-created narratives, it stands to reason that women’s weapons would be chosen from the female arsenal. Since feeding is one of women’s primary cultural roles, it becomes key to their seizing of power’. Female spaces are also the centre of women’s power in Old Norse literature. Borovsky (1999, p. 17) writes of *hvöt* scenes, ‘The setting of these performances was *innangarðs*, the centre of the woman’s space, and usually at mealtime, when she was most capable of binding an audience to her performance’. Thus, inciter women frequently act at mealtimes, sometimes using food as part of the incitement. Though the food-centric nature of Eve’s persuasion is not an addition or emendation by the Old Norse translator, it nonetheless can be connected to the mealtime incitements within the target literary corpus, particularly with the repeated use of the words *eggja* and *áeggjan* in the story.

Food is sometimes even a central part of the incitement in the sagas. For example, in *Heiðarvígga saga* (*Heið ÍF* 3 22:276-278), Þuríðr serves her sons very large portions of meat, symbolic of the pieces of their brother’s murdered body, as well as a stone, representing the shame of inaction. Interesting in this particular example is that the large portions of meat themselves amount to a challenge of the sons’ masculinity. Steingrímur declares ‘Þó er nú brytjat stórmannliga, móðir, ok ekki áttu vanða til at gefa mǫnnum svá kappsamliga mat, ok er á þessu mikit vanstilli, ok ertu nær óvitandi vits’ (*Heið ÍF* 3 22:277) [This is cut heroically, mother, and it is not your custom to give men portions so abundantly, and this is very

excessive, and you are nearly out of your wits]. The use of the adverb *stórmannliga* [in a manly manner; munificently] to describe the mother's cutting of large portions of meat draws attention to the connection between excessive eating and masculinity or heroism in the period.¹⁴⁵ It also emphasises Þuríðr's masculinity at a time in which she criticises her sons for their (effeminate) inaction.¹⁴⁶ A challenge is presented: the sons cannot be less masculine than their mother. In *Stjórn I*, when Eve tells Adam to eat the fruit, she goads him to 'eta *eigi* sidr' (*Stj I* p. 53) [eat no less] than her. This perhaps also presents a challenge to Adam and his masculinity; he must eat as much as his wife. In *Stjórn I*, then, the portrayal of Eve's persuasion combines the convention of a mealtime incitement with an implication of challenged masculinity.

The depiction of Eve thus aligns with the model for the inciter woman proposed in Chapter One, combining a directive with many of the conventions commonly associated with incitement scenes. The potential for Eve in *Stjórn I* to represent an inciter woman has previously been touched upon by Grønlie (2006, p. 302), who writes, 'the use of the verb *eggja* and related noun (*á*)*eggjan* in the Norse treatment of Eve, Jezebel, and Sigríðr clearly registers this parallel [with the inciter woman]'. The Eve of *Stjórn I* (or any other Old Norse Fall story) has never, however, formed part of a discussion on this trope, likely because of the

¹⁴⁵ The connection between eating, particularly excessive eating, and masculinity is evident in several Old Norse texts. For example, in *Þrymskviða*, Þórr's disguise as a woman is questioned and threatened by his excessive eating at the wedding feast (*Edd ÍF* i 426).

¹⁴⁶ On female masculinities in saga literature, see Evans, 2020.

previous narrow focus on vengeful incitements. Eve's whetting of Adam does not have vengeance as a motivator. In fact, no motivation is given for Eve's speech act; this is unusual considering the *Stjórn I* translator's 'clear tendency towards searching for and accentuating interior psychological causalities' (Astås, 1991, p. 106). In all the discussions of the motivations behind the Fall, however, there is no mention of vengeance against God. The previous limited definition of the *Hetzerin* excludes Eve, despite the clear indications in *Stjórn I* that the translator is writing her as part of this trope. This is a significant omission, since Eve's depiction (in *Stjórn I* and other Old Norse texts) has a significant impact on our understanding of the inciter woman.

Incitement and Sin

In Jochens' studies of female goaders (1986; 1996a), she concludes that these figures are intended to be read negatively, as destructive women who harm men and male society through their speech acts. Jochens (1996a, p. 175) writes of the inciter woman, 'Whereas she had appeared as a grand and impressive woman in the distant, mythic setting of the poetry, in the familiar Icelandic society she was often vilified and turned into a scapegoat for men's failures in establishing a peaceful society'. In an article that precedes her monograph, Jochens (1986, pp. 49-50) compares the scapegoating of the inciter woman to that of the biblical Eve:

The image of the evil, cunning woman who goaded men to barbarous deeds of revenge, thereby destroying the male order of society, did have resonance with the long-established ecclesiastical view of Eve, the first woman and the

vehicle for the entrance of sin and misfortune into the world. (Jochens, 1986, pp. 49-50)¹⁴⁷

Jochens did not, however, analyse the Eve of *Stjórn* I or any other Old Norse text. If she did, she might have found that the depiction(s) supported her argument. It is not only Jochens who has noticed the parallel between the inciters of saga literature and the figure of Eve; it seems that writers and translators in the medieval North were aware of this connection themselves.¹⁴⁸ Whilst depicting Eve as an inciter, the compiler of *Stjórn* I also includes and manipulates material from his source texts to denounce Eve's speech act, and thus women's incitement, as a sin that harms men, betrays God, and begets disaster.

In *Stjórn* I, the translator includes a passage of commentary (*Stj* I pp. 55-58) taken mostly from the *Historia Scholastica* (*HSG* 24:42-45) which lists the sins committed by each of the players in the Fall. At the beginning of this passage, the translator outlines the number assigned to each and uses this to determine their guilt: the snake sins three times, Eve twice, and Adam only once (*Stj* I p. 55). Incitement is included within Eve's list of offences: 'Konan misgerdi meðr tuennum greinum um þat fram sem hon eggjadi sinn bonda at eta eplít ok afsakaði sik siþan' (*Stj* I p. 56) [The woman transgressed in two ways in addition, as she incited her husband to eat the fruit and excused herself afterwards]. In this comment on Eve's sins,

¹⁴⁷ This is also quoted in Mundal's (1994, pp. 5-6) article on women's position in Old Norse society. Mundal does not examine any Norse depiction of Eve.

¹⁴⁸ Though the other Old Norse Fall stories are beyond the scope of this study, there is a brief discussion of them below.

the compiler combines commentary from Comestor (*HSG* 24:44) and Vincent (*SH* 1.42:17). In the *Historia Scholastica*, Eve's twofold sins are described as follows: 'In duobus peccauit mulier, superbiuit et uetitum comedit' (*HSG* 24:44) [The woman sinned in two ways: she was proud, and she ate the prohibited fruit]. In the *Speculum Historiale*, however, Eve's sins are fourfold: 'mulier ad suggestionem Serpentis elata, quatuor modis peccauit, scilicet diuinitatem rapere volendo; contra prohibitionem comedendo; virum ad comedendum inuitando; ad interrogationem domini culpam suam excusando' (*SH* 1.42:17) [The woman, brought up to the suggestion of the serpent, sinned in four ways: certainly, in wanting to seize divinity; in eating against the prohibition; in inciting the man to eat; and in excusing her offence at the lord's inquiry]. In *Stjórn* I, the translator states that Eve sins twice, in line with the *Historia Scholastica*, but then picks out two of her sins from the list in the *Speculum Historiale*.

This mixing of commentary causes some confusion in the text. The translator next discusses how God's punishments line up with Eve's sins, returning to content from the *Historia Scholastica*: her pride is punished as God humbles her, and the eating of the fruit is disciplined through painful childbirth (*Stj* I pp. 56-57). This introduces two further sins to Eve's count: 'Hon misgerdi medr ofmetnaði' (*Stj* I p. 56) [she transgressed with pride], and 'hon misgørði etandi af tressíns auexti' (*Stj* I p. 57) [she transgressed in eating the fruit of the tree]. The compiler therefore lists four sins, while claiming that Eve's transgressions are only twofold. The phrase 'um þat framm' (*Stj* I p. 56) [in addition] in the quotation above is perhaps

the compiler's attempt to rectify this, referring back to the earlier discussions of Eve's motivations: 'af þi at konan uar metnaðar giðrn. i þi er hon uilldi samlikiaz uid uid [sic] gud' (*Stj* I p. 53) [because the woman was ambitious, in that she wished to compare herself to God]. Eve's twofold sins (*Stj* I p. 56) of incitement and excusing are perhaps to be read in addition to this transgression of divine ambition. Is this sin of *metnaðargirnd* (*Stj* I p. 53) [ambition], however, the same as her sin of *ofmetnaðr* (*Stj* I p. 56) [pride], or could this be a fifth sin? In any case, incorporating different commentaries upon the Fall into *Stjórn* I, the translator lists many sins of Eve, including two (incitement and excusing) that explicitly relate to speech acts.

Eve therefore sins four or five times according to the *Stjórn* I account. This contradicts the translator's earlier statement on the number and severity of each figure's misdeeds:

Höð ormrínn misgørði fyrst ok mest. þiat hann misgørði í íí. hlutum. konan misgørði minnr enn hann. enn meik en karlmaðrinn. þiat hon misgørði i íí. lutum. Hann misgørði minnr enn þau. (*Stj* I p. 55)

[The serpent transgressed first and most, because he transgressed in three things. The woman transgressed less than it but more than the man, because she transgressed in two things. He transgressed less than those two.]

The later inclusion of Eve's additional sins of incitement and excusing thus creates some numerical difficulties. It is not, however, only Eve's transgressions that do not line up with this proposed three-two-one structure. In this section of *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I pp. 55-58), while only three sins are listed for the serpent, Adam is assigned a new sin, also taken from the *Speculum*

Historiale (SH 1.42:17): ‘misgòrði hann upp æ tuenna greín. þá adra sem fyrr uar fra sagt. at hann bergdi æ bannadum æ uextí. enn þá adra at hann af sakadi sik. kennandi konunni sina sekt’ (*Stj* I p. 58) [he transgressed in two ways: first, as was said before, he tasted the forbidden fruit and, second, he excused himself, blaming the woman for his guilt]. The final sin count is: Serpent – Three, Eve – Four/Five, Adam – Two. Eve’s sins are now more numerous even than the those of the serpent, who (as explored below) is said to be the devil himself! The number of sins assigned to each participant is explicitly linked with the severity of their transgression in the above quotation using the conjunction *því at* (*Stj* I p. 55). Inserting two sins of female speech into Eve’s list, the translator not only accentuates the theme of female incitement prevalent in the *Stjórn* I Fall story but also casts incitement as a sin that tips the scale of blame. Eve is perhaps held more accountable for the Fall than Lucifer, specifically because of her speech acts.

It is, nevertheless, difficult to draw such conclusions from a text like *Stjórn* I, since the translator’s compilatory technique consistently resists cohesion. As Grønlie (2024, p. 157) writes of this passage, ‘there is little attempt to harmonise any of these different interpretations [...] a single coherent reading of the scene is subordinated to the full range of moral lessons to be learned from it’. It is, however, significant that many of the ‘lessons’ (Grønlie, 2024, p. 157) the compiler expounds here concern the conduct, and the speech acts, of women. Though the translator perhaps did not expect his readers to count and compare the number

of sins ascribed to each actor as I have above, these numbers nonetheless illustrate the emphasis placed upon female disobedience, upon women's wicked words.

Within *Stjórn* I, then, incitement is undeniably depicted as a sin, and it is punished with forced obedience to men. Explaining this punishment of Eve/women, taking material from the *Historia Scholastica* (HSG 24:44), the translator notes: 'Fyrir sýndína uar hon ok skýlldí honum hlýðín uera. meðr einum saman kærleik ok elskhuga. enn síþan uard hon af skýlldan ok skilmála honum at uera hlýðín meðr otta ok hræðzlu' (*Stj* I pp. 56-57) [Before the sin she was and should have been obedient to him with only love and affection, but afterwards she became obedient to him out of obligation and stipulation, with fear and dread]. The verb *hlýða* [to listen to, to yield to, to obey] (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 274) is significant here, since it is also used in the translation of Genesis 3.17 (discussed above), where God chastises Adam for listening (*hlýða*) to his wife's words and incitement (*Stj* I p. 57). Adam listened to and obeyed Eve's incitement in the way that women are meant to listen to and oblige their husbands. The incitement reverses the divinely decreed power relations between the sexes. To punish the woman/women, men are to enforce obedience in the postlapsarian world; they are not to listen to women's speech acts.

The sinful depiction of incitement is also emphasised by the overall negative portrayal of Eve in *Stjórn* I. There has, however, been some scholarly disagreement about Eve's depiction. While J. Ericksen (1998, p. 205) writes that the Old Norse translator 'stresses and

lingers over women's disobedience', Astås (1991, p. 147) argues that the translator instead 'emphasises parallelism and equality between Adam and Eve as to the sin committed by each of them'. Astås' analysis (which does not focus on the figure of Eve but rather the theology of the compiler) somewhat misses the point here: as I have described above, Eve's sins are far more numerous than Adam's in *Stjórn I*. Although the translator does note that Adam's sin of eating was greater than Eve's since '*hann misgerði uisúitandi*' (*Stj I p. 58*) [he sinned knowingly], as Grønlie (2024, p. 157) puts it, 'it is a small pittance, for both Vincent of Beauvais and Augustine give reasons elsewhere that tend to excuse the man'; these excuses are included in *Stjórn I*.

Astås also attempts to argue for a more positive depiction of Eve using the description of her punishments; Astås (1991, p. 129) writes, 'by means of omissions in the text, God's judgement is somewhat softened; consequently, the woman is in a better position in *Stjórn I* than in the corresponding immediate source texts'. The ostensible 'omission' Astås references here is from the Vulgate account of her punishment: '*mulieri quoque dixit multiplicabo aerumnas tuas et conceptus tuos in dolore paries filios et sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tui*' (Gen 3.16) [to the woman He also said: I will multiply your troubles and your conceptions; in pain you will bear sons, and you will be under your husband's power, and he will have dominion over you]. This line is translated directly in *Stjórn I* as follows: '*Ok þar ímot lægði gud hana. þa er hann sagdi sua. Þínar eýmdir ok uesalldir munu fiolgaz. ok undir*

bonda þíns ualldi skaltu iafnan uera' (*Stj* I p. 56) [And on the contrary God humbled her, when he said thus: Your miseries and wretchedness will multiply, and you will always be under your husband's power]. Examining this line in isolation, it is possible to glimpse Astås' (1991, p. 129) point: 'The Bible text is abbreviated by the omission of the following two elements: 1. et conceptus tuos and 2. et ipse dominabitur tui'.

The supposed omission here, however, appears to result from the translator's desire to expand upon the nature of Eve's punishment using commentary material. The compiler uses the *Historia Scholastica* to explain how men will have dominion over their wives in the aforementioned quotation about forcing female obedience with fear and dread (*Stj* I pp. 56-57; *HSG* 24:44). Regarding Eve's painful conceptions, the translator again uses Comestor (*HSG* 24:44) to elaborate on this punishment, explicitly connecting it to Eve's eating of the fruit:

Ok fyrir þa sæk at hon misgörði etandi af tressíns æuextí. uar hon æfínliga þínat i sealftrar sinnar æuexti ok af kuæmí. eptir þi sem gud taladi til hennar sua segiandí. meðr sut ok særleík mantu fòða sunu þína ok born. (*Stj* I p. 57)

[And because she transgressed in the eating of the fruit of the tree, she was forever punished in her own fruit and conceptions, according to that which God told her, saying thus: With grief and pain you shall birth your sons and children.]

The translator thus does not omit any of the punishments of Eve listed in the Vulgate account; he draws more attention to them by adding in commentary material, which even advises men

on how to make their wife obey. Astås' conclusion that Eve fares better in *Stjórn* I than any of its sources appears to be wishful thinking based on select details.

The overall portrait of Eve in *Stjórn* I emphasises her sins, culpability, and enduring punishments: it is not sympathetic. Several examples of the negative depiction of Eve and her speech acts have already been expounded, but a further example can be found in the etymology given for the name 'Eve'. The compiler includes many of Isidore's (ostensible) etymologies, but he attempts to align them with the Norse language, connecting words with no etymological link in the vernacular. On Eve's name, Isidore writes 'Eva interpretatur vitasive calamitas sive vae' (*IE* i VII.vi:278) [Eve means life or calamity or woe]. The direct translation of this in the Old Norse is as follows: 'Eua þýðiz upp i vǣrt mál eymð eðr ue' (*Stj* I p. 58) [Eve signifies in our language misery or woe]. The one positive element of Isidore's etymology is removed in the translation. The compiler, however, has earlier mentioned Eve's role as the mother of all humans (*Stj* I p. 58), taking material from the Vulgate (Gen 3.20) and a passage from the *Historia Scholastica* about the sounds made by wailing children (*HSG* 19:38). While this might compensate for the loss of the reference to *vita* [life] in the Isidore translation, the text strongly emphasises the negative aspects of Eve's life-giving qualities: it is through their tears that children sound out Eve's name. Translating Peter Comestor (*HSG* 19:38), the compiler writes, 'aller þeir menn munu segia e. eðr .a. sem feðaz af eua þuiat nýfett sueín barn býriar sinn grátt medr a. enn meý barn af .e.' (*Stj* I p. 58) [all people will say ee! or

ahh! as they are born from Eve, because a newborn boy begins its weeping with ah! and a girl with ee!]. While the removal of any word for *vita* [life] may result from the clear differences between the Old Norse word for life, *líf*, and the name Eve, the lack of a positive connection to Eve's name is emblematic of the overall portrayal of the figure in *Stjórn I*.

Eve in this Old Norse Fall story is therefore portrayed as an inciter woman who brings nothing but suffering to man(kind) through her speech acts. Her negative depiction aligns with Jochens' (1986; 1996a) view of the inciter woman as a scapegoat for male misdeeds. Incitement is even listed as one of Eve's many sins. Women's verbal power, and its ability to influence men, is therefore both emphasised and condemned in the Fall story of *Stjórn I*.

Snake, Devil, and a Woman Who Wants to Learn

Eve, however, is not the only, or even the first, inciter portrayed in *Stjórn I*. Preceding the Fall of Man are two accounts of the Fall of Angels (*Stj I* pp. 14-21), taken from the *Speculum Historiale* (*SH* 1.9-14:4-6) and the *Historia Scholastica* (*HSG* 2-4:8-13, 7:18).¹⁴⁹ Within this passage, the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* are used liberally to describe the speech acts of angelic and demonic interactions with mankind.

The first mention of the word *áeggjan* in AM 226 fol. is during the description of Lucifer's Fall. The translator explains that he fell so 'hátt' (*Stj I* p. 14) [deeply] because 'hann

¹⁴⁹ On the Fall of Angels in *Stjórn I*, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 144-151.

misgiörði vtan nokkurs annars a eggian eðr freistni' (*Stj* I p. 14) [he transgressed without the incitement or temptation of another]. After Lucifer's Fall, the translator writes that the devil incites men, and that God must defend mankind from him: 'hann setti [...] geýmslu engillinn moti pukanum ok hans áeggian' (*Stj* I p. 15) [He (God) set [...] the angel to protect against the devil and his incitement]. Before Lucifer, there was no evil being to incite others towards sin; after his own Fall, however, Lucifer then poses a continual threat to mankind through his incitements. Lucifer thus appears to be the source of evil egging. To combat the devil, however, the angels then also take to goading; the translator later describes how angels incite humans to be good and aspire to heaven (*Stj* I p. 16). The latter two mentions of incitement (*Stj* I pp. 15-16) have no precedent in the source text; the compiler has added them to describe how divine beings use this technique for both good and ill when interacting with mankind.

In the story of the Fall of Man, the devil brings incitement to Paradise. In *Stjórn* I, the snake that tempts Eve is specifically said to be Lucifer (*Stj* I p. 52). The temptation scene is introduced in AM 226 fol. with the following rubric: 'her segir fra adam ok euo huersu hógormr kom til þeira ok eggjadi þau til at briota moti gudi sealfum' (*Stj* I p. 52) [Here it says about Adam and Eve how the serpent came to them and incited them to offend against God].¹⁵⁰ From the beginning of the story of mankind's Fall, the compiler draws attention to speech acts and incitement. Interestingly, the neuter plural pronoun is used in the rubric to

¹⁵⁰ This title is unique to AM 226 fol.

describe the object of the devil's egging on: Adam is not a victim of the incitement of Eve, but that of the devil. Perhaps the devil acts through Eve to incite Adam.

When Eve decides to eat the fruit, the translator adds material from the *Historia Scholastica* (HSG 22:40) to explain her motivations. Eve acts 'af þi at konan uar metnaðar giðrn. i þi er hon uilldi samlikiaz uid uid [sic] gud af ormsíns æ eggían' (*Stj* I p. 53) [because the woman was ambitious, in that she wished to compare herself to God at the serpent's incitement]. The concept of incitement cannot be found in the source for this line: 'Et elata mulier uolens similiari Deo acquieuit' (HSG 22:40) [And the proud woman acquiesced, wishing to be like God]. Furthermore, in the Vulgate account, the snake's actions are described only with the verbs *dicere* (Gen 3.1, 3.4) [to say] and *decipere* (Gen 3.13) [to deceive]; there is no explicit description of the snake urging. Though this might be read into the speech itself (Gen 3.1-5), the dialogue is on the surface only an assertive (giving Eve information), rather than a directive (instructing her to eat). The compiler of *Stjórn* I thus appears to be adding details that emphasise the devil's directives and depict the devil as an inciter.

Though Lucifer in *Stjórn* I quite obviously does not conform to the model of the inciter woman, since he is not a woman, the depiction of his temptation as an incitement has important consequences for the reading of Eve's speech act. There is a potential mirroring between Lucifer and Eve, since both their speech acts are described using the same words:

eggja and *áeggjan*. This parallel is also emphasised by the inclusion of the idea (attributed to Bede though it appears to stem from Comestor himself: *HSG* 22:40)¹⁵¹ that the serpent approaches Eve with the face of a maiden: ‘þa kom hann til konunnar i þeim einum hóg ormi sem hann hafdi meýiar a seonu eptir þi sem beda prestr segir’ (*Stj* I p. 52) [then he (Lucifer) came to the woman in the serpent, which had the face of a maiden, according to what the priest Bede says]. This is also depicted visually in a marginal drawing in AM 227 fol. (Figure 1), where the snake has a human face. The features and angle of the face, as well as the hair, mirror that of Eve. Both the text and the marginalia in AM 227 fol. thus emphasise the parallels between the serpent/devil and Eve.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ See Flood, 2010, p. 72.

¹⁵² Just as female speech acts continue to haunt the texts of AM 226 fol., the illuminations in AM 227 fol. repeatedly feature apples or apple-like objects. In the bottom margin on fol. 23v, Sarah is drawn extending a hand to Abraham as he departs from Haran (Gen 12.1-5). She holds a spherical object with a thin shape that looks like a leaf trailing from it. Perhaps an apple is drawn in Sarah’s hand at this moment in which (according to her body language, with her feet twisted away from Abraham) she appears to be pleading with (inciting?) Abraham to remain in Haran, defying God’s word. Furthermore, in the left margin of fol. 33v, an unknown figure is depicted. Halldór Hermannsson (1935, p. 17) writes that this figure is ‘probably the fool [...] inserted merely for decorative purposes’. Selma Jónsdóttir (1971, p. 18) describes him as follows: ‘a man stands [...] on one foot, wearing a short dress and holding a ball in his left hand as if he is about to throw it off the page’. Could this spherical object be an apple rather than a ball? The text on this manuscript page is significantly the Lenten Sermon discussing the devil’s temptation of Christ (using the word *eggja*). Perhaps these spherical drawings at moments relating to persuasion and incitement are designed to call upon the apple from the Fall of Mankind.

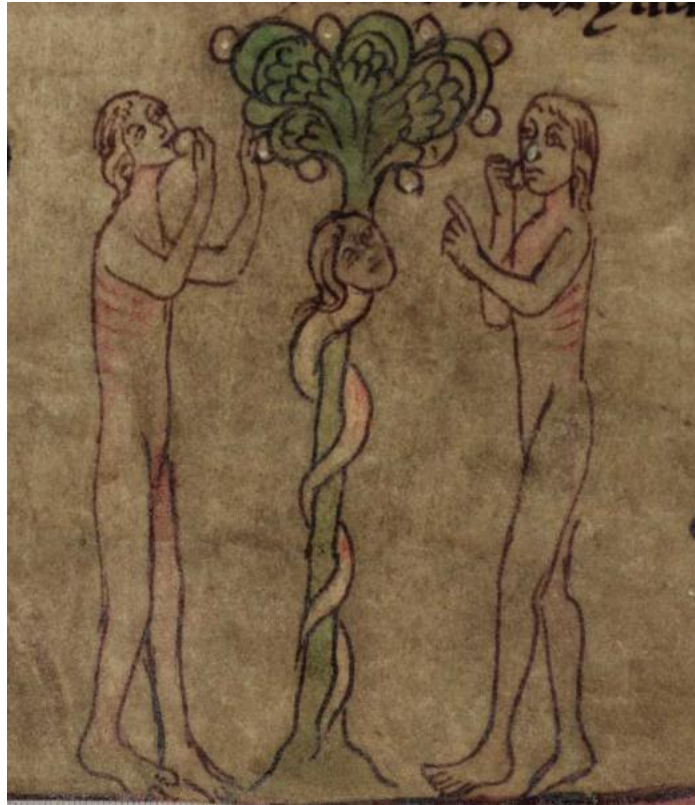


Fig. 1: Adam, Eve, and the Snake on fol. 1v in AM 227 fol.

Image source: The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

There are, however, differences between the temptations of the devil and Eve, as the devil's speech act is sometimes described as deception rather than incitement. For example, when noting the difference between Adam's knowing transgression and Eve's ignorance (an idea taken from Vincent: *SH* 1.42:17), the translator writes that Eve 'uar lockad til medr lÿgiligum suikum' (*Stj* I p. 58) [was enticed with lying falsehood]. This leans more towards the depiction of the devil's temptation as deception rather than incitement (though the verb *lokka* is used here, which can depict incitement). This different treatment of the devil's speech act in this instance, however, seems to result from a theological necessity to distinguish it from

Eve's. If both Eve and the devil incite in the same way, Adam's transgression in eating from the tree cannot be more knowing or more severe than Eve's.

There is one other instance in which the devil's speech act is described differently from Eve's. Translating Eve's reply to God when asked why she transgressed (Gen 3.13), the compiler uses the word *svíkja* [to deceive] to describe the devil's temptation: 'Höð ormrinn sueik mik ok at ek fyrir þa sök af trenu' (*Stj* I p. 55) [the serpent deceived me and for that reason I ate from the tree]. This directly translates the Vulgate: 'serpens deceptit me et comedi' (Gen 3.13) [the serpent deceived me, and I ate]. An accurate translation of this line necessitates a verb of deception rather than incitement. In both instances in which the serpent's speech act is described primarily as deception rather than incitement, the translator appears to do so for the sake of accuracy to the theological demands of the source texts. Wherever the translator can use his own creativity, he depicts the devil as an inciter using words such as *eggja*, *áeggjan*, and *lokka*, paralleling Eve's subsequent speech act to Adam.

The descriptions of the serpent's speech act as deception also notably occur only after Eve eats the fruit and incites Adam (*Stj* I p. 53). Before Eve Falls, the devil's speech is frequently described using the verb *eggja* and its noun form; after Eve's transgression, these words are exclusively applied to Eve. The word *eggja* is not again applied to the devil until much later in a Lenten Sermon (*Stj* I pp. 213-239), in a passage that compares the temptation

of Christ to that of Adam.¹⁵³ The use of the same verbs to describe both the devil and Eve thus goes beyond paralleling the two speech acts. The incitements are connected: the first inciter appears to teach the second his nefarious technique. Eve takes over the position of prime inciter when she Falls. This change occurs exactly as Eve eats from the tree of knowledge, after which she immediately proceeds to incite her husband, successfully performing a speech act she has never attempted before. This suggests she has learnt from the devil, whose *áeggjan* was recently so effective upon her, but it is also possible that some knowledge of incitement comes from the fruit itself. Eve learns not only good and evil but also how to perform incitement. Though the translator waits until after Adam eats the fruit to declare ‘lukuz upp augu þeira beggia’ (*Stj* I p. 53) [both their eyes opened], denoting their newfound awareness to sin, Eve’s eyes appear to be open to this new speech act well before Adam joins her in the fated feast. The Fall story of *Stjórn* I thus depicts the passage of incitement from the devil to Eve via the eating of the fruit.

Just like Prometheus in Greek mythology gives humankind fire, the devil in *Stjórn* I gives incitement. J. Ericksen (1998, p. 205) writes that the compiler of *Stjórn* I has the ‘overall commitment’ of ‘conveying the chain of disobedience from Satan to the contemporary, and especially to the masculine, human body’. It is not just disobedience that is passed on from

¹⁵³ This passage contains rich descriptions of temptation and incitement, which would prove fruitful for analysis. Since it does not discuss women’s role in such temptations, however, it is beyond the scope of this study.

the devil, however. While J. Ericksen's analysis focuses on the passage of physical sin from devil to man, there is a chain of incitement alongside this 'chain of disobedience'. The *Stjórn I* narrative depicts the passage of incitement from devil to woman/women.

Within *Stjórn I*, then, we find not only Original Sin, but Original Incitement, committed by the first woman in Christian world history, and bringing death not only to the target of the goading (as common in the *Íslendingasögur*) but to all of humankind. The translator of *Stjórn I*, showing the passage of incitement from devil to woman, appears to be depicting the origin of female incitement in his version of Christian world history. Despite this interest in the genesis of incitement, *Stjórn I* is, of course, a relatively late text (see the Introduction on the dating of AM 226 fol. and its contents). This text thus cannot shed light on what the actual origins of the motif might be, but it can demonstrate what a later medieval translator thought of them. Female goading in *Stjórn I* is a cursed gift from Lucifer himself; these damned female speech acts threaten societal peace and the supremacy of men over women.

Incitement in Other Old Norse Fall Stories

Stjórn I is far from the only Fall story recorded within Old Norse literature, nor is it the only literary text describing the actions of the devil. Though the focus here is on the contents of AM 226 fol., it is worth comparing the portrait of Eve in *Stjórn I* with these other accounts

to determine whether the depiction of Eve and the devil as inciters is unique to *Stjórn I*, or if there is a trope of devilish and/or original incitement within Old Norse religious literature.

In order to determine this, I have examined fifteen different accounts of, or references to, the story of the Fall of Man in wider Old Norse literature that specifically mention the temptation scenes: *Adams óður (Adó)*,¹⁵⁴ AM 238 XIX fol. (ed. by Astås, p. 1217), AM 764 4to (*UH* p. 246), *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga (Barl)* pp. 14-15), *Bartholomeus saga postola (Barth)* p. 759), the *Debate of the Body and Soul on a Saturday Evening (ViðrLaug)* p. 286), the Old Norse *Elucidarius (Eluc)* pp. 50-63, 119), the Icelandic Homily Book (*HómÍsl* pp. 14v-15r, 22r, 30v, 39r-39v, 47v, 52v, 61v-62v, 98v, 102r-102v), the *King's Mirror (Kgs)* pp. 75-84), an encyclopaedic extract (*Enc III* pp. 40-42), *Malcus saga (Malc)* p. 440), *Michaels saga (Mich)* pp. 678-680), *Tveggja postola saga Jons ok Jacobs (JJ)* p. 537), *Veraldar saga (Ver)* pp. 7-8), and *Vitæ Patrum II (VP)* p. 604). There are certainly more Old Norse Falls than this, due to the centrality of the story to Christian thought. This collection does not intend to be exhaustive but will suffice to contextualise the account in *Stjórn I* within the wider corpus.

The depiction of the devil as an inciter is certainly not unique to *Stjórn I* and AM 226 fol. In the fifteen Old Norse accounts of the Fall I have examined, nine use verbs of incitement or urging to describe the serpent/devil's action towards Adam or Eve. For example, in the Icelandic Homily Book, the devil's actions are described using the nouns

¹⁵⁴ I am grateful to Tiffany Nicole White for drawing my attention to this fascinating text, and for sharing her edition with me ahead of publication.

áminning (*HómÍsl* p. 39r) [urging] and *fyrirtölur* (*HómÍsl* p. 61v) [persuasions]; in *Vitæ Patrum II*, the snake pushes (*skýfa*: *VP* p. 604) Eve out of paradise perhaps through its hissing (*hurra*: *VP* p. 604); and in *Bartholomeus saga postola*, the devil is said to have overcome (*yfir stíga*: *Barth* p. 759) Adam by enticing him (*teygja*: *Barth* p. 759) to eat the forbidden fruit. In the Old Norse *Elucidarius*, the devil's persuasion of Adam and Eve is rendered with many verbs implying some kind of urging: *freista* (*Eluc* p. 50) [to tempt], *tæla* (*Eluc* p. 58) [to entice], *teygja* (*Eluc* p. 61) [to allure/entice]. In *Adams óður*, the serpent announces his intent to turn (*víkja*: *Adó* st. 11) Eve with his words (*orðum*: *Adó* st. 11). The words *eggja* and *áeggjan* are also used to describe the actions of the serpent/devil in *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (*Barl* p. 15), the *Debate of the Body and Soul* (*ViðrLaug*, p. 286; JS 405 8vo), *Malcus saga* (*Malc* p. 440), and the *King's Mirror* (*Kgs* pp. 78, 81, 84). The *Stjórn* I translator is not unique in describing the speech acts of the serpent/devil in the Fall story as incitement, or in using the words *eggja* and *áeggjan* to denote such acts.

This trope of the devil as a goader of men, however, extends beyond the Old Norse Fall stories. The actions of the devil and his followers are frequently described using the words *eggja* and *áeggjan* within wider Old Norse religious literature. To name a few examples: *Andreas saga postola* (*AndrA* p. 321; *AndrB* p. 125),¹⁵⁵ *Bartholomeus saga postola* (*Barth* p. 748), and *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (*Barl* pp. 15, 222). This depiction of devilish incitement

¹⁵⁵ I am grateful to Eugenia K. Vorobeva for drawing my attention to the occurrences in *Andreas saga*.

throughout the Old Norse religious corpus perhaps reflects upon the *Hetzerin* motif. Although the devil is not part of this trope, the prevalence of texts describing his action as an incitement using words associated with this female role might encourage readers to draw an equivalence between the incitements of female figures and those of the devil. In the Old Norse *Elucidarius*, those possessed by the devil are said to ‘hafa eitr ímvnne þat ero ill orþ’ (*Eluc* p. 51) [have poison in the mouth: that is, evil words]. Perhaps the female goaders, performing the same speech act as the devil himself, would also be considered to have ‘eitr ímvnne’ (*Eluc* p. 51) [poison in the mouth] as they speak their incitements.

In the other Old Norse Fall stories I have examined, Eve is also occasionally depicted as urging, persuading, or inciting Adam to Fall (though the image of Eve as inciter is rarer than that of the devil as inciter). For example, in the Icelandic Homily Book, Eve’s persuasion is described as a *tilfýsing* (*HómÍsl* p. 61v) [urging/exhortation]. Additionally, in *Adams óður*, the verb *biðja* (*Adó* st. 17) [to ask, beg, bid] is used to describe Eve’s temptation of Adam, implying a speech act of the directive type. Two Old Norse Falls even use the significant words *eggja* and *áeggjan* to describe Eve’s speech act: the *King’s Mirror* (*Kgs* pp. 76, 82, 83) and the *Debate of the Body and Soul* (*ViðrLaug* p. 286). The *King’s Mirror* also repeatedly uses the word *ráð* [counsel] throughout its Fall stories; for example, God questions Adam ‘hvi fylgðer þu hældr þáeil ræðum kono þinnar en heilræðum minum’ (*Kgs* p. 82) [why did you follow your wife’s wretched counsel rather than my holy counsel?]. This perhaps recalls the

ostensibly proverbial condemnation of incitement as women's 'cold counsel' in the wider Norse corpus.¹⁵⁶ From these examples, it becomes clear that the idea of Eve as an inciter was known in Old Norse texts beyond *Stjórn I*.

It is worth comparing the *King's Mirror* and the *Debate of the Body and Soul* more closely with *Stjórn I*, since the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* describe the speech acts of Eve as well as the serpent or devil in all three texts. Of the three, the *Debate* is the most distinct, since it contains only a brief reference to the Fall story, rather than a full retelling, as found in both *Stjórn I* and the *King's Mirror*.

Comparison with the King's Mirror

The *King's Mirror*, also known as *Konungs Skuggsjá* or *Speculum Regale*, is a Norwegian text of an instructional nature that takes the form of a dialogue between father and son, exploring topics such as trade, rulership, and morality. It incorporates several biblical stories from Genesis, Samuel, and Kings as pedagogical exempla,¹⁵⁷ including the story of the Fall of Man, which is told twice (*Kgs* pp. 75-78, 78-84). There has been much discussion about the relationship between the *King's Mirror* and *Stjórn*, but it has mostly concerned *Stjórn III* rather than *Stjórn I*. There are several shared passages between *Stjórn III* and the *King's Mirror*,

¹⁵⁶ See S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002, pp. xi-xii.

¹⁵⁷ On the other biblical stories within the *King's Mirror*, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 120-137.

leading to lively debate on the relationship and dating of the texts.¹⁵⁸ Less scholarship exists exploring any connection between *Stjórn* I and the *King's Mirror*.¹⁵⁹

Could there have been some contact between *Stjórn* I and the *King's Mirror* that facilitated the sharing of the idea of Eve as inciter? Though the texts have similarities, they appear to result from shared sources rather than textual contact. Grønlie (2024, p. 152) writes of these texts, 'both are using the same or similar sources, but the overall effect is different'. While *Stjórn* III shares larger passages with the *King's Mirror*, *Stjórn* I shares only smaller details, like how both texts describe the Fall of the Angels on the first day of creation (see Sverre Bagge, 1987, p. 225). This detail can be found in Augustine (*Civ* i 11.19:538-539), but the *Historia Scholastica* is said to be the source in *Stjórn* I, though no extant version of Comestor's text includes this detail (see Bagge, 1987, p. 225). Despite its absence in surviving variants, the occurrence of this detail in both *Stjórn* I and the *King's Mirror* is most easily explained by a common source. There is therefore no evidence of a literary relationship between the *King's Mirror* and *Stjórn* I. Consequently, it seems that the authors of both texts have independently depicted Eve as an inciter with the verb *eggja*, suggesting this is a wider trope rather than an idea limited to a specific group of texts.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Kirby, 1986, pp. 169-181; Hofmann, 1973; Bagge, 1974; Kleivane, 2018, pp. 118-119; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 5-7.

¹⁵⁹ Grønlie (2024, pp. 152-155) compares both texts' renderings of the Fall story; Sverrir Jakobsson (2018) analyses the descriptions of India and the East in the *King's Mirror*, *Stjórn* I, and a selection of other Old Norse texts; and some scholars like Bagge (1987, p. 225) note shared details between *Stjórn* I and the *King's Mirror*.

The depiction of Eve and her speech act in the *King's Mirror* is also drastically different from *Stjórn* I. The first version of the Fall story in the *King's Mirror* (*Kgs* pp. 75-78) is concerned primarily with judgement and punishment rather than temptation. The son, however, keeps questioning the father, leading to a discussion about the Fall of the Angels and how Lucifer tempted Eve (*Kgs* pp. 78-84). It is during this second account of the Fall that the actions of both Eve and Lucifer are described with the verb *eggja* (*Kgs* pp. 78, 81-84), though Eve's temptation of Adam is once described with this verb in the first account as well (*Kgs* p. 76). The focus in the second account, however, is on the devil: the son asks about Lucifer's methods and motivations, and it is upon this that the father elaborates (*Kgs* pp. 78-84). While Eve's incitement is rendered using the word *eggja*, but otherwise left unqualified (*Kgs* pp. 76, 82, 83), the actions of Lucifer are richly depicted; not only does he incite Eve, but he does so with *lostasemi* (*Kgs* p. 80) [lustfulness] and *yfirgjarnlig sinka* (*Kgs* p. 80) [desirous greed], for example. Despite the use of the same verbs used to denote the two speech acts, they are described in very different ways. This contrasts with the similarity between the incitements of the devil and Eve in *Stjórn* I.

While *Stjórn* I emphasises the culpability and punishment of the woman in the Fall of Man, the *King's Mirror* seems to let her off relatively lightly. Bagge (1987, p. 231) writes, 'compared to the theological versions, the author does not pursue the case against Eve with any great rigour'. The author even adds a comment from the personification of Truth that

acquits Eve of the blame for Adam's transgression;¹⁶⁰ though Adam attempts to blame his Fall upon Eve, Truth clarifies that his primary motivation was, in fact, the desire for wisdom, combined with the sweet appearance of the apples (*Kgs* p. 77). Though Eve is an inciter woman in the *King's Mirror*, she does not carry the predominant part of the blame for the Fall, and her speech act does not appear to be connected with that of the devil to the same extent as in *Stjórn* I. The *King's Mirror* thus presents a considerably less damning depiction of Eve, and thus female incitement, than *Stjórn* I.

It is worth mentioning that both the *King's Mirror* and the *Debate of the Body and Soul* (analysed below) are Norwegian texts; the former is undeniably Norwegian (see, for example, Karl G. Johansson and Elise Kleivane, 2018), and the latter is found within the manuscript containing the Norwegian Homily Book (AM 619 4to). There are, nonetheless, Icelandic manuscripts containing each of the texts (e.g., AM 243 a fol. and AM 764 4to). Most scholarship on the inciter woman focuses on Icelandic literature and culture, as the whetting woman is commonly associated with the *Íslendingasögur*. More research is necessary to examine the appearances of the inciter woman in medieval Norwegian literature. It may well be, however, that the depiction of Eve as inciter is given more critical attention in the *Stjórn* I of AM 226 fol. because the trope of the inciter woman is more widespread in Icelandic literature.

¹⁶⁰ On the allegory of the four daughters of God, see Mattias Tveitane, 1972; 1980; Grønlie, 2024, pp. 58, 125-126, 130.

Comparison with the Debate of the Body and Soul

The *Debate of the Body and Soul (on a Saturday Evening)*, or *Viðróða líkams ok sálar (einn laugardag at kveldi)*, belongs to the literary tradition popular in the medieval period of depicting moral debates between the physical body and spiritual soul.¹⁶¹ The temptations of Adam and Eve are only referenced in passing in this Old Norse *Debate*: they are used by the body as a simile for the way the soul (described with feminine pronouns) incites it to act (*ViðrLaug* p. 286). There is no sustained description of Eve here, only a brief mention of her persuasion of Adam. This is described using the word *áeggjan* in two of the manuscript attestations edited by Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (*ViðrLaug*, p. 286; AM 619 4to, JS 405 8vo).

As with the *King's Mirror*, there could have been some contact between *Stjórn* I and this Old Norse *Debate* to inspire the use of the word *áeggjan*, but more research would be needed to determine this. The *Debate* is an old text; its earliest manuscript (AM 619 4to) dates to the early thirteenth century (see Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 1959, p. 275) and thus significantly predates *Stjórn* I. It seems unlikely that the brief metaphor in the *Debate* would have sparked the sustained depiction of Eve as an inciter in *Stjórn* I. I therefore consider the texts to be independent portraits of Eve as a goading woman.

¹⁶¹ On body and soul debates within medieval literature, see Michel-André Bossy, 1976. On the Old Norse versions, see Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 1959; Eriksen, 2016; Alice Fardin, 2023.

The brief nature of the reference in the *Debate* is itself revealing. Though the allusion to Adam and Eve comes from the Old French source material,¹⁶² the use of the Fall story as a comparative when discussing incitement, using the verb *eggja*, suggests that there may have been an association between the temptations of the Fall and (female) incitement within Christian learned culture. Eve is used as an exemplar of egging: ‘Adamr myndi oc æigi syngasc ef æigi váre ormr oc a æggian kono’ (*ViðrLaug*, p. 286; AM 619 4to) [Adam also would not have sinned if it were not for the serpent and the incitement of the woman]. For Eve to be called upon with only a brief reference to her *áeggjan*, and no further elaboration, suggests that the idea of Eve as an inciter woman (rather than, or in addition to, a seducer or deceiver of men) was a relatively well-known concept at the time.

Despite the *Debate*’s many differences from *Stjórn* I, the depiction of Eve and the judgement of the speech act are similar. In the above quotation, the blame for Adam’s Fall is spread between the serpent and Eve, but her portion of the blame specifically rests upon her speech act. In the version of the text in JS 405 8vo, furthermore, some equivalence emerges between the speech acts of the devil and of Eve: Adam’s sin is said to stem from the ‘eggjun hennar oc Ormsins’ (*ViðrLaug*, p. 286; JS 405 8vo) [incitement of her (Eve) and the serpent]. While in AM 619 4to, the incitement belongs only to Eve, in this manuscript it belongs to both the woman and the serpent, who are both rendered in the genitive. I have found this

¹⁶² On the source, see Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 1959, pp. 274-279, and Fardin, 2023.

paralleling of the speech acts of the serpent and Eve only in *Stjórn I* and this *Debate of the Body and Soul*. Eve's incitement in the *Debate* is thus devilish and evil, in contrast with the more lenient depiction in the *King's Mirror*.

Eve's Absent Voice

It is worth noting that in all the Old Norse renderings of the Fall story I have examined, Eve's temptation of Adam is never recorded in direct speech (with one exception, examined below). While this approach aligns with the depiction in the Vulgate (Gen 3.6), it differs quite markedly from some medieval Fall stories written outside of the medieval North, which use Eve's speech to Adam to explore the temptation theme. For example, in the Old English poem *Genesis B* (*GenB* pp. 50-52), Eve's speech to Adam is rendered directly (and creatively); she encourages Adam to eat the fruit to appease the devil, who she still believes is God's messenger, and tells him quite honestly of the (thus far, exclusively good) effects of eating the apple. In an Old French play, *Le Mystère d'Adam*, Adam and Eve's dialogue is played out on the stage: they discuss their options after the devil's temptation (*MA* pp. 15-16), and, after Eve eats, she persuades Adam to do the same (*MA* pp. 16-17). Although, as a play, *Le Mystère d'Adam* necessitates speech far more than a biblical translation like *Stjórn I*, this nonetheless still evidences how medieval Fall stories (outside of Iceland and Scandinavia) render Eve's persuasive words directly. Within the Old Norse versions, however, though her words in some

renditions clearly have a great effect on Adam, they are almost never recorded for the reader to consider.

The examples of the Old English *Genesis B* and the Old French *Le Mystère d'Adam* are chosen for comparison here not only because they exemplify medieval writers creatively exploring the words used by Eve, but also because they both use verbs or nouns to describe the speech act as an exhortation. In *Genesis B*, Eve is described as enticing Adam towards his Fall using the verb *spanan* (*GenB* p. 44 l. 575, p. 52 l. 684) [to urge]. In *Le Mystère d'Adam*, Eve's persuasion is repeatedly described as counsel, *conseil* (*MA* pp. 17–19, 26). The Old Norse accounts are therefore not unique in depicting Eve's speech act using verbs and nouns that imply incitement. In neither of these accounts, however, is the concept of incitement stressed as much as in *Stjórn* I. Though a more comprehensive comparison with medieval Fall stories would be insightful, to determine whether the focus upon Eve's incitement is a specifically Norse trope, this biblical story was so popular in the Middle Ages that a full comparison would take up the rest of this thesis. For now, it must suffice to say that the Old Norse appears to be unique in its reluctance to render Eve's words on the manuscript page, and perhaps also in the focus within certain texts on Eve's role as an inciter woman.

There is, however, one Old Norse Fall story in which some of Eve's tempting words are depicted directly: *Adams óður*. While Eve's initial temptation words to Adam are not rendered directly but summarised with the verb *biðja* (*Adó* st. 17) in this poem, Eve urges

Adam a second time, and this is recorded in direct speech. After her first incitement attempt, Adam is reluctant to eat the apple because he fears death (*Adó* st. 17), a detail perhaps taken from the *King's Mirror* (*Kgs* p. 81).¹⁶³ Adam's reaction sparks Eve's reply:

hvert ætlar þu ed Eva kvad.
 at þig muni eg vilia pretta.
 þvi eta mattu ecki par.
 angr giorer mior þetta. (*Adó* st. 18)

[“Do you think,” Eve said, “That I would wish to deceive you? Because if you do not eat one bit, it will make me upset.”]

This fascinating speech incorporates the Augustinian idea (*GLitt* 11.42:378) found in Vincent of Beauvais (*SH* 1.42:17) and *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I p. 57) that Adam eats the fruit out of fear of Eve's reaction. The Norse poet places this theological idea into the mouth of the woman as a threat. Eve in this Fall story is cheeky and forthright, when her initial request fails, she resorts to rhetoric and manipulation to achieve her goals.

Despite this one exception, it is strange that so many Old Norse Fall stories do not render Eve's speech directly, particularly texts like *Stjórn* I and the *King's Mirror*. Bagge (1987, p. 230) writes that the author of the *King's Mirror* ‘differs from the theological writers by letting the “actors” in the story speak the comments’; Eve, however, is not allowed to speak any of the theological interpretations of her temptation (as she is in *Adams óður*). Furthermore, scholars have commented on the *Stjórn* I translator's interest in the psychology

¹⁶³ On this passage in the *King's Mirror*, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 127-128, 154-155.

On the connections between *Adams óður* and the *King's Mirror*, see T. N. White, forthcoming, 2025.

and motivations of the Fall (see Astås, 1991, p. 106, and Grønlie, 2024, p. 148); it therefore would not have been surprising if Eve's speech had been expanded in this compilation to explore both Adam and Eve's motivations. Despite the interest in female speech acts and incitement within *Stjórn I*, the Old Norse translator does not dare to render this evil inciter's speech directly.

Conclusion: Original Incitement

Eve is not just the first woman in the *Stjórn I* version of biblical history, she is also the first inciter. The speech act she uses to convince Adam to sin, thus introducing evil, suffering, and death to mankind, aligns with the model for the inciter woman proposed in the previous chapter. This is despite the lack of a vengeful motivation for Eve's actions; if it were not for the new model, which de-centres revenge and violence, it would not be possible to learn from the insights into female incitement in *Stjórn I*. The depiction of Eve's speech act, with its connection to sin and the voice of the devil, richly illuminates our understanding of the *Hetzerin* trope.

My analysis supports Jochens' (1986, pp. 49-50) brief suggestion that female incitement was connected to the image of Eve for some Old Norse writers. The authors of *Stjórn I*, the *King's Mirror*, and the *Debate of the Body and Soul on a Saturday Evening* even write Eve as an inciter in their renderings of the Fall story. She is widely condemned for her

inciting words (though the Norwegian *King's Mirror* is somewhat more generous in its depiction). This aligns with Jochens' (1996a, p. 175) interpretation of the inciter woman as a 'scapegoat', emerging from a misogynistic society desperate to blame men's faults upon women. In *Stjórn I*, the incitement even has its genesis in the devil himself, poisoning the words of women who are meant to be obedient to their husbands.

The Fall story of *Stjórn I*, however, only contains a fraction of the speech acts in AM 226 fol. that are used by women to incite, command, seduce, urge, or otherwise gain power over men. Eve's speech act is the Original Incitement not just in *Stjórn's* biblical history, but also in the manuscript AM 226 fol.: female figures continue to use and abuse the speech act Eve discovered when she ate the forbidden fruit. The portraits of some such women appear to align with their ancestral mother, inciting men towards evil and sin (see Chapter Three). Others, however, appear to redeem Eve and her speech act, using incitement to urge family members to do good (see Chapter Five). Some women even combine postlapsarian lust with devilish directives, seducing men to lead them astray (see Chapter Four). Turning away from the protoplasts towards their descendants, this thesis will now analyse the various speech acts of the daughters of Eve in AM 226 fol.

Evil Egging and Aristocratic Authority: Royal Woman and their

Speech Acts

Eve is the first, but by no means the only, female figure within AM 226 fol. that is depicted as an inciter, with the Old Norse translator lingering over the power of her voice. This chapter explores three other female figures in AM 226 fol. (two in *Stjórn III* and one in *Rómverja saga*) who appear to follow in Eve's footsteps: Jezebel (*Stj III* pp. 1080, 1084, 1086-1087, 1092-1093, 1105-1107, 1158, 1160, 1161-1162), Athaliah (*Stj III* pp. 1156-1157, 1168-1171), and Arsinoe IV (*Róm* 89:382). The Old Norse stories of these three figures all share certain similarities: the translator emphasises the importance of voice in the narrative, their speech acts are in some way associated with the verb *eggja* or its noun form, and the women and their voices are depicted (to different extents) as being evil, sinful, or on the wrong side of a war. Thus, we find three female figures who continue Eve's legacy of evil egging.

The first two women, Jezebel and Athaliah, are depicted in the *Stjórn III* translation of the Books of Kings. Cameron B. R. Howard (2014, p. 167) writes that these two books are 'practically fixated [...] on the seductive nature of *foreign* women [...] "turning men's hearts" toward foreign gods' (Howard's emphasis). Although, as shall be shown, the translator does not stress the figures' seductive or foreign natures, he does linger over women's ability to

influence men, turning them from God.¹⁶⁴ Both Jezebel and Athaliah (who in *Stjórn* III are mother and daughter) incite their husbands to worship pagan gods and are heavily condemned for it.

The third figure explored in this chapter, Arsinoe IV, is quite different from Jezebel and Athaliah since, as a classical figure, she is not embroiled in the same religious feud. Arsinoe, however, shares with the others the ability to influence a man with her voice, inciting Ganymedes to free her from prison. The translator makes several changes to this story, which might even cast Arsinoe and Ganymedes as unlikely lovers.

All three women in this chapter are united not just by incitement, but also by royal status. All are born princesses and to some extent occupy positions of political power in the narratives. This adds a nuance to their speech acts that is not seen in the depiction of Eve: some of their directives can be considered royal commands (with their verbal power stemming from their political position) rather than incitements (where women have lower social status than the men they goad; see the discussion of status in Chapter One). These female figures incite, command, threaten, and scheme, demonstrating the diverse nature of female verbal power.

¹⁶⁴ Throughout this thesis, whenever ‘god’ is capitalised, it refers to the Christian or Jewish God (in this case, the God of the Old Testament). When the word appears uncapitalised, it refers to ‘pagan’ gods, like Baal and Asherah. This distinction is of particular importance for the stories of Jezebel and Athaliah, which involve competing divinities. Much biblical scholarship on these stories refers to God using the name Yahweh/YHWH; I have decided against using this here for the sake of continuity with the rest of the thesis.

This chapter, then, analyses the various speech acts of three royal women within AM 226 fol., all of whom incite a husband or at least a potential lover to act. These stories all undergo changes in the process of translation; some of which appear to result from confusion, misunderstanding, or scribal error. Amongst this, however, an extra emphasis on female verbal power (in all its forms) can be discerned; the translator highlights the female voice and the drastic effects when women choose to use their verbal power for ill.

Jezebel

Jezebel, like Eve, is an infamous biblical figure whose legacy continues to influence body politics to this day. Her story is dispersed throughout I and II Kings, where she is described as an evil queen who converts her husband to paganism, brings about the deaths of hundreds of God's prophets, and eventually meets a grisly end fitting for her sins. Her story is translated within *Stjórn* III, which is a much closer rendering of the Vulgate than *Stjórn* I, where Eve's story is found (see the Introduction). Despite the closer translation, there are nevertheless still moments in which the translator deals creatively with Jezebel and her story, drawing especial attention to the power of her voice. I begin by introducing Jezebel's story in the Vulgate and her continuing legacy in Christian thought and modern-day racism, before turning to her portrait in *Stjórn* III.

Jezebel in the Vulgate

Jezebel's story is glimpsed through small details scattered between I Kings 16.31 and II Kings 9, as her story is interwoven with those of Ahab, Elijah, and Elisha (among others). Jezebel is first introduced in I Kings 16.31 as the foreign Sidonian and Phoenician princess that Ahab, the King of Israel, chooses as his wife. While Howard (2014, p. 172) writes, 'This marriage was surely a political move', one which 'Solomon had employed [...] hundreds of times', the biblical narrator comments that Ahab's choice of bride is a manifestation or continuation of his sins against God (I Kings 16.31). Immediately following the line detailing the marriage between Ahab and Jezebel, the text describes how Ahab then worships the pagan god Baal (I Kings 16.31), constructing a temple for him (I Kings 16.32). Even from this first introduction, there are indications that Jezebel is a bad influence on Ahab; the true depth of her power over her husband and the religious ideology of Israel, however, is yet to be established.

Later, at I Kings 18.4, the Vulgate account reveals that Jezebel has previously attempted to slaughter all the prophets of God. She succeeded in killing all but one hundred, who were saved by Obadiah (I Kings 18.4). The massacre and rescue are never depicted directly in the narrative, but they are referenced at I Kings 18.4, I Kings 18.13, and II Kings 9.7. Although Jezebel kills God's prophets, at I Kings 18.19 she is described as caring and providing for the prophets of Baal and Asherah. As Lissa M. Wray Beal (2024, pp. 168-169) writes, 'Her action [sustaining the prophets] reveals a loyal commitment to her deities and

prophets, sustaining her “people” on her own initiative’. Jezebel is ruthless to the prophets of God but caring to those of Baal and Asherah.

The next reference to Jezebel (I Kings 19.1) occurs when she hears news of the events that transpire when Elijah challenges all her prophets of Baal and Asherah (I Kings 18.19-25). Since the pagan gods do not respond to the prophets’ call, but God responds to Elijah, the people of Israel turn against paganism, and, with their help, Elijah kills Jezebel’s pagan prophets (I Kings 18.26-40). Hearing this news, Jezebel threatens Elijah (I Kings 19.2), who is terrified and flees to the desert (I Kings 19.3-4).

Jezebel next appears in a longer passage dealing with the ownership of a field belonging to Naboth (I Kings 21). King Ahab attempts to purchase the field to grow herbs because it is close to his own, but Naboth refuses to sell the king his ancestral land (I Kings 21.1-3). Ahab gets angry and despondent at this, refusing to eat or get out of bed (I Kings 21.4). Jezebel asks what troubles him, and, while Ahab lies in despair and inaction, his wife sets to solving matters in a particularly bloody way (I Kings 21.5-16). She writes letters in her husband’s name declaring that Naboth should be framed for blasphemy against God and king and thus stoned to death (I Kings 21.8-10). Claudia V. Camp (1992, p. 103) writes of this section, ‘Ahab seems the passive partner to Jezebel’s wanton use of royal power’. Jezebel’s action in the face of her husband’s inertia might even draw comparison with the figure of Manoah’s wife (Samson’s unnamed mother, discussed in Chapter Four), who is brave and

capable in contrast to her husband's incompetence (Judg 13). While Manoah's wife interprets and enacts God's word, however, Jezebel shows her abilities in a more worldly sphere: getting her husband what he wants. Though her actions might seem severe, Camp (1992, p. 103) notes that, due to her upbringing as a Phoenician princess, Jezebel was 'unused to the democratic impulse in Israelite culture that regarded land as a gift given to each Israelite family by Yahweh'. Her actions can therefore 'be understood from her point of view as an appropriate royal response to insubordination' (Camp, 1992, p. 103). Though some feminist interpreters may read her actions sympathetically, the biblical narrator certainly does not. In response to Jezebel's actions, God speaks a message for Elijah to deliver to Ahab: that he shall die for causing the death of Naboth (I Kings 21.17-19). Delivering this message, Elijah prophesies not only Ahab's death (I Kings 21.17-26) but also Jezebel's: dogs will eat her body in the field (I Kings 21.23).

This is not the only prophetic foreshadowing of Jezebel's death. At II Kings 9.10, when Jehu is anointed King of Israel by a prophet of God, the prophet again predicts that Jezebel's body will be eaten by dogs in the field. Here there is the added detail that no one will bury her (II Kings 9.10). Later in the same chapter, Jezebel's death is finally depicted (II Kings 9.30-37).

After killing Jehoram and Ahaziah, Jehu marches to Jezebel (II Kings 9.14-30). Hearing of Jehu's approach, Jezebel paints her face with makeup, looks out a window and

speaks to Jehu (II Kings 9.30-31). The meaning of her actions and speech have been discussed extensively in biblical scholarship.¹⁶⁵ Jezebel is pushed from the window by servants inside faithful to her usurper, and she dies from the fall (II Kings 9.33). There is then a gruesome description of Jezebel's blood coating the walls, while her body is trampled by horses (II Kings 9.33). After sitting down to eat, Jehu commands his men to recover the body and bury it, because she is the daughter of a king (II Kings 9.34). When the men go to her, however, they discover that dogs have eaten so much of her body that only her hands, feet, and skull remain, fulfilling God's earlier prophecies (II Kings 9.35-36). While many scholars interpret the mutilation of Jezebel's body as a narratorial condemnation of the figure (see, for example, Tina Pippin, 1995, pp. 226-227, and Howard, 2014, p. 177), Josey Bridges Snyder (2014, p. 183) writes 'Jewish tradition offers that these body parts [her hands, feet, and skull] were left unscathed because they were the portions of her body that she had used for good'. In this tradition, 'Jezebel was an empathetic queen who would often join in the rejoicing or the mourning of wedding and funeral processions that passed by her palace' (Snyder, 2014, p. 183). Despite the potential positive interpretations, the overwhelming impression given by this scene is one in which a woman who used her power to murder and turn her people against God is punished through death and the (mis)treatment of her body.

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, Simon B. Parker, 1978; Claudia V. Camp, 1992, pp. 103-4; Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 2004, pp. 76-77; Susan Ackerman, 2009, pp. 160-161; Bradley L. Crowell, 2013, pp. 12-13; Cameron B. R. Howard, 2014, pp. 176-177; Lissa M. Wray Beal, 2024, p. 174.

Jezebel's Legacy

Although the account of Jezebel's mutilated, unburied body (and Jehu's reaction to it) ends her story in the Old Testament (II Kings 9.35-37), Jezebel's legacy is far from over at her death. Pippin (1995) even creatively compares Jezebel to a vampire, returning after her bloody death and indecent burial to live eternally as something else, something dangerous.¹⁶⁶ After the narrative of Kings, the name 'Jezebel' appears only once in the Bible, in the Book of Revelation (2.20). Here, it names a highly sexualised false prophet, who appears to be contemporary with John (Rev 2.20-23). Snyder (2014, p. 180) writes that Jezebel's name is here used 'as a rhetorical device to discredit another powerful woman in the church of Thyatira'. The use of Jezebel's name to denigrate powerful women continues to this day. Discussing the passage in Revelation, Snyder (2014, p. 180) adds, 'While none of the Thyatira woman's deeds overlap with those attributed to Jezebel in Kings, this invocation of Jezebel's name evidences an early example of associating her with a growing array of sinful behaviours, including fornication'. After the death of the biblical Jezebel, her name becomes linked to and even synonymous with an increasing number of actions seen to be morally or culturally inappropriate for women: sexual promiscuity, magical practice, and assertiveness.

¹⁶⁶ Tina Pippin (1995, p. 227) writes, 'Jezebel returns eternally as vamp/ire, the phantom-ghost who roams time haunting both men and women. Jezebel is the vamp/ire that cannot be killed, who roams through other texts and times and women'.

In North America, the name Jezebel has transformed into a trope and stereotype that is used to disparage and degrade black women.¹⁶⁷ For example, during the 2024 Presidential Election, Kamala Harris, the first black female Vice-President and Presidential Nominee, was labelled ‘Jezebel’ by some conservative Christian leaders.¹⁶⁸ This trope of the black female ‘jezebel’ began during the slave trade and continues to be used today. Although the ‘jezebel’ racial slur has developed beyond its biblical namesake (hence the difference in capitalisation used to distinguish the two), the concept cannot be separated from its biblical roots. Tamura Lomax (2018, p. 33) writes, ‘jezebel is a trope [...] even though she may be appropriated individually she is simultaneously always already historically created from without [...] But she is also biblical Jezebel, remixed, revived, and incarnate’. The significance of this biblical figure to understandings and interpretations of race and gender thus cannot be understated.

Though the impact of Jezebel on medieval Icelandic society appears admittedly muted in comparison with her cultural prevalence in the present day, the figure was still remembered as an example of an evil woman who leads men astray. Grønlie (2006, pp. 302, 306, 314) argues that Jezebel was used as an archetype in Old Norse conversion narratives, where a pagan woman, particularly a foreigner, rejects Christianity and turns her husband towards paganism. In addition to her appearance in *Stjórn* III, Jezebel is also mentioned (though not

¹⁶⁷ This has been discussed extensively by scholars of race and religious studies. See, for example, Deborah Gray White, 1985; Crowell, 2013; Love L. Sechrest, 2016; Tamura Lomax, 2018.

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, Isabella Volmert and Michelle R. Smith, 2024. This is not the first time Harris has been called jezebel/Jezebel; see, for example, Anne Branigin, 2021.

by name) in *Jóns saga Baptista II* (*JBapt* p. 914). Interestingly, while in the modern-day it is Jezebel's name that is remembered for its badness, with specific details of her actions only briefly glimpsed behind the racialised and misogynistic stereotype, in *Jóns saga Baptista II*, the deeds of Jezebel are listed without her name. There seems to be an expectation that the reader will recognise the reference: 'Hana flyði Elias spamaðr [...] oc hann for fyrir henni hriaðr oc rekinn, oc þann manninn, sem hon finnr reinan, gerir hon saurgan' (*JBapt* p. 914) [the prophet Elijah fled from her [...] and he went from her, harassed and forced; and the man that she finds pure, she makes dirty]. This text features in a section which details the deeds of Eve, Bathsheba, and Herodias (without naming them), coalescing the figures into one metaphorical woman who leads men astray and brings about death. Grønlie (2024, p. 94) writes of this passage, 'The conflation of Eve, Jezebel, Bathsheba, and Herodis into a single woman – the source of all evil in the world – is rhetorically very powerful [...] The effect – just for a moment – is to collapse historical time and difference so that one can see the eternal truths'. Jezebel's part in this 'eternal truth' as the 'source of all evil in the world' (Grønlie, 2024, p. 94) demonstrates her significance to Christian thinking about gender and evil in the medieval North. Though depictions of her in the Nordic vernaculars are rare, this makes the study of *Stjórn III* even more vital: it is the only full description of her life and story extant in Old Norse.

Jezebel in Stjórn III

Like in the Vulgate, in *Stjórn III* Jezebel's story is glimpsed in small references throughout a long narrative spanning the two Books of Kings, across eighty pages in Astås' edition (*Stj III* pp. 1080-1162). This is in stark contrast to the depiction of Eve analysed in the previous chapter, where a long section (incorporating much commentary material) considers the figure, her sins, and her motivations. Although the more spread-out depiction of Jezebel might mean that her character is overlooked by the reader, the translator draws attention to the figure by emphasising her wickedness and her culpability for Ahab's crimes. Though stylistically the stories of Eve and Jezebel are very different, the translator of *Stjórn III* makes several changes to the narrative of the Vulgate that draw particular attention to Jezebel's verbal power and parallel her speech acts with those of the first woman.

Introducing Jezebel: Reconstructing the Passage in AM 226 fol.

The damning depiction of Jezebel in *Stjórn III* is evident from her very first introduction, though this is sadly lost from AM 226 fol. due to a missing leaf between folios 99 and 100 (*Stj III* pp. 1070-1085). This complicates our analysis of the figure, especially as this passage contains significant variation in the extant manuscripts. Astås uses AM 227 fol. in the main body of his edition, quoting variants in the footnotes. The version in AM 227 fol. is similar

to that in AM 228 fol. and AM 617 4to, but very different from AM 225 fol.¹⁶⁹ Careful consideration of these versions facilitates an approximate reconstruction of the text in AM 226 fol.

In AM 227 fol., the introduction of Jezebel reads as follows:

ok enn æigi let hann æigi sinn vánd skap ok þeira illzku ser éinlitan. hælldr iok hann þeira illzku. hann gekk at eiga hina uerstu konu er het iezabel dottur metabal konungs sidoníorum þjóða. ok fyrer hennar girnd ok vándan blot skap. giørði hann hit mesta hof i samaría ok dýrkaði þar skurð guð báál. (Stj III p. 1080; AM 227 fol.)

[And he did not let his own wickedness and their evil suffice, rather he increased their evils.¹⁷⁰ He married the worst woman who was called Jezebel, the daughter of King Ithobaal of the Sidonian people. And from his desire for her/at her desire and evil idolatry,¹⁷¹ he built the greatest temple in Samaria and worshipped there the idol Baal.]

AM 228 fol. and AM 617 4to have similar passages here, with some variation. All three of these manuscripts contain a damning depiction of Jezebel, though in some versions her heathenness and idolatry are emphasised more than others.¹⁷² All versions, however, include

¹⁶⁹ On the various manuscripts of *Stjórn* and their relationships, see Astås, 2009, i pp. xxxv-cxxi, and the Introduction.

Of the four manuscripts discussed here, AM 227 fol. and AM 228 fol. contain texts of *Stjórn* that can be considered independent (see Kirby, 1986, p. 51). Though Jakob Benediktsson (2004, p. 28) argues that the *Stjórn* of AM 617 4to is an independent text, Astås (2009, i pp. ciii-cx, cxix-cxxi) disagrees, asserting that it does depend upon other manuscripts of *Stjórn*, including AM 226 fol. AM 225 fol. is a copy of AM 226 fol.

¹⁷⁰ The pronoun 'þeira' (*Stj* I p. 1080; AM 227 fol.) [their] refers to the other evil kings of Israel mentioned in the previous line.

¹⁷¹ The ambiguity in the text at this point is discussed below.

¹⁷² In AM 617 4to, she is called the 'vestu héidna konu' (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 617 4to) [worst heathen woman] rather than just the 'uerstu konu' (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 227 fol.) [worst woman]. In both AM 228 fol. and AM 617 4to, the reference to Jezebel's 'girnd' (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 227 fol.) [desire] is

the description of Jezebel as the *verst kona* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [worst woman], who Ahab marries out of his own *váðskapr* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [wickedness].

This same general depiction of Jezebel, however, is not found in the corresponding section within the manuscript AM 225 fol., a close copy of AM 226 fol. created in c. 1400.¹⁷³ AM 225 fol. is therefore the most reliable of the extant manuscripts when considering the missing content of AM 226 fol. In AM 225 fol., the passage which normally introduces Jezebel (I Kings 16.31) is translated as follows: ‘*ok enn let hann ser eigi éinlitan vandskap þuiat hann gerdí hit mesta hof i samaría ok þar med skurd god bæl ok dýrkadi*’ (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 225 fol.) [and he did not let his own wickedness suffice because he built the greatest temple in Samaria and also the idol Baal and worshipped him]. Jezebel is removed from this translation. Ahab does not build the temple and worship heathen gods because of Jezebel in this renarration, but he instead appears to act from his own volition. The reading of Jezebel in this manuscript is therefore significantly different; her damning introduction is entirely omitted from this biblical passage. In removing Jezebel’s description here, however, the queen might also be seen as significantly less powerful than in the other *Stjórn* manuscripts, where she appears to have some influence over her husband’s actions.

instead to her ‘*blotgirni*’ or ‘*blotgirne*’ (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 228 fol., AM 617 4to) [desire for idolatry].

¹⁷³ See, for example, Seip, 1956, p. 11, and Kirby, 1986, pp. 51-52.

Can this be considered an accurate representation of the contents of AM 226 fol.? I believe that the version in AM 225 fol. does not represent the text as it would have been in AM 226 fol. but rather demonstrates the common scribal error of eye-skip. In both AM 228 fol. and AM 617 4to, the word *vándskapr* occurs twice: first in describing Ahab's own wickedness, and later in detailing Jezebel's. Comparing the text in these manuscripts against that in AM 225 fol., it looks as if the copyist has written up to the first *vándskapr*, describing Ahab's sins, and then carried on after the second *vándskapr*. The copyist's eyes seem to have skipped over the introduction of Jezebel as they returned to the manuscript page, focusing incorrectly on the second occurrence of the word *vándskapr*. It therefore seems likely that AM 226 fol. did mention Jezebel here, but this has been mistakenly omitted from AM 225 fol.

The copyist, it seems, eventually realised his mistake, as he adds in a passage very similar to that in AM 227 fol., AM 228 fol., and AM 617 4to before the next mention of Jezebel (*Stj* III p. 1084). This passage reads:

hann geck at eíga. þa konu sem het jezabel dottur methbaal konungs sidoníorum þioda. hon uar eín hín uersta kona sua at fyrir hennar blotgirní okuandskap. gerdi hann þat mikla hof j samaría sem fyrr uar fra sagt. (Stj III p. 1084; AM 225 fol.)

[he married that woman who was called Jezebel, the daughter of King Ithobaal of the Sidonian people. She was the worst woman and for her idolatry and wickedness he built the great temple in Samaria as was said before.]

This appears to be the copyist's attempt to correct his earlier mistake.¹⁷⁴ This passage even includes the second *vándskapr*, the most probable cause of the eye-skip. It is likely the passage incorporates but changes the text of AM 226 fol. to make it fit its new context. Though the exact contents of AM 226 fol. will never be known, it seems that this passage would have resembled the versions extant in the manuscripts AM 227 fol., AM 228 fol., and AM 617 4to.

Jezebel's Influence over her Husband

In the Vulgate account, there is no explicit statement that Jezebel was the cause of Ahab's pagan practice. The introduction of Jezebel in the Vulgate is as follows: 'nec suffecit ei ut ambularet in peccatis Hieroboam filii Nabath insuper duxit uxorem Hiezabel filiam Ethbaal regis Sidoniorum et abiit et servivit Baal et adoravit eum' (I Kings 16.31) [Nor was it sufficient that he (Ahab) walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Naboth; in addition he took as wife Jezebel, the daughter of King Ithobaal of the Sidonians, and he went and served Baal and adored him]. This verse states that Ahab chooses to marry Jezebel because of his own sins; then, after the marriage, Ahab is said to worship the pagan god Baal. As a Phoenician princess, Jezebel would have been raised pagan (see Camp, 1992, p. 103), and (as is evident from the

¹⁷⁴ If this mistake had been present in AM 226 fol., it is likely the copyist would have attempted to correct it in AM 225 fol. I therefore assume this is the mistake of the AM 225 fol. copyist and not of the AM 226 fol. scribe.

rest of her story) she continued to practice and support her ancestral religion as queen of the Israelites.¹⁷⁵ It is therefore not too much of a stretch to imagine that Jezebel would have influenced Ahab's religious practice in some way. Snyder writes of this passage:

The biblical text does not indicate a direct causality between Ahab's taking of Jezebel as a wife and his sinfulness or worship of Baal. Still the proximity of the statements in I Kings 16.31 creates the association in the mind of the reader—an association strengthened by a later verse that does directly blame Jezebel for Ahab's misdeeds. (Snyder, 2014, p. 180)

While the Vulgate remains ambiguous about Jezebel's influence upon her husband at this early stage in the narrative, her culpability is emphasised in the Old Norse translation.

In *Stjórn III*, after describing Jezebel as the *verst kona* (*Stj III* p. 1080; AM 227 fol.) [worst woman], the translator explicitly links Ahab's paganism to his relationship with Jezebel. Ahab is said to build a great temple to Baal 'fyrer hennar girnd ok vǣndan blot skap' (*Stj III* p. 1080; AM 227 fol.). This line could be translated as either 'from his desire for her and [his] evil idolatry' or 'at her desire and evil idolatry'. The former translation might suggest a sexual motivation, with Ahab trying to impress his new wife, while the latter implies more agency for Jezebel: she is able to make Ahab act according to her own desires. Both translations, nonetheless, emphasise the power Jezebel has over her husband and his sins. Grønlie (2006, p. 302), commenting on the overall depiction of Jezebel in *Stjórn III*, writes, 'In the biblical

¹⁷⁵ Carol Smith (1998, pp. 160–61) notes that Jezebel is never called a queen in the Hebrew original (this is also true of the Vulgate version). In *Stjórn III*, however, she is called a queen at several points (e.g., *Stj III* pp. 1084, 1087, 1092, 1161), perhaps giving her more authority in the Old Norse version.

account, and even more so in the Norse translation, Jezebel is held responsible for the moral and spiritual collapse of her husband'. Jezebel's culpability for Ahab's actions is mentioned several times throughout her story, sometimes in the direct translations from the Vulgate and sometimes (as here) in additional details. Jezebel's influence over her husband appears to be an important concern of the translator as he renders her story.

Jezebel's power over her husband's religious practice can be assumed to result from a speech act. Although there is no direct mention of any of the words Jezebel uses to convince her husband to worship pagan gods in either the Vulgate or the Old Norse translation, nor any mention that this is specifically a verbal act, it would have been impossible for Jezebel to achieve the influence ascribed to her *without* the use of her voice. To make sense of the brief reference to Jezebel's power over her husband in the introductory passage, the reader must construct one or several imagined speech acts that would have taken place between husband and wife, to lead Ahab to his paganism. Later, in one of the prophecies of Jezebel's death (explored below), the Old Norse translator uses the words *eggja* and *áeggjan* to describe Jezebel's control of her husband's behaviour (*Stj* III p. 1107). These words, analysed in Chapter One, are connected with speech, and quite often stand in as an indirect description of a speech act. I therefore consider Jezebel's conversion of her husband to paganism to involve one or more speech acts.

These speech acts can be considered incitements in line with the model proposed in Chapter One. Though it is difficult to use Searle's formulas here, the use of the word *áeggjan* (*Stj* III p. 1107, explored below) implies that a speech act of the directive type has taken place. This word, as one of the conventions of incitement, also suggests that Jezebel can be considered an inciter woman as she urges her husband to convert. Though Jezebel's incitement is not for revenge, it certainly has bloody consequences, as the rest of the narrative demonstrates.

Jezebel's incitement of her husband to convert is condemned from its very first mention in the character's introduction. She is called the *verst kona* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [worst woman] with no detail of any sins other than her conversion of her husband. The influence she has over Ahab is also perhaps ascribed to her *vándskapr* (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 228 fol.) [wickedness]. This first introduction of Jezebel thus establishes the figure not only as a pagan queen, but also as an evil egger.

The overwhelmingly negative depiction of Jezebel is also evident throughout the rest of her story in *Stjórn* III. She is regularly denounced for her 'v hæfur' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [wickedness] and evil. The translator consistently goes beyond the criticism in the Vulgate, which is for the most part implicit, adding clear statements about Jezebel's immorality. This criticism is most often found when the figure is named, as the translator introduces adjectives that describe Jezebel as evil. For example, in one of the prophecies of her death, Jezebel is

called ‘illu iezabel’ (*Stj* III p. 1158) [evil Jezebel]. The adjective is absent in the corresponding passage of the Vulgate (II Kings 9.10).

The condemnation of Jezebel, however, appears to be more muted in AM 226 fol. compared to the other versions of *Stjórn* III. For example, the title of the death scene in AM 227 fol. is ‘drepin hin illa iezabel drotning’ (*Stj* III p. 1161; AM 227 fol.) [the evil queen Jezebel was killed], compared to the more neutral title in AM 226 fol.: ‘her segir af dauða Jezabel drottningar’ (*Stj* III p. 1161) [Here it says of the death of queen Jezebel]. Another example is the naming of Jezebel when Jehu tells his men to bury her (II Kings 9.34). In AM 226 fol., Jezebel is called ‘þersi bannsetta iezabel’ (*Stj* III p. 1162; AM 226 fol.) [this accursed Jezebel], preserving the condemnation of the Vulgate. While certainly damning, this version does not go as far as that of AM 227 fol., where the figure is called ‘þersi bannzetta ok hin bqlfaða iezabel’ (*Stj* III p. 1162; AM 227 fol.) [this accursed and the damned Jezebel]. Thus, while *Stjórn* III is generally damning in its depiction of Jezebel, AM 226 fol. interestingly contains the least condemnatory description of the queen in the extant manuscripts.

Jezebel and the Prophets of God

After her initial introduction, Jezebel next appears in the retrospective descriptions of her massacre of the prophets of God. In these accounts, there is one significant difference between the Vulgate version and the Old Norse translation: while Jezebel is the active agent in the murder of the prophets in the Vulgate, the translation within *Stjórn* III says that she

commanded the deaths rather than enacting them herself. The first description of this massacre reads as follows in the Vulgate: ‘nam cum interficeret Hiezabel prophetas Domini’ (I Kings 18.4) [for when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord]. In *Stjórn* III, this is translated as ‘Hín bann setta drottning jezabel let drepa alla *guds* spamenn ok rettruada kenní menn þa sem hun nadi’ (*Stj* III p. 1084; AM 225 fol.) [The accursed queen Jezebel had all the prophets of God and the right-believing clerics that she had captured killed].¹⁷⁶ The addition of the verb *láta* [to let, to command] here implies that Jezebel does not commit the murder with her own hands, but rather through instructions to subordinates.¹⁷⁷ Although the next mention of the massacre does not use an auxiliary verb to distance Jezebel from the murders (*Stj* III p. 1086), the final description of it (*Stj* III p. 1158) again uses the verb *láta* to suggest that Jezebel acted through others. Most of the depictions of this slaughter in *Stjórn* III thus distance the act somewhat from Jezebel herself, perhaps adding an implied speech act, from Jezebel to her subordinates, in which she commands them to murder for her.

This speech act would be a directive according to Searle’s taxonomy (1979). However, it has one major difference from those analysed thus far in this thesis: it is from a woman in a position of authority (a *dróttning* [queen] in the Old Norse) to those who are presumably

¹⁷⁶ This passage is also missing from AM 226 fol. due to the lost leaf. I quote from AM 225 fol., which here seems to be a more accurate record of the content within AM 226 fol.

¹⁷⁷ All variations of this text listed in Astås’ edition contain a verb like *bjóða* [to bid, command] or *láta* [to let, command] which suggests that the killing is not performed by Jezebel herself, but through her commandment.

inferior. It is a command to subordinates rather than a woman's urging of a man of similar status (whose gender affords him a privileged position to act). The relative statuses of the speaker and hearer are quite different, and therefore I do not consider this to be an incitement aligning with the model in Chapter One. It is nevertheless an (implied) speech act and a directive, which is still important for the analysis in this thesis on female verbal power.

This (speech) act is naturally condemned by the translator of *Stjórn* III. In the rendering in the Vulgate, the criticism of Jezebel is implied, as the reader is presumably expected to morally disagree with Jezebel's murder of God's prophets. There is, however, nothing explicit in the Vulgate text that criticises the figure. In the Old Norse translation, it is 'Hín bann setta drottning jezebel' (*Stj* III p. 1084; AM 225 fol.) [the accursed queen Jezebel] who kills the *réttrúaðr* (*Stj* III p. 1084) [right-believing] prophets. This clearly expresses condemnation of the figure and her (speech) act. The description of Jezebel as *bannsettr* [accursed] seems especially significant here, since this adjective is used elsewhere in *Stjórn* to describe particularly evil figures, like Goliath (*Stj* III p. 792).¹⁷⁸ Although Jezebel's massacre of God's prophets is undeniably criticised by the Old Norse translator, as shall become apparent, this act is not condemned as strongly as her initial incitement of her husband to turn to paganism.

¹⁷⁸ On the depiction of Goliath, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 230-232.

Jezebel and her Pagan Prophets

The next mention of Jezebel in *Stjórn* III is a brief reference of her role in sustaining the pagan prophets, translated from I Kings 18.19 (*Stj* III p. 1087). Although, in the Vulgate, Jezebel is said to provide for all eight hundred and fifty prophets, the translator alters this, placing only the four hundred of Asherah at her table (*Stj* III p. 1087). Though the prophets of Baal are mentioned, there is no detail about who is providing for them (*Stj* III p. 1087). This change may have resulted from an intentional gender divide; Asherah is a goddess,¹⁷⁹ and so perhaps the translator wished to align the worshippers of a female deity with this female ruler. It seems more likely, however, that this difference results from the translator's ignorance about the deity's identity.

Unlike Baal, Asherah is not mentioned by name in this passage; in fact, her name (while occurring in the original Hebrew) is not included anywhere in the Vulgate. Asphodel Long (2007, p. 1) writes that, translating the word 'Asherah', 'the Vulgate in Latin provides *lucus* or *nemus*, a grove or a wood'. At I Kings 18.19, the Vulgate uses a plural form of *lucus* [grove]. Long (2007, p. 1), commenting on the widespread removal of Asherah's name in biblical translations, writes, 'These translations lead to the consequent loss of Asherah's name and knowledge of her existence to English language readers of the Bible over some 400 years'. The removal of her name from the Vulgate also seems to have deprived medieval Icelandic

¹⁷⁹ On Asherah and her appearance in the Books of Kings, see Camp, 1992, pp. 97-98. On Asherah and Jezebel, see Ackerman, 2009, pp. 147-150, 155-162.

Bible readers of knowledge of this goddess. Translating the Vulgate's 'prophetasque lucorum' (I Kings 18.19) [and the prophets of the groves], the Old Norse translator writes, 'spa menn iezabel drottningar þa sem hun feðer a sinv borði til þers at blota meðr ser skoga ok skurðguð' (*Stj* III p. 1087) [the prophets of queen Jezebel, those which she feeds at her table for this that they worship with her the forests and idols]. The translator might have been confused here about the identity of the '[prophetas] lucorum' (I Kings 18.19) [prophets of the groves] in the Vulgate account, not knowing that this referred to Asherah's prophets. Instead, he tried to re-write these figures as prophets that Jezebel has recruited to join her in worshipping nature and unspecified idols. The inclusion of the phrase 'meðr ser' (*Stj* III p. 1087) [with her] suggests that she is simply buying herself company in her false religion, that could even be read as her own creation.

This renarration of Jezebel's patronage shrinks the number of prophets in her care by more than half. This might be seen to minimise Jezebel's role in the paganism of Israel. It nevertheless also gives the impression that Jezebel has at least promulgated if not founded a sect of forest-worship, potentially placing her in the position of religious as well as political leader. It is especially intriguing that the prophets of Baal are no longer under Jezebel's care in this translation, since elsewhere she is blamed for causing her husband to worship and build temples to Baal. Since she incites her husband to worship this pagan god, it is strange that she abandons his prophets in place of her own sect of paganism. Attempting to make up

for his seeming ignorance about Asherah here, the translator produces a rather strange passage about Jezebel's prophets and paganism, which also, interestingly, does not include any explicit condemnation of the figure.

Jezebel's Threats to Elijah

Jezebel next appears following Elijah's triumph over and subsequent slaughter of the prophets of Baal and Asherah/Jezebel.¹⁸⁰ Hearing that her beloved prophets are dead, Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah, who flees from her (*Stj* III pp. 1092-1093). This is undeniably a speech act, rendered directly (though sent via a messenger) in both *Stjórn* III and the Vulgate (*Stj* III p. 1092; I Kings 19.2). Jezebel here flexes her verbal power; her words are strong enough to drive a man to terror, flight, and despair (*Stj* III pp. 1092-1093).

The Old Norse translator creatively expands upon the speech of Jezebel here, demonstrating a fascination with the power of her words, as well as an interest in the psychological reasoning behind her speech. Astås (1991, p. 106) has noted the 'clear tendency towards searching for and accentuating interior psychological causalities' in *Stjórn* I; this might also apply to this passage of *Stjórn* III. Before she threatens Elijah, Jezebel chastises him for the lives he has taken, declaring 'æigi þottí þer fullgort þat er þu hefer margan lýð suellt til bana okbýrgt hímín *sua* at all dri náði at rigna ýfir iordína á .iij. árum vtan nu hefer þu drepit

¹⁸⁰ On interpretations of the difference between Jezebel and Elijah's massacres of prophets, see Josey Bridges Snyder, 2014, p. 181.

alla spamenn vǣra' (*Stj* III p. 1092) [Did you not think it finished when you starved many people to death and shut up heaven so that it never rained over the earth for three years, but now you have killed all our prophets]. There is no precedent for this line in any of the extant source material of *Stjórn* III. This thus appears to be an addition by the Old Norse translator, which draws perhaps unusual attention to the lives lost throughout these biblical chapters because of God's prophets and commandments: first in the three-year famine that punishes the Israelites for turning against God, and then in the slaughter of the pagan prophets. In Wray Beal's (2024, pp. 168-169) sympathetic reading of Jezebel, she emphasises her commitment to the welfare of her people. Wray Beal writes,

Her commitment is ironically contrasted with her husband, who is unaware of (or unconcerned with) the plight of not only Yhwh's prophets but his own people. [...] His foreign wife is more attentive, and committed, to her 'people' than he is. (Wray Beal, 2024, p. 169)

The addition in *Stjórn* III interestingly draws attention to the queen's caring nature, making her threat to Elijah not merely one of personal or religious feud, but a royal declaration made with the (mistaken) belief that eliminating Elijah would protect her people from further harm. This contrasts the extreme condemnation of the figure found elsewhere in the translation.

The threat itself, which follows this castigation of Elijah, is also elaborated upon by the Old Norse translator, but the underlying meaning remains the same: I will kill you at this time tomorrow (*Stj* III p. 1092; I Kings 19.2). In Searle's taxonomy, this speech act is undeniably a commissive (the class which includes promises and vows) since the point is 'to

commit the speaker [...] to some future course of action' (Searle, 1979, p. 14). The direction of fit is *world-to-words*, the sincerity condition is *intention*, and the propositional content is that the Speaker, Jezebel, does the future Action of killing Elijah ('S does A': Searle, 1979, p. 14). In the Old Norse, this speech act is described as a 'heít' (*Stj* III p. 1092) [vow], which Elijah fears. It could also, however, be considered an indirect directive (indirect in that this is not the main illocutionary act, and a directive in that it belongs to Searle's category of the directives: 1979, pp. 13–14). In promising to kill Elijah at the same time the next day, Jezebel gives him enough time to flee beforehand. It may be that Jezebel simply wanted him out of her kingdom one way or another, and so she intended through this threat to force him to leave. As Wray Beal (2024, p. 169) writes, 'Her words at the least intend only to frighten Elijah [...] At the worst her words are a vow to kill the prophet'. Thus, this speech act might also be considered a directive, as she wants the hearer, Elijah, to take the action of fleeing the country.

Jezebel's speech act is certainly effective; it even has Elijah wishing for death before God's angel comforts him (I Kings 19.4; *Stj* III p. 1093). Snyder (2014, p. 181), analysing early interpretations of Jezebel, writes, 'several Christian interpreters exhibit discomfort with the notion that Jezebel may have had influence—or, worse, victory—over Elijah when her threat caused him to flee'. Jezebel's voice is evidently very powerful here, able to terrify Elijah and unsettle early (male) readers of the Bible with its influence.

Although it is possibly a directive and certainly very powerful, this speech act cannot be considered an incitement that fits into the trope of the inciter women outlined in Chapter One. Jezebel's authority in this threat comes from her status as a royal and political leader. As with her commandment to kill the pagan prophets, in this threat Jezebel speaks from a position of (earthly) authority to a hearer with none. This thus demonstrates the power a woman's voice can wield when they are in a position of authority but differs from the inciter woman's use of verbal power due to this variation in hearer/speaker status.

Interestingly, the Old Norse translator does not add any explicit criticism of Jezebel to the passage describing this speech act (*Stj* III p. 1092). There is no adjective denoting Jezebel as evil or accursed. The expansion of Jezebel's speech act, outlining all the ways she believes Elijah has wronged her people, perhaps even has the opposite effect: it shows her to be a caring leader committed to eliminating the threats to her kingdom. While elsewhere Jezebel is condemned by the Old Norse translator, this passage offers a rare moment of humanisation for this *verst kona* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [worst woman]. This perhaps suggests that the translator has some understanding for Jezebel in this moment, as she defends her kingdom in the best way she knows how. This speech act thus receives the least condemnation of any of Jezebel's speeches, which is perhaps surprising considering the 'discomfort' (Snyder, 2014, p. 181) this scene, and Jezebel's verbal victory, caused for many early interpreters.

The Plot Against Naboth

Jezebel's plot to kill Naboth is her final act as queen. This plot is enacted through letters written in Ahab's name, as she utilises her husband's authority to bring about death. This plot will not be discussed in depth here, since it involves written commands rather than verbal power (the subject of this thesis), and the Old Norse translator does not linger over the story in his translation. The account in *Stjórn III* (*Stj III* pp. 1105-1106) faithfully follows but shortens the story as it is depicted in the Vulgate (I Kings 21.4-16). No particular emphasis is drawn either to Jezebel's role in the plot or to Ahab's incompetence by the translator. Again, there is no explicit criticism of Jezebel added to this biblical passage in *Stjórn III*.

Jezebel does, however, speak to her husband in this passage, and although her words here are not as narrative defining as her written plots, they are still worthy of mention. In a scene that might remind an Old Norse audience of Bjargey's repeated incitements of her husband to get out of bed and seek compensation or revenge for their son's death in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (*Háv ÍF* 6 5-9:308-321), Jezebel twice urges her husband to get out of bed: 'ris vpp' (*Stj III* pp. 1105-1106) [Get up!]. The main difference between *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* and this biblical translation, however, is that in *Stjórn III* Jezebel takes care of all the political work for Ahab, so all he needs to do is get up and take the now unclaimed land. Although Bjargey gives specific instructions to her husband (*Háv ÍF* 6 6-9:309-321) and arranges the support of their kinsmen (*Háv ÍF* 6 8:315-318), she cannot act in the manner of Jezebel,

arranging things in her husband's name via letter writing. Jezebel's urgings of her husband to get up are not nearly as powerful as those of Bjargey, who must incite her husband to do the work himself.

While Bjargey remains in the female sphere in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, inciting her husband to perform the necessary work in the male realm of politics and blood, Jezebel crosses that line to participate in the political world that she should not normally have access to (as evidenced by the use of her husband's name and seal). Bradley L. Crowell (2013, p. 11) writes, 'Jezebel is pictured repeatedly usurping male authority and acting against the traditional social structure of male leadership'; nowhere is this more evident than in this scene. Wray Beal (2024, p. 171), however, notes that the subordinates who carry out the task knew it was Jezebel, not Ahab, who ordered the death of Naboth: 'Their report is made to Jezebel rather than Ahab'. Though Jezebel pretends to act under her husband's name, it is clear that she is the one giving the directions, and 'her reputation commands unquestioning obedience' (Wray Beal, 2024, p. 171). Although the charade of Ahab's insignia indicates that Jezebel should not normally have access to the kind of power she is wielding, Jezebel has clearly established herself within the royal and political sphere in a position of authority that should belong to her husband. Thus, unlike the inciter women within the wider Old Norse corpus, Jezebel does not need to incite her husband to act in the political sphere to get what she wants; she is able to step into this sphere herself to take the necessary action.

Two Prophecies of Jezebel's Death (and a Hierarchy of Speech Acts)

The death of Naboth sparks the first prophecy about the deaths of Ahab and Jezebel. The translator makes some interesting changes that emphasise the culpability of Jezebel and the role of her verbal power. The section of the prophecy involving Jezebel is translated as follows:

	Vulgate	<i>Stjórn III</i>
I Kings 21.23	sed et de Hiezabel locutus est Dominus dicens canes comedent Hiezabel in agro Hiezrahel [but also of Jezebel the Lord spoke, saying dogs will eat Jezebel in the field of Jezrahel]	Enn af iezabel talar <i>sua</i> drottinn. at hræ hennar mǫnu hundar slita. þuiat hon egiaði þik á allzhattar v hæfur. <i>sua</i> at þu hefir verra gert enn huerr konungr fyrir þer. þu hefir ok fyrir hennar ást ok egian dýrkat berligha bannsett skurð goð. (<i>Stj III</i> p. 1107)
I Kings 21.24	si mortuus fuerit Ahab in civitate comedent eum canes si autem mortuus fuerit in agro comedent eum volucres caeli [if Ahab dies in a city, dogs will eat him, but if he dies in a field, birds of the sky will eat him]	[But of Jezebel the lord says this: dogs will tear apart her body because she incited you to all kinds of wickedness, so that you have done worse than every king before you. You have also for her love and incitement openly glorified the accursed idols.]
I Kings 21.25	igitur non fuit alter talis ut Ahab qui venundatus est ut faceret malum in conspectu Domini concitavit enim eum Hiezabel uxor sua. [therefore there was not another of such kind as Ahab, who was sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord; his wife, Jezebel, urged him.]	

The translation here significantly shortens the Vulgate text and shifts the focus from the sins of Ahab onto those of his wife. Although Ahab is still criticised in the Norse translation immediately before this, the compiler omits I Kings 21.24, which contains the details about

how Ahab will die, and which animals will eat his body. The translator thus keeps the focus on Jezebel and her culpability.

Jezebel's punishment and death are linked to her verbal power in the Old Norse translation. The translator adds to the translation of I Kings 21.23 an explanation for the reason for Jezebel's punishment; the subordinating conjunction *þvi at* [because] explicitly connects and blames Jezebel's urging of her husband to 'allzhattar v hæfur' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [all kinds of wickedness] for her fated punishment. Jezebel is condemned because she 'eǰiaði' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [incited] her husband, because of her role as a *Hetzerin*.

It is not clear, however, what exactly the translator means in the phrase 'allzhattar v hæfur' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [all kinds of wickedness]. Of all Jezebel's actions described above, the only incitement of her husband to act is when she convinces him to worship pagan gods, an act also described in the translation of I Kings 21.25, using the noun *áeggjan*. The more general statement 'allzhattar v hæfur' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [all kinds of wickedness], however, appears to go beyond this, suggesting that Jezebel has incited her husband to do other evil things.

Could it have been Ahab who had all of God's prophets killed after Jezebel incited him? This seems unlikely, not only because of his own inertia (evidenced in the Naboth episode: *Stj* III pp. 1104-1106) but also because the massacre is always said to be the queen's doing. If the translator thought the king had a hand in it, he would surely have mentioned

this earlier. The threat to Elijah certainly cannot be considered an action of Ahab. Perhaps the translator refers to the murder of Naboth here, blaming this on Jezebel's incitement of her husband? As I have shown, however, the only directive Jezebel gives to her husband is for him to get up and claim the fruits of her labour; Ahab did not have a hand in orchestrating the plot and death itself. Nevertheless, Ahab is frequently blamed for Jezebel's actions; Howard (2014, p. 173) writes of the biblical account, 'This last blast of prophetic venom [...] holds Ahab himself ultimately responsible for his seizure of Naboth's vineyard, even though the agency in the seizure was almost entirely Jezebel's'. While the biblical narrator does not explain why Ahab is blamed for Jezebel's actions, it is possible that the Old Norse translator is rewriting this as an incitement to demonstrate why Ahab is condemned here. This, however, does not match the inciter women motif, in which it is the husband who acts, and the woman who is blamed for her 'cold counsel'.¹⁸¹

This general statement, with no details about the specific sins Jezebel has supposedly urged her husband towards, seems more likely designed to cast a wide, unspecific net over all the bad things that have happened during Ahab's reign and blame them on his wife. Using a verb of incitement, the translator creates endless imagined speech acts between Ahab and his wife, where Jezebel urges him to sin. While evoking the *Hetzerin* motif, the translator connects

¹⁸¹ On this proverbial phrase, see S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002, pp. xi-xii.

Jezebel's brutal corporeal punishment with her urging and influence over her husband, painting her not just as a bad queen, but as a bad wife.

In the translation of I Kings 21.25, in the above quoted passage, the translator again references the incitements of Jezebel; this time, he refers specifically to her incitement of her husband to worship pagan gods. This refers back to the first ever (implied) speech act assigned to Jezebel in her character introduction. The noun *áeggjan* (*Stj* III p. 1107) [incitement] translates the Latin verb *concitare* (I Kings 21.25) [to urge]. Although there is precedent for this incitement word in the source material, its use here, in addition to the use of *eggja* just above, emphasises Jezebel's action of incitement and her identity as a *Hetzerin*. Grønlie (2006, pp. 302, 314) has previously linked the use of the verb *eggja* here to the depiction of Eve in *Stjórn* I and the concept of female incitement.

It is interesting that the only action of Jezebel that is overtly criticised in this fateful moment is her incitement of her husband. Jezebel commits many sins in the biblical narrative, only one of which (inciting her husband to paganism) is mentioned explicitly here. Although the translator has included the phrase 'allzhattar v hæfur' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [all kinds of wickedness], this does not seem to apply to her murder of the prophets, her threat to Elijah, or her plot against Naboth (the very event that sparked this prophecy in the first place). While the translator readily includes additional details about Jezebel's supposed incitements of Ahab, he does not mention any of her other (arguably more serious) sins. This implies a sort of

hierarchy of women's speech acts, in which incitement of one's spouse is by the far the worst. Jezebel's primary sin (for which she is punished severely) is not murder, tyranny, or the usurpation of her husband's authority, but the times she has convinced him to do her bidding: her incitements.

The second prophecy of Jezebel's death, occurring right before it is enacted, focuses on a different one of Jezebel's (speech) actions: her command to have God's prophets massacred. The Old Norse translation of this prophecy is as follows:

þu drepir nidr hird ok hýski achab konungs. ok hefnir sua mínna spamanna. ok allra þionostu manna er iezabel hefir drepa látit. Ok sua giorsamliga skaltu eyða allri ætt þeira ok af kuęmí at æigi einn hinn minzti sueinn skal eptir lifa i israel. Enn hræ hínar illu iezabel munu hundar rífa æ akri iezrael. ok engín man grafa hana. (*Stj* III p. 1158)

[Strike down the court and household of King Ahab and thus avenge my prophets and all the serving men which Jezebel has commanded to be killed. And you shall altogether destroy all their family and offspring so that not even the smallest boy might afterwards live in Israel. And dogs will tear apart the body of the wicked Jezebel in the field of Jezrael, and no one will bury her.]

Comparison with the source material (II Kings 9.7-10) reveals that the translator has again removed a verse that does not relate to Jezebel (II Kings 9.9); this perhaps minimises repetition with verse II Kings 9.8, but it also keeps the reader's focus on the punishment of the woman. The translator also adds the adjective *illr* [evil] to describe the queen.

In this prophecy, Jezebel is condemned to death not because of her incitements of her husband, but because of the prophets she has killed (this detail is taken from the source

material: II Kings 9.7). By this point, Jezebel's husband is dead, and their son is soon to be, taking with them most of her political and personal influence. Perhaps the translator did not add any details about her incitements here (as he did at *Stj* III p. 1107) because there is no one left alive for her to incite. She does not even have power over her serving people, who throw her from the tower at Jehu's command (*Stj* III p. 1162). Jezebel the inciter woman is no longer a threat, so the translator only mentions her massacre of the prophets, though he includes the verb *láta* to render this as a speech act. If incitement is seen as her primary sin (as argued above), her command to kill hundreds of God's prophets is a close second.

Jezebel's threat to Elijah and her plots against Naboth are not mentioned explicitly in any prophecy of her death in *Stjórn* III. The translator also attaches no overt condemnation to the figure as she performs these actions. Her threat to Elijah is perhaps even depicted positively, as a moment of royal strength in a genuine (if misplaced) attempt to protect her people. The hierarchy of condemnation placed upon Jezebel's (speech) acts thus is as follows: incitement, command, plot, threat.

Love and Revenge

The prophecies of Jezebel's death raise two themes worth exploring further: love and revenge. In the first prophecy of the queen's death, the translator includes the word pair 'ást *ok* egian' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [love and incitement] to describe why Ahab turns to paganism. Placing the concepts side-by-side, the translator perhaps connects them, implying that love, or a close

relationship, is a component of incitement. It is significant that within AM 226 fol., the only time a woman is said to urge a man using the verb *eggja* or its noun form is within a relationship with a lover, husband, or child.¹⁸² Within the Jezebel story, the words *eggja* or *áeggjan* are only used to describe the speech acts between husband and wife. In the *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*, incitement is also a family matter; women incite their husbands, brothers, and fathers to take the action they themselves cannot take (see Judith Jesch, 1991, p. 189). Perhaps some kind of love is necessary for incitement.

The word *ást* (*Stj* III p. 1107) [love] may also, however, be used as an innuendo for sexual desire, hinting at a use of sex or seduction in Jezebel's incitements of her husband. This is also an available interpretation in the introduction of Jezebel in AM 227 fol., where Ahab is said to build a temple to Baal 'fyrer hennar girnd' (*Stj* III p. 1080; AM 227 fol.) [at her desire/from his desire for her]. Despite never explicitly seducing in the biblical text, Jezebel is interpreted as a seductress throughout history.¹⁸³ Alice Ogden Bellis (2007, p. 144) writes, 'To this day the epithet "Jezebel" is applied to women who are thought to wear too much makeup or jewellery, or sexually provocative clothing'. It is possible, though I believe unlikely, that the translator includes these references to *ást* [love] and *girnd* [desire] to emphasise Jezebel's role as a seductress. This is a much larger topic that I return to below.

¹⁸² The only possible exception is in the story of Arsinoe (*Róm* 89:382), explored later in this chapter.

¹⁸³ On early Christian interpretations of Jezebel and her seductive nature, see Snyder, 2014.

It is fascinating that Jezebel's incitement of her husband to paganism, which is depicted with verbs of incitement, is connected more strongly to love than to revenge. There is no element of revenge in Jezebel's incitement of her husband; she merely converts the man she marries to her own religion. The second speech act of Jezebel, her murder of the prophets, also does not appear to be vengeful; there is no story of the prophets doing anything to wrong Jezebel, aside from belonging to a religion she does not follow. Both non-vengeful speech acts receive harsh criticism in the Old Norse renarration. Jezebel does, however, speak and act when motivated by vengeance: her threat to Elijah and her plot to kill Naboth are both vengeful. Neither of these speech acts are incitements, and they do not receive particularly harsh criticism from the compiler, despite his vehement condemnation of Jezebel's verbal power in other cases.

It appears that vengeance is not a prerequisite for incitement, but a close personal (loving?) relationship with the target of the incitement is essential. This provides further proof for the need to remove the vengeance requirement when defining the inciter woman. Of all the speech acts in the *Stjórn* III story of Jezebel, it is one that certainly lacks revenge as a motivator that draws the most parallels with the *Hetzerinnen* in the wider corpus.

The Death of a Son and the Birth of a Seductress

Following the prophecy of Jezebel's death, II Kings 9 depicts the coup of Jehu, during which he murders Jezebel's son, Jehoram, and then the queen herself. The narratives surrounding

these deaths contain two details that have sparked biblical interpretations of Jezebel as a seductress. The first potential reference to Jezebel's supposedly sexual nature is in Jehu's response when Jehoram asks him if he comes in peace. In the Vulgate account, Jehu replies, 'quae pax adhuc fornicationes Hiezabel matris tuae et veneficia eius multa vigent' (II Kings 9.22) [What peace? As the fornications of Jezebel your mother and her many sorceries thrive]. This mention of Jezebel's *fornicationes* (II Kings 9.22) [fornications] is often interpreted as pointing to her excessive sexuality (see Snyder, 2014). Many scholars, however, believe this word refers instead to Jezebel's paganism; Howard (2014, p. 174), for example, writes, 'that language reads as a comment on religious practices—either the practice of cultic prostitution that may have accompanied the worship of some deities, or more likely as a metaphor for religious infidelity'. Though the sexual reading of this line may have been misplaced, it nevertheless had a great impact on the image of Jezebel from early Christian interpretation to the modern day.

This passage has also inspired interpretations of Jezebel as a witch or sorceress: another frequent character trait attached to the figure.¹⁸⁴ Though Jezebel is at many times depicted practicing paganism, it is only in this line that she is explicitly said to practice magic: her many sorceries, 'veneficia eius multa' (II Kings 9.22), are heavily criticised here. This not only

¹⁸⁴ See Pippin, 1995, p. 222; Dutcher-Walls, 2004, p. 75; Ora Brison, 2021, pp. 121-22.

adds to the condemnation of Jezebel for her paganism but also assigns to her another kind of power: magic.¹⁸⁵

This important passage is altered significantly by the Old Norse translator. In AM 226 fol., it is rendered as follows: ‘hordomar ok hófleýsur ok ærsla full grimð modur þínar iezabel hefir enn margan mann her til suíkliga sigrat’ (*Stj* III p. 1160) [the whoredoms and excesses and mad fierceness of your mother Jezebel have treacherously overcome many men up to now].¹⁸⁶ The word ‘hordomar’ (*Stj* III p. 1160) [whoredoms/adulteries] is quite a straight translation of the Latin *fornicationes* (II Kings 9.22) [fornications].¹⁸⁷ Much like the Latin word, it does carry a strong connotation of sexual transgression, especially extra-marital sex (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1975, p. 281). It can, however, also be used to signify religious infidelity, much like its Latin counterpart. For example, in the Old Norse *Elucidarius*, there is a description of ‘andleggr hordómr’ (*Eluc* p. 57) [spiritual whoredom]: ‘þuiat ond hanf vaf gíftt g(oþe) en hon fyr leit hann oc famtengþeíc diofle oc tynde elíco ení fanna bruþ[-] guma íem ritet eí. Glatafc huEK fra g(oþe) eí hordom gerer’ (*Eluc* pp. 57-58) [because the soul of him was given in marriage to God, but she (the soul) abandoned Him and joined the devil and lost the love of the true bridegroom as is written. Whoever commits whoredom is lost from

¹⁸⁵ On women’s magic as a type of power and agency in Old Norse literature, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2013, pp. 47-58.

¹⁸⁶ The question ‘huat friði’ (*Stj* III p. 1160; AM 227 fol.) [What peace?] is absent from AM 226 fol. but present in the other versions of *Stjórn* III.

¹⁸⁷ The ONP (Entry: ‘hórdómr’) notes that the word *hórdómr* is regularly used to translate the Latin *fornicatio*, as well as *adulterium*.

God]. This may be the type of *hórdómr* [whoredom] that the Old Norse translator is referring to in *Stjórn* III. Also within *Elucidarius*, however, there is a use of this same word with the meaning of sexual infidelity when describing David's many wives (*Eluc* p. 151). The potential sexual meaning in the source text is thus preserved in the Old Norse word *hórdómr*.

While *hórdómr* (*Stj* III p. 1160) clearly translates *fornicationes* (II Kings 9.22), the words 'hófleysur ok ærsla full grimð' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [excesses and mad fierceness] are more ambiguous. It is possible that 'hófleysur' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [excesses], alliterating with 'hordomar' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [whoredoms], is intended to emphasise Jezebel's excessive sexuality/paganism and form a word-pair: a typical stylistic device used within *Stjórn*. Word-pairs frequently elucidate or highlight certain concepts.¹⁸⁸ In this line, however, there are three subjects (whoredoms, excesses, mad fierceness), and it is not clear if they should be read together or separately.

The excesses and mad fierceness could be read as relating to the whoredoms. If reading the word *hórdómr* with its sexual implications, this could emphasise the depiction of Jezebel's sexuality: it is not only adulterous, but also excessive, mad/raging, and fierce/violent (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1975, pp. 280, 759, 215; Entry: 'grimmð', ONP). A sexual interpretation of the word 'grimð' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [fierceness/violence], however, does not seem fitting. It appears this last subject, at least, should be read as separate from any potential sexual

¹⁸⁸ See, Kirby, 1986, p. 54; Astås, 1991, pp. 111-12; Grønlie, 2019, p. 37; 2024, esp. pp. 185, 200; West, 2023, pp. 130-162.

interpretations in the word *hórdómr* [whoredom]. Furthermore, ‘hófleysur’ (*Stj* III p. 1160) [excesses] might not necessarily be seen as synonymous with the word ‘hordomar’ (*Stj* III p. 1160) [whoredoms]. Though it is a rare word, *hófleysa* is never used elsewhere to describe sexual excess, only financial/material extravagance and a large number of men (Entry: ‘hófleysa’, ONP). It therefore seems unlikely that this word is used to describe Jezebel’s sexuality. A reading of material excess here would be just as (if not more) damning, particularly considering Jezebel ruled during a famine, when her people would have had very little.

The three things for which Jezebel is condemned in the Old Norse translation of II Kings 9.22 therefore appear to be paganism/adultery, (material?) extravagance, and unrestrained violence. There is, however, no explicit mention of Jezebel’s sorceries, like in the source material. It is possible that the phrase ‘ærsla full grimð’ (*Stj* III p. 1160) [mad fierceness] is intended to carry some implication of magical practice, but there is nothing explicit in these words (or elsewhere in the *Stjórn* III narrative) to depict Jezebel as engaging in magical practice. The translator may be inspired by the *Historia Scholastica* here, since Comestor also omits any mention of sorcery (*HS* 1396A-B). There is, however, no precedent for the other changes the translator makes to this biblical verse in the *Historia Scholastica*. Elsewhere in AM 226 fol. the translator does not shy away from depicting magical women; significantly, the Witch of Endor is included within *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III, pp. 862–66; I Sam 28.3–

25), though her story is displaced, inserted after the translation of I Samuel 30. There are also several magical women in *Rómverja saga* in the same manuscript (see Natasha A. J. Bradley, 2022, pp. 16-30). Jezebel, however, appears to have her magic stripped from her in this Old Norse translation. This is especially interesting as Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, p. 110) notes that female rulers in Old Norse literature are often depicted employing magic to achieve their goals. A magical queen Jezebel would not have been out of place in the target literary culture.

In *Stjórn III*, Jezebel therefore does not appear to be depicted as a sorceress or witch, unlike in the source material. This, however, perhaps has the effect of de-emphasising her pagan practice, since the reference in the Vulgate is mostly likely connected to Jezebel's paganism (see Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 2004, p. 75). This contrasts her depiction elsewhere in *Stjórn III*. Replacing the explicit reference to magic practice with quite vague mentions of violence, extravagance, and paganism/adultery thus seems an unusual choice. Perhaps it is motivated by the target culture's attitudes towards paganism and magic. It might also, however, have been chosen to emphasise the power of Jezebel's voice. Rather than painting Jezebel's influence as supernatural, the translator keeps it in the worldly sphere: it is not through magic that this woman was able to lead so many men astray, it is through speech acts.

Jehu's speech to Jehoram in the Old Norse is ultimately concerned with Jezebel's power over men. While, in the Vulgate, Jezebel's *fornicationes* and sorceries 'vigent' (II Kings 9.22) [thrive], in the Old Norse, Jehu declares that the queen's paganism/adulteries, extravagance, and raging violence have 'margan mann [...] suikliga sigrat' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [treacherously overcome many men]. Jezebel does not act in a vacuum, thriving on her own, in the Old Norse, but she participates in and manipulates the world of men. The verb *sigra* [to gain victory/to defeat] frames Jezebel's influence over men as a military victory, and a treacherous (*svikligr*) one. While this verb may be used in part because of the many men who lost their lives due to Jezebel's 'ærsla full grimð' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [mad fierceness/violence], it also recasts the whole conflict. Jehu's battle is not just against paganism and its proponents (as in the Vulgate), but against women who overstep, with Jezebel as the prime example of this. This conflict is not only religious or sectional anymore; it is man vs. woman. The threat of women's influence over men looms large in the Old Norse translation.

There is no specific emphasis on speech acts in this passage, contrasting other elements of Jezebel's story which draw attention to her voice and its power. As with other events in Jezebel's story, however, a reader might assume that speech acts have taken place to provide Jezebel with this influence. While she could have overcome many men with her 'ærsla full grimð' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [mad fierceness/violence] without the use of her voice, the earlier accounts of her slaughter of the prophets of God (to which this phrase presumably refers)

have been subtly changed to show that these murders resulted from a speech act. It is hard to tell exactly how Jezebel's 'hófleysur' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [excesses] overcame many men, or was imagined to be by the translator, but, if interpreting this word in relation to material extravagance, then it might have involved bribing or bragging. If 'hordomar' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [whoredoms/adulteries] is considered to mean religious infidelity, then this might refer to Jezebel's use of speech acts to convert her husband, and thus his kingdom, to paganism. If the word is interpreted literally and sexually, it might suggest that Jezebel has used her power of seduction to influence 'margan mann' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [many men]. As discussed in the next chapter, seduction often involves speech in some way. The Old Norse translation of this passage may therefore be depicting Jezebel as seducing men (who are not her husband, since *hórdómr* refers explicitly to extra-marital affairs) in order to gain victory over them.

In my analysis, I have consistently shied away from the sexual interpretations of Jezebel's influence, both over her husband and over the 'margan mann' (*Stj* III p. 1160) [many men] depicted here. This is in part because I believe any sexual implications in the story are muted in comparison with the emphasis placed upon incitement and speech acts that do not have an obvious sexual element. It is also because, as demonstrated in the following chapter, the women who are explicitly seductresses appear to have a very specific depiction within the texts of AM 226 fol., which does not align with the portrait of Jezebel in *Stjórn* III. The depiction of Jezebel does, however, have many parallels with the inciter women elsewhere in

this manuscript. I therefore consider Jezebel primarily as an inciter rather than a seductress. This is not to say that there can be no sexual undertones to Jezebel's portrayal and her speech acts, but that the sexual influence does not define her in the same way that it characterises the translation of figures like Delilah and Cleopatra. While there are possible sexual elements in the depiction of Jezebel in *Stjórn* III, the translator does not appear to emphasise the sexual nature of her influence, nor paint her as a seductress.

Jezebel Faces Death

After killing Jehoram and Ahaziah, Jehu marches to find Jezebel (*Stj* III p. 1161; II Kings 9.30). Hearing of his approach, Jezebel in the Vulgate text is said to dress up and paint her face with makeup (II Kings 9.30). This is another detail within the biblical text that has led to sexual interpretations, with some scholars interpreting Jezebel's actions as expressing an intent to seduce Jehu to save her life.¹⁸⁹ Crowell (2013, p. 12) writes of this scene, 'She attempts to seduce him [Jehu] just like a prostitute'. If this was Jezebel's intention, it would parallel her with a figure like Cleopatra, who in *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 93:388) is said to attempt to seduce Octavian/Augustus as a last resort before killing herself (see Chapter Four). Many scholars, however, dispute any sexual connotations here.¹⁹⁰ For example, Susan Ackerman

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Parker, 1978; Crowell, 2013, pp. 12-13; Ephrem, *SLR* 9.30-31:540-541.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, Camp, 1992, pp. 103-104; Howard, 2014, p. 174, 176; Snyder, 2014, p. 180; Wray Beal, 2024, p. 174.

(2009, p. 161) writes that this scene ‘is ultimately a portrait of a proud noblewoman who stands formally and regally adorned’. Ackerman (2009, pp. 155-161) also notes potential parallels with the image of the goddess Asherah as Jezebel looks from the window: ‘the description of Jezebel in II Kings 9.30-31 seems meant to present this queen mother [...] as the human counterpart of Asherah’ (Ackerman, 2009, p. 161). As with the first reference to her *fornicationes* (II Kings 9.22), the sexual interpretations here are muted and disputed.

Much like the translator’s treatment of II Kings 9.22, this biblical verse is quite different in *Stjórn* III compared to the Vulgate. Jezebel’s preparations are described in the Vulgate as follows: ‘Hiezabel [...] depinxit oculos suos stibio et ornavit caput suum et respexit per fenestram’ (II Kings 9.30) [Jezebel painted her eyes with antimony and ornamented her head and looked through the window]. In *Stjórn* III, this is translated as follows: ‘hratt hun af ser ellipokka sem hun máttí ok prýddi sik agetvm hqfut bunaði ok hinum bezta klæðnaði’ (*Stj* III p. 1161) [she threw off her elderly appearance as she was able to and adorned herself with an excellent headdress and the best clothing]. Jezebel’s dressing up is expanded upon here, with the translator adding that she does not just wear a headdress (*hqfuðbúnaðr*), but also her ‘bezta klæðnaði’ (*Stj* III p. 1161) [best clothing]. This perhaps emphasises the idea of Jezebel as a seductress, as it parallels an addition to the depiction of Delilah (*Stj* III p. 670), who is certainly portrayed as a seductress (see Chapter Four). Grønlie (2024, p. 224) notes a connection between Ruth’s dressing up to go to Boaz with Delilah’s seduction of Samson;

perhaps this addition to Jezebel's preparations is also intended to reflect the dressing up of this infamous seductress.

Even more interesting, however, is the treatment of Jezebel's makeup in this Old Norse translation. Instead of the antimony (*stibium*) makeup referenced in the Vulgate, *Stjórn* III has 'hratt hun af *ser* ellipokka sem hun mátti' (*Stj* III p. 1161) [she threw off her elderly appearance as she was able to]. The explicit reference to cosmetics is replaced with a vague comment which highlights Jezebel's old age, using the hapax legomenon *ellipokki* [old age-disposition]. This could be considered a paraphrase of an additional detail in the *Historia Scholastica*; after describing Jezebel's application of *stibium* [antimony] around her eyes and her use of a headdress, Comestor comments that she does this 'ut pulchrior venientibus appareret' (*HS* 1396C) [so that she might appear more beautiful to those who come]. If the translator is here adapting Comestor's addition, it reveals a lot about the translator's view of the beauty of old women. Indeed, Jochens (1991a, p. 19) writes that 'old women were often designated ugly' in Old Norse saga literature. This does not, however, explain the omission of the antimony makeup in *Stjórn* III.

Makeup and cosmetics have not been the subject of any major study of Old Norse literature or culture. The only reference to makeup I have found by any Old Norse scholar is in Jesch's (1991) book on Viking women, but it is only to dismiss as improbable a description of the eye-makeup of the people from Schleswig written by Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb (Jesch, 1991,

pp. 91-92). Jesch offers no further comments about the likely usage of makeup in the period, and I have found no scholar who can add anything more to this.¹⁹¹ I can also think of no account within the sagas mentioning women wearing makeup. According to the ONP ('Definitions' search function), there is no Old Norse word with a definition of 'cosmetics', and the only word defined as 'make-up' (*gerð*) relates to form and shape (as in *Stj* I p. 249) rather than products applied to the face (Entry: 'gerð', ONP). It may therefore be that the translator did not have the terminology in his native language to describe the makeup used by Jezebel; he may also not have understood the Latin word *stibium* [antimony], looking instead to Comestor (*HS* 1396C) for some explanation.

This does not necessarily mean that cosmetics were unfamiliar in Iceland in the period.¹⁹² It does seem likely, however, that the Old Norse translator is unfamiliar with the specifics of its use, which might not be surprising for a male monastic. It seems that the translator was, however, aware of the idea of women using makeup to appear younger. Cosmetics as a form of deception was a well-known idea in the medieval period (see Montserrat Cabré, 2010, p. 129), and women using makeup to appear younger was a popular

¹⁹¹ Cosmetics is also understudied in medieval period more generally. The most extensive study of medieval makeup I have found is Montserrat Cabré, 2010. See also Lawrence Charles Parish and John Thorne Crissey, 1988, pp. 2-3; Danielle Régner-Bohler, 1988, pp. 360-62; Sarah-Grace Heller, 2001; Eleanor Janega, 2023, pp. 75-80.

¹⁹² It is also, of course, possible that makeup was unfamiliar in Iceland, perhaps because its terrain provided less of the materials necessary to create such products. Further study would be necessary to determine this.

example of this deception (see Ruth Mazo Karras and Jacqueline Murray, 2010, p. 67).

Lacking knowledge of the specifics of cosmetic application, the translator perhaps instead relied upon this stereotype of age deception to portray Jezebel's application of makeup.¹⁹³

If this comment does allude to the application of cosmetics, then it is possible that the ambiguous sexual interpretations of the Vulgate verse carry through in the Old Norse. The depiction of her seductive nature is perhaps even emphasised with the addition of her 'bezta klæðnaði' (*Stj* III p. 1161) [best clothing]. Matthew Roby (2019, p. 306) writes that within Old Norse literature there is 'a fairly comprehensive repudiation of the sexual activeness of older women'. This additional comment on Jezebel's age thus perhaps depicts her as a sexual older woman, the likes of which are overwhelmingly condemned in the Old Norse corpus.

Despite the addition to Jezebel's dressing up, and the potential parallels with seductresses like Delilah and Ruth, Jezebel's speech to Jehu in the Old Norse discourages sexual interpretations of the queen's final actions. In the Vulgate, Jezebel shouts down to Jehu from a window: 'numquid pax esse potest Zamri qui interfecit dominum suum' (II Kings 9.31) [can there be peace for Zimri, who killed his master?]. The word 'Zamri' (II Kings 9.31) is most often interpreted here as referring to King Zimri, who reigned only three days after killing his master, the former king (*Stj* III pp. 1075-1077; I Kings 16.9-16.20). Since Jehu has

¹⁹³ There is no comment on Jezebel's age in either the Vulgate or the *Historia Scholastica*. She is at the end of her life, which was filled with schemes, murders, and incitements, so it might be natural to assume she was advanced in age, but there is nothing explicit in the biblical text about this.

just killed a king, Jezebel perhaps uses this metaphor to criticise him and express her desire that he befall a similar fate. This interpretation obviously does not align with the idea of Jezebel as a seductress, so scholars who believe Jezebel's intentions to be sexual or romantic must argue around it. Ephrem the Syrian (*SLR* 9.30-31:540-541), for example, considers Jezebel's preparations to be 'a fleeting attempt to seduce Jehu into taking her as his wife' (Snyder, 2014, p. 181), but that she changes her mind: 'the sight of him ignites her rage and she resorts to taunting him instead' (Snyder, 2014, p. 181). Simon B. Parker (1978), however, rather than depicting Jezebel as fickle and hot-tempered, instead re-interprets her speech to Jehu as complimentary and seductive, through close analysis of the Hebrew. For example, he suggests that the word 'Zamri' in the original Hebrew, instead of referring to the former usurper, could instead be 'a cognate noun which, by etymology, would mean something like "strong one," or "protective one"' (Parker, 1978, p. 72). This reading is not available in the Vulgate, and especially not in *Stjórn* III.

In *Stjórn* III, after preparing herself, Jezebel ascends a tower, 'turn' (*Stj* III p. 1161), and speaks to Jehu. There is no mention of her position in the window: a detail that has been interpreted as adding to her sexual image in the Vulgate.¹⁹⁴ Jezebel then speaks the words: 'huart maattí zambri uáandr drottín suikari nockurn frið hafa er drap suikliga sinn herra' (*Stj*

¹⁹⁴ Although he acknowledges that the window image could relate to Asherah, Parker (1978, p. 70), for example, writes, 'The more general image of a harlot at her window is a more likely allusion than the specifically sacral image'.

III p. 1162) [how can Zimri, the evil traitor of his lord, who treacherously killed his master, have any peace?]. There is certainly no way of interpreting Jezebel as speaking to Jehu ‘obsequiously’, as Parker (1978, p. 74) does, in the Old Norse translation; having been castigated as evil throughout her narrative in *Stjórn* III, Jezebel gets her own back by loading her speech to her son’s killer with vitriol. While Jehu called Jezebel’s victories over men *svikliga* [treacherous], Jezebel now uses this same word to describe Jehu’s own actions against her son, his (former) master.

The hatred that laces Jezebel’s speech in the Old Norse does not align well with interpretations of her as a seductress. It is of course possible, as Ephrem (*SLR* 9.30-31:541) suggests, that Jezebel has a dramatic change of heart upon seeing the man who killed her son, but this seems unlikely. When both Ruth and Delilah dress up to seduce, there are certain other aspects of the scene which are obviously sexual in the Old Norse, like how they lie next to a sleeping man (*Stj* III pp. 671, 687). They both also follow a formula in which they dress up, get this man drunk, or wait for him to become drunk, and then sleep next to him (*Stj* III pp. 670-671, 687).¹⁹⁵ Jezebel, however, does not follow this pattern, and there is nothing explicit in her narrative that would depict seduction. In *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 93:388), when Cleopatra attempts to seduce Octavian/Augustus in a last-ditch attempt to save her life, the translator explicitly states her intentions (see Chapter Four). In Jezebel’s story, there is no

¹⁹⁵ On the connections between Ruth and Delilah in *Stjórn* III, see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 224-225.

such elaboration. Though the translator does add the detail about Jezebel wearing the best clothing (perhaps to make up for his lack of elaboration on how she might have thrown off her *ellipokki* [elderly appearance]), he adds far more emphasis to the condemnation of Jehu in Jezebel's speech. The overall impression, then, is not that of a seduction scene.

Jezebel might have hoped that her vitriolic speech would encourage some of Jehu's followers to question his actions and turn on him, or that it might prophesy an approaching death for Jehu. In the end, however, Jezebel's voice fails her. Jehu turns even her own eunuchs upon her, and she is thrown from the tower (*Stj* III p. 1162). Having lost her verbal power, she is finally defeated. The rest of her narrative, regarding the treatment of her body, is much the same in the Old Norse and the Latin, except for one detail: in AM 226 fol., Jezebel's skull is not recovered, only her fingers and feet (*Stj* III p. 1162). The other versions of *Stjórn* III do mention the recovery of Jezebel's *hauss* (*Stj* III p. 1162; AM 227 fol.) [skull]; it is not clear why this has been omitted in AM 226 fol. Perhaps the skull, housing the mouth and thus the source of Jezebel's verbal power, must be destroyed to satisfactorily eliminate this powerful and threatening speaking woman?

A Foreign Woman?

An important aspect of Jezebel's identity that has not yet been considered is her position as a geographic outsider: a significant aspect of her character in the biblical account. Crowell (2013, p. 13) writes, 'For the Deuteronomist, Jezebel [...] is the symbolic lesson of the ideal

divine command in Deut. 7:1-5 to avoid foreign women because they will mislead the people and usurp the power of the male king'. The Vulgate introduces Jezebel as a Sidonian princess; it is clear from the introduction that she is foreign, from a different people and religion. All the extant versions of *Stjórn* III include this detail from the Vulgate in their translations, naming Jezebel's father as the King of the Sidonians. In the Vulgate, this is the only explicit mention of Jezebel's foreign nature, though her otherness is emphasised through her magic. While the translator goes out of his way to include additional condemnation of Jezebel, he never emphasises her position as a geographic outsider. His removal of the reference to Jezebel's sorceries might even minimise the depiction of her foreignness.

The Old Norse translator thus does not appear to share in the concern of the Deuteronomist about foreign women. Indeed, the biblical passage mentioned by Crowell above (Deut 7.1-5), warning against marriages to foreign women, is absent from the translation of *Stjórn* II. Furthermore, Grønlie (2024, pp. 223-224) notes that the translation of Ruth in *Stjórn* III also does not display a particular concern for her foreignness; Grønlie (2024, p. 223) writes, 'In the Hebrew, Ruth's foreignness is a significant factor, but this has little meaning for the Old Norse translator, who emphasises instead her poverty'. Grønlie (2024, p. 223) here suggests that the translator may have lacked interest in or knowledge of biblical geography, which might not have been as relevant to him or his imagined readership.

Although the translator might not be concerned about the influence of specifically foreign women, he is certainly concerned about the influential (verbal) power of women more generally. The inciter woman is a trope local to Iceland. It is possible that the translator does not need to emphasise Jezebel's geographic or familial otherness to paint her as a fearsome figure; he is able to place her into this local tradition of the inciter woman to condemn her without highlighting her racial difference. The translator focuses not on the corrupting nature of foreign women like in the biblical account, but on the terrifying verbal power that all women can yield over men, especially their husbands.

Conclusion: Jezebel in Stjórn III

Jezebel's story in the Old Norse is filled with speech acts: moments in which she exerts (or attempts to exert) power over men. It is also characterised by condemnation: the Old Norse translator on several occasions includes additional adjectives to criticise Jezebel and her influence. Within the multitude of speech acts depicted here, there appears to be some differentiation and perhaps even a hierarchy of condemnation. When Jezebel speaks directives to her husband, this can be considered an incitement; these speech acts are described with the words *eggja* and *áeggjan*, and they are criticised the most by the translator. Jezebel also speaks directives to her subordinates, but they are commands rather than incitements; these acts are revealed through the auxiliary verb *láta*. Jezebel's royal commands are condemned less than her incitements, though they are still criticised by the Old Norse translator. Jezebel

also threatens and schemes, but for this she does not receive additional condemnation in the translation. The Old Norse translation reveals an inherent concern with women's power over men, with certain speech acts appearing more threatening than others. Unlike in modern interpretations, Jezebel in *Stjórn III* is neither witch nor seductress, but she is something equally terrifying in the target culture: an inciter woman.

Athaliah: Jezebel's Daughter

Jezebel's influence over the world of men does not end with her death in *Stjórn III*: it continues through Athaliah, who is called her daughter in the Old Norse translation. This royal woman marries a king, is blamed for turning him against God, and later attempts to seize control of the kingdom in a particularly brutal manner. Even in these bare bones of Athaliah's story, a parallel with Jezebel emerges. The Old Norse translator emphasises this parallel, explicitly connecting Jezebel and Athaliah whilst drawing attention to the verbal aspects of the latter's power. Jezebel in *Stjórn III* produces in Athaliah a daughter who can continue her legacy of paganism, bloodshed, command, and incitement: the apple does not fall far from the tree.

Athaliah in the Vulgate

The story of this lesser-known biblical figure is told in II Kings (8.18, 8.26, 11.1-20) and II Chronicles (21.6, 22.2-3, 22.10-23.21, 24.7). Only the passages from II Kings are translated

in *Stjórn* III.¹⁹⁶ Athaliah is introduced (though not named) in II Kings 8.18, which describes her marriage to King Jehoram of Judah (a different Jehoram from the one discussed above). In the Vulgate narrative, Athaliah is blamed for the sins of her new husband; this blame is more explicit than that placed upon Jezebel in her introduction in the Vulgate (discussed above). Camp (1992, p. 104) writes of Athaliah, ‘she is assigned blame for the sin of both her husband and her son’.

Athaliah’s son, Ahaziah, becomes King of Judah following the death of Jehoram, Athaliah’s husband (II Kings 8.24–25). Athaliah’s culpability for the evil actions of her son is revealed in II Kings 8.26–27: Ahaziah’s sins are said to result from his familial ties with Ahab, through his mother Athaliah. Her bad influence upon her son is emphasised in II Chronicles (22:3), where she is said to urge (*inpellere*) him to do evil. This passage is not, however, translated within *Stjórn* III, nor anywhere else in the Norse corpus.¹⁹⁷

In these first mentions of Athaliah in II Kings 8, she is said to have two different fathers: first Ahab (II Kings 8.18), then Omri, Ahab’s father (II Kings 8.26). Athaliah’s parentage is still the cause of much debate. For example, Camp (1992, p. 96) considers Athaliah to be the daughter of Jezebel but H. J. Katzenstein (1955, p. 197) argues that Jezebel

¹⁹⁶ Though the translation of *Stjórn* III ends before the Books of Chronicles, there are some additions from Chronicles throughout *Stjórn* III (e.g., *Stj* III pp. 876, 900, 923). None of these additions relate to Athaliah.

¹⁹⁷ There are no passages from the Books of Chronicles edited in Kirby’s *Biblical Quotation* (1976, i). Kirby does, however, list some Old Norse references to these biblical books (1980, ii p. 232), but none of the material relates to Athaliah.

certainly cannot be Athaliah's mother: while it is possible that Ahab fathers her with another woman, it is more likely she is Omri's daughter, but that she was raised by Ahab and Jezebel. Hye Kyung Park (2017), furthermore, writes, 'Rabbinical tradition preferred to explain Athaliah as the daughter of Ahab since she was raised at the court of Ahab, although in fact he was her older brother'. Reuven Chaim (Rudolph) Klein (2014, p. 17), however, considers both traditions to be 'legitimate'. The true father (and mother) of the biblical Athaliah is not important here, but it is important to note the differing traditions: two options for Athaliah's parentage were available to the *Stjórn* III translator, but he decides (as shall be shown below) to emphasise Athaliah's descent from Ahab (and Jezebel).

The longest passage detailing Athaliah's story in the Books of Kings is at II Kings 11. Receiving news of her son's death at the hand of Jehu, Athaliah slaughters all the royal heirs to the Judean throne (II Kings 11.1). This might seem an unusual choice for a grieving mother, but it makes more sense considering her political position. While Ahaziah ruled, Athaliah had power and influence as the queen mother, but her son's death stripped her of this significant political position in Judea.¹⁹⁸ Her new position was much more unstable, as Camp describes:

Her power and position derived from two sources, her royal family in Israel and her status as queen mother in Judah. With the death of Jezebel and the rest of her blood kin, as well as that of her ruling son, she was suddenly cut off

¹⁹⁸ The significance of the queen mother is discussed in much biblical scholarship on Athaliah. See, for example, Camp, 1992, pp. 104-105; Smith, 1998; Ackerman, 2009, pp. 128-180; Howard, 2014, p. 171.

not only from her power base but also from any means of retreat or escape. (Camp, 1992, p. 104)

Consequently, Athaliah killed all the competing heirs and ruled Judea alone for six years (II Kings 11.1-3).¹⁹⁹

Athaliah, however, did not successfully wipe out all her royal competitors. During the massacre of her relatives, a boy called Jehoash, Athaliah's grandson, was saved from the slaughter by a woman called Jehosheba (II Kings 11.2-3). Jehosheba is said to be the daughter of Jehoram (II Kings 11.2), but there is no mention of her mother, leading to some speculation about whether she is Athaliah's daughter (see Ackerman, 2009, p. 174) or step-daughter (see Camp, 1992, p. 105). In *Stjórn III*, Athaliah is referred to as the 'stiuþmoder' (*Stj III* p. 1168) [stepmother] of Jehosheba. Jehosheba raises Jehoash in hiding, away from Athaliah, for six years (II Kings 11.3), until a coup is organised to crown the boy as the new King of Judah, overthrowing Athaliah (II Kings 11.4-11). Athaliah despairs when she hears of the conspiracy (II Kings 11.13-14); she is then executed with a sword (II Kings 11.15-20).

Athaliah in Stjórn III: Introducing Athaliah

Translating the introduction to the figure at II Kings 8.18, the Old Norse translator emphasises Jehoram's sins, Athaliah's culpability, and the connection to Jezebel. This passage in the

¹⁹⁹ On Athaliah's official position during these six years, see Camp, 1992, p. 104; Smith, 1998; Ackerman, 2009, pp. 138, 150; Howard, 2014, pp. 171, 177; Christine Mitchell, 2014, p. 189.

Vulgate reads as follows: ‘ambulavitque in viis regum Israhel sicut ambulaverat domus Ahab filia enim Ahab erat uxor eius et fecit quod malum est coram Domino’ (II Kings 8.18) [and he (Jehoram) walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had walked, for his wife was the daughter of Ahab, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord].

In *Stjórn* III, this is translated as follows:

Joram *gerdiz bratt illr ok v hlýðinn* guði. *sua at hann leiddi framm sítt líf eptir vándum uegum israelis konungs achab. ok annaþa hans maka. þuiat ioram gekk at eiga dottur achabs ok iezabel. hon uar systír ioram konungs af samaria. [...]* ioram í ierusalem *gerði illa luti í auglití drottíns.* (*Stj* III p. 1156)

[Jehoram soon became evil and disobedient to God, so that he led forth his life according to the wicked ways of King Ahab of Israel, and others like him, because Jehoram married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was the sister of King Jehoram of Samaria. [...] The Jehoram in Jerusalem did evil things in the sight of the Lord.]

While in the Vulgate account, the evil nature of the ‘viis’ (II Kings 8.18) [ways] of Ahab and the other kings of Israel is only explicitly stated in the final clause, ‘fecit quod malum est coram Domino’ (II Kings 8.18) [he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord], the translator makes Jehoram’s sins clear from the very first line. The evil (*illr*) and disobedient (*úhlýðinn*) actions of both Jehoram and Ahab are thus emphasised in this passage of *Stjórn* III.

The translator also accentuates the blame placed upon Jehoram’s new wife for these evil ways. In *Stjórn* III, the conjunction *því at* [because] is used to connect Jehoram’s sins and his marriage to Athaliah; this is stronger than the Vulgate’s conjunction *enim* [indeed, in fact, for]. Jehoram sins *because of* his marriage, suggesting that Athaliah is pushing her husband to

do bad things. Athaliah's culpability for her husband's evil is also, however, accentuated through the unambiguous statement that her mother is Jezebel: a woman renowned for her horrific influence upon her husband, which in the Old Norse is achieved through verbal power and incitement.

Although both statements of Athaliah's paternity are maintained within *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III pp. 1156, 1157), the translator gives more emphasis to descent from Ahab through this statement that Jehoram (Jezebel's son, whose death scene is discussed above) is Athaliah's brother and Jezebel is her mother (*Stj* III p. 1156). No other mother is named for Athaliah.

This is not the only time Jezebel is named in connection with her children in *Stjórn* III. The translator names her alongside her husband three times when discussing her children (*Stj* III pp. 1127, 1156, 1165) where she is not named in the Vulgate version (II Kings 3.1-2, II Kings 8.18, II Kings 10.13 respectively).²⁰⁰ Through this, the translator potentially emphasises Jezebel's role as a mother. This differs from the biblical text; as Howard (2014, p. 174) writes, 'Though Jezebel is a mother [...] the Kings narrative does not engage in that aspect of her identity'. Though the translator does not expand upon any of the character's maternal aspects, the naming of Jezebel when talking of her children lingers over the figure's position as a mother, continuing the family line. Through this, the translator perhaps

²⁰⁰ In both II Kings 3.2 and II Kings 10.13, Jezebel is mentioned in the source (though not by name); it is only in this passage introducing Athaliah that Jezebel is named with no precedent in the source text.

emphasises the extent of Jezebel's influence: it stretches through the actions of her sons and manifests especially in her daughter, who drives her husband to do evil.

Recalling Jezebel as Athaliah is introduced, the translator appears to parallel the two figures, particularly in their relationships to their husbands. Athaliah seems to hold a similar influence over her husband as her mother, convincing him to turn away from God's command. This introduction of Athaliah takes place while Jezebel is still alive, and the mother and daughter's stories are physically very close: Athaliah's marriage to Jehoram and her influence over him is depicted on the same manuscript page as her mother's death (fol. 105r). This proximity fuels the association between mother and daughter, encouraging a reading of Athaliah that is coloured by Jezebel's actions.

Although, in Athaliah's case, neither the biblical narrator nor the translator expand upon what exactly Athaliah has convinced Jehoram to do, the parallels drawn between Jezebel and Athaliah suggest that she has also urged her husband to worship pagan gods.²⁰¹ There is no elaboration on how Athaliah achieves such influence, but, as with Jezebel above, it can be assumed that speech acts (particularly directives) would have been involved. Though the word *eggja* [to incite] is never used to describe the speech act of Athaliah, it can be applied to Athaliah's influence over her husband through the mirroring of Athaliah and Jezebel. Through this association, Athaliah could be interpreted as an inciter woman in line with the

²⁰¹ On Athaliah's paganism, see Smith, 1998, p. 157, and Ackerman, 2009, p. 150.

model proposed in Chapter One. Though there is no explicit speech act here, Athaliah appears to repeat the incitements used by her mother, Jezebel.

The (presumed) speech act(s) between Athaliah and Jehoram absorb the condemnation not only of Jehoram's resulting actions (*Stj* III p. 1156) but also of the most harshly condemned of Jezebel's speech acts (see discussion above). Incitement, however, is not the only speech act that Athaliah has learnt from her mother.

Athaliah's Massacre

Following the death of her son, Athaliah attempts to have the entire royal line assassinated to maintain power. In the Vulgate account, this reads as follows: 'Athalia vero mater Ahaziae videns mortuum filium suum surrexit et interfecit omne semen regium' (II Kings 11.1) [When Athaliah, truly the mother of Ahaziah, saw the death of her son, she arose and killed all the royal seed]. The Old Norse translator renders this slightly differently:

Nv er þar *til* at taka er atthalía móðir ochozía *konungs* af hierusalem fretter dauða sunar síns. riss hun þegar vpp *ok* var hennar þat hið fyrsta at hun let drepa allt *konunga* kÿn i iuda ok iherusalem. (*Stj* III p. 1168)

[Now when it happened that Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Jerusalem, hears of the death of her son, she immediately rises up and the first thing that she did was she had all the king's family in Juda and Jerusalem killed.]

The key difference for a discussion of female verbal power is the introduction of the auxiliary verb *láta* [to let, have, command] before the verb *drepa* [to kill], introducing a speech act

similar to her mother's, when she commands the massacre of God's prophets. The verb *láta* is repeated the second time the translator mentions the assassinations effected by Athaliah, when describing the rescue of Jehoash (*Stj* III p. 1168); the translator at every instance indicates that a speech act is taking place. The wording of the Vulgate account suggests that Athaliah commits the assassinations herself, which is unlikely but not impossible.²⁰² The translator perhaps adds this verb for clarity, but it nonetheless emphasises Athaliah's verbal power, as she commands rather than enacts the assassinations.

As with Jezebel's command (discussed above), this speech act to her followers would be a directive, with the propositional content that the *Hearers* take the *Action* of assassination (Searle, 1979, p. 14); it does not, however, fit with the model for incitement because of the different power dynamics at play. Athaliah presumably commands subordinates rather than equals to commit the murders. The statement that 'riss hun þegar vpp' (*Stj* III p. 1168) [she immediately rises up] perhaps refers not just to her taking of initiative at this moment that could cause despondency, but also to the elevation of her own status. Upon the death of her son, Judea becomes what Carol Smith (1998, p. 160) calls 'a male power vacuum', without its king. It is in this absence of male power that Athaliah is most able to use her own. Camp (1992, p. 104), however, also notes that Athaliah 'could not have then ruled for six years

²⁰² There are accounts of women committing murders in the books of the Bible translated within *Stjórn*: Jael (*Stj* III pp. 607-09; Judg 4.17-22, 5.24-27) and the unnamed woman who kills Abimelech (*Stj* III p. 633; Judg 9.53).

without support'. In the Old Norse translation, then, Athaliah's power emerges both through her voice and her loyal followers. Commanding her supporters, Athaliah uses a directive (but not an incitement) to kill even the rightful heir to the Judean throne.

Another important change to this passage is one of the senses: Athaliah hears of (*frétta*) rather than sees (*videre*) the death of her son. This is again perhaps changed for clarity, since Athaliah certainly did not witness the death of her son, but it nevertheless places the focus upon the importance of the voice. Exchanging information and giving commands, the voice is central to this bloody story.

As with her earlier incitements of her husband and son, Athaliah's command to kill her royal family is coded negatively by the Old Norse translator. Though there is no explicit judgment placed upon Athaliah's action here, Jehoash (one of Athaliah's would-be victims) is praised through an addition in the Old Norse that has no precedent in either the Vulgate or the *Historia Scholastica*. The translator calls Jehoash 'hinn lofliga stulð' (*Stj* III p. 1168) [the praiseworthy loot] as Jehosheba hides him away. The narratorial praise is thus with Jehoash and Jehosheba, Athaliah's female rival who thwarts her plan.²⁰³ It is perhaps significant that the translator sides with the woman who acts herself, rather than the one who uses her voice to command others to act for her. As Athaliah's stepdaughter (see discussion above), Jehosheba also significantly has no relation to Jezebel. This dispute between Jezebel's daughter

²⁰³ On Jehosheba as Athaliah's rival, see Camp, 1992, p. 105.

and an unrelated woman is perhaps used by the translator as a microcosm to demonstrate how good women, who do not use incitements and speech acts to manipulate men, eventually overcome the bad.

Athaliah's verbal power is ultimately shown to be inadequate. Despite commanding the murder of all the royal heirs, one escapes, freed by another woman. This incomplete enaction of her directive becomes her downfall. When she realises that she is betrayed, Athaliah makes one last declaration (the only one of her speeches rendered directly in the text): 'vei. vei. nu fara suik í' (*Stj* III p. 1170) [Woe! Woe! Now conspiracy is afoot]. This translates the Vulgate's 'coniuratio coniuratio' (II Kings 11.14) [Conspiracy! Conspiracy!]. The declarations of *vei!* perhaps echo the etymology of Eve's name presented in *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I p. 58). This last speech act is an assertive (expressing a belief in the truth of a statement: Searle, 1979, pp. 12-13); aware that she no longer has the power or male connections to influence the world with her words, she instead describes it. Athaliah and her speech acts (and with them Jezebel's legacy) are thus overcome.

Conclusion: Athaliah in Stjórn III

Athaliah continues the wicked (speech) acts of her mother, Jezebel, in *Stjórn* III. In this story, which is fraught with tensions surrounding a woman's ability to influence the traditionally male world of politics, Athaliah uses speech acts to gain and maintain power in Judea. The ability to manipulate men with words (whether incitements or commands) appears to be a

skill passed from mother to daughter. Unambiguously depicting Jezebel as Athaliah's mother, despite her conflicting parentage in the Bible, the translator demonstrates how the relationship between Jezebel and Ahab forms a pattern that repeats through the generations. The threat of an inciter woman sometimes does not die with her; Jezebel leaves behind a protégé who, although not condemned as much as her mother in *Stjórn III*, nonetheless causes death and disorder through calculated use of speech acts.

Arsinoe IV

The analysis now turns from *Stjórn* to *Rómverja saga*, and from biblical queens to a classical almost-queen: Arsinoe IV, another royal figure who eggs on a man for personal gain. The story of this lesser-known princess features at the end of the Lucan section of *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 89:382), but neither Lucan (*LP* X.519-523) nor the Old Norse translator devote much narrative space to her story. Within this brief tale, however, the translator makes several changes to the narrative which reframe the use of the female voice. The translator removes official authority from Arsinoe, uses the word *eggja* [to incite] to describe her speech act, and even seems to depict her as a romantic damsel in distress. Stripped of her royalty in the Old Norse, Arsinoe cannot command a subordinate; instead, she incites. Though Arsinoe's incitement is not condemned as obviously as the speech acts in the two examples above, the

translator still appears to code female incitement as something negative, working on the wrong side of the Alexandrian War.

The Life of Arsinoe IV

Unlike the women of the Bible, who have received much critical attention, the women of Lucan's *Pharsalia* have received little scholarly interest; Arsinoe, as a minor figure, has been especially overlooked. The Old Norse translator himself does not seem to have really understood Arsinoe; there are some clear mistakes suggesting he was somewhat confused about the figure's identity and story. Even some modern scholarship on Lucan seems to misunderstand the story of this classical figure. It is therefore pertinent to first discuss the life of the historical Arsinoe IV.

Arsinoe IV was the younger sister of Cleopatra VII, the famous Egyptian queen (and seductress?) examined in the following chapter. In fact, most scholarship on Arsinoe's story is found in biographies of her more famous elder sister.²⁰⁴ The siblings' relationship was fraught, to say the least; the elder sister eventually had the younger killed in 41 BCE.²⁰⁵ Lucan's *Pharsalia* (and thus *Rómverja saga*), however, explore(s) an earlier stage of their sibling rivalry: the Alexandrian War (48-47 BCE), where the Ptolemaic siblings fought for the Egyptian crown (with Roman influence through Julius Caesar). In this war, which

²⁰⁴ See, for example, Michael Grant, 1972; Adrian Goldsworthy, 2010; Duane W. Roller, 2010.

²⁰⁵ See M. Grant, 1972, p. 121; Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 269; Roller, 2010, p. 79.

famously caused the accidental burning of the Library of Alexandria, Arsinoe escaped from the besieged palace and was declared queen by those opposing Cleopatra's rule.²⁰⁶ There was, however, dissension amongst Cleopatra's opposition, with factions appearing, until eventually Achillas was killed by Ganymedes (Arsinoe's adviser, foster-father, and eunuch).²⁰⁷ While Michael Grant (1972, p. 72) and Adrian Goldsworthy (2010, p. 178) only state that Achillas was murdered, Duane W. Roller (2010, p. 63) says that this was done at the urging of Arsinoe: the idea of the woman goading the man to murder is also found in *Rómverja saga*, as discussed below. Though they put up a good fight, Arsinoe and her army were eventually overcome by the Roman forces of Caesar, who crowned Cleopatra and her brother Ptolemy XIV the co-rulers of Egypt.²⁰⁸ Although Arsinoe had initially been made Queen of Cyprus before her escape and defection, she was captured during the war and led forth in triumph in Rome; afterwards, she went into exile until she was killed on Cleopatra's orders.²⁰⁹

Arsinoe IV in Classical Sources

Arsinoe's story is found in several classical sources, including Lucan's *Pharsalia* (LP X.519-523), Caesar's *Commentarii de bello civili* (BC 3.112:354), Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (RH iv

²⁰⁶ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 71-72; Goldsworthy, 2010, pp. 177-178; Roller, 2010, p. 63.

²⁰⁷ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 71-72; Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 178; Roller, 2010, p. 63.

²⁰⁸ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 72-74, 77-79; Goldsworthy, 2010, pp. 178-180; Roller, 2010, pp. 63-65.

²⁰⁹ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 68, 71-72, 79, 85-86; Goldsworthy, 2010, pp. 176, 178, 180, 193-194, 235-236, 269; Roller, 2010, pp. 64-65, 79.

42.39-40:174-176; *LRH* 42.131:227, 42.132:228-229), and Pseudo-Caesar's *De Bello Alexandrino* (*BA* 4:14, 33:62-64).²¹⁰ Brief references to her death at the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus can also be found in Flavius Josephus' *Contra Apionem* (*CA* 2.5:316) and Appian's *Civil Wars* (*CW* 5.9:16).²¹¹ The Old Norse version of her story in *Rómverja saga*, however, is based upon Lucan.

Lucan's *Pharsalia* tells of Arsinoe's part in the Alexandrian war in just four lines, describing her escape from the palace, her leadership of the army, and the death of Achilles, which, in Lucan, she seemingly performs with her own hand. After describing Caesar's execution of Pothinus (an important point to which we will return), Lucan writes:

nec non subrepta paratis
 a famulo Ganymede dolis pervenit ad hostis
 Caesaris Arsinoe; quae castra carentia rege
 ut proles Lagea tenet, famulumque tyranni
 terribilem iusto transegit Achillea ferro.
 (*LP* X.519b-523)

[moreover, having been snatched away by plots prepared by the servant Ganymedes, Arsinoe arrived at the enemies of Caesar; she held the camp

²¹⁰ Cassius Dio's *Roman History* was originally written in Greek. Throughout this thesis, I favour Latin translations of Greek texts, since it is more likely that the Old Norse translator would have read a Latin version than the original Greek. In this case, however, I reference both a Greek edition (*RH*) and a Latin translation (*LRH*), because the depiction of Arsinoe varies between the versions (discussed below).

²¹¹ This section of Josephus' *Contra Apionem* is only preserved in Latin. The Latin editions of Appian's Greek *Civil Wars* are very difficult to navigate (e.g., Florence, BML, Plut. 68.19). Since the details referenced here are not included in the Old Norse story of Arsinoe, I reference a Greek edition (*CW*) here for simplicity.

deprived of a king, as the offspring of Lagus, and stabbed Achillas, the terrible servant of the tyrant, with a just sword.]

In this account, Arsinoe is rescued by the machinations of her servant Ganymedes, but after this she rules over the military camp and even appears to kill Achillas herself. The grammatical authority lies with her: the verbs *tenere* [to hold, possess, master] and *transigere* [to stab] are both in their active form with Arsinoe as their subject. After her initial rescue, she is a leader, ruler, and fighter in Lucan's account. In her book on Lucan's female characters, Lisa Sannicandro (2010, p. 130) writes, 'Dalla testimonianza di Cesare e dal racconto lucaneo, che pure le concede ben poco spazio, Arsinoe appare come donna giovane ma determinata e ambiziosa' [From the testimony of Caesar and the account of Lucan, which also grants her very little space, Arsinoe appears as a young but determined and ambitious woman]. In Lucan, Arsinoe is certainly determined and ambitious as she takes charge of an army, aspiring to the Egyptian throne, and murders those standing in her way.

Lucan is the only classical writer to depict Arsinoe killing Achillas herself, though this detail may well be poetic hyperbole. The closest account to Lucan's depiction of Arsinoe can be found in *De Bello Alexandrino* (attributed to Caesar in its manuscript attestations, but now considered to be of unknown authorship).²¹² This text describes a power dispute between Achillas and Arsinoe: 'cum uterque utrique insidiaretur et summam imperi ipse obtinere vellet, praeoccupat Arsinoe per Ganymeden eunuchum, nutricium suum, atque Achillan

²¹² See A. G. Way, 1964, pp. vii-xi.

interficer' (*BA* 4:14) [and with each of them plotting against the other and wanting to obtain the highest authority for themselves, Arsinoe acted first by means of the eunuch Ganymedes, her tutor/foster-father, and killed Achillas]. Arsinoe is the subject of the verb *interficere* (to kill), but this text specifies that she acts through Ganymedes, suggesting she has used a speech act to command him to kill. This is likely the source behind Roller's (2010, p. 63) interpretation that 'Arsinoë persuaded Ganymedes to kill Achillas and to take command of the army himself'. Pseudo-Caesar then goes on to describe how Arsinoe takes complete control, without a co-ruler (a detail unlikely to be true),²¹³ while Ganymedes leads her army (*BA* 4:14). She then disappears from the narrative until the end of the war, where Pseudo-Caesar describes her capture and removal from Egypt by Caesar (*BA* 33:62-64). This account thus depicts an ambitious, capable, and ruthless queen, much like the portrait in Lucan's tenth book. Additionally, in Caesar's *Commentarii de bello civili*, which *De Bello Alexandrino* follows,²¹⁴ Arsinoe escapes from the palace through her own volition (*BC* 3.112:354), rather than the schemes of Ganymedes, as in Lucan. Though this text does not describe the rest of her story (a task picked up by Pseudo-Caesar), this account also emphasises Arsinoe's volition.

Within Dio's account in his *Roman History* (*RH* 4 42.40:176; *LRH* 42.132:229), however, it is Ganymedes, not Arsinoe, that performs a speech act, inciting the death of Achillas. This is more explicit in the Greek than the Latin: 'καὶ αὐτὴν ὁ Γανυμήδης ἔπεισε

²¹³ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 72, 74, and Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 178.

²¹⁴ See *BA* 4:14, n. 2.

τὸν Ἀχιλλᾶν ὡς καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν προδώσοντα ἀποκτεῖναι' (*RH* 4 42.40:176) ['Ganymedes prevailed upon her to put Achilles to death, on the ground that he was going to betray the fleet' (*RH* 4 42.40:177)]. Ganymedes urges the queen to the killing, rather than the queen commanding her subject, as in *De Bello Alexandrino*. In the Latin translation of this passage, however, the speech act has been omitted, but it is said that Ganymedes is the one who wants Achilles dead: 'autor ei Ganymedes fuit' (*LRH* 42.132:229) [Ganymedes desired this]. In both versions, there is no explicit detail about how Achilles is killed, whether at the hand of Arsinoe, Ganymedes, or another soldier.

Ganymedes urging the queen in the Greek version of this text is an interesting reversal. In the Old Norse corpus, incitement is normally seen as a way for women to access the power of action that is reserved for men. Ganymedes appears to be using a speech act here to access royal power, which in this case is centred on the woman. It might nonetheless imply a certain ignorance or oversight in Arsinoe's political understanding. Whereas, in the aforementioned sources, Arsinoe is herself able to access the political landscape and identify a threat to her power, in Dio's account she must be warned and spurred to action by Ganymedes. It is unclear from this narrative whether she commits the murder herself, but this seems unlikely since she elsewhere performs very few actions in Dio's version: she is rescued from Caesar by Ganymedes, and, when she reaches the Egyptian people, she acts more as a representative figurehead than a leader (*RH* 4 42.39:174-176; *LRH* 42.132:228-

229). Her importance to the resistance is primarily in legitimising their cause, as a member of the Ptolemaic dynasty that stands with them in opposing Cleopatra's rule and Roman interference. In Dio, then, Arsinoe lacks some of the determination and volition of the other accounts, but there is an interesting reversal in the depiction of command/incitement.

While it is important to note classical scholarship that introduces the idea of urging, incitement, and command into the narrative, which may have had some effect on the specific (lost) version of Lucan that the Old Norse translator was working with, it is Lucan's portrait of Arsinoe in his *Pharsalia* that was the direct source for the translation in *Rómverja saga*. In this account, Arsinoe is a fierce leader, who reigns over a military camp and kills a competitor, once she has been rescued by Ganymedes.

A very different interpretation of Lucan's portrait of Arsinoe is, however, found in the doctoral dissertation of Diane Monica Sawyer (1987). Though taking the medieval translation/compilation, *Li Fet des Romains* (discussed further below) as her subject, Sawyer (1987, pp. 17-54) devotes a chapter to analysis of the female figures in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. On Arsinoe, she writes:

The portrait that Lucan gives Arsinoe essentially serves to reinforce that of Cleopatra. Lucan describes an evil woman, a replica of her royal sister Cleopatra [...]; through her, he repeats his hostile description of Eastern influences and women's destructive force. (Sawyer, 1987, p. 45)

This interpretation, however, does not seem to line up with the text of Lucan, and may result from a misunderstanding of the story. Sawyer (1987, p. 27) also writes, 'Arsinoe, the sister of

Cleopatra, continues the nefarious deeds begun by Cleopatra'. This seems historically inaccurate: Arsinoe revolts against her sister; they are not working together in any way (and Lucan does not present them as such). Sawyer (1987, p. 45) also appears to misunderstand Arsinoe's ancestry, commenting that 'she acted as if she were of royal Laguean blood'. Lucan's description of Arsinoe as 'proles Lague' (*LP* X.522) [the offspring of Lague] is entirely accurate: Lague was the father of Ptolemy I and thus the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty.²¹⁵ Arsinoe, Cleopatra's sister, is part of the Ptolemaic dynasty and thus descended from Lague. Sawyer's (1987, p. 45) comment that '[Lucan] implies that her degenerate background was not suitable for such a noble position' is thus baffling: Arsinoe had a very noble background and would have had a claim to the throne should her older siblings have died or lost enough favour with the people. I thus disregard the interpretation of Sawyer, who appears to misunderstand Arsinoe's story. I can also find no textual evidence in Lucan to support the parallels she draws between the depictions of Arsinoe and Cleopatra (an important point, since there appear to be some parallels in the Old Norse translation). Though they are both foreign women, and Cleopatra is certainly condemned by Lucan (see Chapter Four), the portrait of Arsinoe does not appear to be coloured by her evil sister's ways in *Pharsalia*.

²¹⁵ See Edwyn Bevan, 1927, pp. 18-21, and M. Grant, 1972, p. 7.

For a simplified family tree of the ancestors of Cleopatra VII and Arsinoe IV (through their father's side), see M. Grant, 1972, p. 288. Note, however, the mistake in the naming of Lague's wife, who was called Arsinoe, not Berenice.

Indeed, the only explicit judgement that Lucan places upon Arsinoe is praise for her killing of Achillas. Lucan uses the word 'iusto' (*LP* X.523) [just, righteous] to describe the sword that Arsinoe yields, perhaps also praising Arsinoe herself for the killing. The sword (and perhaps Arsinoe) receive(s) this praise for killing one of the men who murdered Pompey, the character Lucan ostensibly supports throughout the epic.²¹⁶ After Pompey's death (at the order of Ptolemy), Lucan's narrator bemoans the loss and speaks of the necessity for revenge, which is partly received when Arsinoe kills Achillas (*LP* X.524-529). The killing of Pompey's slayer is thus presented positively by Lucan, and this praise is the only explicit judgement placed upon Arsinoe. It is, however, possible that Lucan makes one ironic snide remark about Arsinoe, when he describes Arsinoe's military camp as one that is 'carentia rege' (*LP* X.521) [deprived of a king]. This presumably refers to the fact that all the Ptolemies (the potential male heirs) are held by Caesar in the palace, giving the attacking troops no royal support: a problem that Arsinoe's escape neatly resolves. It may also, nonetheless, hint at Arsinoe's unsuitability (as a woman) for the leadership role she assumes. This seems an unlikely interpretation, however, since Arsinoe is certainly capable when she murders Achillas and is praised for it. Lucan's overall portrait of this figure, though very minor, appears to contain at least muted praise for the tenacious and murderous young woman.

²¹⁶ Though there are a range of interpretations of Lucan's intentions and political sentiments, from nihilistic at one end to promoting republican values through Pompey and Cato at the other (see Andrew J. Turner, 2010, p. 203), Lucan greatly praises Pompey in his epic.

Arsinoe in Rómverja saga

Within the Old Norse corpus, the only account (to my knowledge) of Arsinoe's story is found in the short redaction of *Rómverja saga*. The only part of Arsinoe's story included in this account is her role in the Alexandrian War; this is the section detailed in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. This would be expected if *Rómverja saga* ended its narrative at the same point in history as Lucan's text; however, the saga narrates the history that immediately follows, up until the foundation of the Roman Empire under Augustus Caesar. During this period of history, Arsinoe's relationship with her sister soured, until Cleopatra used her influence over Antony to commit sororicide. No detail of this story is contained within *Rómverja saga*. This might reflect a general lack of interest in, or confusion over, Arsinoe and her story. The omission might also, however, have been carried over from the translator's source material for this passage (a long *summa historiae*); the two edited *accessūs* that Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. lxxxvi-lxxxviii) identifies as similar to that used by the translator, *AccA* and *AccBT*, do not mention Arsinoe.²¹⁷ The only aspect of Arsinoe's story that is told in Old Norse translation, then, is her role in the Alexandrian War.

²¹⁷ See also the Introduction and Chapter Four.

Arsinoe in the Alexandrian War

The story of Arsinoe in *Rómverja saga* is significantly different from the account in Lucan and all other classical material about Arsinoe. Her escape from prison and the following events are described in *Rómverja saga* as follows:

Systir hans het Asenoe. Hon egiadi þann mann er Ganímedes het. at drepa Fotínun. ok litlu sidar drap hann Akillam. enn hafdi brott med ser Asenoe. or myrkuastofunní. er hon hafdi lengi j verit. Sidan reisti hann bardaga í moti Julio. ok veittí ymsum betr. (*Róm* 89:382)

[His sister was called Arsinoe. She incited the man who was called Ganymedes to kill Pothinus and a little later he killed Achilles and took Arsinoe away with him from the prison in which she had been for a long time. Afterwards he rose up an army against Julius, and then one then the other got the better.]

The translator has changed not only the story but also Arsinoe's identity in this renarration. While some of these alterations seem to be the result of misunderstandings, some changes appear to be a purposeful renarration that centres female verbal power.

First, there are a few historical inaccuracies to note that affect the depiction of Arsinoe.

The translator writes, 'Systir hans het Asenoe' (*Róm* 89:382) [His sister was called Arsinoe]; in the previous line, the male pronoun 'hans' refers to Julius Caesar. It is possible that there has been some influence here from commentary on Lucan's text, which often featured in medieval manuscripts of the epic (see Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. lxxx-lxxxii). Within Carol. Fred. Weber's edition of some commentary material,²¹⁸ there are several references to

²¹⁸ See Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. lxxx-lxxxii.

Arsinoe as ‘soror Ptolemaei’ (*LPS* p. 800 nn. 519, 521) [the sister of Ptolemy]. Arsinoe is Ptolemy’s sister, and the translator may well have intended to describe her as such, but the translation in *Rómverja saga*, using the masculine pronoun instead of Ptolemy’s name, encourages the reader to refer back to the male figure discussed in the previous lines: Caesar. In *Rómverja saga*, Arsinoe is therefore described as the sister of Caesar, not of Ptolemy or Cleopatra, completely changing her ancestry and thus her role in the story. As Caesar’s sister, the Old Norse Arsinoe is not royal, does not belong to the Ptolemaic dynasty, and has no obvious stake in the civil war over the Egyptian throne. Her role in the war is not clear, and it is not explained by the translator. This inaccuracy may have resulted from a mistake, or from a misunderstanding of Arsinoe’s identity.

In *Rómverja saga*, Ganymedes kills both Pothinus and Achillas; in the classical accounts, it is only Achillas that Ganymedes and Arsinoe murder. Pothinus, in all classical accounts of the story, is killed by Caesar, who orders his execution when he discovers that Pothinus was plotting against him.²¹⁹ While Lucan describes Pothinus’ death before the escape of Arsinoe (*LP* X.515-519), both Caesar (*BC* 3.112:354) and Dio (*LRH* 42.132:229) narrate it afterwards. Although the timing difference in the latter sources might allow for the possibility that Arsinoe had something to do with Pothinus’ death, it is clear from all accounts (including one written by Caesar himself) that Caesar was the one to order Pothinus’

²¹⁹ See M. Grant, 1972, p. 72; Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 177; Roller, 2010, p. 63.

execution. This must be another mistake made by the translator, revealing his ignorance of the story of this minor figure.²²⁰

These inaccuracies in the Old Norse translation, however, create a very different narrative for this classical queen. Confused about the story he was translating, the translator appears to have renarrated the story into something that made more sense to him, something that he thought his readers would understand. This goes beyond simple mistakes to a conscious domestication of the source material.

For example, the translator drastically transforms the status difference between Arsinoe and Ganymedes. In the Old Norse, there is no mention of Ganymedes as a servant; in fact, a reader without external knowledge of the historical events is more likely to view him as holding a position of more authority than Arsinoe. Aside from the incitement (discussed below), Ganymedes is the one who consistently takes action: he commits both murders, rescues Arsinoe from prison, and raises the army to fight Caesar. There is no mention of Arsinoe's determination or zeal: features that characterise her depiction in the classical accounts. Arsinoe does not lock heads with Achilles in a battle of ambition, she does

²²⁰ Such mistakes are not unusual. Meissner (1910, p. 183) writes of the translator of *Rómverja saga*: 'Seine Kenntnisse sind freilich beschränkt, seine Kritik mangelhaft, die Hilfsmittel, die ihm die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit darbietet, gänzlich unzureichend' [His knowledge is of course limited, his criticism inadequate, and the resources offered to him by the scholarship of his time completely insufficient]. It is natural that there are errors. While Meissner (1910, p. 183) uses these mistakes to argue against the achievement of the translation, the errors instead demonstrate the constraints within which the translator worked, perhaps even emphasising his accomplishments.

not kill her competitor with her own hand, and she does not act as a leader or even figurehead of the army (indeed, a sister of Caesar would have been less use to an army desperate for royal legitimacy than a Ptolemaic queen). Placing even her eunuch above her, the translator of *Rómverja saga* strips from Arsinoe her royal birthright and all authority in the rebel camp (though at least he leaves her clothes, unlike another medieval translator discussed below).

The only power Arsinoe is left with in the Old Norse account is that of her voice. This is mentioned briefly and indirectly in *Rómverja saga*: ‘Hon egiadi þann mann er Ganímedes het. at drepa Fotinum’ (*Róm* 89:382) [She incited the man who was called Ganymedes to kill Pothinus]. Ganymedes then goes on to perform several other actions, but it is not clear whether these actions also result from Arsinoe’s speech act. It is possible to interpret Arsinoe as inciting all the actions here: two murders and then her escape from prison. The temporal phrase ‘ok litlu sidar’ (*Róm* 89:382) [and a little later] followed by the introduction of a new subject, however, suggests that Arsinoe’s incitement in *Rómverja saga* only applies to the death of Pothinus. Ganymedes perhaps performs all the other actions through his own volition, rather than in response to a female speech act. This limits the impact of Arsinoe and her words in the Old Norse account.

Arsinoe’s speech act is clearly a directive according to Searle’s taxonomy (1979, pp. 13-14): she intends to shape the world with her words rather than simply describe it, and the act has the underlying propositional content that the *Hearer* (Ganymedes) performs an *Action*

(killing Pothinus). In the indirect narration of Arsinoe's speech in *Rómverja saga*, the translator does not render the words spoken by Arsinoe, only their propositional content: her urging of Ganymedes to kill Pothinus. There is also an assumption that Arsinoe's speech act was successful, though the translator does not state this directly. It appears as if describing the action of incitement is enough to note that the action is completed, as if there could be no refusing it. This aligns with depictions of incitement in the wider corpus, where men perform actions they are incited towards even when they know them to be unwise and even potentially suicidal.²²¹ This blurring of action and result exaggerates female power whilst undermining male volition. It is, nonetheless, possible to read this line as suggesting that Ganymedes does not listen to Arsinoe (indicating an abuse – in speech act terms: Austin, 1975, pp. 12-24): she incites him to kill Pothinus, and a little later he killed Achilles *instead*. This, however, seems less likely than the reading of Ganymedes as killing Pothinus and then Achilles, with the assumption that the incitement of Ganymedes was successful.

The sincerity condition of the speech act is, however, a little more complicated. I believe a sincerity condition of *want/wish/desire* is assumed, though it is not clear why Arsinoe would want Pothinus dead. There is no exploration of Arsinoe's motives, and her new family connections complicate any assumptions that might be drawn from a historical perspective. Pothinus was an ally of Achilles in the factions of the besieging camp, and thus

²²¹ For example, in *Guðrúnarhvot* and *Hamðismál* (*Edd ÍF* ii 402-413), Guðrún incites her sons to go to their certain deaths to avenge her daughter. The men go despite the perilous danger.

an enemy to the historical Arsinoe, leading the opposing faction. Arsinoe, however, never takes up this position of authority in *Rómverja saga*. It may be that Arsinoe was outlining to Ganymedes how to rise in the ranks, since he later goes on to lead the army, taking over from his victims.²²² Alternatively, since Arsinoe is the sister of Caesar in this account, she may have incited the death of Pothinus to save her brother, since Pothinus was one of the primary conspirators against him. This would make little sense, considering her rescuer then continues the assault against Caesar himself. Perhaps Pothinus and Achilles are guarding her prison, and must be killed to release her? Or did the translator simply not know or care about this minor figure's intentions?

Regardless of her motivations, we can assume she had a desire for the death she uses her speech act to effect. Her urging of Ganymedes is thus certainly a directive; it also conforms to the definition of the inciter woman laid out in Chapter One. Arsinoe drives a man to take an action using her words, and the translator uses the significant verb *eggja* [to incite] to describe the speech act, a feature of many incitements within the Old Norse corpus. There is, however, no obvious connection to revenge, a trait which previously formed the dividing line in analyses of the female goader. While Arsinoe's motivations are obscure, they do not seem to be vengeful. With the broader definition of the inciter woman proposed in Chapter

²²² This option is quite possible if Arsinoe is read as Ganymedes' lover, a topic explored below. Inciter women often have the reputation of their husbands, lovers, and families in mind when performing incitements (see Jesch, 1991, p. 189).

One, however, Arsinoe is certainly an inciter woman, driving a man to commit an action, which in this case is murderous but not necessarily vengeful.

Arsinoe's incitement of Ganymedes appears to be an addition from the Old Norse translator, but it may have been inspired by commentary material in his manuscript of Lucan. C. F. Weber lists one manuscript addition that specifies that Arsinoe commanded the death of Achilles: 'cuius iussu Achilles occisus est' (*LPS* p. 800 n. 521) [at whose order Achilles was killed], where the pronoun 'cuius' refers to Arsinoe rather than Ganymedes. It is possible that the Old Norse translator saw something like this in his source material and decided to renarrate Arsinoe as an inciter woman rather than a murderess, who kills Achilles herself (as in Lucan). In doing so, however, the translator changes several other details: the victim is Pothinus rather than Achilles, and Arsinoe has no royal authority to command. Her eunuch, Ganymedes, appears to have authority over her, and there is even the suggestion of a more intimate relationship than that between a queen and her tutor/foster-father/eunuch.

Arsinoe and Ganymedes: Unlikely Lovers

Without knowledge of the historical context, this passage does not read as a queen enlisting her servant to help her escape; there may even be romantic undertones in Ganymedes' action of carrying Arsinoe off from prison. After killing Pothinus and Achilles, Ganymedes 'hafdi brott med ser Asenoe. or myrkuastofunní. er hon hafdi lengi j verit' (*Róm* 89:382) [took Arsinoe away with him from the prison in which she had been for a long time]. This perhaps

calls upon the trope/cliché of the damsel-in-distress, with a man rescuing a woman from a tower or prison with romantic intentions. The trope was extremely popular in continental romance, which influenced Old Norse writing from at least the twelfth century onwards, where translations of romances led to the development of the *riddarasögur* genre.²²³ Tom Grant (2023, p. 7) writes that the *riddarasögur* ‘regularly employ the “damsel in distress” of medieval European romance’. The damsel-in-distress motif would therefore have been known to the translator, and he may be drawing on it here.

There is no detail in the Old Norse account about what happens to Arsinoe after the rescue, contrasting the classical accounts of the war and the source material in Lucan. In *Rómverja saga*, the only extant detail is that Ganymedes takes her ‘*med ser*’ (*Róm* 89:382) [with him], perhaps suggesting that she stays with him afterwards as his wife or lover. Though it is hard to draw solid conclusions from a short passage, the fact that the rescue follows the deaths of Pothinus and Achilles might encourage a reading in which Arsinoe is a prize for the heroic feats of Ganymedes. There may, consequently, be some influence from the bridal-quest romances in Old Norse literature, which ‘flourished in fourteenth-century Iceland’ (Marianne E. Kalinke, 1990, p. 1), when the majority of AM 226 fol. was written.²²⁴ In these texts, the narratives are driven by a hero’s efforts to marry a maiden. Though *Rómverja saga* does not have this as an overarching plot structure, there may be some influence in this scene;

²²³ On this genre, see Sif Rikhardsdottir, 2024, pp. 435–451.

²²⁴ On the Old Norse bridal-quest romances, see Kalinke, 1990.

Ganymedes' murder of Pothinus and Achilles might be driven by his goal to obtain Arsinoe for romantic, sexual, or marital reasons. Since there is no other reason given for the deaths (as explored above), this reading is freely available.

There is, however, no mention of Ganymedes' intention when helping Arsinoe escape, and no explicit reference of a romantic connection between them in *Rómverja saga*. It is nonetheless significant that, painting Arsinoe as Caesar's sister rather than a Ptolemaic queen, the translator gives no political motivation for Ganymedes' actions. Why would Ganymedes help Arsinoe escape if there is no political advantage to do so? There must be some other reason, perhaps an emotional one. As a family member of Caesar, it is unlikely that the Arsinoe of *Rómverja saga* would have resided in Egypt before the war, suggesting that any relationship or emotional connection with this Alexandrian man must be new and fast-acting. The use of the word *eggja* [to incite] to describe Arsinoe's speech act to Ganymedes might also suggest a personal rather than hierarchical relationship between the pair. When describing the speech acts of both Jezebel and Athaliah discussed above, the verb *eggja* [to incite] is consistently used to describe incitement within personal relationships; royal commands are depicted with the auxiliary verb *láta* [to have done]. The use of *eggja* rather than *láta* here might suggest that the relationship between Arsinoe and Ganymedes is more personal than that between a queen and a servant. Perhaps the relationship is even that of lovers?

Rómverja saga would not be the only medieval version of the story to portray Arsinoe and Ganymedes as lovers. In the Old French translation and compilation *Li Fet des Romains*, which renarrates material from Sallust, Lucan, Suetonius, and Caesar, Arsinoe's story is re-written as a typical romance scene (*LFR* i pp. 649-651).²²⁵ In this account, Ganymedes approaches Arsinoe with news of the war and offers to help rescue her if she agrees to marry him upon her release (*LFR* i pp. 649-650). Arsinoe accepts these terms. Ganymedes then throws a rope to the window of the tower in which she is kept, but the window is so narrow that the only way Arsinoe can get through is to strip completely naked, 'tote nue' (*LFR* i p. 650). After fleeing naked from the tower, Arsinoe goes to the Egyptian camp, demands and partakes in the murder of Achilles, and reigns as queen (*LFR* i p. 651). At the end, the Old French compiler admits the story might not be accurate, because the source material on the matter is so brief (*LFR* i p. 651). Jeanette Beer (1976, p. 40) notes, 'The affinities of the Arsinoe episode with romance [are] obvious'.²²⁶ On this passage, the editors, Louis-Fernand Flutre and Cornelis Sneijders de Vogel write, 'Le récit lui-même semble bien être composé par l'auteur français' (*LFR* ii p. 208) [The story itself seems to be composed by the French author]. Since his sources were so brief, the Old French translator has creatively reimagined the story in alignment with continental romance conventions. The potential romantic

²²⁵ On *Li Fet des Romains*, see Jeanette Beer, 1976. On the female characters of *Li Fet des Romains*, see the doctoral thesis of Diane Monica Sawyer, 1987, but note the aforementioned misunderstandings over the figure of Arsinoe in Lucan's text.

²²⁶ See also Sawyer, 1987, p. 147.

undertones of the Arsinoe story in *Rómverja saga* are certainly more muted than those in *Li Fet des Romains*.

How did two medieval translations of Arsinoe's story from very different geographic places both come to interpret Arsinoe and Ganymedes' story as a romance? It is possible that both translators, confronted with a story about a man saving a woman from prison, independently decided to recast the story as a romance. There could potentially have been some contact between the two translations themselves, with the French translation travelling up North (though there is no extant evidence of this) to have some (admittedly muted) impact on the Arsinoe story in *Rómverja saga*. Due to the popularity of the French romance in the medieval period,²²⁷ and the dialogue between French and Old West Norse literature,²²⁸ this hypothesis cannot be ruled out. The quite stark difference between the two translations, however, makes this unlikely. It seems far more probable that both translators encountered a similar detail in their source material that suggested or outright stated a romantic connection between Ganymedes and Arsinoe. Both translators would then have incorporated the romance elements to different extents, based on the genre of the translation they were creating.

²²⁷ Beer (1976, pp. xiii-xiv) writes: '*Li Fet des Romains* immediately became one of the most popular translations of the Middle Ages. At least fifty-nine manuscripts survive [...] The translation's vogue extended beyond France. Italy, Portugal, and doubtless Spain, each had their version of it'.

²²⁸ The most obvious example of this for the study of AM 226 fol. is *Alexanders saga*: a translation of a Latin work by a French author. See also Kirby (1986, pp. 10-14) on potential French influence on *Stjórn*.

There is some evidence that incorrect information about a relationship between Ganymedes and Arsinoe was circulating in medieval manuscripts on Lucan. In Arnulf of Orleans' commentary on *Pharsalia*, when Ganymedes leads the army after rescuing Arsinoe, Arnulf writes: 'Ganimedis qui Arsenoen duxerat in uxorem' (*GsL* p. 529 n. 531) [Ganymedes, who had taken Arsinoe as a wife]. This detail, or something akin to it, may well have been circulating in the medieval manuscripts used by the translators of both *Li Fet des Romains* and *Rómverja saga*. It cannot, however, be found in C. F. Weber's (*LPS*) edition containing scholastic commentary from various manuscripts, including three that are particularly important sources for *Rómverja saga* (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, p. lxxxi-lxxxiii).²²⁹ It is impossible to know for certain whether the Old Norse translator would have seen this detail, or something akin to it, in his source material. It certainly seems possible, nonetheless, that there was a medieval tradition in circulation that depicted Ganymedes and Arsinoe as lovers, which the translator of *Rómverja saga* picked up upon and included (in an admittedly muted way) in his own work.

²²⁹ If Carol. Fred. Weber had found this comment in any of the manuscripts he consulted, however, he likely would not have included it in his edition, because it is quite clearly incorrect (on the editorial practice, see C. F. Weber, 1831, p. vii).

The historical Arsinoe certainly did not marry Ganymedes: Ganymedes was a eunuch, and Arsinoe would probably have had to marry her brother to secure her position as co-ruler (of either Cyprus or Egypt; see Roller, 2010, p. 62, and Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 178 respectively).

Arsinoe and Cleopatra

Another interesting detail of the Old Norse translation is the relationship between Arsinoe and Cleopatra. Although, as explored above, these two sisters are not mirrored in Lucan's epic, there appears to be a parallel drawn between the two in *Rómverja saga*. Both are imprisoned in a *myrkvastofa* [*lit.* dark room], and both somehow escape; their prison breaks are both described on the same manuscript page, perhaps encouraging comparison or equation of the two figures. This is another similarity with *Li Fet des Romains*. In the French narrative, Cleopatra is also imprisoned (contrary to Lucan's account but in alignment with some commentary: *LPS* p. 773 n. 58), and the translator even notes that Cleopatra and Arsinoe were imprisoned in the same tower (*LFR* i pp. 623, 649). If the figures are equated in *Rómverja saga*, Arsinoe does not come out well: Cleopatra's infamy as a dangerous seductress is evident within the Old Norse depictions of her life, as explored in Chapter Four. Although the Lucan section of *Rómverja saga* is the part containing the least damning depiction of Cleopatra in the corpus, the association between Arsinoe and this figure who is elsewhere disparaged so harshly would reflect badly upon Arsinoe.

The potential parallels between Cleopatra and Arsinoe may also forefront the reading of some romantic association between Arsinoe and Ganymedes. Following Cleopatra's escape from prison, the translator goes on to detail how Cleopatra speaks to Caesar, beginning a relationship that quickly turns sexual; there is perhaps an equivalence between Cleopatra's

‘seduction’ of Caesar (explored in Chapter Four) and Arsinoe’s *áeggjan* of Ganymedes. If the translator’s desire was to draw connections and equivalence between Arsinoe and Cleopatra, however, it is unusual that he does not mention that they are sisters.

While the imprisonment of the two women appears to be somewhat paralleled, their prisonbreaks are certainly different. Cleopatra’s escape is described as follows:

Enn af radum Akill(as) ok Fotírí er drepit hófðu Pompeíum. setti konungr hana í myrkua stofu. ok villdi æigi eigha hana. ok er hon spyrr at Iulius er þar kominn. þa komz hon or myrkua stofunni med fégiofum. (*Róm* 88:378)

[And on the advice of Achilles and Pothinus, who had killed Pompey, the king put her in prison and did not wish to marry her. And when she heard that Julius had come there, then she got out of the prison with bribes.]

Cleopatra escapes by means of *fégjafar* [money-gifts], whereas Arsinoe breaks out with the help of her friend/helper/lover Ganymedes. In Arsinoe’s case, this follows an incitement. Although there is ambiguity surrounding how much of the ensuing action results from Arsinoe’s incitement (as mentioned above), her prisonbreak seems to be at least an indirect result of the speech act. While Cleopatra uses bribes, the only thing Arsinoe explicitly uses to escape is her voice. This might serve to demonstrate the quasi-financial value of the female voice: what can be achieved by money can also be achieved through a woman’s verbal power. It is, however, difficult to determine how this difference in escape method affects the reading of Arsinoe in comparison with Cleopatra. Perhaps incitement would have been considered a more noble escape method than bribery, or perhaps (due to the condemnation explored thus

far surrounding the female voice) the opposite is true, and readers would have considered Arsinoe's potential manipulation of Ganymedes to get her freedom to be worse than Cleopatra's use of bribes.

An Evil Egger?

The power of the female voice is certainly highlighted in the renarration of Arsinoe's story, but it is not clear whether this verbal agency is celebrated, condemned, or recorded without comment. Unlike the two earlier examples in this chapter, Arsinoe is not explicitly condemned by the translator, and her story is so brief that sweeping conclusions about her treatment should be avoided.

It may, nevertheless, be relevant to consider the political sentiments within *Rómverja saga*. In Lucan, Arsinoe is briefly praised for her killing of Achilles, one of the slayers of Pompey, who the epic frequently glorifies. In *Rómverja saga*, however, the political tendencies are very different. Rudolf Meissner (1910, p. 256) writes: 'Der Übersetzer übernimmt nicht die politische Meinung des Lucan, nicht die Parteilichkeit für Pompeius und den fanatischen Haß gegen Caesar' [The translator does not preserve the political opinion of Lucan, not the partiality for Pompey nor the fanatical hatred of Caesar]. Stefanie Würth (2009, p. 164) has also commented on this, writing, 'Da Caesar im Sallust-Teil als positive Figur erscheint, konnte er sich im zweiten Teil der *Rómverja saga* nicht plötzlich in eine *persona non grata* wandeln, ohne dass ein Bruch in der Darstellung entstanden wäre' [Since the Caesar in the

Sallust part appears as a positive figure, he could not have suddenly changed into a *persona non grata* in the second part of *Rómverja saga* without causing a break in the depiction]. The Old Norse translator of *Rómverja saga* thus takes a very different political position to Lucan, muting much of the condemnation of Caesar to depict him more positively. With this change in political sentiment, it is perhaps not surprising that the praise of the murder of Achilles is omitted from *Rómverja saga*. Since the translator does not praise Pompey to the same extent as Lucan, it makes sense that his slayers are not condemned as extensively. Both Achilles and Pothinus, however, are also enemies of Caesar, so this slightly more pro-Caesar translation might be expected to still celebrate their deaths. There is, nonetheless, neither celebration nor condemnation as their deaths are enacted by Arsinoe's speech act and Ganymedes' actions.

The position of Arsinoe herself is also more ambiguous here. Although she is, apparently, the sister of Caesar in this account, she is imprisoned (presumably in the palace, though this is unclear) and runs off with the head of the army opposing Caesar. Despite her supposed familial relationship with Caesar, her closeness with Ganymedes positions her as Caesar's enemy. Though it would be unwise to make sweeping conclusions from this small passage, it is perhaps significant that the translator renarrates Arsinoe as an inciter woman when she is an enemy of Caesar, a figure depicted more positively in the Old Norse translation. Though she is not evil in *Rómverja saga*, contrasting the depiction of Jezebel and Athaliah analysed above, she is not portrayed positively either.

Conclusion: Arsinoe in Rómverja saga

Overall, the Arsinoe story in *Rómverja saga* is a short but fascinating episode in which the translator renarrates the story of an ambitious Ptolemaic queen as that of a woman whose only authority is in her verbal power. While some of the changes made appear to result from mistakes or misunderstandings of/in the source material, there are several changes to the story that may well be the result of a deliberate alteration to centre the female voice. The translator shifts the power locus of the story from royal status and command to incitement, whilst severely altering the relationship between Arsinoe and Ganymedes. The former servant is perhaps even painted as a lover to the Arsinoe of *Rómverja saga*, who he carries off from prison with ambiguous motives. Ganymedes also appears to have more authority than Arsinoe at every step: he is the one to kill Pothinus and Achilles, to rescue her from prison, and to lead the army against Caesar. Arsinoe is nonetheless able to influence him with the power of her voice, performing a directive; the success of the speech act is implied within the description of the act itself. Using her voice to command death, Arsinoe echoes the other inciter women in this chapter; however, it is not clear from the passage itself whether the translator considers the incitement to be disagreeable (as with the aforementioned figures), or if he simply passes no judgement upon it. Although there is no explicit condemnation of Arsinoe's incitement, it might be significant that the translator re-writes this enemy of Caesar as an inciter woman using the verb *eggja*.

Conclusion: Mother, Daughter, Princess, Queen

Women's voices do more than just incite, though this is the speech act that the Old Norse translator particularly lingers upon in his renarration of Jezebel, Athaliah, and Arsinoe. This chapter, focusing on royal women in the manuscript who use their voices to influence men, has revealed more about the incitement trope as well as the female speech acts which fall outside of it. Status is an especially important aspect for classification here, as speech acts performed to subordinates, which take their power from royal authority, differ from those directed at husbands or lovers. There is even a difference in verb use, with *láta* signalling commands and *eggja* incitements. Though Jezebel and Athaliah are criticised by the translator for their queenly commandments, Jezebel's incitement of her husband is condemned far more harshly. In the hierarchy of speech acts, incitement comes out on top: it is the most condemned by the Old Norse translator, and therefore perhaps the most disruptive and powerful.

Like mother, like daughter: Athaliah continues the sins and speech acts of her mother, Jezebel. In specifying that she is the daughter of the infamous *verst kona* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [worst woman], the translator colours the depiction of Athaliah. He also, however, hints at a kind of female community sharing knowledge: the mother teaches her daughter the secrets to her success. Just as Jezebel ruled effectively for years, so too does Athaliah. They are, of course, eventually overthrown, and the translator demonstrates the impotence of their voices

at their defeat. Jezebel's skull is destroyed, and Athaliah usurped with the help of a good woman, of different descent, who would be outside of the female community teaching women to wield their verbal power. The threat of incitement, however, can never be fully vanquished; just as Athaliah is born to Jezebel, so all women are the daughters of Eve, the first *Hetzerin*. The connections drawn between Eve and Jezebel, in both *Stjórn* and *Jóns saga Baptista II* (*JBapt* p. 914), demonstrate the ever-present threat of the evil egger.

Arsinoe IV might seem the odd one out, since her incitement is not condemned to the same extent as Jezebel and Athaliah's. The differentiation between royal commands and personal incitement evident in the stories of the biblical queens, however, informs and is informed by the Arsinoe episode. Littered with mistakes and inaccuracies, Arsinoe's story in *Rómverja saga* perhaps even goes beyond renarration: her identity and the details of her life are completely changed by the compiler. Given all the ways he could have rendered her story, why did the translator transform her into an inciter? Royal women in leadership positions are not unknown in the corpus, and nor are their commandments. This renarration appears to touch upon a particular concern with incitement rather than command. The idea that a lover or wife could have such power over a man is a repeated concern within AM 226 fol.

Though none of these figures, who are coded as *Hetzerinnen* in the translation, ever incite for reasons of vengeance, many of them do mix love (or maybe even sex) into their incitements. They remain, nevertheless, inciters rather than seductresses, which are depicted

quite differently in the manuscript. It nevertheless seems that some kind of love is a prerequisite for the incitement trope, and a low level of seduction can be tolerated.

The translator stresses the role of the female voice in these narratives, drawing persistent attention to the speech acts women use to influence and control men. Royal power is tied to the female voice, and Jezebel especially shows a mastery of several types of speech act. Though these women all, to some extent, have power and authority through their royal birthright and marriages, they all nonetheless resort to incitement when dealing with their husbands or lovers. Incitement is thus a tool that even female figures in positions of power call upon to act. The examples explored in this chapter thus demonstrate the diversity of speech acts used by women to influence men; they nevertheless also highlight the central concern with incitement, a speech act that is heavily condemned in the Old Norse translation.

Poisonous Serpents and Whorish Toads: Seductive Speech Acts

As the previous chapter has made apparent, female figures in AM 226 fol. sometimes utilise male love and sexual attraction in their speech acts to gain influence over men. This chapter, taking two apparent seductresses as its focus, analyses how the Old Norse translator depicts female figures who combine their verbal power with their romantic or sexual allure to influence men. The scenes of seduction analysed here contain the most damning depictions of female figures explored in this thesis; women's seducing powers are clearly a concern for the Old Norse translator. The female voice is central to these seductions: the women speak (or attempt to speak) directives to men to drive them to act. This is particularly emphasised in the Old Norse version. This chapter thus presents further evidence for the translator's fixation on female verbal power in the texts of AM 226 fol., while interrogating whether seduction might be considered a type of incitement according to the broader definition of the *Hetzerin* proposed in Chapter One.

Several figures within the manuscript seduce men, including Potiphar's Wife in *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I pp. 299–301), Ruth in *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III pp. 686–688), and Thalestris, queen of the Amazonian women, in *Alexanders saga* (*Alex.Norm* 8:88–89; AM 226 fol., 141vb–142ra).²³⁰

This chapter, however, selects two figures for in-depth analysis: Delilah, in *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III

²³⁰ This is the only female figure described in any depth in *Alexanders saga*, which generally focuses on the pursuits and wars of men. Interestingly, the translator calls the Amazons 'skjaldmeyjar' (*Alex.Norm* 8:88; AM 226 fol., 141vb) [shield-maidens].

pp. 663-673) and *Alexanders saga* (*Alex.Norm* 4:49; AM 226 fol., 136vb), and Cleopatra, in *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 88:377-379, 90:382, 93:387-388) and *Gyðinga saga* (*Gyð* 29:142-144, 30:146). Other seductresses are drawn into the discussion where appropriate.

These two figures are selected, first, because their seductions in the translation centre upon female speech. This contrasts figures like Bathsheba, who attracts the attention of King David (whether intentionally or not)²³¹ because of her body, not her voice; due to the verbal focus of this thesis, the study of such seductresses is beyond its scope. The stories of Delilah and Cleopatra also stand out for the various additions and amendments made by the translator, who emphasises the verbal nature of their seductions whilst condemning their powerful influence with vitriol and metaphor. They provide an important base for exploring the translation of the seductive female voice, provoking questions about the identification, interpretation, and classification of seduction scenes.

The selection of Delilah and Cleopatra does, however, limit this chapter to the explicitly negative seductresses. This does not reflect the scope of seductresses depicted in AM 226 fol., some of whom are depicted positively by the translator. For example, Jael and Ruth, who have both been interpreted as seductresses (see Shira Weiss, 2022, pp. 184-190), are praised in *Stjórn* III; the translator includes exegesis, taken from Richard of St Victor (*LE* 2.4.7:274, 2.4.10:279), that interprets them allegorically as figures signifying Christian truths

²³¹ Bathsheba has been interpreted as both a victim of royal rape and as a scheming woman who purposely seduces the king (see Alice Bach, 1997, pp. 7, 128-150).

(*Stj* III pp. 609, 693). Like incitement, seduction is thus a technique that can be used for both good and ill. Although the positively-coded seductresses are occasionally brought into the discussion, there is not enough space to consider them in depth. It is in the stories of the villainous seductresses that the translator most extensively explores the influence of female verbal power; this is also where the differences between incitement and seduction are fully developed. These negatively-depicted figures therefore form the basis of this study.

This chapter begins with a general introduction to seduction, which explores the definition of the term and introduces the theories of Baudrillard, which are used in the later analysis. It also considers the state of scholarship on seduction in Old Norse literature thus far. Following this, the stories of Delilah and Cleopatra are considered in turn; the analysis reveals how these figures are depicted as poisonous sisters to the infamous inciter woman.

Seduction: Definition, Theory, and Scholarship

Definition

The word ‘seduction’ has a wide semantic range, incorporating a variety of sexual and non-sexual methods of persuasion (see Entry: ‘seduction’, OED). It is therefore pertinent to begin with a discussion of the types of seduction included in the analysis of this chapter.

This thesis focuses on seductions that relate in some way to sex, physical attraction, or romantic relationships. Even in this context, the word is unhelpfully unspecific, due to

changing ideas and laws about consent over time. Historically, the word had a specific legal use in the ‘tort of seduction’, the conditions for which changed with developing sexual mores (see Jane E. Larson, 1993, pp. 381–412). In this context, ‘seduction’ designated illegal sexual behaviours. Now, however, the word sits uneasily across the boundary between consensual sex and sexual assault (as defined in the UK Sexual Offences Act, 2003), as modern legal definitions have moved away from the term. The word ‘seduction’ can describe instances in which consent is attained as well as those in which it is not. It can therefore gloss over important issues of consent (and thus power) in the persuasions it denotes.

The use of the term to describe sexual violence is evident in both recent and older scholarship. For example, in Freud’s ‘Theory of Seduction’, a precursor to his theory of the Oedipus Complex, the word represents child sexual abuse.²³² More recently, in Old Norse scholarship, Jan A. Kozák (2023) has used the word ‘seduction’ to describe both Vǫlundr’s rape of Bǫðvildr and Óðinn’s false relationship with Gunnlǫð. The former gets his victim too drunk to resist him, while the latter lies about his identity; the actions of both could be

²³² The title ‘Seduction Theory’ was given to Freud’s ideas in 1896 by Ernst Kris (see Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, 1984, pp. 3–5, and Hall Triplett, 2004).

Freud eventually abandoned this theory, instead claiming that his patients’ stories of sexual abuse were fabricated: imagined manifestations of childhood sexual desire (see Masson, 1984; Dianne Hunter, 1989, pp. 1–6; Triplett, 2004). Masson (1984, p. 189) calls Freud’s abandonment of his Seduction Theory ‘a failure of courage’ that discredited victims of sexual violence for the sake of academic fame.

considered rape.²³³ Kozák, however, uses the ambiguity within the word ‘seduction’ to gloss over important concerns of consent and coercion in the poems; he even writes that both women ‘slept with the protagonist willingly’ (Kozák, 2023, p. 145).

The words ‘seduction’ and ‘seduce’ can also denote ‘the action or process of arousing a person's sexual interest or desire, esp[ecially] with the intention of having sex’ (Entry: ‘seduction’, OED). With this usage, there is no suggestion of sexual violence. In this chapter, the word ‘seduction’ is used with this meaning.

Rape and sexual violence are not considered here, because they should be considered separately from seductions that result or occur in consensual sexual relationships.²³⁴ There are many scenes of sexual violence in AM 226 fol., including the rapes of Dinah (*Stj* I pp. 281–284; Gen 34), the Tamar of II Samuel (*Stj* III pp. 927–934; II Sam 13), and the unnamed Levite’s wife (*Stj* III p. 601; Judg 19). Sometimes women are the perpetrators; Lot’s daughters (*Stj* I pp. 187–189; Gen 19.31–38) and the Tamar of Genesis (*Stj* I pp. 296–299; Gen 38.13–30), for example, use alcohol and/or deception to sleep with men, undermining their consent.²³⁵ The biblical stories of these women are nonetheless included in Weiss’ (2022)

²³³ Alcohol can invalidate consent under UK law. According to the ‘tort of sexual fraud’ proposed by Jane E. Larson (1993, pp. 453–471), identity deception can also invalidate consent. Current UK law, however, does not consider this kind of deception to be sexual violence (see Sexual Offences Act, 2003, ch. 6).

On Vǫlundr’s actions as sexual violence, see Grace O’Duffy, 2024, p. 68.

²³⁴ On rape and sexual violence in Old Norse literature, see O’Duffy, forthcoming.

²³⁵ On bed-tricks and rape-by-deception, see Larson, 1993; Marliss C. Desens, 1994; Wendy Doniger, 2000.

study of the ‘Biblical Seductresses’. The Old Norse renarrations of these scenes are fascinating and would be a fruitful avenue for further study,²³⁶ but they are excluded from this analysis because there is no informed male consent.

Despite the unhelpfully wide semantic range of ‘seduction’, it is the most apt word to describe the type of enticement explored in this chapter. Here, it denotes how characters (in this case, women) arouse and/or manipulate the sexual or romantic desires of others (in this case, men) to convince them to do something. The end goal of the seduction might be sex, but it could also be an unrelated action. Both Delilah and Cleopatra use seduction for non-sexual ends: Delilah convinces Samson to reveal a secret, and Cleopatra persuades powerful Roman men to support her. Though some seductresses are discussed here that use their wiles to (attempt to) sleep with men, such as Salina Alexandra (*Gyð* 22:111-114), the focus is upon seductions with non-sexual objectives for easier comparison with the other figures discussed in this thesis.

²³⁶ For example, in the story of Lot and his daughters, the translator includes the opinions of biblical commentators including Saint Jerome and Walahfrid Strabo (taken from Comestor: *HSG* 54:102-103) who excuse the women and blame Lot for the incest (*Stj* I pp. 188-189). According to *Stjórn* I, the women can be forgiven because they believed that the Lord required them to repopulate the world (*Stj* I pp. 187-188), but Lot cannot be excused, because he allowed himself to be made insensibly drunk (*Stj* I pp. 188-189). This starkly contrasts modern perceptions and laws on consent and alcohol.

Theory

Jean Baudrillard's (1979) *De la séduction* can provide a helpful framework for analysing seduction. There are, however, numerous difficulties that emerge when trying to engage with his theories. Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner (1993, p. ix), for example, write that Baudrillard's work is filled with 'Elementary errors and wild arguments', though they note that these supposed flaws 'only seem to add to his charm'. Baudrillard's slippery style needs to be unpacked before his theories can be appropriately utilised.

Baudrillard's *De la séduction* uses seduction as a framework for analysing truth, appearances, and a variety of social and political issues (see Brian Singer, 1991). He describes seduction as a *jeu* [game]: 'le jeu pur des apparences' (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) ['the pure play of appearances' (Singer, 1990, p. 8)]. I will draw upon this metaphor of seduction throughout this chapter. Baudrillard also, however, explicitly connects seduction to women: 'Cette puissance du féminin est celle de la séduction' (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 16) ['The strength of the feminine is that of seduction' (Singer, 1990, p. 7)]. Early in his book, Baudrillard passionately criticises contemporary feminism for failing to see the benefits women gain from seduction.

He writes:

Or, la femme n'est qu'apparence. Et c'est le féminin comme apparence qui fait échec à la profondeur du masculin. Les femmes au lieu de se dresser contre cette formule 'injurieuse' feraient bien de se laisser séduire par cette vérité, car là est le secret de leur puissance, qu'elles sont en train de perdre en dressant la profondeur du féminin contre celle du masculin. (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 20)

[‘Now woman is but appearance. And it is the feminine as appearance that thwarts masculine depth. Instead of rising up against such “insulting” counsel, women would do well to let themselves be seduced by its truth, for here lies the secret of their strength, which they are in the process of losing by erecting a contrary feminine depth.’ (Singer, 1990, p. 10)]

As might be expected, such comments have been poorly received, especially by female scholars. For example, Jane Gallop (1987, p. 113), responding to the above quotation, writes ‘when I read this passage, as a woman, I feel insulted’, a feeling shared by the author of this thesis.

Singer (1991, p. 145), however, suggests a different way of reading *De la séduction*: ‘Baudrillard is not to be taken literally (how can he be taken literally, when he tells us that nothing else can?)’. Singer (1991, pp. 148-149) writes that ‘the way the book is written (and the way it is to be read) is made to reflect and respond to the content of what is written’. Like seduction, Baudrillard’s writing is ‘itself a game’ (Singer, 1991, p. 148), ‘le jeu pur des apparences’ (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) [‘the pure play of appearances’ (Singer, 1990, p. 8)]. It is thus hard to trust anything Baudrillard writes. Perhaps his misogynistic comments about women are genuine, or perhaps they are intended as a challenge, a play with outrage.

Whatever Baudrillard’s intentions, his writings present an analysis of seduction heavily rooted in misogyny. This is, however, quite useful for the analysis in this chapter, which considers seduction scenes rooted in medieval misogyny. His comments that, for example, ‘Ainsi le séducteur n’est rien, toute l’origine de la séduction est dans la jeune fille’

(Baudrillard, 1979, pp. 133-134) [‘The seducer by himself is nothing; the seduction originates entirely with the girl’ (Singer, 1990, p. 99)] can thus offer an insight into views that might have informed the depictions of seduction in AM 226 fol. When exercising caution, it is therefore possible to productively utilise Baudrillard’s theories. The analysis throughout this chapter engages with Baudrillard’s useful (if problematic) seduction framework.

Old Norse Scholarship on Seduction

Unlike the trope of the inciter woman, which has been analysed extensively, there is no comprehensive study of the seductress in Old Norse literature. There is, nevertheless, some scholarship on seduction (broadly defined). Such discussions are usually a small part of larger studies focusing on love, sexuality, or gender,²³⁷ though Jochens’ (1991b) article on the ‘Illicit Love Visit’ takes seduction (by men) as its main subject. Although these studies make important contributions, they frequently do not distinguish between consensual and non-consensual ‘seductions’ (see, for example, Bjørn Bandlien, 2005, pp. 23-25), and they focus almost exclusively on instances in which men seduce women. For example, Bandlien (2005, pp. 89-91) devotes only a few pages to women’s seductions of men, despite the focus throughout his monograph on female agency in love and marriage in Old Norse society.

²³⁷ See, for example, Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre, 1991; Jochens, 1991a; 1996b; 1996c; Bjørn Bandlien, 2005; Judy Quinn, 2007; Marlene Ciklamini, 2008; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 2016; Matthew Roby, 2019.

Some scholars, nonetheless, do discuss the depictions of seducing women. For example, Judy Quinn (2007) argues that valkyries are portrayed as seductresses; Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (1991) discusses scenes in which women (particularly giantesses) seduce men; and Roby (2019, pp. 184-191) analyses various depictions of the female libido in supernatural scenes, including some seductions.²³⁸ Despite Bandlien's (2005, p. 90) assertion that 'As a rule, women did not take the initiative', there are certainly several examples of women seducing men in the Old Norse corpus.

This extant scholarship on seduction also focuses almost exclusively on those instances with sex or romance as the end goal. The one exception is a trope, discussed by Jochens (1996c, p. 375) and Roby (2019, p. 266), where a woman is depicted laying her arms around a man's neck to convince him to do something. Jochens (1996c, p. 375) writes that this gesture 'was mainly a sign of marital affection', but 'wives frequently used it to elicit favours from husbands'. There are therefore some instances of female seduction for non-sexual ends throughout the Norse corpus. Aside from Delilah's use of 'halsföngum' (*Stj* III p. 671) [neck-embraces] to convince Samson to drink excessively, however, none of the seductions considered in this chapter involve a woman laying her arms around a man's neck. The female figures analysed here nonetheless use men's love or lust to exert some control

²³⁸ See also Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 2016, pp. 198-200.

over their actions. This type of female seduction has not before received extensive analysis within Old Norse scholarship.

Delilah

Delilah, whose story is told in Judges 16, is the ultimate biblical *femme fatale*.²³⁹ She sells out her lover, Samson the Strong, to the Philistines, seducing him into revealing the secret of his unworldly strength. Her story, centred on the consequences of speech acts, has been used by biblical interpreters and poets alike to warn against the wiles of women.²⁴⁰ Despite Delilah's enduring legacy, she cannot be adequately considered in isolation from the other women in Samson's story, all of whom are unnamed: his mother, the Timnite, and the prostitute in Gaza. The Timnite, Samson's first lover, is particularly important for this study, since she also convinces Samson to reveal a secret, prefiguring the seductions of Delilah. The analysis of Delilah thus begins with an introduction to the relevant biblical material and a discussion of the interrelations between the women in Samson's story. Turning to the Old Norse material, I consider the role of speech acts and female agency in seduction, before analysing the translator's criticism of seductive women. Inserting a passionate condemnation of Delilah, the

²³⁹ See Danna Nolan Fewell, 1992, p. 73; J. Cheryl Exum, 1996, pp. 175-237; Susanne Scholz, 2014, p. 121; Snyder, 2014, p. 138.

²⁴⁰ See Exum, 1996, pp. 175-177; Scholz, 2014, p. 121; Snyder, 2014.

Stjórn III translator emphasises the woman's destructive power, revealing an anxiety about seductive female speech.

The Vulgate Account

Samson's story in Judges features four women in its four chapters. Judges 13 narrates Samson's birth; his unnamed mother seems particularly competent next to her 'inept and overanxious' (J. Cheryl Exum, 2015, p. 44) husband Manoah.²⁴¹ Judges 14-15 depict the story of Samson's first love, when he attempts to marry (with disastrous consequences) a woman from Timnah (here called 'the Timnite'). Judges 16 begins with Samson's stay with a prostitute in Gaza, followed by his love affair with Delilah. As Exum (2015, p. 41) writes, 'The story of Samson is a story about women'.

While Samson's mother is interesting here primarily as a dramatic foil to the other women,²⁴² the three lovers of Samson are important for the study of seduction. Exum (2015, p. 47) writes that, as a 'strategy [...] to deal with women's threatening yet desired sexuality', the biblical text 'merge[s] the three different women with whom Samson becomes involved [...] into one composite, negative image of the "foreign woman"'. The study of Delilah must thus begin with the story of the Timnite.

²⁴¹ On Manoah's wife, see Exum, 1980; 2015, pp. 41-67; 2020 pp. 47-59; Niditch, 1990, pp. 610-612; Fewell, 1992, pp. 72; Scholz, 2014, p. 121.

²⁴² See Exum, 2015, pp. 41-67; 2020, pp. 47-59.

Samson visits the Philistine city of Timnah and sees a certain woman there (Judg 14.1). He immediately asks his parents to arrange his marriage to her (Judg 14.2); they are initially resistant because of her religious difference but eventually agree (Judg 14.3). The marriage is arranged, but during the feasts, Samson's speech acts begin to cause issues, as he challenges the Philistines to a riddle contest with a material prize (Judg 14.7, 14.10-12). Samson then proposes the following neck-riddle: 'de comedente exivit cibus et de forte est egressa dulcedo' (Judg 14.14) [out of the eater came food and out of the strong came sweetness]. This refers to Samson's earlier killing of a lion using his God-given strength (Judg 14.5-6): a swarm of bees had produced honey in the lion's mouth (Judg 14.8-9). Since Samson kept his interactions with the lion secret, there is no way the Philistines could solve the riddle.

Enraged, the Philistine men approach Samson's bride-to-be and demand that she convince Samson to tell her the answer (Judg 14.15). They threaten to burn her and her father's house if she does not (Judg 14.15). Under the threat of death, the woman weeps before Samson, begging him to reveal the answer if he truly loves her; he refuses (Judg 14.16). She continues crying to Samson for seven days, until he eventually tells her because 'ei molesta esset' (Judg 14.17) [she was annoying him]. The Timnite tells the Philistine men, who then correctly answer Samson's riddle (Judg 14.17-18). Samson immediately knows that the Timnite has betrayed his confidence; he declares that the men must have *araverunt* [ploughed] with his *vitula* [female calf], a loaded sexual innuendo, to get the answer (Judg 14.18). Samson

then kills thirty Philistine men and uses their possessions to pay his debt for losing, before returning to his father's house in anger (Judg 14.19). The Timnite is instead married to one of his groomsmen (Judg 14.20).

In Judges 15, Samson attempts to return to his former fiancé but learns of her new marriage (Judg 15.1-2). In his anger, he burns the Philistine's crop fields, destroying an important food source (Judg 15.3-5). When the Philistines discover this, and learn the cause of Samson's anger, they burn down the Timnite's house, killing her and her father in a haunting echo of their earlier threat (Judg 15.6). This causes further disputes between Samson and the Philistines, during which Samson uses his superhuman strength to kill a thousand Philistine men (Judg 15.7-20).

The final chapter in Samson's story begins with his visit to a prostitute in Gaza (Judg 16.1). The Philistines attempt to ambush him, but he escapes (Judg 16.2-3). This woman's story is described very briefly, but Exum (2015, p. 50) reads it as another example of female betrayal, conjecturing that 'the prostitute was the informant' who revealed Samson's location to the Philistines.

In the next verse, Samson is said to love Delilah (Judg 16.4). The Philistine leaders offer Samson's new lover money in exchange for the secret of his strength, instructing her to deceive him to get this information (Judg 16.5). Delilah's response is not recorded, but in the next verse she asks Samson to reveal his secret and tell her how she might bind him so that

he could not escape (Judg 16.6). He lies to her (Judg 16.7). She tests his information, binding him as he instructed while the Philistines wait in an adjacent chamber (Judg 16.8-9). She cries loudly that the Philistines have come for him, and he immediately breaks his bonds and leaps up, ready for action (Judg 16.9). Realising he has lied, Delilah again demands to know his secret (Judg 16.10). The process repeats itself twice more, with a lie, a test, and the revelation of his falsity, but Samson draws closer and closer to the truth (Judg 16.11-14).

After Samson's third lie is exposed, Delilah complains that he cannot love her if he will not share his secrets with her (Judg 16.15). Samson eventually reveals the truth, after Delilah 'molesta ei esset et per multos dies iugiter adhereret' (Judg 16.16) [annoyed him and continually clung to him for many days]. This makes Samson's soul 'ad mortem usque lassata' (Judg 16.16) [wearing up to death]. After learning the truth, that Samson will lose his God-given strength if his hair is shaved, Delilah readies the Philistines (Judg 16.17-18). She makes Samson sleep with his head in her lap, and she has a barber shave his hair (Judg 16.19).²⁴³ Delilah calls out to Samson, who wakes to the realisation that his hair and strength have been taken; he is captured by the Philistines and blinded (Judg 16.20-21).

Delilah disappears from the narrative here, but Samson still has his moment of redemption against the Philistines. Brought out for humiliation before his enemies, Samson

²⁴³ The Vulgate specifies that a barber, rather than Delilah, shaves Samson's hair, but the original Hebrew is ambiguous (see Exum, 1996, p. 183). The barber features in most versions of *Stjórn* III, but in AM 226 fol. Delilah shaves Samson herself (*Stj* III p. 672).

prays that God restore his strength a final time. He uses it to destroy the two pillars supporting the house in which three thousand Philistines were gathered: killing himself and his enemies in the process (Judg 16.25-30).

The biblical versions of Delilah's story are filled with ambiguity as to her feelings, motivations, race, and profession. As Smith (1999, p. 94) writes, 'there are certain unanswerable questions about Delilah, which provide food for speculation'. Like many writers, the Old Norse translator speculates in his *Stjórn III* renarration, which presents an ideologically charged depiction of Delilah.

The Stjórn III Account

The story of Samson closes the Book of Judges in *Stjórn III* (*Stj III* pp. 645-679); this rearranged structure emphasises the fall of Samson the Strong. The rubrics of AM 227 fol. also introduce the story as a 'saga' (*Stj III* p. 645; AM 227 fol.). Biblical scholarship often calls Samson's story a 'saga', 'legend' or 'epic';²⁴⁴ the title 'Samson's saga' seems particularly appropriate for the Old Norse translation.²⁴⁵ Samson's saga has been studied previously by Grønlie (2024, esp. pp. 212-220), who analyses the depiction of Samson and various stylistic and thematic parallels between this biblical renarration and the Icelandic sagas.

²⁴⁴ See Exum, 1981, pp. 3-29; 2015, pp. 41-57; 2020, pp. 47-59; Smith, 1997, p. 45.

²⁴⁵ 'Samson's saga' is here not to be confused with *Samsons saga fagra*, one of the *riddarasögur*, which is not discussed in this thesis.

The Old Norse translator highlights and lingers over the moments in which women overcome Samson, learning his secrets and reporting back to the Philistines. Particular stress is placed on Delilah; as Grønlie (2024, p. 218) writes, the Delilah section is ‘The most overwritten part of Samson’s story’. The following thus examines the seductions of Delilah, informed by the earlier persuasions of the Timnite, in *Stjórn* III, with a particular focus on female verbal power.

Seduction and Speech Acts

Speech, and the information it can extort, tease at, or reveal, is of utmost importance to Samson’s saga, in both the Vulgate and the Old Norse versions. Even before Samson is born, speech acts dictate his life, as an angelic messenger pronounces his fate (*Stj* III pp. 645-646). A difference between male and female speech acts also emerges in his birth story: his mother’s astute response to the angel contrasts Manoah’s redundant questions (*Stj* III pp. 645-649). Manoah, however, does not seem to trust, or view as sufficient, his wife’s report of the angelophany (*Stj* III pp. 646-647; see Danna Nolan Fewell, 1992, pp. 72, 76). Male speech acts thus seem ill-advised in contrast to the good (but ineffective) speech of women.

The speech acts performed by Samson continue in the calibre of his father’s, although Manoah’s repeated questions contrast Samson’s repeated revelations (Exum, 2020, pp. 57-58). Even before he reveals his secrets, Samson’s speech acts cause problems. First, he urges his parents to arrange a politically dangerous marriage (*Stj* III p. 650). He then ‘[breaks] verbal

rules' (Fewell, 1992, p. 73) in his fatal riddle contest (*Stj* III p. 652), although a reader familiar with the neck-riddles in wider Old Norse literature, like Óðinn's in *Vafþrúðnismál* (*Edd* ÍF i 365), might not find this unusual. Instead of a woman's incitement at mealtime (one of the conventions of the *Hetzerin* motif, see Chapter One), Samson's saga features a male speech act performed during a feast, sparking a chain of events leading to a seduction scene.

In contrast to the astute speech of Samson's mother, the Timnite and Delilah perform speech acts that are first ineffective, but eventually disruptive and fatal. All female speech is, however, only performed at male instigation. The Philistines threaten the Timnite's life and offer Delilah money to urge them to use their verbal (and perhaps sexual) power over Samson. The prostitute in Gaza does not speak in the narrative. Despite the male impetus behind their actions, the speeches of the Timnite and Delilah are nonetheless 'attempts to take care of themselves, to protect themselves from physical harm [...] or to shield themselves from economic destitution' (Fewell, 1992, p. 76). Like the other women explored in this thesis, these so-called seductresses use speech acts to advocate for themselves in a world otherwise controlled by men.

In contrast to the episodes considered in other chapters, however, the words *eggja* and *áeggjan* are not used to denote female speech in Samson's saga. The noun *áeggjan* instead describes a male speech act, when Samson incites his parents to arrange the ill-fated marriage

to the Timnite (*Stj* III p. 650). The use of the word perhaps draws attention to the importance of the speech acts and verbal power (both male and female) that define Samson's story.

In Samson's saga, various verbs and nouns denote the speech acts of the Timnite and Delilah, including *biðja* (*Stj* III pp. 653, 665) [to ask/beg] and *gnadda* (*Stj* III p. 668) [to grumble]. The verb *lokka* [to entice], however, appears to dominate the narrative. Within AM 226 fol., this verb is first used to denote female speech in the Fall Story (*Stj* I pp. 57-58). Although it does not carry a sexual dimension there, as discussed in Chapter Two, the word is explicitly connected to postlapsarian sexual desire (*Stj* I p. 58). In the Fallen world of Judges, the verb *lokka* therefore denotes an urging that utilises sex or sexual attraction. It describes the actions of both the Timnite and Delilah (*Stj* III pp. 652, 671), labelling their appeals to Samson as seductions. Though the verb only appears twice, its significance is highlighted by the focus on Samson's hair, which is described with the word *lokkar* (*Stj* III pp. 667, 673)²⁴⁶ [locks of hair] throughout the Delilah episode. Significantly, this word is never used in the birth story, which initially outlines the restriction against haircuts (*Stj* III p. 645). Samson's hair is both his strength and weakness, but the word *lokkar* is only used to describe it when it signals his vulnerability to the Philistines. Samson's two weaknesses are thus linguistically linked: his hair (*lokkar*) and women's seduction (*lokkan*).

²⁴⁶ See also *Stj* III p. 672; AM 227 fol., AM 228 fol., AM 617 4to.

In the textual rendering of these scenes, speech acts are at the heart of the seductions. Both the Timnite and Delilah address Samson in direct speech to convince him to reveal his secrets. In both cases, however, before he reveals the truth, the women must grumble (*Stj* III p. 668) and annoy (*Stj* III p. 653) Samson: these actions appear to involve speech in some way, though they may denote something else, as explored below.

The direct speech of both women aligns with Searle's (1979, pp. 13-14) category of the directives, in line with the other female speech acts examined in this thesis. Delilah's first urging of Samson, for example, reads, 'Ek bidr minn kíère. at þu seger mer í trunaðe. huaðan þu hefer sua míkinn styrkleik vm *framm veralldar menn*' (*Stj* III pp. 665-666) [I bid you, my dear, that you tell me in good faith/in confidence from where you have your great strength above men of the world]. The sincerity condition is *want*, the direction of fit is *world-to-words*, and the propositional content is that the *Hearer*, Samson, takes an *Action*: revealing his secret. All of Delilah's speech acts are directives, though some are indirect (i.e. having both a primary and secondary illocutionary act; see Searle, 1979, pp. 33-34). The Timnite's speech act is indirect; she declares, 'hatar þu mik. enn elskar eigi ef þu vill eigi skýra mer gatu þa er þu hefer vpp borit fyrer mína frèndr' (*Stj* III p. 653) [You hate me and do not love me if you do not wish to tell me the answer to the riddle that you have given to my kinsmen]. On the literal level, this is an assertive, describing Samson's emotions; the primary

illocutionary act, however, is clearly a directive, urging Samson to tell her his secret and thus confirm his love.

The Timnite and Delilah therefore both perform the same type of speech act as the inciter women. This might suggest that seduction could be considered a type of incitement. As I shall demonstrate, however, the literary conventions associated with seduction are distinct from those of the *Hetzerin* trope.

What Makes a Directive Seductive?

I have earlier described seduction as the manipulation of sexual or romantic attraction to convince someone to do something. The inclusion of both sex and romance is to recognise that, as Bjørn Bandlien (2005, p. 8) writes, ‘the distinction between instinct-driven “sexuality” and spiritually driven “love” must not be considered as universally acknowledged’. When Samson is said to be in love, *ást* (*Stj* III p. 664), with Delilah, and when the Timnite and Delilah question his love in their speech acts, this could refer to sexual attraction, a deeper emotional connection, or a combination of these feelings.²⁴⁷

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, there is sometimes a connection between incitements and love (broadly defined). The speech acts of both Delilah and the Timnite, however, manipulate Samson’s (romantic/sexual) feelings in a manner unseen in the

²⁴⁷ On love in Old Norse literature, see also Sif Rikhardsdottir, forthcoming.

incitements analysed thus far. While Ahab is purportedly swayed by Jezebel's 'ást *ok* egian' (*Stj* III p. 1107) [love and incitement], it is not clear whether she uses love *as part of* her urgings, or if the love between the pair simply made Ahab more pliable. Samson's seductresses, however, explicitly use his love to force him to confide in them. Both state that his unwillingness to reveal his secrets demonstrates his lack of love: for example, in AM 227 fol., in response to Samson's lies, Delilah declares, 'hardla miok hrygger mík þat er þu segíz elska mík. enn þat er þo ekkí vtan hegomí þinn, þuiat hugr þinn er mer huarfiarre' (*Stj* III p. 668; AM 227 fol.) [it distresses me greatly when you say you love me because it is nothing but your falsehood, as your heart is far away from me]. This reflects the Timnite's earlier statement. While inciter women usually question or insult the hearer's masculinity, seductresses question his love.

Interestingly, in AM 226 fol., Delilah instead references her own love to manipulate Samson, declaring, 'Ek elskar þik hiartaliga. enn þu gabbar mik *ok* hefir at háði' (*Stj* III p. 668) [I love you heartily, but you mock and laugh at me]. In the biblical source, Delilah's feelings towards Samson are never made explicit. In AM 226 fol., Delilah's confession of love becomes a means to exploit Samson, contrasting her supposed devotion with his duplicity.

Sexual (Mis)Interpretations of Delilah and the Timnite

This interpretation of seduction conveniently avoids the debate around the sexual interpretation of Delilah and the Timnite's actions. While acknowledging that this emotional

ultimatum may well be enough to classify these figures as seductresses, it is nonetheless worth exploring the extent to which the Old Norse translation of Samson's saga paints the women's actions in a sexual light.

Commenting on the Hebrew version of Samson's saga, Exum (2015, p. 62) writes, 'the text does not say that the women used sexual favours to get the answers out of Samson'. Despite the sexually charged nature of Judges 14-16, with riddles,²⁴⁸ honey,²⁴⁹ hair,²⁵⁰ weddings, and prostitutes, the women's persuasive actions do not appear to be explicitly sexual. This has not stopped biblical exegetes throughout history from interpreting the women's actions as such, creating the *femme fatale* image that dominates their representations in popular culture.²⁵¹ For example, while the biblical text only says that Delilah annoys and nags Samson to convince him (Judg 16.16), these actions are interpreted in a sexual light in the Babylonian Talmud, in which it is suggested that 'at time of consummation, she [Delilah] detached herself from him' (trans. in Snyder, 2014, p. 139). It seems that (male) interpretation has transformed the Timnite and Delilah from nagging women into sexual seductresses.

The Old Norse translator perhaps encourages sexual readings of the Timnite's nagging. In *Stjórn* III, this part of her persuasion is described as follows: 'hon giorer honum allar vnaðer meðr akafleghum grate' (*Stj* III p. 653) [she troubles him with vehement

²⁴⁸ See Fewell, 1992, p. 72, and Exum, 2015, pp. 55, 57-58.

²⁴⁹ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1973; 1979, pp. 412-412.

²⁵⁰ See Niditch, 1990, pp. 616-617, and Lori Rowlett, 2001, pp. 106-111.

²⁵¹ See Exum, 1996, pp. 175-237; 2015, pp. 41-67; Rowlett, 2001; Scholz, 2014; Snyder, 2014.

weeping]. The word ‘vnađer’ (*Stj* III p. 653) is, of course, *únáđir* [troubles, disturbance], but it may have been chosen for its similarity to *unađ* [delight, pleasure]. This creates a double entendre in which the Timnite’s tears can be interpreted as sexual manipulations. This aligns with Baudrillard’s description of seduction as ‘le jeu pur des apparences’ (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) [‘the pure play of appearances’ (Singer, 1990, p. 8)], defined by its ‘réversibilité’ (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 8) [‘reversibility’ (Singer, 1990, p. 2)]. It is possible to interpret the Timnite’s speech and tears as genuine reactions to fear and desperation: how could Samson really love her, if he would let her be killed because of his riddle contest? Equally, the innuendo promotes a possible interpretation of her actions as sexual attempts to manipulate. She achieves the perfect Baudrillardian *réversibilité* [reversibility].

The aforementioned merging of Samson’s three lovers also fuels sexual interpretations of the women’s stories. Delilah is never said to be a prostitute in the Book of Judges, but her proximity to the Gazan prostitute has fuelled interpretations of Delilah as a sex worker (see Exum, 2015, esp. p. 49). Similarly, neither Delilah nor the woman in Gaza are said to be Philistines (Delilah even has a Hebrew name), but they absorb this identity marker from their proximity to and parallels with the Timnite (see Exum, 2015, esp. p. 48). The interpretation of Delilah as a foreign prostitute encourages sexual readings of her persuasions. Again, interpretation that is not necessarily grounded in textual evidence seems to be behind the labelling of these women as sexual seductresses.

The Old Norse translator indulges rather than challenges the depiction of Delilah as a sexual seductress in a diatribe against the figure introduced between her discovery of Samson's secret and the shaving of his hair (*Stj* III pp. 670-671).²⁵² This sermon-like (see Grønlie, 2024, p. 219) diatribe calls Delilah a 'bannsetta puta' (*Stj* III p. 670) [accused whore]. The word *púta* is both a label describing a sex worker and an insult to degrade women considered overly sexual. While this word encourages interpretations of Delilah as a prostitute, it might be intended only as a condemnation of Delilah for her sexuality. Notably, the translator uses a different word in his earlier description of the Gazan *portkona* (*Stj* III p. 662) [prostitute], who is definitely a sex worker.

The rest of this added passage ascribes further sexual and seductive actions to Delilah.

The passage in AM 226 fol. reads as follows:

Delila gerir sik nu blida. ok plagar sik alla vega meðr skart ok skraut. hins bezta bunadar. þuiat sea hín bannsetta puta. ok hín bitra nadra. er alla vega utan aa at sea tigulig oktil lýstilíg. var friduz allra kuínna sýnum enn innan liot. ok leidilig. full eítrs ok vlyfians. Hon býrlar ok berr samsone hínner sterkazta drykk lockandi hann með blautum kossum. ok scætum halsföngum til at drecka sem mest. (*Stj* III pp. 670-671)

[Delilah now acts gently and dresses herself in all ways with ornament and finery, the best clothing. Because that accursed whore and biting snake was in all ways from the outside noble and delightful to look at, the most beautiful of all women in appearance, but ugly and hideous on the inside, full of poison

²⁵² Astås (2009, ii p. 670) notes that this comes from a currently unidentified source, but Grønlie (2024, pp. 218-219) suggests it is the translator's original addition, though it could be drawn from a sermon. Until an appropriate source text is suggested, I follow Grønlie in interpreting this passage as the translator's creation.

and venom. She pours and brings the strongest drink to Samson, enticing him with soft kisses and sweet embraces to drink excessively.]

The embraces, kissing, and dressing up align Delilah with biblical seductresses like Ruth and Judith (see Grønlie, 2024, pp. 219, 224–225). The wearing of her ‘*bezta bunadar*’ (*Stj* III p. 670) [best clothing] also recalls Jezebel, as does the adjective *bannsettr* [accursed] (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, Grønlie (2024, p. 219) suggests that the serving of drink draws upon the trope of ‘woman as cupbearer in heroic legend’. In condemning Delilah and sexualising her actions, the translator simultaneously aligns her with other figures in biblical and Norse literature.

The parallels between the seductions of Judith and Delilah are particularly striking (see Betsy Meredith, 1989).²⁵³ Delilah delivers Samson to the Philistines like Judith delivers Holofernes (or, at least, his head) to the Jews. Delilah is, however, condemned for her actions while Judith is glorified. The primary difference between the seduction stories is the perspective; Fewell (1992, p. 74) writes, ‘If this had been Philistine literature, they [the Timnite and Delilah] would doubtless have been remembered as heroes’.²⁵⁴ The Old Norse translator emphasises the parallels between Delilah and this positively-coded seductress in his diatribe. While this might be seen to temper the condemnation of Delilah, it more likely

²⁵³ On the Old Norse translation of the Book of Judith, see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000, esp. pp. 126–141; 2020.

²⁵⁴ Dorothee Sölle and others (1994, p. 141) even suggest that the legend of Samson and Delilah was originally Philistine, with Delilah as the hero, before it was adopted and reframed by the Israelites. See also Bach, 1997, p. 190, and Smith, 1997, p. 46.

poisons the image of the positive seductresses who use the same seductive techniques. Meredith (1989, p. 76) writes that the stories of both positively- and negatively-depicted seductresses contain the ‘powerful message’ that ‘women’s sexuality is dangerous to men’. Using Judith and Ruth’s seductive tactics in his condemnation of Delilah, the translator emphasises this message, depicting all women’s seductions as powerful and dangerous.

This passage also depicts Delilah serving Samson alcohol, which perhaps crosses the line of consent outlined in the introduction to this chapter. Delilah, however, seems to use sexual actions to encourage Samson to drink rather than using drink to convince, trick, or force him into sexual contact. Her actions thus contrast those of Lot’s daughters (*Stj* I pp. 187-189), for example. The drink eventually puts Samson into a deep sleep in which he is deprived of his hair and his strength. The Nazirite vow that prevents Samson from shaving his hair, however, also stipulates the abstention from alcohol (Num 6.3).²⁵⁵ Though Samson has no agency over his haircut, he willingly breaks his Nazirite vow in the Old Norse translation by accepting Delilah’s strong drink. The translator perhaps also highlights the contrast between Delilah and Samson’s mother, who must not drink any ‘stýrkan drýkk’ (*Stj* III p. 646; AM 227 fol.) [strong drink] for Samson to develop his divine gifts.²⁵⁶ It is thus fitting that a woman should use the ‘sterkazta drýkk’ (*Stj* III p. 671) [strongest drink] to deprive him of his hair and his divinely-bestowed strength.

²⁵⁵ This biblical verse is not included in the *Stjórn* II translation.

²⁵⁶ In AM 226 fol., this is only called the ‘afeinngín drýkk’ (*Stj* III p. 645) [intoxicating drink].

Seduction, Agency, and Power

There is a curious paradox of power in Samson's story. As Exum (2015, p. 62) writes, 'without women the Philistines are impotent, but for all their power over Samson, the Timnite and Delilah are the pawns of men'. Though the Old Norse translator emphasises the destructive power of the women's voices, he also seems to have some sympathy for the Timnite's situation, drawing attention to the threat that forces her to speak. When depicting the fire that eventually takes her life (the threat of which spurred her seduction), the translator inserts additional victims in comparison with the sources, emphasising fire's drastic effects. In the Vulgate, only the woman and her father are reported dead (Judg 15.6), while Comestor notes that both her 'parentes' (*HS* 1288A) [parents] are killed with her. The Old Norse translator, however, includes a longer list of fatalities, which varies in each manuscript. In *AM* 226 fol., the woman, her father, and 'frændr' (*Stj* III p. 655) [kinsmen] die in the fire, while in *AM* 227 fol. the list also includes her mother 'ok hýskí ok heima menn' (*Stj* III p. 655; *AM* 227 fol.) [and household and servants]. This alteration perhaps results from the Icelandic concern with arson that dominates texts like *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Emphasising the drastic effects of housefires, the Timnite's earlier seductions (trying to avoid this very fate) might seem justifiable: she was trying to save not only her own life, but also those of her family and her entire household. Delilah is given no such excuse by the translator.

There is another aspect of both seduction scenes that seems to indicate the women's lack of power and agency. The distinguishing characteristic between a directive and a seduction (the manipulation of male love or lust) appears, to some extent, to be beyond the control of the women in the story. Though Delilah and the Timnite both choose to manipulate Samson's love once it is established, there is no indication that they have any influence over the development of his feelings. Samson falls for the Timnite when he sees her from afar (*Stj* III p. 650). He is also the grammatical subject of the line introducing Delilah: 'lagde hann ást viðr þa konu' (*Stj* III p. 664) [he (Samson) fell in love with a woman]. Neither woman, it seems, attempts to spark the initial attraction.

Baudrillard, however, considers all seductions to begin with the woman; as noted above, he writes, 'Ainsi le séducteur n'est rien, toute l'origine de la séduction est dans la jeune fille' (Baudrillard, 1979, pp. 133-134) ['The seducer by himself is nothing; the seduction originates entirely with the girl' (Singer, 1990, p. 99)]. According to Baudrillard, women can seduce simply by existing: 'vierge, belle et séduisante, elle constitue un défi en soi' (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 135) ['as a beautiful and seductive virgin, she is in herself a challenge' (Singer, 1990, p. 100)]. Reading in line with this misogynistic framework, it is possible to hold the women responsible for sparking Samson's emotions. When Samson sees the Timnite from afar, she is (according to Baudrillard) seducing him. Perhaps it is not just in the

emotional ultimatums that the translator depicts the Timnite and Delilah's seductions of Samson.

Comparing the seductresses with inciter women, another paradox emerges: the translator seems to express a greater anxiety over women's seductive power even though the seductions depicted here seem less effective than incitements. Eve, for example, does not repeatedly nag Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in *Stjórn* I. While incitements appear to work the first time, the Timnite and Delilah must both trouble Samson over many days to influence him. Despite this, the translator condemns Delilah far more than the inciters in AM 226 fol.; the labelling of Jezebel as the *verst kona* (*Stj* III p. 1080) [worst woman], for example, does not compare to the loaded language used in the sermon-like diatribe against Delilah (explored further below). The inclusion of this charged passage appears to suggest a particular concern with women's seductive power disproportionate to the textual evidence of its efficacy. Eve brought all of humanity to sinful ruin with her incitement, but Delilah's destruction of one man earns the full force of the translator's condemnation.

Delilah as Deceiver: Stjórn III and Alexanders saga

Stjórn III is not the only account of Delilah's story in AM 226 fol. Although the biblical translation emphasises the seductive tactics at play, the short description of Delilah's story in *Alexanders saga* emphasises another aspect of the scene: deception.

The tombstone of Darius' wife (also discussed in Chapter Two) is decorated with several biblical stories, including those of Eve and Delilah. Describing the reliefs, Walter of Châtillon writes that Delilah proved herself 'Fortior' (*Alexandreis* 4:101, l. 220) [stronger] than Samson the Strong. The Old Norse translator, however, removes this ostensible glorification of women's seductive power, writing instead that 'Dalila sveik Samsonem inn sterka' (*Alex.Norm* 4:49; AM 226 fol., 136vb) [Delilah deceived Samson the Strong]. The emphasis on deception is also found in the *Stjórn* III renarration of her story. In AM 226 fol., when the Philistines ask Delilah to deceive Samson, her response is recorded: 'hon iattar at fremia þersi suík' (*Stj* III p. 664) [she agreed to perform this deception]. Delilah is also called a deceiver when she is mentioned in the world history within AM 764 4to (*UH* p. 250).

The Old Norse tradition of interpreting Delilah as a deceiver is not necessarily supported by the biblical text; Meredith (1989, p. 70), for example, writes, 'there is no deceit at all' in Delilah's dealings with Samson.²⁵⁷ Grønlie (2024, p. 218) considers the Delilah of *Stjórn* III in the same light: 'Delilah in no way tries to deceive Samson as to what she will do once she knows the secret of his strength'. In her first request in *Stjórn* III, however, Delilah seems to promise Samson confidentiality; she asks him to confide in her 'í trunaðe' (*Stj* III p. 665). This phrase could mean 'in good faith', with Delilah encouraging him to speak truthfully (as she does later, using different words: *Stj* III p. 667). It also, however, carries the meaning

²⁵⁷ See also Fewell, 1992, p. 73; Rowlett, 2001, pp. 110-111; Scholz, 2014, pp. 121-122; Exum, 2015, p. 60.

of ‘in confidence’, assuring Samson that she will not disclose his secret. Although Delilah is direct about her intentions to bind Samson so that he may not escape, in the Old Norse version she falsely promises confidentiality and trust.

This double meaning perhaps adds to the seductive quality of Delilah’s words. She utilises a Baudrillardian *réversibilité* [reversibility] in her ‘jeu [...] des apparences’ (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) [‘play of appearances’ (Singer, 1990, p. 8)]. Delilah in the Old Norse both promises and does not promise confidentiality. Baudrillard (1979, p. 36) also describes seduction as an ‘échange rituel ininterrompu, d’une surenchère où les jeux ne sont jamais faits, de qui séduit et de qui est séduit’ [‘uninterrupted ritual exchange where seducer and seduced constantly raise the stakes in a game that never ends’ (Singer, 1990, p. 22)]. Delilah’s play with confidentiality certainly raises the stakes. Samson, however, is unable to quit Delilah’s seductive game; he is ‘addicted to mixing sex with danger’ (Susanne Scholz, 2014, p. 122) and eventually takes it too far.

Delilah as a Poisonous Snake

In his diatribe against Delilah, the Old Norse translator describes her as a ‘bitra nadra’ [biting snake] that is ‘full eítrs ok vlyfians’ (*Stj* III p. 670) [full of poison and venom]. It is worth lingering on this metaphor as it ties together the seductresses discussed in this chapter. The word *naðra* literally means ‘serpent’ but can be used more generally to denote ‘noget giftigt/ondt’ (Entry: ‘naðra’, ONP) [something poisonous/evil]: the word evidently carries

negative connotations. Although the ONP (Entry: ‘naðra’) lists this occurrence of the word with the latter, general definition, the translation of ‘snake’ or ‘serpent’ seems more appropriate, particularly as it is qualified by *bitr* [biting]. Grønlie (2024, p. 219) uses the serpent metaphor here to link Delilah to Eve and identifies a parallel between Delilah’s poisonous pouring of drink and Eve’s serving of the ‘*dauþa-dryc*’ (*Hómísl* pp. 39r-39v) [death-drink] in the Icelandic Homily Book.

Although this poisonous snake metaphor may well have originated from an association with Eve, by the time it was written in AM 226 fol., at least, it has taken on a new significance. Eve is never described as poisonous or serpentine in this manuscript, despite extensive treatment of her story (see Chapter Two). There are, however, two other figures (analysed below) who are depicted as poisonous serpents or amphibians, both of which are seductresses. This metaphor appears to have bloomed into a common trope to describe and denigrate seductive women. Eve, who cannot seduce Adam because of his prelapsarian nature (see Chapter Two), is depicted as an inciter rather than a poisonous and serpentine seductress.

A Note on Samson

The depiction of the women in Samson’s saga is undeniably tied to the portrayal of the titular hero. Snyder (2014, p. 139) writes, ‘For many Christian interpreters, the demonisation of Delilah corresponds to the lifting up of Samson as a saint’. There is no space here for an in-depth analysis of Samson and his masculinity, but a quick comment seems necessary.

Although Samson certainly has his faults, the Old Norse translator includes a passage of typological exegesis at the end of the story that compares Samson to Christ (*Stj* III p. 679). This passage is taken from Richard of St Victor (*LE* 2.4.10:278-279). Although Delilah is not mentioned explicitly here (as in the source), painting Samson as a figure of Christ places Delilah in the position of Judas and/or the devil, who (respectively) betrayed or tempted Jesus.²⁵⁸ This is particularly evident in the Old Norse version, as the translator has earlier condemned Delilah heavily for her role in the deception, destruction, and seduction of Samson.

In *Stjórn* III, Samson is also depicted as a saga hero. Grønlie (2024, p. 13) writes, ‘Samson is completely at home in the saga world and should take his place alongside Egill and Grettir as the anti-social but verbally dextrous hero’. Delilah thus betrays both a Christ-like saint and a saga hero. Consequently, she contrasts loyal wives like Auðr in *Gísla saga* (*Gísl* ÍF 6 31-32:99-101), who dramatically refuses to betray her husband for money.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Snyder (2014, p. 139) notes that this interpretation of Delilah was common in the Renaissance period.

²⁵⁹ See Grønlie (2024, pp. 250-254) for a detailed analysis of the various parallels, echoes, and contrasts between Samson’s saga and *Gísla saga*.

On Auðr’s rejection of the money in *Gísla saga*, see Eugenia K. Vorobeva, forthcoming.

Conclusion: Delilah in AM 226 fol.

Samson's saga is defined by its speech acts; although male speech brings chaos and war, female speech acts are underlined in the Norse translation for their destructive potential. Playing with Samson's love (whether sexual or emotional), both Delilah and her unnamed precursor in Timnah nag their lover into sharing dangerous secrets. While the Timnite can perhaps be forgiven due to the threat of arson, which is emphasised in the Old Norse, Delilah is wholly condemned by the translator. Although seduction seems less powerful than incitement, far more criticism is applied to seductive activities; perhaps women's seduction evoked greater unease in the (male) translator than women's incitements. These differences, alongside the distinction in the verbs and metaphors used to describe seductresses and inciters, suggest that these female roles should be considered separately.

Cleopatra VII

If Delilah is the biblical *femme fatale*, Cleopatra VII is the *femme fatale* of classical antiquity.²⁶⁰

Remembered throughout history and literature as the lover of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony,

Cleopatra VII also captured the attention of Old Norse translators. She features in two of the

texts within AM 226 fol.: *Rómverja saga* and *Gyðinga saga*.²⁶¹ The portrait of this classical

²⁶⁰ Lucy Hughes-Hallett (1997, p. 16) writes of Cleopatra, 'She is a temptress, a *femme fatale*'.

²⁶¹ Three Cleopatras appear within *Gyðinga saga*. This analysis focuses on Cleopatra VII (69-30 BCE) of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

queen, however, is inconsistent within these translations. While one section of *Rómverja saga* minimises her agency in the seduction scene, another depicts her actively attempting to use seductive tactics to define her fate. Then, within *Gyðinga saga*, Cleopatra is heavily condemned for her seductive influence in a speech by Herod. This analysis begins with an overview of Cleopatra's tumultuous life before analysing each appearance of Cleopatra in turn. Even with the discrepancies, the overall portrait of the queen in the Old Norse is clear: she is a seductress, with the ability to manipulate men with her beauty and her voice. Cleopatra's many achievements as a queen, polyglot, and scholar are not included in the Old Norse translation.²⁶²

The Life of Cleopatra VII

The Old Norse translations detail events from different points in Cleopatra's life. I therefore first present a short summary of the main events of her life pertinent for this study.²⁶³

Cleopatra VII was the last Ptolemaic Queen of Egypt. She was at least half Greek (from her father's side), but her mother may have been Egyptian.²⁶⁴ Since Egyptian society was resistant to solo female rule,²⁶⁵ she always had a male co-ruler; she had three in her lifetime. First, she ruled with her younger brother and husband Ptolemy XIII, though he

²⁶² On Cleopatra's life beyond her relationships, see Roller, 2010.

²⁶³ For detailed discussions of Cleopatra's life, see M. Grant, 1972; Goldsworthy, 2010; Roller, 2010.

²⁶⁴ See Roller, 2010, pp. 15, 165-166.

²⁶⁵ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 30-31, 47-48, 79, 98-99, and Roller, 2010, pp. 64-65.

attempted to overthrow her, sparking a conflict that led to his own death in the Alexandrian War. She then ruled alongside her even younger brother and new husband Ptolemy XIV, until his untimely (and suspicious) death. By this point, she had a young son, Ptolemy Caesar (Caesarion), who she ruled alongside.

Despite her official marriages to her siblings, Cleopatra's heart seems to have been elsewhere. Her first supposed affair started in the Alexandrian War, when she met with Julius Caesar to request his support. Cleopatra claimed that Caesarion was Caesar's son, though it is unclear whether he acknowledged his paternity before his assassination.²⁶⁶ After Caesar's death, the battle of Phillipi, and the foundation of the Second Triumvirate, Cleopatra and Mark Antony met to discuss their political affairs and, rumour has it, began a personal affair too. At this time, Cleopatra developed a notable rivalry with Herod, the King of Judea, while Antony's relationship with Octavian, his fellow triumvir, deteriorated drastically. Antony eventually divorced his wife, Octavia (Octavian's sister), and may have married Cleopatra, but this is unclear.²⁶⁷

Tensions between Antony and Octavian only increased, until eventually Octavian declared war on Cleopatra. Though he also fought against Antony, Octavian avoided an official civil war by making Antony's wife/lover the official enemy.²⁶⁸ The war was decided in

²⁶⁶ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 83-85; Goldsworthy, 2010, pp. 192-193; Roller, 2010, pp. 69-70.

²⁶⁷ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 185-187; Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 351; Roller, 2010, p. 100.

²⁶⁸ See M. Grant, 1972, p. 201.

the Battle of Actium, where Octavian's forces overpowered Antony and Cleopatra's. The couple fled to Egypt, where Antony despaired while Cleopatra tried to arrange affairs to save her children's lives. When Octavian arrived in Egypt, he easily overpowered their forces. Antony committed suicide, and Cleopatra was captured. She was later found dead alongside her maids, having supposedly committed suicide. She likely did not use a poisonous serpent to do it, but the myth of Cleopatra's death by asp bite developed quickly.²⁶⁹ While Octavian became the first emperor, under the name Augustus, Antony and Cleopatra were buried together. Their tomb has never been discovered.

This biography makes no claim to objectivity. Focusing on moments in Cleopatra's life relevant to the study of the Old Norse translations, it centres more on her relationships with Caesar and Antony than on her other political pursuits. Many of the classical depictions of Cleopatra, however, also cannot be relied upon for objectivity. Though there are accounts written during her life or shortly afterwards, the record of Cleopatra's character was significantly affected by the propaganda of Octavian/Augustus.²⁷⁰ Octavian spread a negative image of both Antony and Cleopatra to justify his war, but the queen was his main target; as a foreign woman ruling a foreign kingdom, she was easier prey than the Roman Antony. Cleopatra was depicted as a seductress who had lured Antony away from his duties in Rome, infecting him with inertia, sensuality, and a love of opulence: traits considered quintessentially

²⁶⁹ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. 224-228; Goldsworthy, 2010, pp. 384-385; Roller, 2010, pp. 148-149.

²⁷⁰ See M. Grant, 1972, pp. xvi-xvii, and Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 7.

Egyptian and Greek in the racial prejudices of the time (see M. Grant, 1972, pp. 178-179).

Although Cleopatra and Antony also spread their own propaganda against Octavian, it was not as influential as that propagated by Octavian/Augustus.

The image of Cleopatra in Augustan propaganda has influenced historical and literary depictions of the queen ever since. It has become an essential part of her legacy; as Mary Beard (2010) writes, 'however historically correct it might seem, you cannot separate Cleopatra from her myth'. The portraits of Cleopatra in AM 226 fol. both align with and reinforce the impression promulgated by her enemies, depicting Cleopatra as a dangerous seductress.

Cleopatra VII in Rómverja saga

Cleopatra appears twice in *Rómverja saga*: first in the translation of the final, unfinished book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (*Róm* 88:377-379) and then in the historical summary that concludes the saga (*Róm* 90:382, 93:387-388).²⁷¹ The first appearance describes her role in the Alexandrian War and the start of her relationship with Caesar, while the latter summarises her relationship with Antony, the war with Octavian, and the events that lead to her death. Although her seduction of Caesar can be read as accidental, the translator includes a passage just before her death that depicts an active attempt at seducing Octavian. Here, the translator stresses the

²⁷¹ On the various parts of *Rómverja saga*, see the Introduction.

role of the voice in Cleopatra's seductions. These appearances are analysed in turn below; each section begins with a consideration of the depiction of Cleopatra in the source material.

Cleopatra in Lucan

The first appearance of Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga* is translated from book ten of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, when the end of Caesar's war with Pompey brings him to Egypt. The dispute between Cleopatra and her brother, husband, and co-ruler Ptolemy XIII is already underway as Caesar arrives. In the standard version of Lucan's poem, Cleopatra has fled Egypt; she bribes harbour guards to allow her ship to enter at Pharos so she can meet with Caesar (*LP* X.56-58). There appears, however, to be a medieval tradition that depicts an imprisoned Cleopatra who bribes her way out of captivity to Caesar; this is the narrative found in *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 88:378), as well as in *Li Fet des Romains* (*LFR* i p. 623) and some commentaries on Lucan's text (*LPS* p. 773 n. 58). Andrew J. Turner (2010, p. 202) writes that this is 'a much less probable interpretation', but it is nonetheless the narrative found in *Rómverja saga*.

After describing Cleopatra's arrival in Alexandria, Lucan passionately criticises her character in an extended diatribe (*LP* X.59-69). He calls Cleopatra, 'dedecus Aegypti, Latii feralis Erinys, | Romano non casta malo' (*LP* X.59-60) [the disgrace of Egypt, the fatal Erinys

of Latium, the unchaste one, to the disaster of Rome].²⁷² He also compares her to Helen of Troy, since the beauty of both causes the destruction of men (*LP* X.60-62; see Andrew Feldherr, 2021, pp. 143-146). Cleopatra, however, differs from Helen in her ambition, as Sannicandro (2010, p. 114) argues, since she intends to capture Caesar (*LP* X.64-65) and rule the world (*LP* X.66-67). Lucan then turns his condemnation towards Caesar, criticising him for liaising with Cleopatra (*LP* X.70-81). Drawing parallels with Cleopatra and Antony's relationship, Lucan retrospectively applies the criticism of Cleopatra's corruption of Antony from Augustan propaganda onto her relationship with Caesar.²⁷³

Returning to the narrative, Lucan describes how Cleopatra arranges her appearance into a false show of mourning before addressing Caesar (*LP* X.82-84). She requests his support and advocacy in a powerful speech rendered directly in the poem (*LP* X.85-103); this is explored in more depth below. After Cleopatra and Caesar spend the night together, Caesar agrees to help (*LP* X.106-107).

Cleopatra then hosts a lavish feast to celebrate his support (*LP* X.108-171). The palace, the food, and Cleopatra's appearance are described in detail. The translator clearly draws upon Virgil's depiction of Dido's banquet in the *Aeneid*, which delays Aeneas from achieving his true destiny.²⁷⁴ The Egyptian display of wealth and excess further corrupts Caesar (*LP* X.146-

²⁷² On Cleopatra's depiction as an Erinyes, see Concetta Finiello, 2005, p. 164.

²⁷³ See Otto Zwierlein, 1974, p. 58, and Lisa Sannicandro, 2010, p. 116.

²⁷⁴ See Zwierlein, 1974, pp. 61-64; Turner, 2010, pp. 204-205; Andrew Feldherr, 2021, pp. 137, 142.

171). The feast ends with an extensive discussion between Caesar and Acoreus about Egyptian geography and history (*LP X.172-333*).

The narrative then switches to Pothinus (*LP X.333*), who plots against Cleopatra and Caesar. He incites Achillas, the leader of Ptolemy XIII's army, to attack the palace (*LP X.333-398*), sending a message that is rendered directly by Lucan (*LP X.354-398*). This message heavily criticises Cleopatra, accusing her of sexual excess; she is '[inter] maritos | discurrens Aegypton habet Romamque meretur' (*LP X.358-359*) [running between two husbands, possessing Egypt and serving Rome]. He ascribes Cleopatra's dangerous influence to sex, drugs, and poison, painting her as a manipulative seductress (*LP X.360-370*). He also argues that Caesar's death would be politically advantageous (*LP X.370-398*). Convinced, Achillas readies his troops (*LP X.398-402*). The unfinished book concludes amidst the fighting that follows.

Cleopatra in the Lucan Translation

The Old Norse translator's treatment of Lucan's *Pharsalia* is defined by shortening and omission. Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, p. clviii) calls the Lucan translation 'a paraphrase of an enormous work' that 'in very few places keeps closely to the Latin text'. Accordingly, the Egypt narrative of Book Ten is stripped to its bare bones. Notably, the long passages of exposition that criticise Cleopatra and describe her corruption of Caesar are omitted from the translation.

The Lucan translation also demonstrates a notable shift in political sympathies that perhaps explains these omissions. As Meissner (1910, p. 256) writes, ‘Der Übersetzer übernimmt nicht die politische Meinung des Lucan, nicht die Parteilichkeit für Pompeius und den fanatischen Haß gegen Caesar’ [The translator does not adopt the political opinion of Lucan, not the bias towards Pompey nor the fanatical hatred of Caesar]. In removing many of the criticisms of Caesar, however, the translator significantly changes the depiction of Cleopatra, as her destructive seductions are minimised in this part of *Rómverja saga*.

The other significant change to the narrative in this part of the saga is that the feast celebrates the union of Ptolemy and Cleopatra (*Róm* 88:378), rather than ‘die Verbindung Cäsars mit Kleopatra’ (Otto Zwierlein, 1974, p. 62) [the connection between Caesar and Cleopatra]. In Lucan, the Ptolemaic siblings are still at odds when the feast is thrown. In the Old Norse translation, however, Caesar immediately reunites the siblings after his night with Cleopatra; this renewed peace is then celebrated at the feast. This perhaps results from a misreading of Lucan, who states that the celebrated truce is with an unnamed *dux* (*LP* X.107) [leader]. Perhaps the translator (or a later copyist or redactor) did not understand the larger context, and thought that Ptolemy, rather than Caesar, was the *dux* referenced here.

Despite this change, the feast still makes Caesar desirous for war in *Rómverja saga*: ‘Julio [...] æsti þa at vfridr skyllði verða millum hans ok Egipta landz manna’ (*Róm* 88:379) [Julius (Caesar) wished that there would be conflict between himself and the Egyptians]. This

translates Lucan's comments on the corruption of Caesar (*LP* X.169-171). The line is introduced with the phrase '*Sua s(egir) Lukanus*' (*Róm* 88:379) [So says Lucan], corresponding to the translator's treatment of the anti-Caesar statements elsewhere in the translation (see Meissner, 1910, p. 256, and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, p. clvii). Caesar's newfound battle ambitions are surprising in *Rómverja saga*, since he has already resolved the dispute between Cleopatra and Ptolemy: the root cause of the Egyptian civil war. This perhaps emphasises the corruption of Caesar, who desires to instigate new conflict (rather than taking advantage of an ongoing one) for financial gain.

Caesar does not, however, begin a new war in *Rómverja saga*. After the feast, the translator describes Pothinus' conspiracy against Caesar (*Róm* 89:379). Pothinus enlists Achilles' help, but the direct rendering of the speech in Lucan (with its heavy condemnation of Cleopatra's seductive influence) is removed in the renarration. The next mention of Cleopatra is in the *summa historiae* translation, explored below.

Cleopatra's Speech to Caesar

From Caesar's landing in Egypt until the end of the Lucan translation, there is no direct speech in *Rómverja saga*. The translator omits Lucan's direct renderings of Cleopatra's speech, Caesar's dialogue with Acoreus, and Pothinus' message to Achilles. This contrasts the interest

in the speeches elsewhere in the saga.²⁷⁵ The removal of all speeches in this part of the saga may suggest a lack of interest in the Egyptian portion of the story. It may also, however, be designed to smooth over the transition between the Lucan section and the *summa historiae* translation, which moves through history much faster than the Lucan part. While omitting Pothinus' scathing speech might allow for a more neutral depiction of the Egyptian queen, removing Cleopatra's speech de-emphasises the queen's agency and verbal power.

Cleopatra's rhetorical prowess is an important part of her characterisation in Lucan's account. Concetta Finiello (2005, p. 163) writes that, despite his overall marginalisation of female characters, 'Lucan nicht weniger als sieben Mal in seinem Epos Frauen in die Handlung eintreten und sprechen lässt' [Lucan lets women enter the action and speak no less than seven times in his epic]. Lucan, however, comments that Cleopatra's speech would have had no impact on Caesar if it were not spoken by such a beautiful woman: 'Nequiquam duras temptasset Caesaris aures: | vultus adest precibus faciesque incesta perorat' (*LP* X.104-105) [She would have urged Caesar's hard ears in vain, but her face supported her request, and her unchaste beauty did the rest]. Seductive qualities appear to bolster speech acts, making them more effective. Despite the narrator's fierce rejection of Cleopatra's verbal power, however,

²⁷⁵ Speeches are of particular significance in the earlier redaction within AM 595 a-b 4to; despite the 'many omissions', Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, p. cxci) writes that 'all the monologues and speeches are carefully translated'. Although many speeches are shortened in the later redaction (as found in AM 226 fol.), the beginnings and endings are usually maintained (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, 2010, pp. clxxv-clxxvi).

her rhetoric shines through; Feldherr (2021, p. 137) calls Cleopatra's speech 'cunningly effective'. The translator's removal of the direct rendering of Cleopatra's speech thus minimises the figure and her influence in this part of *Rómverja saga*.

In the Old Norse, Cleopatra's persuasion of Caesar is described as follows: 'hon [...] bad hann styrkia sik til at hon næði ríki sínu. Enn henní vard þat ecki torsott. þuiat Iulio rann þegar hugr til hennar. ok lauk þi sua at Iulíus lagdi hana i sæng hia ser' (*Róm* 88:378) [she asked him to assist her so that she might gain her kingdom. And that was not hard for her to do, because Julius (Caesar) immediately fell in love with her, and it concluded with this that Julius laid her in bed next to him]. Though it is not rendered directly, Cleopatra evidently still performs a speech act of the directive type (Searle, 1979, pp. 13-14): the direction of fit is *world-to-words*, the sincerity condition is *want*, and the propositional content is that the Hearer (Caesar) takes an Action (supporting Cleopatra in the royal conflict). The speech act is, however, explicitly connected to sex. Love is described as an important part of Cleopatra's persuasion, and the meeting concludes (*líka*) not with a political alliance but with a sexual one.

The translator includes but significantly alters Lucan's comment that Cleopatra's persuasive force comes from seduction. Although Lucan insists that Cleopatra's directive would have been *nequiquam* (*LP* X.104) [in vain] without her seductive allure, the Old Norse translator writes that it was easier for her to achieve her wishes because of Caesar's emotions.

In *Rómverja saga*, Caesar's love for Cleopatra certainly helps the queen make her case, but it is not this alone that convinces him. The translator thus ascribes more power to Cleopatra's words than Lucan, even as he omits the direct rendering of her speech.

While the Timnite and Delilah must repeatedly nag Samson to convince him to reveal his secrets, Cleopatra's speech act needs no repetition. Perhaps the speech acts underlying the Timnite and Delilah's seductions were less persuasive than Cleopatra's, relying more upon Samson's emotions than particularly persuasive words. Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga*, however, seems to mix seductive tactics with cunning rhetoric: a combination so powerful that it overcomes Caesar and bends this great Roman leader to her will.

Agency and Emotions

In the Old Norse translation, it is no longer Cleopatra's beauty ('facies': LP X.105), carefully arranged (LP X.82-84), that convinces Caesar; the seductive elements of the queen's influence instead relate to Caesar's emotions. As with the above seductresses in Samson's saga, the queen here seems to have little control over the development of Caesar's emotions, even though they define her speech act, transforming it into a seduction.

The line describing Caesar's emotion uses the stock phrase *renna ... hugr til hennar*, which describes someone falling in love in various Old Norse texts (see Entries: ²renna, rinna *vb*, ³renna *vb*, ONP). For example, in *Margrétar saga* (Marg p. 475), this phrase describes the moment the Roman prefect Olybrius sees Margaret, immediately desiring to marry or

possess her. None of the major dictionaries have an appropriate translation for the verb *renna* in this construction; Fritzner (1896, iii p. 82), however, offers the definition ‘sætte noget [...] i Bevægelse’ [to set something in motion]. Caesar’s *hugr* sets him in motion towards Cleopatra.

The word *hugr* has been explored extensively in Old Norse scholarship on emotions.²⁷⁶

It is often translated into English as ‘thought’ or ‘mind’, but this is insufficient. As Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir (2019, p. 40) writes, the word’s ‘semantic range includes the meanings of the modern English hyponymic concepts of “feeling” or “emotion” but exceeds those categories by including cognitive qualities, such as intelligence, will, and memory’. In this episode of *Rómverja saga*, the word could relate to intellect, thus describing how Caesar is convinced by the political and intellectual terms of Cleopatra’s argument. Since the construction found here is elsewhere used to depict men falling in love, and because the translator goes on to describe Caesar and Cleopatra sleeping together (*Róm* 88:378), however, the word must relate to Caesar’s love for Cleopatra. Again, the word ‘love’ is broadly defined here, as it could refer to a deep emotional connection, purely sexual attraction, or some combination of these feelings. The even broader semantic range of *hugr*, however, neatly demonstrates how Caesar’s mental and emotional capacities are swayed by Cleopatra: a concept much harder to express

²⁷⁶ See, for example, K. T. Kanerva, 2012, p. 7; Quinn, 2012, esp. p. 212; Colin Peter Mackenzie, 2014; Sif Rikhardsdóttir, 2017, pp. 50-51; Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2019, pp. 39-41; 2023, p. 28; Marie Novotná, [2024], pp. 14, 51, 55-56, 105-106, 113.

in modern English. The intellectual argument offered by Cleopatra may thus be as important as her romantic or sexual allure in her persuasion of Caesar.

Caesar appears to have little control over his own *hugr*. In the line ‘Iulio rann þegar hugr til hennar’ (*Róm* 88:378) [Julius (Caesar) immediately fell in love with her], *hugr* is in the nominative while Caesar’s name is in the Latin dative or ablative case. Caesar is directed by his *hugr*. The grammatical structure seems to reflect a wider trend in Old Norse literature that depicts men at the whim of their sexual or romantic attraction rather than actively in control of it. For example, in *Skírnismál* (*Edd* ÍF i 380–381), Freyr is overtaken by his desire for Gerðr, which leaves him unable to function. Freyr is unable to control his own emotions and desires. Caesar seems similarly overtaken by his *hugr*, though he immediately takes matters into his own hands by sleeping with Cleopatra. As Caesar ‘lagdi hana i sæng hia ser’ (*Róm* 88:378) [lay her in bed next to him], he is the grammatical subject, regaining his agency. Cleopatra, however, is the object.

Caesar’s *hugr* also seems to be out of the control of Cleopatra. There is no indication in *Rómverja saga* that she attempts to arouse his *hugr* in a romantic or sexual way. Unlike in Lucan (*LP* X.82–84), Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga* does not arrange her appearance before approaching Caesar. Omitting this detail, as well as Lucan’s fierce condemnation of the figure, the translator leaves no trace of sexual or romantic intentions in his renarration of Cleopatra’s actions towards Caesar. Regardless of her intent, Caesar’s *hugr* is clearly stirred sexually. While

the mix of love, sex, and speech acts here suggests the scene should be interpreted as a seduction, it is not clear if Cleopatra actively attempts to seduce.

When Caesar and Cleopatra sleep together, there is also no indication of Cleopatra's consent. She may have agreed to sleep with Caesar out of her own sexual desires, or she may have seen it as politically advantageous. She may, nonetheless, have felt forced or coerced due to her insecure position. Like Gerðr in *Skírnismál* (*Edd ÍF* i 383–388), the woman is given no real option to refuse once the man's desire overtakes him.

The depiction of Cleopatra's agency in her own seduction scene thus overlaps in several ways with Delilah and the Timnite, who similarly have little control over whether Samson loves them and are in some way coerced into their seduction scenes. These biblical figures, however, are depicted actively manipulating Samson's emotions once they emerge. It is not clear whether Cleopatra intends to elicit and exploit Caesar's love here.

The depictions of Cleopatra in *Gyðinga saga* and elsewhere in *Rómverja saga*, nevertheless, underscore the figure's position as a seductress, suggesting she should be read as such here. Perhaps Cleopatra inadvertently learns the effects of combining directives with male emotions in her persuasion of Caesar, then later explicitly uses this technique in her dealings with Octavian and Antony. Although a feminist reading highlights Cleopatra's lack of agency in this scene, it is also possible that an interpretation less sympathetic to the plight of women might still blame Cleopatra for Caesar's unruly emotions, in line with the portrayal

in Lucan's epic. If, as Baudrillard (1979, pp. 133–134) writes, 'toute l'origine de la séduction est dans la jeune fille' ['the seduction originates entirely with the girl' (Singer, 1990, p. 99)], perhaps Cleopatra seduces Caesar in the Old Norse without knowing or trying. Baudrillard (1979, p. 15) elsewhere comments, 'le féminin séduit parce qu'il n'est jamais là où il se pense' ['the feminine seduces because it is never where it thinks it is' (Singer, 1990, p. 6)]. In Baudrillard's theories, female ignorance can be seductive.

Perhaps, to identify persuasions that would have been considered seductive in the medieval period, it is pertinent to look not at the women's actions, but at the interpretation of them by men. Caesar in the Old Norse appears to interpret Cleopatra's appeal as both sexual and political, as he combines the two outcomes in his response. It is thus possible to interpret Cleopatra's persuasion as both a woman's seduction and the exploitation of desperation by a powerful man. This portrayal is perhaps itself a seductive 'jeu [...] des apparences' (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) ['play of appearances' (Singer, 1990, p. 8)].

The Feast

In the feast that celebrates renewed peace in the Old Norse translation, Cleopatra is only a co-host: 'budu þau Tholomeus ok Cleopatra Julío til sín at þíggja veitzlu' (*Róm* 88:378) [they, Ptolemy and Cleopatra, invited Julius (Caesar) to attend a feast]. Relegated from her position as solo host in the source material, Cleopatra in the Norse translation bears only half the responsibility for Caesar's newfound obsession with Egyptian wealth. While this might

minimise the condemnation of the figure, it also reduces the power ascribed to her. Lucy Hughes-Hallett (1997, p. 16), analysing artistic interpretations of Cleopatra, writes, ‘When Cleopatra is good [...] she is not great’; ‘her badness has frequently a kind of grandeur to it’. Minimising her ‘badness’ at the feast, the translator has also removed much of what made Lucan’s Cleopatra such a powerful figure.

The feast in Lucan can be seen as part of Cleopatra’s seduction of the Roman leader, demonstrating her wealth and her beauty to ensure he continues to support her politically. In the Old Norse, beside her husband, Ptolemy XIII, Cleopatra presumably had less opportunity to seduce Caesar than her counterpart in Lucan. Despite the presence of a rival lover, however, Caesar still seems to be affected by Cleopatra’s beauty: ‘þottí Julio Cleopatra ollv fegrí’ (*Róm* 88:379) [Julius (Caesar) thought Cleopatra more beautiful than everything]. Though the feast does not seem to have seduction as its *raison d’être* in the Old Norse, it still seems to contribute to Cleopatra’s seduction of Caesar.

Interestingly, Cleopatra’s appearance is not described anywhere in the translation. The queen’s beauty is described in extensive detail in Lucan (*LP* X.82-84, X.137-143), but none of this is preserved in *Rómverja saga*. For the figure whose allure ostensibly caused the downfall of two prominent Roman men, the lack of a physical description seems unusual. Depictions of female beauty are also, however, notably rare in the *Íslendingasögur*; as Jochens (1991a) has identified, there are more descriptions of the physical beauty of men than of

women. This also seems to be the case in *Rómverja saga*, where (as shall be shown) Octavian's appearance is described with some interest, while Cleopatra's is never given specific detail. This contrasts the depiction in, for example, the Old French *Li Fet des Romains* (*LFR* i pp. 626–627), with its detailed description of Cleopatra's appearance, including her appealing figure, wide forehead, sparkling eyes, and blonde hair (see Beer, 1976, pp. 159–161).

The historical Cleopatra, with mixed Greek and Egyptian heritage (see Roller, 2010, pp. 15, 165–166), almost certainly did not have blonde hair. Cleopatra's race has been the subject of much critical debate and creative output, but Samuel Agbamu ([2024]) writes that the queen 'did not radically differ from a normative Mediterranean appearance'. Her hair and skin would thus have been darker than that of the typical Icelander or Norwegian.²⁷⁷ Consequently, Cleopatra might not have aligned with the heavily racialised beauty standards in the medieval North; dark skin and hair are frequently described as ugly throughout the Old Norse corpus (see Jochens, 1991a, pp. 6, 19, and Richard Cole, 2015b, pp. 23, 33–35).²⁷⁸ This perhaps explains why no detail is given about the appearance of this beautiful and (likely) dark-skinned queen in *Rómverja saga*, even as the translator comments on the skin colour of her servants: 'sumir varo húítir sem sníor. en sumir suartari enn iðrd' (*Róm* 88:378) [some

²⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the only comment perhaps suggestive of Cleopatra's race in Lucan is the note that she has 'candida [...] pectora' (*LP* X.141) [white breasts]; hardly a marker of dark skin.

²⁷⁸ On perspectives towards race in Old Norse literature, see also, for example, John Lindow, 1995; Jochens, 1999; Cole, 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Cordelia Heß and Jonathan Adams, eds, 2015; Sverrir Jakobsson, 2016; Basil Arnould Price, 2020; Arngrímur Vídalín, 2020.

were white as snow and some blacker than earth]. An anxiety about racial difference is perhaps behind the conspicuous silence on Cleopatra's appearance.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the translator also removes the line from Lucan (*LP* X.82-84) in which Cleopatra manipulates her appearance to appeal to Caesar: a detail that could have been included regardless of any racial anxieties at play. This contrasts the treatment of Delilah's seduction, where the translator introduces a description of her dressing to impress Samson (with all its parallels to the Old Norse stories of Judith, Ruth, and Jezebel). There therefore seems to be an overall tendency to de-emphasise Cleopatra's appearance. This perhaps underlines the significance of her voice in the seduction scenes. Though Cleopatra's beauty is certainly appealing to Caesar, it is when she speaks that his *hugr* gravitates towards her.

Continuing Cleopatra's Story

Lucan never finished his *Pharsalia*; he was forced to commit suicide as punishment for conspiring against Nero before he completed the tenth book. It is unclear how he intended to finish the epic, and how much more history he wished to cover.²⁷⁹ The text as it stands, however, 'describes Cleopatra's success rather than her defeat and places her not at the ending

²⁷⁹ Various scholars speculate on this; see, for example, J. D. Duff, 1928, p. xii, and Frederick M. Ahl, 1976, pp. 306-326.

point of the civil war but at the start of the dynasty that replaced it' (Feldherr, 2021, p. 136).

This is not the case in *Rómverja saga*.

The Old Norse translator includes a summary of the history from the Alexandrian War until the reign of Augustus Caesar to end the saga. This span of history includes Cleopatra's relationship with Antony, their defeat at Actium, and their eventual double suicide. Cleopatra's story is thus narrated to its tragic end in the Old Norse translation, demonstrating how her seductions lead to her defeat. Though this passage moves quickly through history, there is a brief account of Cleopatra's relationship with Antony and an additional detail stating that the queen attempted to seduce Octavian.

The summa historiae Translation

As discussed in the Introduction, *Rómverja saga* closes with a description of Roman history with no clear source. Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010, pp. lxxxvi–cxii) argues that the source is a translation of an extended *summa historiae*, and she notes two editions of such *summae*: *AccA* and *AccBT*. These texts are used in this analysis for some guidance as to the potential contents of the source, though they are not the exact source used by the translator. The Old Norse text, however, contains an additional scene that is absent from both *AccA* and *AccBT*: Cleopatra's final (seductive) meeting with Octavian. This scene is found in certain classical accounts of Cleopatra's life, so it is likely that the translator received some details about it from his source text. In the absence of an appropriate source for this scene, I compare the

text against the extant classical versions by Plutarch (*PPL* ii 83:1137) and Dio (*LRH* 51.305–306:516–518). Though these texts should not be considered sources, they can be used as a guide to indicate the ideas that might have been available to the Norse translator from some intermediary text.

This passage of *Rómverja saga* has parallels in *Clemens saga*, *Veraldar saga*, and the world history in AM 764 4to.²⁸⁰ These texts have a common source, either a translation of the *summa historiae* or an earlier version of *Rómverja saga* (see the Introduction). Cleopatra is absent from the version in *Clemens saga*, but her death is briefly mentioned in AM 764 4to (*Nsumh* p. cvi). There is more detail in *Veraldar saga*, in which Cleopatra is described as Ptolemy's sister and Caesar's mistress, to whom Caesar gives Egypt after his success in the Alexandrian War (*Nsumh* p. xcvi). Later in *Veraldar saga*, Cleopatra appears again when she kills herself alongside Antony: 'Antonius vard yfirstiginn ok banadi sier sialfr med eitri oc svo Cleopatra kona hans' (*Nsumh* p. cv) [Antony was overcome and killed himself with poison, and thus also Cleopatra his wife]. Cleopatra's climatic death is here merely a sidenote to Antony's suicide.

All other versions thus contain fewer details about Cleopatra than *Rómverja saga*. Perhaps the compiler of *Rómverja saga* wished to retain or include more detail to complete the story of the Egyptian queen that begins in the Lucan translation. It is unclear whether all

²⁸⁰ For easy comparison between the four versions, I reference here the side-by-side edition provided by Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (abbreviated *Nsumh*).

the details about Cleopatra's life and death contained in *Rómverja saga* were in the source used for these other texts, or if they were later additions. Regardless, the compiler of *Rómverja saga* is certainly more interested in Cleopatra and her seductive powers than the authors of these other texts.

Cleopatra in Rómverja saga's summa historiae

Cleopatra first appears in this part of *Rómverja saga* when Caesar gives her all of Egypt after conquering it (*Róm* 90:382). She is next mentioned during the breakdown of Antony and Octavian's relationship, where her love affair with Antony is described in political rather than emotional terms: 'hann skildi þa med systur Augusti. ok sendi hana med ðngri virðing heim til brodur síns. En feck Cleopatre er verít hafði frilla Iulij. þottiz hann nu ok vita at Augusto mundí illa lika' (*Róm* 93:387) [He (Antony) separated from the sister of Augustus (Octavian) and sent her home to her brother with no honour and married Cleopatra, who had been Julius' (Caesar's) mistress. He was certain that Augustus (Octavian) would be displeased]. Antony seems to marry Cleopatra in the Old Norse out of spite for Octavian rather than love for Cleopatra. This comment on Octavian's expected emotional response has no precedent in the corresponding passage of either *AccA* (p. 5) or *AccBT* (pp. 41-42); it might, therefore have been added by the translator, perhaps to minimise the love between Antony and Cleopatra.

The translator then describes how both Antony and Cleopatra gather armies to fight Octavian, and he gives a brief account of the battles (*Róm* 93:387-388). After his defeat,

Antony flees and kills himself (*Róm* 93:388). Before Cleopatra's suicide, however, the translator introduces an additional detail describing Cleopatra's attempt to seduce Octavian (*Róm* 93:388). When this fails, she kills herself in Antony's tomb, over his body (*Róm* 93:388).

A Desperate, Dying Cleopatra: One Last Seduction

Two classical sources describe a meeting between Cleopatra and Octavian before her suicide: Plutarch (*PPL* ii 83:1137) and Dio (*LRH* 51.305–306:516–518). In both versions, Cleopatra is depicted as being in some way seductive, though this is more obvious in Dio. While some scholars doubt the historicity of this meeting (see M. Grant, 1972, p. 225), others accept that it did take place (see Roller, 2010, pp. 146–147), though it is unlikely Cleopatra tried to seduce Octavian (see Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 382).

Plutarch (*PPL* ii 83:1137) describes a sick and desperate Cleopatra, whose body shows signs of harm. Despite this, her charm shines (*effulgere*) from 'motibus vultus' (*PPL* ii 83:1137) [the movement/play of her features]. Cleopatra seems to make no active attempt at seduction in this account, but her innate seductive nature shines through, even in her destitution. With a Baudrillardian model for seduction, Cleopatra could be depicted as a seductress here, with the movement of her features perhaps encapsulating 'le jeu pur des apparences' (Baudrillard, 1979, p. 17) ['the pure play of appearances' (Singer, 1990, p. 8)] that defines seduction.

In Dio's account (*LRH* 51.305–306:516–518), however, Cleopatra actively attempts to seduce Octavian. She sets up a carefully curated scene with props and decorations designed

to entrap Octavian (*LRH* 51.305:515). This has some similarity with the inciter women in Old Norse literature who set up an incitement scene (see Chapter One). She speaks flirtatiously to Octavian, who resists the sway of her charm (*LRH* 51.305–306:516–517). As Goldsworthy (2010, pp. 382–383) writes, ‘Propaganda emphasised that Octavian was not to be seduced like Caesar and Antony’.

After Antony’s suicide, the story in *Rómverja saga* is as follows:

Nu bioz Cleopatra af Egipta landi. ok ætlar a fund Augusti. ok treystir á fegrd sína ok munud hans. þuiat hann var allra manna fridaztr. ok bar þat þo mest til huersu afbragðliga hann var eygðr. Hann var manna kuensamaztr. Hon sendi menn til hans ok uilldi na at tala med hann. en hann giætti sín vandliga. ok uilldi huarki sía hana ne heyra. ok er hon þottiz forsmad i þessu. þa for hon aptr til Egipta landz. (*Róm* 93:388)

[Now Cleopatra set out from Egypt and intends to meet with Augustus (Octavian), trusting in her beauty and his lust, because he was the most beautiful of all men, and this was mostly because he had surpassingly nice eyes. He was the most amorous of all men. She sent men to him and wished to get to speak with him, but he guarded himself carefully and wished to neither see nor hear her. When she felt despised by this, she went back to Egypt.]

The queen clearly intends to convince Octavian using her sexual allure: this is the most explicit Old Norse seduction scene (or an attempt at one) examined so far. While her first seduction might have been inadvertent, the queen has clearly learned by now that her seductions have political potential.

Unlike in both Plutarch and Dio, Octavian refuses to meet with Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga*, acting *vandliga* [carefully] to avoid her influence. Her seductions are evidently very

powerful, evoking caution and perhaps even fear in this Roman ruler. There is a classical precedent for Octavian's struggle against Cleopatra's allure in Dio's account of their meeting (*LRH* 51.305:517). Dio writes, 'Cæsar quanquam mulierem ciendis affectibus intentam animaduertebat, tamen eo dissimulato, oculis in terram defixis, hoc vnum pronuntiauit...' (*LRH* 51.305:517) [Although Caesar (Octavian) noticed the woman intent to rouse his passions, concealing it and fixing his eyes on the ground, he said only this...]. While Dio's Octavian can escape Cleopatra's influence by averting his eyes, in *Rómverja saga* the Roman must also avoid Cleopatra's words, refusing to see *or hear* her. This emphasises the importance of the voice in seduction; though Cleopatra intends to rely upon her beauty (*fegrð*), her verbal prowess is considered equally dangerous by Octavian. Although Dio's Octavian can face the seductions of Cleopatra and resist, this is too risky for the Octavian of *Rómverja saga*. To avoid the woman's dangerous influence, Octavian must not listen to her words.

Octavian's Lust

Cleopatra's beautiful appearance is not described in this passage, but Octavian's lust seems to be explained with a description of his physical beauty. In the line 'þuiat hann var allra manna fridaztr' (*Róm* 93:388) [because he was the most beautiful of all men], the male pronoun is perhaps surprising, since this phrase explains why Cleopatra 'treystir á fegrð sína ok munud hans' (*Róm* 93:388) [trusts in her beauty and his lust]. This line, with the conjunction *því at*, states that Octavian's beauty is the source of his lust; this is emphasised in the later comment,

with parallel phrasing, that ‘*Hann var manna kuensamaztr*’ (*Róm* 93:388) [He was the most amorous of all men]. Male beauty here seems to represent a high libido, making a man more susceptible to seduction. Male rather than female beauty appears to define the risk of the seduction scene.

Octavian, like many saga heroes (see Annette Lassen, 2003, pp. 17-42), has particularly fine eyes (*Róm* 93:388): a description that probably refers both to the appearance of his eyes and the strength of his eyesight. Lassen (2003) has demonstrated the connections between strong male eyesight, masculinity, and sexual virility in Old Norse texts. Like his beauty, Octavian’s surpassingly fine eyes(ight) represent(s) his lust for women, which Cleopatra hopes to play upon. Though Jochens (1991a, p. 22) concludes that ‘Old Norse culture had not yet constructed a fully developed male gaze’, Old Norse texts depict men who use their superior eyesight to look at and lust over women’s bodies. As in Samson’s saga, a man’s source of masculinity is linked to his susceptibility to women’s seductions: Cleopatra intends to use Octavian’s fine, lustful eyes to manipulate him.

A Lover’s Death

When Octavian denies her an audience, Cleopatra returns to Egypt, opens Antony’s tomb, sits next to his body and kills herself: ‘hon [...] lét ormínn aspidem koma a briost *ser*. ok iafnskiott beit *hann hana* til bana’ (*Róm* 93:388) [she placed an asp on her breast, and it immediately bites her to death]. The saga ends shortly after this, following a brief description

of Augustus' reign and the birth of Christ (*Róm* 93:389-390). It is unclear in the classical sources whether Cleopatra's suicide takes place at Antony's tomb or elsewhere. Plutarch (*PPL* ii 84-85:1137-1138), for example, states that Cleopatra visits Antony's body before she prepares for her suicide. Roller (2010, p. 147) writes, 'It is not obvious whether she returned to the palace or whether the following events [i.e. the suicide] occurred at the tomb'. The Old Norse translator thus may have received some source that described the suicide at Antony's tomb, incorporating this narrative into his translation.

Cleopatra in *Rómverja saga* dies next to Antony's body like a lover, embracing death to be with her dearly departed. This seems quite ironic considering she has just tried to seduce Antony's sworn enemy. It nevertheless defines her, even in her death, by her romantic relationships with men. The scene perhaps recalls that of Brynhildr running into Sigurðr's funeral pyre in *Völsunga saga* (*Völs* 33:61) or Sigrún's visit to the grave mound of her lost lover in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (*Edd* ÍF ii 280-283), where she spends a final (sexual?) night with Helgi's revenant and dies shortly afterwards. Unable to find a new target for her seductions, Cleopatra instead continues acting out her role as Antony's lover, performing an established trope of female suicide.

Cleopatra VII in Gyðinga saga

In AM 226 fol., Cleopatra's death and the conflict that leads to it is depicted a second time in *Gyðinga saga* (*Gyð* 29:142-144). This is found in the second part of the saga, which narrates

events that overlap with the timeline treated in *Rómverja saga*. The focus of the events is different, however, as *Gyðinga saga* centres on Judea.

The Sources

The material in this part of the saga is translated from Peter Comestor, who in turn uses Josephus. There are, however, certain details in *Gyðinga saga* that are closer to Josephus' account than the *Historia Scholastica*; there is some debate about whether the translator had access to Josephus' texts or if he had a more extensive version of the *Historia Scholastica* than available in modern editions (see the Introduction). The following analysis compares the text of *Gyðinga saga* against both Josephus (in Latin) and Comestor, using the Patrologia Latina edition of the *Historia (HS)*.

All details about Cleopatra in *Gyðinga saga*, except two, have their source in some combination of Comestor and Josephus. The mention of Cleopatra's suicide (*Gyð* 29:143) and the use of her death to date the birth of Christ (*Gyð* 30:146), however, cannot be found in these sources (see Kirsten Wolf, 1995, p. xcvi). Thomas N. Hall (1999) identifies Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* as a possible source for the latter detail.

As Jan Willem van Henten (2005, p. 115) writes, 'Josephus is one of the most negative ancient sources about Cleopatra'. The root source of most information about the queen in *Gyðinga saga*, then, is the work of a man who was 'savagely biased against the queen' (M. Grant, 1972, p. 240). Across Josephus' three major works (*Bellum Judaicum*, *Antiquitates*

Judaicae, and *Contra Apionem*), Cleopatra is said to corrupt Antony and persecute the Jews of Egypt and Judea (see Van Henten, 2005). It is unclear whether the historical Cleopatra actually persecuted the Jews in this way; Sarah Pearce (2017), for example, argues that Josephus distorts the image of Cleopatra to defend Judaism in a Rome rife with antisemitism. Since Cleopatra already had a negative reputation, Josephus perhaps used this to his advantage. Pearce (2017, p. 32) describes Josephus' technique as follows: "we" Jews should be glorified, not maligned, for finding "ourselves" also abused by this monstrous queen'. The enemy of our enemy is our friend.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Cole (2015a, esp. pp. 220-231) has identified the philo-Semitic tendencies of the translator of *Gyðinga saga*. There is a particular interest in Jewish customs (explored further in the next chapter), and the image of the Jews is generally positive. It might therefore be expected that the translator would linger upon and condemn Cleopatra's persecution of the Jews. Although the translator includes some details about Herod and Cleopatra's fraught political relationship, however, there is no mention of Cleopatra's attacks on the Jewish people in *Gyðinga saga*. Cleopatra is depicted negatively, but this is for her seductions rather than her antisemitism.

The narrative space devoted to Cleopatra decreases from Josephus to Comestor to *Gyðinga saga*. The Old Norse translator thus appears to omit details about Cleopatra, perhaps because her story has already been dealt with earlier in the manuscript. Some of the details

that seem to be omitted depict Cleopatra as a dangerous seductress (e.g., *BJud* 1.XII.5; *HS* 1534C), while others portray her more positively (e.g., *AJud* 15.II).²⁸¹ There is, however, no way to be certain that these points were in the translator's source. All the details included in the text paint the queen in a wholly negative light, as a bloodthirsty seductress.

Cleopatra's Clash with Herod

The narrative in this part of *Gyðinga saga* focuses on Herod, and thus Cleopatra's relationship with the Judean king. The translator hints at the deep feud between the two rulers when discussing the Battle of Actium and Octavian's victory. The historical Herod did not participate in this fight. As M. Grant (1972, p. 196) writes, 'Cleopatra decided that her worst enemy, Herod of Judea, ought to be kept at a safe distance', and so she sent him to war with the Nabataeans instead. In *Gyðinga saga*, Herod also does not fight in Actium, but the reason given for his Arabian war is different: 'uilldi hon taka vndir sik þess ríki sem sigradr yrði' (*Gyð* 29:143) [she (Cleopatra) wished to take for herself the kingdom that would be overcome]. Cleopatra in the Old Norse translation does not act out of caution, but greed, desiring to expand her kingdom. She seems to have no great stake in the war: if Herod lost, she would take Judea, if his opposition fell, she would have Arabia. Cleopatra is not a shrewd political ruler, but a bloodthirsty woman intent on expanding her kingdom regardless of the cost.

²⁸¹ Although the portrait of Cleopatra is overwhelmingly negative, Sarah Pearce (2017, p. 63) writes, 'Josephus gave us glimpses of another Cleopatra, offering refuge to members of Jewish aristocracy'.

Following this, the translator adds further details about the feud between Herod and Cleopatra: ‘*adr hafdi hon rægt hann med antonium marcum. ok kom þat fyrir ecki*’ (*Gyð* 29:143) [she (Cleopatra) had previously slandered him (Herod) to Mark Antony, but it came to nothing]. The queen attempts to use speech acts to convince Antony to abandon his friend, but her words are fruitless. This contrasts inciter women like Hringr’s wife, whose passionate urgings for her husband to act peacefully to his friend, king Gautrekr, successfully define the political landscape by preventing conflict (see Chapter One). It can be assumed, based on the depiction of Cleopatra as a seductress that follows (see below), that she is mixing speech acts with some sexual or romantic appeal here. Although Cleopatra’s seductions are powerful and effective in *Rómverja saga*, her speech acts in this line appear weak and ineffective, similar to the portrayal of Delilah and the Timnite’s seductive nagging, which only works through repetition. Perhaps the repeated slander of Herod might have worked if Cleopatra and Antony lived longer, giving her more time to nag her lover.

The depiction of Cleopatra as Herod’s enemy needs not, however, condemn the queen. Herod is first introduced in *Gyðinga saga* as ‘*herodes. hiN illi*’ (*Gyð* 24:121) [Herod the bad], and the translator repeatedly stresses his evil nature and his persecution of the Jews (e.g., *Gyð* 30:148–149, 31:158–159). When Herod requests that Jewish leaders are killed upon his death (*Gyð* 31:158–159), Cole (2015a, p. 227) even suggests an identification between the Jews and the Icelanders (under Norwegian rule), emphasising the negative portrait of Herod. Omitting

Cleopatra's persecution of the Jews (according to Josephus) and depicting her as the enemy of Herod the bad, the translator perhaps depicts Cleopatra positively: the enemy of our enemy is our friend.

There are, however, moments of redemption for Herod in the saga, as in the source material. Van Henten (2016, p. 237) writes, 'Herod's capabilities as a military commander contributed significantly to a positive image'; these military successes are depicted in *Gyðinga saga* (*Gyð* 25:126, 26:130, 27:131-135, 28:137-140, 29:143-145). While these moments do not make up for the atrocities Herod commits, they do nuance the portrayal, depicting Herod as a capable military leader as well as a fierce oppressor of both Christians and Jews. It is perhaps for the reader to decide whether his conflict with Cleopatra is part of his folly or his martial prudence.

Herod's Speech

The portrait of Cleopatra in *Gyðinga saga* centres around Herod's speech to Octavian (now Augustus). After the defeat and deaths of Antony and Cleopatra, Herod appears to Augustus to ask for mercy (*Gyð* 29:143). As Antony's former ally, Herod would naturally have been Augustus' enemy, but he turns the situation in his favour by blaming Cleopatra in his speech act:

Med gengr ek þui herra at ek var traustr uín antoníj. ok þat skylldir þu hafa reynt vid actum ef ek hefði þar verit. ok þo senda ek honum bædi vapn ok ústir. ok þat uillda ek at hann hefði drepit eittr þódduna cleopatram. er rót ok

upp spretta var allz v fridar yckar imillí. Enn nu er ek yfir kominn. ok væntandi af ydr lifs ok líma. (*Gyð* 29:143)

[I confess to you, lord, that I was a trusted friend of Antony, and you would have experienced that at Actium if I had been there. And though I sent to him (Antony) both weapons and provisions, I also wanted him to kill the poisonous toad, Cleopatra, who was the root and source of all hostility between you two. But now I am overcome, hoping for life and limb from you.]

Augustus then forgives Herod, praising his ‘stadfesti. ok trulyndi’ (*Gyð* 29:143) [steadfastness and faithfulness]. After achieving military success for Augustus, Herod is even given some of Cleopatra’s former kingdom to control (presumably the parts that had originally belonged to Judea; see Roller, 2010, p. 153).

Herod’s argument, that his feud with Cleopatra aligns him with Augustus (the enemy of our enemy, etc.), makes sense historically, since Octavian officially declared war on Cleopatra rather than Antony.²⁸² For the most part, this argument comes from Josephus (see below). It is less appropriate in the Old Norse translation, however, where the war is fought against either Antony alone (*Gyð* 29:142) or both Antony and Cleopatra (*Róm* 93:388). This makes Herod’s position even more fraught in the Old Norse rendering and his argument harder to execute. This might explain why the translator places especial emphasis on Cleopatra’s culpability, adding in extra details and perhaps choosing to use as a source the version of this speech that is more condemnatory towards Cleopatra.

²⁸² See M. Grant, 1972, p. 201; Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 347; Roller, 2010, pp. 136–137.

The Old Norse translator here emulates the rhetorical strategies used by Herod in Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*AJud* 15.VIII). This differs from the speech in (the Patrologia Latina edition of) Comestor (*HS* 1536A), which is based instead on Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJud* 1.XX.1; see Annabelle Flores Fersch, 1982, p. 162). In both the *Historia Scholastica* (*HS* 1536A) and *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJud* 1.XX.1), Herod declares that he would only have provided military support for Antony if he rejected Cleopatra: 'nec modo deessem, si mihi acquiescens, Cleopatram [...] occidisset' (*HS* 1536A) [nor would I have been lacking, if, agreeing with me, he had killed Cleopatra]. As Van Henten (2005, p. 122) writes, 'Herod saw himself as the much better alternative for Cleopatra'.

Herod's allyship with Antony is not conditional in either *Gyðinga saga* or *Antiquitates Judaicae*, however. In Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*AJud* 15.VIII), Herod does not state that he withheld support from Antony because of Cleopatra, though he does tell Augustus that he asked his friend to kill the queen, declaring, 'si perempta illa fuisset nullatenus a rerum principatu concidisset, immo magis et tuas facilius indignationes euitasset' (*AJud* 15.VIII) [if she (Cleopatra) had been killed, he (Antony) would in no way have fallen from the command of government, and, greatly to the contrary, he would have more easily avoided your (Augustus') indignation]. In this speech, Cleopatra is depicted as the root cause of the conflict between Augustus and Antony, rather than as the cause of a schism between Herod and Antony. Elements of this argument can also be glimpsed in (the Patrologia Latina edition of)

the *Historia Scholastica*, where Cleopatra is called ‘odii vestri fomitem’ (HS 1536A) [the fuel of your hatred]. While the plural second person pronoun might be the royal plural, showing respect to the Roman Emperor, it seems instead to refer to both Augustus and Antony. As Van Henten (2005, p. 122) writes, ‘Herod suggests that Antony and Octavian would not have become enemies without Cleopatra’s influence, turning Cleopatra—not Antony—into Rome’s real enemy’.

In *Gyðinga saga*, the translator uses the argument presented in *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*AJud* 15.VIII), but he also includes a translation of this line about Cleopatra’s influence from the *Historia Scholastica* (HS 1536A). It is impossible to tell if this combination of details is all that was available to the translator, or if he chooses the elements from his source(s) which highlight Cleopatra’s culpability. The depiction that remains in *Gyðinga saga*, however, forefronts Cleopatra’s role in instigating the conflict, using the word pair ‘rót ok upp spretta’ (*Gyð* 29:143) [root and source] to highlight this. The translator gives no evidence in *Gyðinga saga* to contradict Herod’s depiction of the queen. The overwhelming impression of Cleopatra in this text is thus of a powerful but ultimately destructive woman, who brought two great Roman leaders into conflict.

A Poisonous Toad

There is one element of Herod’s speech that seems to link Cleopatra’s power to her seductions: the ‘eittr pödduna’ (*Gyð* 29:143) [poisonous toad] metaphor. There is no precedent for this

comparison in either Comestor or Josephus; Fersch (1982, p. 162) suggests that it may be ‘an echo of *Gyð* 61.7’ (*Gyð* 22:111), which depicts the seductions of Salina Alexandra (discussed below). It also seems to recall the description of Delilah as a poisonous serpent. As I shall go on to argue, seductresses throughout Old Norse literature seem to be described with a simile or metaphor comparing them to poisonous serpents or toads. If this is the case, then the immense power ascribed to her in this speech is linked to her seductions. Though the verbal elements of this are not made explicit here, the role of speech in Cleopatra’s seductions has been highlighted elsewhere in the manuscript (e.g., *Róm* 93:388).

It is perhaps interesting that Cleopatra is compared to a toad rather than a serpent: a more obvious choice for the queen considering the myth of her suicide by asp bite, as recorded in *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 93:388). Perhaps, however, you cannot kill a poisonous snake with a poisonous snake. Though Delilah is only compared to a poisonous serpent, other seductresses (like Salina Alexandra) are compared to both serpents and toads (see below). In *Gyðinga saga*, Cleopatra is connected to poisonous creatures not because of her suicide but due to her (supposed) way of life, which plays into the metaphor of seductresses as serpents or toads within the wider literary corpus.

The image of the toad in medieval literature is overwhelmingly negative (see Mary E. Robbins, 1996, and A. P. Tudor, 1996), but in Old Norse literature it seems to be associated specifically with the seductress. The sexual and promiscuous associations perhaps emerged

from the mating habits of toads; as males outnumber the females, clusters of male toads will simultaneously mate with one female, creating visible ‘mating balls’ that often kill the female toad (see Paul A. Verrell and Norah R. McCabe, 1986). If medieval people in the North had seen these clusters, it is possible that they would have associated toads with (female) sexual promiscuity. This, however, brings up further questions, since there are no native snakes or toads in Iceland. These creatures are nonetheless found throughout Old Norse literature, but they must have been encountered outside of Iceland. There are also potential classical and religious associations between toads, evil, and sexuality that might have informed the connection between the toad and the seductress in Old Norse literature,²⁸³ but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Further examples are, nevertheless, given below of other occurrences of the poisonous snake/toad metaphor in the Old Norse corpus.

Conclusion: Cleopatra VII in Old Norse Translation

Throughout AM 226 fol., Cleopatra grows into a dangerous seductress. Although Cleopatra seems to have little agency in her first encounter with Caesar, when both figures are at the mercy of Caesar’s *hugr*, she later makes active attempts to seduce Octavian, having learnt the power of her seductions. The risk of succumbing to seduction is too great for Octavian, however, who shuns both the queen’s beauty and her words because of their dangerous

²⁸³ See, for example, Amanda Luyster, 2001, and Emma Wilby, 2019, esp. pp. 135-155.

potential. Though Cleopatra dies a lover's death at the end of *Rómverja saga*, her reputation is overwritten in Herod's speech in *Gyðinga saga*. Through Herod, the translator defines the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra as the seductive exploitation and corruption of a noble man, rather than as the tragic affair of star-crossed lovers. Like the historical Cleopatra, the figure in AM 226 fol. is redefined after her death by propaganda that serves Augustus' agenda. The vilification of Cleopatra reaches its crux when Herod calls her a poisonous toad, connecting her to other seductresses within Old Norse literature. Throughout these various details of her life, the translator emphasises both the verbal nature of Cleopatra's seductions and their destructive power. Unlike the seductions of Delilah and the Timnite, Cleopatra's seductions seem even more powerful than female incitements: they corrupt great men, stir up war, end empires, and completely redefine Roman politics.

Further Poisonous Snakes and Toads in Old Norse Literature

Cleopatra and Delilah are not the only seductresses who are compared to poisonous snakes or toads; this appears to be a trope within the wider Norse literary corpus. The following explores a selection of further examples, beginning with Salina Alexandra in *Gyðinga saga*: the third and final seductress in AM 226 fol. that is described as a poisonous herptile. I then note two examples from the wider corpus to demonstrate that this trope is not limited to the

texts of AM 226 fol. A thorough examination of the occurrences throughout Old Norse literature is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

Salina Alexandra in Gyðinga saga

Salina Alexandra was the wife of the first Hasmonean ruler of Judea, Aristobulus I,²⁸⁴ who played an important part in the conspiracy that drove the king to kill his brother. The only classical sources for her story are Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*AJud* 13.XVII-XVIII) and *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJud* 1.III-IV). Scholars have debated whether she is the same person as Salome Alexander, the wife of Alexander Jannaeus.²⁸⁵ The latter Salome successfully ruled Judea as sole monarch for nine years following the death of her husband; she is often considered 'Judea's greatest monarch' (Kenneth Atkinson, 2012, p. 11). In both the *Historia Scholastica* and *Gyðinga saga*, however, the figures appear to be separate: Salina Alexandra is criticised as a murderous seductress while Salome Alexandra is a popular and capable leader.²⁸⁶

Salina Alexandra, who remains unnamed in the Norse account, appears in *Gyðinga saga* when her husband, Aristobulus, rules alongside his brother, Antigonus. This passage (explored in detail below) reads as follows:

Aristobolus æ konu væna. Hon hafdi optliga brogd ok vælar til sett. at ná antigono. en hann vill æigi suikia brodur sínn. ok varaz hana sem eitrligan orm.

²⁸⁴ On Aristobulus I in *Gyðinga saga*, see Cole, 2015a, pp. 225-227.

²⁸⁵ See Tal Ilan, 1993; Kenneth Atkinson, 2012, pp. 62-64; 2016, pp. 85-86.

²⁸⁶ The naming of these figures follows Ilan, 1993.

edr putuliga þóddv. Enn hon fylltiz vpp eitrligrar illzku i moti honum. (Gyð 22:111)

[Aristobulus had a beautiful wife. She had frequently set schemes and tricks to catch Antigonus, but he did not want to betray his brother and was on guard with her like a poisonous snake or whorish toad. And she was filled with poisonous wickedness against him.]

Salina then successfully lays a trap to kill Antigonus by tricking Aristobulus, convincing him that his brother is planning an uprising (Gyð 22:111-113). Her voice is emphasised in her plotting; her dialogue with Aristobulus, which combines assertive and directive speech acts, is rendered in direct speech in the text, and she is later said to train, *temja*, the tongue, *tunga*, of a messenger (Gyð 22:112).

The nature of the ‘brogd ok vælar’ (Gyð 22:111) [schemes and tricks] Salina uses to try to entrap Antigonus in the above quotation is perhaps ambiguous in the Old Norse renarration. They could be interpreted as political traps to take down her husband’s co-ruler, or they could be sexual seductions to convince Antigonus to sleep with her. The interpretation seems to largely rest on the ambiguous male pronouns, which could refer either to Aristobulus or Antigonus. If Aristobulus does not want to betray his brother, this would indicate that Salina’s ‘brogd ok vælar’ (Gyð 22:111) [schemes and tricks] were previous attempts to convince her husband to turn against or kill Antigonus, just like she does in the following narrative (Gyð 22:111-113). It seems more likely, however, that the pronoun *hann* [he] in this line refers to the male object in the immediately preceding clause: Antigonus. If

Antigonus does not want to betray his brother, this would suggest that Salina uses ‘brogd ok vælar’ (Gyð 22:111) [schemes and tricks] to *ná* [get] Antonius in a way that would be considered a betrayal of Aristobulus, her husband. It is possible, then, that Salina tries to convince her brother-in-law to sleep with her.

Antonius is said to be weary of Salina as if she were an ‘eitrligan orm. edr putuliga pòddv’ (Gyð 22:111) [poisonous snake or whorish toad]. The adjective ‘putuliga’ (Gyð 22:111) derives from *púta*: the condemnatory word for prostitute seen earlier in the diatribe against Delilah. The translator seems to be condemning her for her sexuality, supporting the interpretation of Salina’s ‘brogd ok vælar’ (Gyð 22:111) [schemes and tricks] as seductive tactics to *ná* [get] Antonius sexually. When he refuses, she develops a strong hatred, or ‘eitrligrar illzku’ (Gyð 22:111) [poisonous wickedness], towards the man who has rejected her.

Fersch (1982, p. 126) notes that this scene uses ‘the “Joseph and Potiphar’s wife” motif’,²⁸⁷ which appears in the *Historia Scholastica* (HS 1526A-D) version of this story but not in Josephus’ (*AJud* 13.XVII-XVIII; *BJud* 1.III-IV). Comestor (HS 1526A-B) is more explicit about Salina’s seductions. In his *Historia Scholastica*, Salina is said to have ‘oculos in eum iniecerat, sed ipse ei assensum non præbebat’ (HS 1526A) [cast her eyes on him

²⁸⁷ The biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife is depicted in *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I pp. 299-301). Due to space limitations, the story cannot be discussed here. Potiphar’s wife is not compared to a poisonous herptile in *Stjórn* I.

(Antonius), but he had refused to consent to that]. The Old Norse translator seems to include this detail in his renarration.

The poisonous herptile comparative in *Gyðinga saga* is perhaps designed to signal to the reader that a seduction is taking place here. There are several examples connecting seductresses to poisonous serpents and/or toads; the comparative was perhaps popular enough to function as an effective label, identifying the figure as a seductress whilst condemning her for her sexual manipulations. As with the other seductresses explored in this chapter, the depiction of Salina Alexandra is damning.

Two Examples Beyond AM 226 fol.

In *Yngvars saga víðfjrla* (*Yngv* pp. 26-27), a group of mysterious women approach Yngvarr and his men, trying to sleep with them. The protagonist warns his men: ‘Ynguar bad þa suo uarazt konurnar sem hina uersta eiturorma’ (*Yngv* p. 26) [Yngvarr instructed them to be on guard with the women as if they were the worst poisonous snakes]. Here, the saga author uses the poisonous snake comparison in the same construction as in the Salina Alexandra passage: the reflexive form of the verb *vara* [to warn, caution], a noun or pronoun representing the seductress(es), and then the comparison, using *sem*, with poisonous herptiles. This seems too similar to be coincidental. While there could have been some contact between the texts to transfer this line, it seems more likely that it is a stock phrase used to depict seductresses. While women’s counsel is said to be cold, their seductions are poisonous.

In the popular story of the marriage between the Norwegian king Haraldr and the Sámi woman Snæfríðr, there is perhaps another occurrence of this trope, though this is more ambiguous. The story is found in *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum* (*Ágrip* ÍF 29 3-4:5-7) and *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* (*HarHárf* ÍF 26 25:125-127).²⁸⁸ Snæfríðr wins king Haraldr's heart by giving him a drink, thus seemingly seducing him with magic or poison. The king then loves Snæfríðr so much that he neglects his royal responsibilities, even after her untimely death. Haraldr pines by the side of her body, which is miraculously preserved for one year, until her body is touched for the first time. It suddenly releases an awful smell, and creatures jump out from it, including 'ormar ok eðlur, froskar ok þóddur ok allskyns illyrmi' (*Ágrip* ÍF 29 4:6) [snakes and vipers, frogs and toads, and all kinds of evil/poisonous reptiles]. Snæfríðr's body turns into the snakes and toads to which her fellow seductresses are only compared. Though this is quite different from the other uses of the herptile metaphor discussed in this chapter, it nonetheless seems significant that the only animals that spring from the body of this seductress are those used elsewhere to depict seductresses. This could thus perhaps be read as a metamorphic embodiment of the trope.

²⁸⁸ On this story, see Gro Steinsland, 1991, pp. 208-211; Bandlien, 2005, pp. 134-135; Mundal, 2009, esp. pp. 30-33.

Conclusion: A Nordic Motif

In her analysis of the seducing women in *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla*, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2016, p. 199) writes, ‘As the role of the seductress was already long known in continental literature [...] *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* does not represent a Norse attitude to women *per se*’. While the extent to which continental literature has influenced the depiction of the seductress within the Old Norse corpus has yet to be studied, there does seem to be a specifically Nordic literary tradition associated with the seductress. The poisonous snake/toad metaphor, absent from the source material in all three instances in AM 226 fol., seems to represent a distinctly Nordic motif used to describe and denigrate seductive women.

Conclusion: Cold Counsel and Serpentine Seduction

Seduction scenes in AM 226 fol. present the translator with the opportunity to further emphasise the destructive effects of women’s voices. The seductresses use directives to convince men to act, much like the inciter women explored previously, though they in some way manipulate the hearer’s love or lust to (attempt to) achieve their goals. Sometimes it is unclear whether the woman intends to seduce, like when Cleopatra appeals to Caesar for help. When Delilah and the Timnite beg Samson to reveal his secrets, however, they purposely toy with his love (broadly defined). All the women explored here, however, seem to have no influence over whether the men become attracted to them; even figures like Salina Alexandra

and Potiphar's wife, who repeatedly try to stir up their target's desires, ultimately fail. In the seduction scenes explored here, men fall for the women, but the women can then use the men's desires to manipulate them.

Although seductresses and inciter women use the same type of speech act, the literary conventions associated with seduction and incitement scenes in Old Norse literature are different enough to keep their persuasions quite distinct. Different verbs are used to denote the speech acts in AM 226 fol. (*lokka* for seduction in Samson's saga and *eggja* for incitement), and seductions sometimes require repetition in a way that incitements do not. This might imply that incitement is the most powerful speech act; however, the translator emphasises the force of seduction in his diatribe against Delilah and in his renarration of Octavian's rejection and Herod's condemnation of Cleopatra. Seductresses seem to be criticised by the translator more than inciters, perhaps revealing a particular anxiety around women's manipulation of men's emotions and desires.

Due to the distinct literary traditions associated with female incitement and seduction, the seductress can be considered the evil sister of the inciter woman. Sisters can look similar even though they are fundamentally distinct. While the image of Jezebel in *Stjórn* III, explored in the previous chapter, has some seductive elements, the literary conventions describing the figure are ultimately those of the inciter woman trope.

While incitements are said to be cold, seductions are poisonous and serpentine. This chapter has unearthed a distinct trope connected to the seductress in Old Norse literature. There is no Old Norse word for ‘seductress’; the authors instead seem to label women as such by comparing them to poisonous serpents or toads.

If it is true, as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2016, p. 199) suggests, that the image of the seductress is imported to the medieval North from the continent (though more research is needed on this), then the seductress would have arrived in a literary culture already rife with concerns about female verbal power. Perhaps because of her foreignness, the seductress is compared to creatures foreign to Iceland, and she earns a worse reputation than the *Hetzerin*.

The seductresses examined here thus add to the growing collection of female figures in AM 226 fol. who are condemned for using their voice to influence men. As the next chapter shall demonstrate, however, some women in the manuscript are depicted using their voice for good rather than evil.

Warm Counsel: Female Incitement in Scenes of Martyrdom

The women examined thus far have been coded negatively by the translator as they use their words to influence men. Though, as I have shown, the translator pays special attention to the speech acts of the villainous women, there are nevertheless several figures in AM 226 fol. who incite men in a positive way, encouraging them to stay true to their religious or moral values. While David Clark (2009, p. 38) might call such women ‘anti-inciters’, they are performing the same speech act as the likes of Eve, Jezebel, and Athaliah, that is depicted with similar literary conventions.

There are numerous examples of women who goad men to choose peace, save lives, and turn away from needless revenge in AM 226 fol. This chapter selects three examples for close analysis based on the conditions used elsewhere in this thesis: the use of the word *eggja* and a particular emphasis on female verbal power. The unnamed Maccabean mother with seven sons in *Gyðinga saga* (*Gyð* 2:7-14) and Jephthah’s unnamed daughter in *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III pp. 640-643) stand out for these reasons. These accounts are also connected by martyrdom and sacrifice. For this reason, the story of John’s unnamed mother (*Gyð* 21:108-110) is also considered here, as she attempts to use her voice to sacrifice herself for the greater good. Her speech act, however, differs on two major counts: it fails to influence the hearer in the Norse translation, and it is not described with the words *eggja* or *áeggjan*.

These three accounts together present examples of women who use their verbal power for good in scenes of martyrdom and are (to some extent) praised for it in the Old Norse translation. Despite this focus on suffering and sacrifice, it is important to remember that AM 226 fol. contains no saints' lives. This chapter thus examines hagiographic moments within texts that focus primarily on classical and biblical history. These moments were nonetheless significant for at least one reader of the manuscript: the copyist who produced AM 225 fol. After faithfully copying the contents of AM 226 fol., this scribe added the lives of the desert saints to the manuscript, perhaps to expand upon the hagiographic moments within AM 226 fol. Although the study of Old Norse saints' lives is beyond the scope of this thesis, the scenes examined here both influence and are influenced by wider hagiographic writings in the medieval North.

The conditions used in this thesis to select scenes for in-depth analysis has unfortunately excluded many of the female figures who wisely use their words for good. Although the translator does not appear to linger over their verbal power, nor render their speech acts with the words *eggja* or *áeggjan*, these scenes nonetheless influence the overall impression of women's words in the manuscript. I shall thus list some examples here, to demonstrate the variety of female figures whose words have positive influences in AM 226 fol.

Some figures urge men to perform peaceful and non-violent actions, such as the unnamed Wise Woman of Tekoa, who convinces David to reconcile with his son, Absalom (*Stj* III pp. 934-938; II Sam 14.1-20). Another unnamed figure, the Wise Woman of Abel, saves her city from Joab through verbal negotiations (*Stj* III pp. 979-980; II Sam 20.16-22). Abigail in *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III pp. 843-847; I Sam 25.14-35) incites to dissuade vengeance, using her voice and gifts of food to convince David not to take revenge against Nabal. In *Stjórn* IV (*Stj* IV pp. 525-529; Josh 2), Rahab the Harlot misleads the men of her city to save the lives of the Israelites, making them swear to save her in recompense.

Other figures in AM 226 fol. urge for violence and war, but this is to fight the forces of evil. Deborah, for example, commands Barak to fight against Sisera and his people (*Stj* III pp. 604-606; Judg 4.4-14). This conflict is necessary, and Deborah's role in instigating it is praised (*Stj* III p. 608; Judg 5). This is thus another example of a female figure whose urging challenges the dichotomous view that considers violent and vengeful incitements as the antithesis to women's wise words (see Chapter One).

Unlike in the depictions of figures like Jezebel and Delilah (see Chapters Three and Four), the Old Norse translator does not seem to draw particular attention to these women and their words. While the condemnation of Delilah is emphasised with an additional diatribe in the Old Norse translation, the praise of Deborah in the song of Judges 5, for example, is minimised severely in *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III p. 608). Even in the scenes of martyrdom explored

here, the translator limits the positive depictions of the inciter women. Though these urgings are certainly not the ‘cold counsels’ proverbially assigned to women,²⁸⁹ they are not exactly ‘hot’ either. These lukewarm depictions of female verbal power offer examples of the positive influences of women’s words, though they pale in comparison to the depictions of villainous inciters and seductresses elsewhere in the manuscript.

The Maccabean Martyr-Mother

The first part of *Gyðinga saga* inserts into its translation of I Maccabees selected stories from II Maccabees,²⁹⁰ including the story of the Maccabean (Proto-)Martyrs, who are tortured and killed by King Antiochus IV for their religious practices. First, two women who circumcised their newborn sons are tortured and killed alongside their babies (*Gyð* 2:8-9). An old man called Eleazar then refuses to eat pork and break his kosher diet; he is killed in punishment (*Gyð* 2:9-10). Finally, an unnamed mother (here called the ‘Maccabean mother’)²⁹¹ is led forth with her seven sons, who all refuse to eat pork and are brutally tortured as a result (*Gyð* 2:10-14). The mother urges her son(s) to bravely face the torture and die rather than abandon their

²⁸⁹ See S. Anderson and Swenson, 2002, pp. xi-xii.

²⁹⁰ See the Introduction, and Wolf, 1995, pp. lxxxviii-xc.

²⁹¹ Though unnamed in the biblical account (and *Gyðinga saga*), the mother has been given various names by different religious traditions, including Hannah or Miriam bat Tanhum, Solomone, and Mart Simouni (see Robin Darling Young, 1991, p. 67).

religion. The narrative in *Gyðinga saga*, however, significantly alters the role of the mother. Though she incites for good, the translator minimises her verbal influence over her sons.

The analysis here begins with a consideration of Jewish and Christian receptions of the Maccabean martyrs to provide important context for the study of the Old Norse translation. It then outlines the narrative in the Vulgate, before considering the depiction in *Gyðinga saga*. The translator strips the mother of her speech acts, her masculinity, and even her clothes in the Old Norse renarration.

Jewish and Christian Receptions of the Maccabean Martyrs

Although the Maccabean Revolt is still celebrated in Judaism (e.g., at Hanukkah), the story of the Maccabean Martyrs is not nearly as popular in the modern day. Van Henten (1997, pp. 1-4) suggests that this is in part due to the story's 'associations with the horrible and unnumbered deaths of Jews during the Second World War' (Van Henten, 1997, p. 2). The story of the Maccabean martyrs was, however, embraced by Jews in the medieval period; Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski (2012, p. 127) argues that it 'held a central place in the articulation of late antique and medieval Jewish identity'. The story was particularly influential at times of persecution and violence, like the Rhineland pogroms of 1096, when some parents killed their children to prevent forced conversion (see Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, 2012, pp. 134-146).

The story was also embraced by Christians, though with some caution due to the prominence of Old Testament dietary laws in the narrative. Early Christians (re)interpreted

the story to focus on the martyrs' endurance of suffering for the faith and their assurance of resurrection, instead of the specific dietary rules.²⁹² For example, in Origen's *Exhortatio ad martyrium* (*Mart 22-27:19-24*), he uses the example of the Maccabean Martyrs to encourage Christians to face the real threat of death for their faith. The Maccabean Martyrs thus became important prototypes for Christian martyrdom and earned a place in Christian martyrologies with a feast day on the 1st of August.²⁹³ The story of these martyrs thus negotiated Christianity's relationship with Judaism, shaped Christian concepts of martyrdom, and demonstrated the importance of female incitement in the face of oppression.

It is important to consider Jewish and Christian traditions together when analysing the Maccabean Martyrs in *Gyðinga saga*. As noted in the Introduction, Cole (2015a, esp. pp. 220-231) has identified the 'philo-Semitism' within *Gyðinga saga* and *Alexanders saga*; he writes that the translator 'recovered a history of the Jews (if not quite a Jewish history) where many contemporaries would only have seen Christian instruction' (Cole, 2015a, p. 230). This is certainly true of the translator's treatment of the Maccabean martyrs, in which he emphasises the Jewish aspects of the story. The Old Norse translator specifies four times that the forbidden food is pork: 'flesk' (*Gyð 2:9*) [pork]; 'suína' (*Gyð 2:10*) [pig]; 'lardum' (*Gyð 2:10*)

²⁹² See Donald F. Winslow, 1974, and Jan Willem van Henten, 2017.

²⁹³ See Robert Leon McGrath, 1963, pp. 3-4; Van Henten, 1997, pp. 2-3; Gabriela Signori, 2012, pp. 10-13.

[lard],²⁹⁴ ‘suin’ (*Gyð* 2:11) [pig]. In comparison, there are only two explicit mentions of this in the Vulgate version, the source for this passage: ‘porcinam’ (II Macc 6.18) [pig]; ‘porcinas’ (II Macc 7.1) [pig]. Comestor similarly specifies the type of meat only twice (*HS* 1522C, 1522D). The translator seems to have introduced the additional references to pork himself, highlighting the Jewish laws behind the story.

In contrast, other Christian interpreters of the Maccabean Martyrs often attempt to minimise or explain away the dietary elements of the martyrdom. For example, in Origen’s *Exhortatio ad Martyrium* (*Mart* 22-27:19-24), there is no mention of the dietary restrictions that drive the narrative. In Ælfric’s Old English *Passio Machabeorum*, the Jewish laws are included, but Ælfric adds a lengthy discussion of how these dietary rules emerged from a misinterpretation of biblical texts (*ÆMach* pp. 282-286).²⁹⁵ Contrasting these interpreters, the translator of *Gyðinga saga* accentuates the Jewishness of the Maccabean Martyrs without casting judgement on the Jewish laws for which they give their lives.

²⁹⁴ A Latin loanword in its accusative singular form. Although the word *larðr* [lard] is attested in Old Norse (see Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, pp. 373-374), this does not fit grammatically here. This Latin word is not used in any of the source texts in the versions currently available, indicating that the translator has embellished the text with his own knowledge of Jewish dietary restrictions. He may also have known the word through trade or farming, though pig farming was very rare in medieval Iceland (see Bernadette McCooey, 2021, and Harriet J. Evans Tang, 2022, esp. pp. 39-42).

²⁹⁵ See Mo Pareles, 2015.

The Maccabean Martyrs in the Vulgate

Before he is tortured and killed, Eleazar is offered a way out of his suffering by sympathetic onlookers, who suggest that he only pretend to eat the forbidden meat to appease the king (II Macc 6.21-22). He refuses, however, stating his wish to inspire younger generations to hold true to their religious laws (II Macc 6.21-28). After he is killed (II Macc 6.28-31), this wish is immediately fulfilled in the story of the mother and seven brothers in II Maccabees 7.

The seven brothers are instructed to eat pork or face torture and a painful death (II Macc 7.1). The eldest brother refuses with a passionate speech (II Macc 7.2), so the king prepares his torments (II Macc 7.3). His tongue, scalp, hands, and feet are cut off, and he is then fried in a hot pan until death (II Macc 7.4-5). Refusing to eat, he is given a culinary punishment. His mother and brothers look on, collectively urging each other to bravely embrace death rather than sin when their time comes (II Macc 7.5-6). After the eldest son's death, the story repeats for each of the brothers, from oldest to youngest: each is instructed to eat the forbidden meat and tortured for his refusal (II Macc 7.7-19). The Maccabean author praises the mother of the sons, who, despite watching all her children's painful deaths, continues to urge them on to their martyrdom (II Macc 7.20-23).

Before the youngest son is killed, the king offers him further temptations and bribes, which he refuses (II Macc 7.24). The king then asks the mother to encourage her only

remaining son to eat and live (II Macc 7.25-26). She agrees to do so but, turning to her son, urges him even more emphatically to resist the king's demands and promises (II Macc 7.26-29). The youngest son thus dies like his brothers (II Macc 7.30-40). To conclude the story and the chapter, the mother is also killed, but no detail is given about her death (II Macc 7.41). The scene is thus set for the Maccabean revolt that follows.

The story of the Maccabean mother and sons is also told in the Fourth Book of Maccabees, often ascribed to Josephus though it is unlikely he wrote the text.²⁹⁶ This book provides additional details about the martyrs and heaps praise onto them all, including the mother. The Old Norse translator, however, does not use any of these details in his translation; it seems unlikely he had access to this text when writing *Gyðinga saga*.

The Maccabean Martyrs in Gyðinga saga

The Old Norse translator makes several changes to the story of the Maccabean Martyrs. Notably, though he highlights the Jewish laws in the narrative, he also incorporates elements from Christian hagiography into their story. The story of the mother and sons is nonetheless framed as a male martyrdom, as the mother's role in the story (and thus her speech acts) is minimised in the Old Norse translation. Although the Maccabean mother still uses a female

²⁹⁶ See Van Henten, 1997, pp. 58-82.

directive (coded as an incitement) for good rather than evil, her speech acts have less impact in *Gyðinga saga* than in the Vulgate.

The Torturer and His Equipment

The translator of *Gyðinga saga* changes two details of the narrative: the identity of the torturer and the nature of his devices. These changes are visible throughout the story in the Old Norse. In the Vulgate, it is King Antioch himself (along with his servants) who tortures the seven brothers. In the Old Norse, however, an unnamed *dómandi* (*Gyð* 2:11-14) [judge], sent by the King, is the one to torture the boys.²⁹⁷ The translator might have been influenced here by ‘The literary pattern of unjust judge and innocent victim’ (Beth A. Berkowitz, 2006, p. 188) found in the New Testament and several hagiographies.

The unnamed judge also favours different torture (or cooking) equipment compared to the king. In the Vulgate, King Antiochus prepares both ‘sartagines et ollas aeneas’ (II Macc 7.3) [frying pans and copper pots] for the torture, though he only actually uses a *sartago* (II Macc 7.5) [frying pan] to kill the boys.²⁹⁸ In the Old Norse renarration, there is no mention of a frying pan; the judge only prepares and uses a pot, *ketill* (*Gyð* 2:10). There are a few attestations of words for ‘frying pan’ in Old Norse (see Entries: ‘hvarna’, ‘panninga’, ONP)

²⁹⁷ See Fersch, 1982, p. 13.

²⁹⁸ On frying pans and Christian symbolism in the medieval period, see Rutger Kramer, 2019, p. 102.

that the translator could have used here, but these words are rare. Some Old Norse hagiographies do, however, feature torture by frying pan, like the *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas (Fid)*. This saga similarly describes the martyrdom of siblings (in this case sisters) at their mother's urging. Here, 'sartagine' (*FHC* p. 274) is translated as 'gloanda íarni' (*Fid* p. 51) [red-hot iron], quite a vague description of a frying pan. It seems possible that this cooking utensil was not widely used in the medieval North, leading to its rare appearance in the written language. This might explain the change in cooking/torture method in *Gyðinga saga*, though the depiction of boiled rather than fried Maccabean martyrs is not unique to the Old Norse version; in Ælfric's Old English version of the Books of Maccabees, for example, the martyrs are similarly boiled to death (*ÆMach* p. 288).

The Martyrdom of the First Son: Silence

In *Gyðinga saga*, while the first son is boiled in the pot, the mother and brothers look on silently (*Gyð* 2:11). The translator includes the line in II Maccabees 7.4 that depicts the mother and brother watching the first martyrdom, but not the line in the following verse that depicts their urging: 'in qua cum diu cruciaretur ceteri una cum matre invicem se hortabantur mori fortiter' (II Macc 7.5) [while he was suffering long tortures there, the others, together with the mother, incited each other to die bravely]. In the Vulgate, this urging is also recorded in direct speech at II Maccabees 7.6. All this is omitted from the Old Norse translation, which only notes that the son is tortured 'at asiandi modur hans. ok brædrum' (*Gyð* 2:11) [in the

sight of his mother and brothers]. The family become impotent onlookers rather than active agents of the martyrdom. While each of the brothers will have their moment of defiance, the mother's rebellious speech acts are further reduced by the translator.

Repeated Urgings? A Contrast with the Saga of Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas

In the Vulgate, the Maccabean mother is praised for urging 'singulos illorum' (II Macc 7.21) [every one of them (her sons)] as they embrace torture and death. The mother's repeated urgings, and the authorial praise that accompanies them (II Macc 7.20-23), are not included in *Gyðinga saga*. The mother remains silent as her first six sons are killed.

This notably contrasts the depiction of the mother, Sophia, in the aforementioned *Saga of Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*. The mother's voice is prominent throughout this text as she repeatedly encourages her three daughters Fides [Faith], Spes [Hope], and Caritas [Charity] to embrace torture and martyrdom rather than abandon their faith. She speaks to all three before the tortures begin (*Fid* pp. 48-49); the Old Norse translator uses the verb *eggja* (*Fid* p. 48) here, labelling her directive speech act as an incitement. She is also present at the deaths of all three daughters, who speak with her before they are killed. Before the torture of the youngest daughter, Caritas, Sophia calls upon God and then urges her child once more to be strong (in this case, 'karllmanlíg' [manly]: *Fid* p. 54) in the face of persecution. Throughout the narrative the mother also speaks to God and to Adrianus, their torturer.

The martyrdom of Fides, Spes, and Caritas has notable similarities with that of the seven Maccabean sons; they even have the same feast day on the 1st of August.²⁹⁹ The Old Norse translations are also connected by a scriptorium; the oldest extant manuscript of *Saga af Fides, Spes, ok Karítas*, AM 233 a fol., was written at Helgafell, in the same scriptorium as AM 226 fol.³⁰⁰ AM 233 a fol. even shares a scribe with AM 226 fol.³⁰¹ Drechsler (2021, pp. 26, 53) dates the section of AM 233 a fol. containing the saga of these three/four saints to 1370-75, compared to 1350-1360 for the part of AM 226 fol. containing *Gyðinga saga*.³⁰² It is thus quite possible that the source for *Saga af Fides, Spes, ok Karítas* or an earlier Old Norse translation was already present at the scriptorium and known to the Old Norse translator when *Gyðinga saga* was written. Certain elements of the Maccabean martyrs' story in *Gyðinga saga* might even have been influenced by the *Saga af Fides, Spes, ok Karítas* (discussed below).

Despite all these similarities, the depiction of the female voice is very different in these two texts. This might be explained by the intended audience. The *Saga af Fides, Spes, ok Karítas* is included in a collection of the lives of female saints in AM 233 a fol. It is also included in another manuscript, AM 429 12mo, which is entirely comprised of female saints'

²⁹⁹ The feast day is noted at the end of *Saga af Fides, Spes ok Karítas* (*Fid* p. 55), but there is no mention of a feast day for the Maccabean martyrs in *Gyðinga saga*. Margaret Cormack (1994, pp. 37, 40) notes that saints Fides, Spes, and Caritas are not included in most Icelandic church calendars; she makes no mention of the Maccabean martyrs.

³⁰⁰ See Ólafur Halldórsson, 1966, pp. 35-38, and Drechsler, 2021, esp. pp. 51-63.

³⁰¹ See Drechsler, 2021, esp. p. 26.

³⁰² See the Introduction on the dating of the manuscript AM 226 fol.

lives and ‘appears to have belonged to the Kirkjubær convent’ (Wolf, 2011b, p. 44). The saga thus seems to be intended for a female audience concerned with the sanctity of women. *Gyðinga saga*, however, was likely written for a male audience (see the Introduction). Accordingly, the translation centres male rather than female martyrdom, focusing on the suffering and speech acts of the brothers rather than those of their mother. This focus is reflected in the rubrics that title this passage, ‘her segir af píníngu .víj. bræðra’ (*Gyð* 2:7) [here is said of the punishment of the seven brothers]. The translator focuses on the martyrdom of men and prioritises fraternal bonds over the maternal.

AM 233 a fol. only contains the first half of the *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*, and thus includes just the first of Sophia’s urgings. Nevertheless, even in this one incitement, spoken before all three of her daughters, Sophia exerts more influence over her children’s martyrdoms than the Maccabean mother in *Gyðinga saga*, who remains silent until all but one of her children have been brutally killed. Presumably, AM 233 a fol. initially contained the whole saga, with Sophia’s additional urging of her youngest daughter. If this story was known to the translator of *Gyðinga saga*, it is possible that this inspired the focus on the incitement of only the youngest son in the story of the Maccabean martyrs.

The Youngest Son

Before the final son is tortured and killed, the judge makes an additional attempt to convince him to abandon his faith (*Gyð* 2:13). In the Vulgate, the king tries to bribe the son, in addition

to requesting that the mother urge him to live (II Macc 7.24-26). The judge in *Gyðinga saga* (Gyð 2:13) offers no bribes, relying instead solely upon female speech to convince the boy to sway from his religious duties. The mother, however, incites her son to embrace his martyrdom.

When only one son remains, the translator offers some insight into the thoughts of the judge: ‘Nu er eptir hinn yngstí. ok hyggr domandinn. at modirín muní þessum mest unna. ok muni hann mest locka fra dauda ok kuðlum’ (Gyð 2:13) [Now the youngest remains, and the judge thought that the mother might love this one the most and might entice him the most from death and the tortures]. There is no precedent for this line in the source material (see Fersch, 1982, p. 13). Two details are particularly fascinating: the judge’s guess about the mother’s emotions, and his desire for the mother to *lokka* [entice/seduce] her son.

Though the Second Book of Maccabees is notably stoic (see Robin Darling Young, 1991, pp. 70-3), the Fourth Book of Maccabees describes the varied emotions experienced by the brothers (*PMacc* 13:96-97) and their mother (*PMacc* 14-16:98-101) in detail.³⁰³ Despite the emphasis given to the mother’s emotions in this text, there is no suggestion that she might love her youngest son more than the others, as implied by the Old Norse translator. Mothers are sometimes depicted with clear favourites in biblical literature as well as in Old

³⁰³ I cite a Latin translation and paraphrase of the Fourth Book of Maccabees: the *Passio Maccabeorum* (*PMacc*). On the transmission of the Books of Maccabees in antiquity and the medieval period, see Signori, 2012, pp. 3-9.

Norse sagas; sometimes the favourite is the youngest child.³⁰⁴ Although there is thus a literary precedent for a dynamic of this type, this statement on the mother's love perhaps depicts her as emotionally fickle or even unloving (towards her first six sons, at least). At this point in the narrative, however, this son is not only the mother's youngest, but also her only surviving child. The judge may believe that all the motherly love has been transposed onto the one living child, who she will now 'mest unna' (*Gyð* 2:13) [love the most].

The translator might have included this line to justify why it is only at the death of the final son that the mother breaks her silence: perhaps she saves her incitement for the one she loves most. Whether a reader believes the evil judge's assessment of the mother's emotions or not, the attention drawn to maternal love here makes the following speech act yet more impactful. Like Guðrún in *Guðrúnahvot* and *Hamðismál* (*Edd ÍF* ii 402–413), who incites her sons to go to their deaths for vengeance, the Maccabean mother incites her only surviving son to die for God. By reminding the reader of her emotional connection to the boy, the translator perhaps emphasises the sacrifice the mother makes in her speech act.

The judge believes that the mother will *lokka* (*Gyð* 2:13) [entice] her final son away from martyrdom and towards a worldly life. It is interesting that the translator here uses the word associated with the most heavily condemned of female speech acts: seduction. Here, the

³⁰⁴ Examples include Rebecca and Jacob in Genesis (Gen 27) and *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I pp. 248–254), and Bera and Böðvarr in *Hrólfs saga kraka* (*Hrólfr* 27:51).

On motherhood in the medieval North, see Stephen Grundy, 1996; Jochens, 1996b; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 2020b, pp. 117–144; Olley, 2022, pp. 109–144.

word does not seem to carry the sexual implications that it does in Samson's saga in *Stjórn* III (see Chapter Four), where it depicts the use of sexual tactics in a speech act. The word does, nonetheless, carry seedy undertones; the judge expects the mother to encourage her son to prioritise worldly pleasures over divine reward. Though the mother defies his expectations, this line further evidences the presumption that female speech will have negative outcomes. Women's words usually lead men astray. The omission of the mother's earlier pious incitements builds dramatic tension here, as the reader might wonder whether the mother will *lokka* her son towards sin or *eggja* him to divine obedience.

The judge does not explicitly ask (or command or demand) that the Maccabean mother speak to her son in *Gyðinga saga*; the translator records his thoughts rather than his speech acts. This contrasts the Vulgate version (II Macc 7.25-26). It might be assumed, however, that the judge grants a new access to the younger son because he assumed the mother would try to sway him, not urge him on to martyrdom. This presents a more forgiving reading of the mother's earlier silence; it is only when the judge assumes her to be desperate with maternal love that he finally lets her speak.

The Speech Act of the Maccabean Mother

The Maccabean mother's only speech act in *Gyðinga saga* is recorded as follows:

Enn hon eggjar hann. ok styrkir til framm göngu. ok synir honum briost sín uisnud. ok þur. ok sua kúðinn seatnadan. ok saman genginn. ok mællti. Her

gat ek þik. ok her bar ek þik. ok uissa ek þa æigi at til sliks mundi koma. Hyg ecki a mik. helldr á þann er þik skóp. (*Gyð* 2:13)

[But she incites him and encourages him to go forth, showing him her withered and dry breast and her sunken and empty stomach. She said: Here I birthed you and here I bore you, and I did not know then that such things would come about. Think not about me, but rather about He who created you.]

This speech act belongs to Searle's category of the directives. After showing her son her naked body (a detail discussed below), the mother encourages him to think about God and divine creation, ignoring the worldly things he sees before him. The sincerity condition is *want* or *desire*, and she aims to shape the world with her words. Though she explicitly only urges her son to think about God, there is an indirect speech act beneath this (also of the directive type) with the propositional content that her son, the *Hearer*, takes the *Action of Martyrdom*: '*H does A*' (Searle, 1979, p. 14). The mother's speech acts in the Vulgate are similarly 'hortatory and persuasive' (Young, 1991, p. 71).

This urging can also be considered an incitement according to the model outlined in Chapter One. Although the end goal of this directive is violence endured, rather than enacted by, the incitee, the speech act is nonetheless of the same type as those of the evil and vengeful inciters throughout the Norse corpus. The translator uses the word *eggja* to describe the Maccabean mother's speech act, whilst also centring the theme of (divine) revenge. For example, the fifth brother declares, 'ætla ecki at gud lati var v hefnt vera' (*Gyð* 2:12) [I do not think that God will let us be unavenged]. Although the corresponding passages in the Vulgate

(II Macc 7.16-17) mention God's power and ability to punish, there is no explicit reference to revenge. Although the revenge discussed here is divine rather than human, as is common in the incitements of the *Íslendingasögur*, it nonetheless perhaps connects this woman's speech act to those of the vengeful inciters in the wider corpus. Although I have earlier shown that vengeance is not a *requirement* of the inciter woman trope, it is certainly a convention. The combination of a directive speech act and selected literary conventions associated with incitement suggests that the Maccabean mother should be read as a holy *Hetzerin*.

The content of the mother's speech combines the urgings listed at II Maccabees 7.22-23 and II Maccabees 7.27-29, which are quite similar. This might also explain the translator's omission of the mother's earlier incitements, because including them all might have seemed repetitive. The mother's exposure of her body during the incitement, however, has no precedent in the Vulgate version.

Exposure and Emptiness

Instead of simply talking about the pregnancy, birth, and rearing of her children, as in the Vulgate, the Maccabean mother in *Gyðinga saga* shows her sons the physical marks of her childbearing. The mother's newfound nakedness is part of a trend within *Gyðinga saga* of exposing the bodies of tortured and martyred women who remain clothed in the source, likely due to a hagiographic influence. In the *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*, for example, the three daughters are stripped before their torture (*Fid* pp. 51, 52, 54). The first daughter, Fides, also

has her breasts cut off, much like Saint Agatha, who is often depicted holding her severed breasts on a tray.³⁰⁵ Perhaps the focus on naked female bodies and particularly the breasts at moments of martyrdom prompted the disrobing of the Maccabean mother in *Gyðinga saga*.

The Maccabean mother, however, willingly reveals her body to her son, in a scene resembling that in *Breta sǫgur*, when Tonema shows her breasts to her feuding sons to reconcile them.³⁰⁶ It might also recall the pregnant Freydís in *Eiríks saga rauða* (*Eir ÍF* 4 11:229), who (after unsuccessfully inciting her people to fight) beats a sword against her bare breast, which frightens their attackers. In each of these cases, the body is shown to elicit a certain response from the onlooker in a scene that is inextricably bound to female incitement. Perhaps, just as physical objects and bloody tokens can be shown in incitement scenes, so too can the naked female body.

The mother's breasts are 'uisnud. ok þur' (*Gyð* 2:13) [withered and dry], her stomach 'seatnadan. ok saman genginn' (*Gyð* 2:13) [sunken and empty]. Unlike Fides, who lactates rather than bleeds when her breasts are removed (*Fid* p. 51), the mother is depicted beyond her childbearing years. While this detail accentuates the loss of the sons, since she seemingly would not be able to have further children, it also perhaps recalls the ascetics who, through extreme starvation, shrink their bodies and their breasts. The description of the mother's body

³⁰⁵ On the trope of violent mastectomy in Old Norse hagiography, see Wolf, 1997b.

³⁰⁶ This detail comes from the Latin source material: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* (*HRB* 41:35); it is not an addition like in *Gyðinga saga*.

is thus possibly inspired by hagiography. This reading aligns the bodily changes and scars of childbirth with the physical toll of an ascetic life, painting pregnancy (rather than, or in addition to, virginity) as holy. Karen A. Winstead (1997, pp. 8-10) notes that in early Christian writings ideas about female sainthood developed and changed; while initially centring on mothers and heads of households, the focus shifted almost exclusively towards young virgins. The Old Norse translator takes an early account of a mother as a martyr and aligns it with later hagiographies of asceticism and virginity.

The Mother's Masculinity and Femininity

The exposure of the mother's body adds to the growing emphasis on the mother's femininity in the Old Norse translation. This contrasts the depiction of the mother's masculinity in the Vulgate, revealed in the line 'et femineae cogitationi masculinum animum inserens' (II Macc 7.21) [and inserting a masculine mind into a woman's thought], a phrase used to introduce one of her incitements. Young (1991, p. 71) describes this as 'the author's understanding, based on a Stoic division between masculine and feminine attributes, of how a mother could have pronounced the following speech'. Though Old Norse literature cannot be considered Stoic, the inclusion of this line would not have been unusual, since there are numerous instances in which women act in a masculine way in the Norse corpus (see Gareth Lloyd Evans, 2020). Evans (2020, p. 74) writes that female masculinities 'subvert male masculinity, destabilizing the ostensibly inevitable link between men and masculinity'. The mother in the

biblical account performs a similar ‘destabilizing’; Young (1991, p. 70) writes, ‘the very example of manliness which he [Eleazar] provided is immediately followed by the startling accounts of the “manliness” of children and of a woman’. The Old Norse translator, however, omits the line about the mother’s masculinity in *Gyðinga saga*.

In addition to showing her female body, the translator also draws attention to the mother’s female role as wife as well as mother. In *Gyðinga saga*, the Maccabean mother is introduced as the wife of Eleazar: ‘kona hans’ (*Gyð* 2:10) [his wife/woman]. There is no mention of the mother’s marital status in II Maccabees, though she is said to be a widow in IV Maccabees (*PMacc* 16:101). Jochens (1995, p. 61) connects the role of widowhood to perceived masculinity, as older widowed women in the sagas ‘were frequently admired for qualities normally associated with men’. The Maccabean mother in *Gyðinga saga* is thus placed into the feminine role of wife rather than the masculine role of widow.

The association between the mother’s body and that of ascetic saints might nonetheless suggest a kind of masculinity. Trans* saints like Pelagia*us use starvation and extreme asceticism to change their body beyond recognition after their transition.³⁰⁷ For such saints, shrunken breasts might align their body with their identified gender. For the Maccabean mother, the withered breasts and shrunken stomach are signs that she might not carry more

³⁰⁷ My thoughts on trans* saints and the queering of asceticism come from the recent ‘Trans Sainthood in Translation, ca. 400-1500’ conference at the German Historical Institute London. The proceedings of the conference will be published in a forthcoming collection.

children. A transition has taken place in the mother's life, not of gender (though it is inextricably connected to gender) but of time. Like the trans* saints whose bodies are revealed after death, the mother's bodily exposure reveals both her past (as a reproducing woman) and her present (as a presumably post-menopausal mother). There might be a kind of masculinity to this, but the other feminising elements of the translation and the removal of the only explicit reference to masculinity in the source questions this reading.

Nevertheless, in her speech, the mother defines her body as distinctly female and feminine, bringing her past reproductive history into the present. Pointing to the parts of her body that represent her motherhood, the Maccabean mother stresses her connection to divine creation whilst highlighting her femininity. Though the Maccabean mother in the Vulgate is praised for her masculine stoicism, her counterpart in *Gyðinga saga* achieves her holiness through her female reproductive body, which she displays with pride as she performs her sole incitement.

The Ancestral Language in Gyðinga saga

As the content of the mother's speech act highlights her female reproductive body, the language she delivers it in accentuates the rebellion of her words. Though the mother's speeches are written in Latin in the Vulgate, they are said to be delivered in the 'patria voce' (II Macc 7.21, 7.27) [ancestral language], the same language spoken by the second son (II Macc 7.8). Van Henten (1997, pp. 187-269) argues that the ancestral language used by the

martyrs is an important part of their Jewish identity. Although the Old Norse translator often includes and accentuates Jewish traditions and laws within *Gyðinga saga*, all references to the ancestral language are omitted from the Old Norse translation. This language change transforms the mother's speech act.

King Antiochus and the martyrs appear to speak in different languages in the Vulgate version. Van Henten (1999, pp. 61-68) suggests that the king probably speaks Greek while the mother and sons speak Hebrew (or possibly Aramaic). The ancestral language spoken by the mother and sons is 'probably [...] incomprehensible' (Van Henten, 1999, p. 63) to King Antiochus. The mother's speeches in the Vulgate are thus secret, private rebellions against the King. This also explains why King Antiochus asked her to encourage her youngest son to relent and live: he probably did not understand the mother's earlier urgings of her sons towards their painful deaths. Young (1991, p. 70) writes that the language difference 'mitigat[es] her role', since 'her remarks are confined to private exhortations'.

In the Old Norse translation, where there is no mention of any language difference between judge and martyr, the mother's speech act becomes a public and powerful rebellion against worldly authority. Her speech becomes performative in the strictest sense, understood by all in attendance: son, judge, and any onlookers. Her instruction to 'Hyg [...] á þann er þik skóp' (*Gyð* 2:13) [Think about He who created you] is heard by Hebrews and heathens alike. This might even explain the omission of the mother's earlier speech acts; if the judge

understood her first incitements, he would not approach her in this climactic episode before the torture of the final son.

The publicity of the speech act also aligns the incitement with those in the wider corpus, in which the *Hetzerin* frequently goads before an audience. As William Ian Miller (1990, p. 214) writes, ‘Some of the incitement’s force to motivate and manipulate should probably be attributed to its “public” nature’.³⁰⁸ The newfound audience for the Maccabean mother’s speech act adds to the force of her words. The young boy is pressured not just by the mother but by all who hear her words. To give in, turning away from both torture and faith, would be a shameful inability to fulfil a woman’s demand for action.

The translator thus may have removed the language differences here to emphasise the mother’s verbal power and the impact of her speech act. He might also have been inspired by hagiographies, where martyrs like Juliana make bold speeches in defiance of a judge. Furthermore, there is no indication in *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas* that Sophia’s speeches are delivered in another language, especially as she regularly speaks to the tormenter in addition to her children. Influence from these hagiographies might have inspired the change from the repeated private rebellions of the Vulgate to the singular public incitement in *Gyðinga saga*, as the mother encourages all to reject worldly authority with the power of her words.

³⁰⁸ See also Frauman, 2019, pp. 270-271.

Male Reaction

In the Vulgate, the son cuts off the mother's urging, asking 'quem sustinetis' (II Macc 7.30) [what are you waiting for?], before declaring his defiance of the king. In the Old Norse, this is rendered as 'Huar fyrir bidit þer' (*Gyð* 2:13). The translation of this line depends on the interpretation of the word 'bidit', which might be the present, plural second person form of *bíða* [to wait], thus giving the translation (in line with the Vulgate): 'Why are you waiting?'. In the manuscript context, where the accent is lost, however, the word could also be the present, plural second person form of *bíðja* [to ask], presenting an alternative reading 'Why are you asking?'. This phrase is followed by 'buinn em ek' (*Gyð* 2:13) [I am ready].

The alternative reading of this phrase emphasises the importance of speech acts in the narrative. It is unclear, however, to whom the question is delivered. He might ask the judge and his men, who have presumably asked him (like his brothers) whether he will eat the meat. This has not been described in the Old Norse translation, however. It could also apply to the mother, questioning why she is asking, or inciting, him to act in a certain way, when he is already prepared. In this case, the plural nature of the verb might reflect the polite form used to address a parent; for example, the son in the *King's Mirror* uses plural second person pronouns to address his father (e.g., *Kgs* pp. 3, 7).³⁰⁹ This reading perhaps presents a resistance

³⁰⁹ I am grateful to Jonas Zeit-Alt peter for pointing out this usage in the *King's Mirror*.

of the mother's incitement, in line with that seen in the *Íslendingasögur*, as men condemn women's 'cold counsel'.³¹⁰

Regardless of the interpretation of this line, the boy seems to be prepared for his death before the mother speaks. Her powerful and public rejection of unjust authority falls flat, ostensibly having no influence on her son. This prefigures the incitement delivered by John Hyrcanus' mother later in *Gyðinga saga* (explored below). Perhaps the newfound audience and the shame that might accompany it spurs the boy to act as though he needs no encouragement, much like his six elder brothers, who die amidst parental silence. Though the resistance to incitement adds yet another literary convention of incitement to the story, it nonetheless minimises the impact of the mother's speech.

The Final Death

After all her sons are brutally killed, the Maccabean mother is put to death: a notable contrast with the narrative in the *Saga of Fides, Spes, ok Karitas*, where Sophia lives long enough to bury her daughters, dying shortly afterwards (*Fid* p. 55). The Vulgate gives little information about the death of the Maccabean mother, stating only 'novissime autem et mater consummata est' (II Macc 7.41) [and lastly the mother was also killed]. This starkly differs from the long descriptions of her sons' brutal tortures.

³¹⁰ See, for example, *Nj* ÍF 12 116:292.

In *Gyðinga saga*, the translator provides more detail about the mother's death: 'Sidan var modir þeirra suerdi hõgguin' (*Gyð* 2:14) [Afterwards the mother was killed with a sword]. The mother suffers a significantly less painful death than her seven sons; this description of a swift death immediately follows the statement that the final son is killed 'med meíra grimmeik enn hína fyrri. ef nockut matti æ auka' (*Gyð* 2:14) [with more cruelty than those before, if this might be increased]. Despite the relatively painless death granted to the Maccabean mother, it is still that of a high-status martyr. Katherine Beard (forthcoming) notes that high-status individuals are often killed by a sword in Old Norse literature. Furthermore, saints like Juliana, Agnes, Lucy, and Cecilia are all eventually killed with a sword in their *passiones*. In the *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*, the first daughter is killed with a sword after her tortures (*Fid* p. 52). No detail about the murder weapon is given for the other two daughters, who are simply said to be killed using the verb *hoggva* (*Fid* pp. 53, 55) [to strike/kill/behead], the same word used to denote the death of the Maccabean mother. The translator of *Gyðinga saga* might therefore have used the details from this saints' life to dress up the final death in the story of the Maccabean martyrs. After her torture, which is emotional rather than physical as she watches her seven sons die, the Maccabean mother is given a quick death like the virgin martyrs.

Conclusion: The Maccabean Mother in Gyðinga saga

The story of the Maccabean mother and her seven sons undergoes several changes in the Old Norse translation that simultaneously minimise the role of the mother whilst painting her as a traditional (virgin) martyr. While the Maccabean martyrs were originally prototypes for early Christian ideas of martyrdom, their story is now being renarrated in accordance with the very hagiographic tropes that they once inspired.

The Old Norse translator omits the repeated urgings of the Maccabean mother, an omission that also results in the removal of any explicit narratorial praise for the mother. Comparing the translation with the source, the mother's silence in *Gyðinga saga* rings loud as she impotently watches the torture of her first six sons. She is defined by her absence; even her body is said to be empty in the Old Norse translation. Gone is the reference to her Stoic masculinity, which was praised in the Vulgate. The translator increasingly strips details from the story of the Maccabean mother.

And yet, the mother still speaks. She announces her resistance loudly, in a language understood by all. The Old Norse translator codes this as an incitement in line with those of Eve, Jezebel, and Athaliah. Goaded before an audience, her son must comply, though it is unclear whether he ever intended to give in to the judge. The speech act, however, has functions beyond convincing her son: it announces her disobedience before the judge and onlookers, in line with the *passiones* of the virgin martyrs, and demonstrates to the reader the

positive ways that women can use their verbal power over men. Incitements need not be cold and evil; they can instead turn men towards God, goading them to trust in divine rather than earthly vengeance.

The Maccabean martyr thus offers a vital example of the positive uses of incitement, in a manuscript filled with evil eggers. This interpretation holds true despite the translator's omissions and minimisations when depicting the figure, because (presumably) *Gyðinga saga* would not always be read alongside and compared with the source material. Medieval readers might therefore not realise that the mother's role has been minimised here. Nevertheless, while a reader might not closely compare source and translation like a modern scholar, they may well have read the *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*, written into AM 233 a fol. about a decade after *Gyðinga saga* was written in AM 226 fol. at the same scriptorium. When one compares these two texts, the Maccabean mother does not come out well. The speech of Sophia is far more impactful than that of the mother in *Gyðinga saga*: her words drive forth the narrative and spur on each of her children (but especially her youngest) to trust in God and accept their tortures.

Writing for a presumably male audience, the translator of the texts of AM 226 fol. is perhaps not interested in providing examples for women to follow in the same way as the translator of *Saga af Fídes, Spes, ok Karítas*. If the AM 226 fol. texts instead function to warn men about the dangers of women's words, there is little need to linger on the positive

examples of female verbal power, like the Maccabean mother. Although the translator does frame the mother's speech act as an incitement, he does not draw particular attention to this holy *Hetzerin*. While the translator adds material to condemn inciters like Jezebel and seductresses like Delilah, he actively removes details that would praise the Maccabean mother.

Jephthah's Daughter

In a story entirely driven by speech acts, an unnamed daughter eggs on her father to uphold his religious obligations, even at the cost of her own life (*Stj* III pp. 640–643).³¹¹ The daughter of Jephthah negotiates a complex web of vows and promises, finding a way to assert some agency in the final moments of her life. Unpicking the speech acts at play, the analysis begins with an examination of the story in the Vulgate and its possible interpretations, before turning to the translation in *Stjórn* III. Though the depiction varies across the manuscript witnesses, the Old Norse translator draws attention to the daughter's good words, which function as a corrective to her father's faithless promise.

³¹¹ Feminist biblical scholarship has given this figure the name 'Bat', the Hebrew word for 'daughter' (on the implications of this, see Mieke Bal, 1989, p. 212). In line with the treatment of the Maccabean mother, the daughter remains nameless in this analysis.

Jephthah's Daughter in the Vulgate

Going to war against the Ammonites, Jephthah vows to God that, should he have victory in the war, he will sacrifice who or whatever first comes from his house to greet him upon his return (Judg 11.30-31). When he comes home victorious, however, it is his only child who first to emerges from his house and greets him, celebrating his victory (Judg 11.34). He despairs, since he must now sacrifice his daughter to the Lord (Judg 11.35). The daughter, however, accepts her fate, though she asks for two months before her sacrifice so that she might *plangere* [bewail] her *virginitas* [virginity] (Judg 11.36-37). Jephthah grants her this, and she retreats to the mountains with her friends (Judg 11.38). She then returns to her father and is sacrificed (Judg 11.39). Afterwards, she is remembered by the women of Israel in an annual celebration (Judg 11.40).

There are two major ways of interpreting this scene, hinging upon the reading of the sacrifice: *holocaustum* (Judg 11.31). Most scholars interpret this as the death of the daughter.³¹² The story thus has parallels with Abraham's (near-)sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22; *Stj* I pp. 195-201); though God prevents Isaac's death at the last second, Jephthah's daughter is not saved. It is only through her own verbal power than she is able to advocate for herself, earn a few months of extra life, and perhaps even create a tradition that preserves her memory after death with ritual female mourning.

³¹² See Bal, 1989; Beth Gerstein, 1989; Anne Michele Tapp, 1989; Peggy L. Day, 2006; Exum, 2015, pp. 1-23.

Some scholars, however, argue that the daughter is not killed in the sacrifice, but only dedicated to God. Pamela Tamarkin Reis (1997, pp. 281-282) argues that ‘Jephthah intends to dedicate and redeem a slave’ in his sacrifice: ‘this dedicated person, once redeemed, can no longer do work’. Since ‘Women’s work includes childbearing’, Reis (1997, p. 283) suggests that the daughter is not killed but prevented from having children, explaining why she mourns her *virginitas* (Judg 11.37) [virginity], and not her whole life. Reis (1997, p. 286) then uses this interpretation of the biblical story to argue that the daughter is a ‘spoiled brat’ who knew of the vow in advance and uses it to manipulate her father.

Jephthah’s Daughter in Stjórn III

Before analysing the depiction of the female voice in *Stjórn III*, it is important to examine whether the translator interpreted the sacrifice as deathly or dedicatory. It is possible to read both interpretations into the Old Norse text. There is no explicit reference to death in the *Stjórn III* rendering of Jephthah’s vow: ‘Jepte het a gud til sigrs ser. at offra honum þann mann til eignar. sem fyrstr kęmi ímot honum af hans husi. þa er hann kęmi apr med sigri. fra sonum amons’ (*Stj III* p. 641) [Jephthah called to God for his victory, offering to Him as property that person who first meets him from his house when he comes back with victory over the sons of Ammon]. The verb *offra* has two meanings: ‘to make an offering, sacrifice’ and ‘to make a gift, to present’ (Cleasby-Vigfússon, 1957, p. 463), providing no specificity as

to the nature of the offering. The noun *eign* [property] is equally ambiguous, though it perhaps leans towards an interpretation of dedication rather than death.

When Jephthah fulfils his vow (*Stj* III p. 641), the verb *fórnfæra* is used, which again can mean either ‘sacrifice’ or to ‘make an offering’ (Entry: ‘fórnfóra’, ONP). Significantly, this verb is also used to describe Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross in *Stjórn* I (*Stj* I p. 167; see also Entry: ‘fórnfóra’, ONP). The sacrifice of the daughter and Christ are even connected in the *Stjórn* III account, as the translator adds a passage of exegesis (taken from Richard of St Victor: *LE* 2.4.9:278) after the death of Jephthah. Jephthah’s sacrifice of his only child for victory is compared to God’s sacrifice of his body (*líkamr*) to redeem all Christian men (*Stj* III p. 643). This implies that the daughter, like Christ, dies in the sacrifice.

Following the sacrifice, the women of Israel ‘*gretu dottur iepte iíf. daga*’ (*Stj* III p. 642) [mourned the daughter of Jephthah for three days] every year. The verb *gráta* [to weep, bewail] is unambiguously sorrowful in the Old Norse. In the original Hebrew, the verb used in this verse is more ambiguous; though conventionally translated with the meaning of ‘to mourn’ here, it might more accurately be translated as ‘to celebrate’ (Mieke Bal, 1989, pp. 226–228; Beth Gerstein, 1989, p. 187; Exum, 2015, p. 17; Reis, 1997, p. 291). In the Old Norse (as in the Vulgate), however, the women are in mourning, adding further evidence to the interpretation of a deadly sacrifice. Although Jephthah’s daughter might not be killed in the original biblical story, she does appear to meet her death in *Stjórn* III.

A Male Vow and Female Incitements

Three speech acts drive forth the narrative of the sacrifice in the biblical account: 1. Jephthah's vow to God; 2. his daughter's instruction that he keep his word; and 3. the daughter's request for time before the sacrifice. Though the woman exerts some control over her fate, the narrative is defined by the first (male) speech act.

Jephthah's vow combines a commissive speech act (promising to do something) with a directive (asking God to act).³¹³ Like Manoah's speech in Samson's saga, this male vow is marked by folly and ineptitude. Phyllis Tribble (2022, p. 104) calls Jephthah's speech act a 'faithless vow' that reveals his distrust in God and the Holy Spirit, which is with Jephthah before the vow (Judg 11.29).³¹⁴ This interpretation would likely have been available to the translator through Peter Comestor, who expands on Josephus' (*AJud* 5.VII) criticism of Jephthah, writing 'Fuit ergo in vovendo stultus' (*HS* 1284C) [He was therefore foolish in vowing]. The criticism of Jephthah and his speech act is not, however, recorded in *Stjórn* III.

When it is the daughter's turn to speak, she reinforces rather than challenges the confines of her father's speech act. On the one hand, this exemplifies female powerlessness: the woman's life and death are controlled by her foolish father's speech.³¹⁵ At the same time,

³¹³ On the vow as a speech act, see also Bal, 1989, p. 213.

³¹⁴ This detail about the Holy Spirit is not, however, included in AM 226 fol., though it is in other versions of *Stjórn* III (*Stj* III pp. 640-641).

³¹⁵ See Tapp, 1989, p. 16, and Exum, 2015, pp. 10-12.

the woman uses her own words to exert her agency within the pre-established limits.³¹⁶ As Johanna Stiebert (2013, p. 99) writes, ‘Active within the confines of the story, the daughter speaks, requests, acts, and is remembered’. Like the other figures explored in this thesis, Jephthah’s daughter uses speech acts to advocate for her own needs in a story primarily defined by men.

Both speech acts performed by the daughter are directives, with the propositional content that the *Hearer*, her father, takes certain *Actions*: sacrificing her to God, but allowing her a sojourn in the mountains beforehand. In the Old Norse version in AM 226 fol., the daughter’s speech is rendered as follows:

Minn sæti fadir. efn heit þitt *vid gud*. fyrir þínn sigr. Enn meðr þui at þu matt mik æigi manni gipta sakir þíns heitz. þa lofa mer med mínum fo systurum .íj. manadi at fara um fiallbýgdir at grata mín meýdom. (*Stj* III p. 641)

[My sweet father! Fulfil your vow to God for your victory. But because you cannot give me to a man for the sake of your vow, then allow me to go with my foster-sisters for two months to the mountains to grieve my virginity.]

This statement conforms to the speech act, status, and gender requirements of the inciter woman model outlined in Chapter One. Nevertheless, there do not appear to be any of the literary conventions associated with the inciter woman in this depiction: there is no lament, association with food, or threats to masculinity. The daughter’s encouragement that Jephthah fulfil, *efna*, his ‘heit [...] *vid gud*’ (*Stj* III p. 641) [vow to God] nonetheless recalls the speech

³¹⁶ See Bal, 1989, pp. 225–229, and Gerstein, 1989, p. 187.

of Hringr's wife, considered in Chapter One, who encourages her husband to uphold the 'góðvilja' (*HG* 3:60) [goodwill] of his friend king Gautrekr. Though Hringr's wife describes this action as noble and masculine, Jephthah's daughter does not explicitly make this connection as she urges her father to remain true to God.

In some versions of *Stjórn* III, however, the daughter performs a third speech act: a promise to incite her father to sacrifice her upon her return. She uses the verb *eggja* in her promise: 'Siðan sem ek kem aftr vil ek vera eíggiandi atþu efnir hæit þitt við guð' (*Stj* III, p. 642; AM 228 fol.) [When I come back, I will be inciting you to fulfil your vow to God].³¹⁷ Though no further detail is given on this promised incitement, even as the woman returns from the mountain, it can be assumed that the daughter again encourages her father to sacrifice her. With this promise of a future incitement, the translator also signals that the daughter's earlier encouragement that Jephthah fulfils his vow (present in all manuscript versions) is similarly an incitement. Using this verb, the translator defines the daughter's speech as incitement.

This is the first example in this thesis of an incitement that seems to need repetition to be effective (see Chapter Four). While the additional speech act in AM 227 fol. and AM 228 fol. draws attention to the female verbal power at play in the scene, it perhaps also implies that one incitement is not sufficient here. In AM 226 fol., which lacks this promise, less

³¹⁷ This promise is also found in AM 227 fol. Although the folio containing this account (fol. 83) has received significant damage, the word 'eggíande' (*Stj* III p. 640; AM 227 fol.) is clearly visible.

attention is drawn to the woman's speech, but the incitement does not appear to require repetition. In all cases, however, it is only through a woman's egging on that the male vow is fulfilled: women's urgings are necessary to ensure men keep their promises to God.

A Positive Depiction of Incitement

Contrasting the figures examined in the earlier chapters, Jephthah's daughter appears to be depicted in a positive light. The woman is presented as a faithful daughter who supports and celebrates her father; she also helps him keep his religious obligations, even at great personal cost. This impression, however, emerges mostly in the details preserved from the Vulgate rather than in additions or alterations by the translator. He does, nevertheless, add the word *sætr* [sweet] in her address of Jephthah: 'Minn sæti fadir' (*Stj* III p. 641) [My sweet father]. Reis' (1997, p. 286) interpretation of the biblical daughter as a 'spoiled brat' relies in part on 'her failure to address her father with proper terms of respect' in the biblical account. In the Old Norse, the translator subtly changes the daughter's speech to depict her as a respectful and doting daughter.

Although some biblical scholars suggest that the daughter's trip to the mountains is part of a female ritual,³¹⁸ perhaps linked to paganism,³¹⁹ there is no indication of this in *Stjórn* III. The translator adds an extra clause to explain the sojourn: 'medr þui at þu matt mik æigi

³¹⁸ See Bal, 1989, p. 217; Gerstein, 1989, pp. 185–189; Day, 2006, pp. 58–74.

³¹⁹ See Pamela Tamarkin Reis, 1997, p. 287.

manni gipta' (*Stj* III p. 641) [because you cannot give me to a man]. The daughter's unmarried, virginal nature is emphasised in the Old Norse translation, in contrast to the treatment of female virginity elsewhere in *Stjórn*. The translator regularly removes references to virginity; for example, the description of Dinah as a virgin before she is raped by Shechem (Gen 34.2) is omitted from the Old Norse translation (*Stj* I p. 281). The unusual emphasis on virginity in the Old Norse story of Jephthah's daughter seems to minimise any other interpretations of the mountain trip that might tarnish the daughter's reputation. In the Old Norse, the daughter only travels with women, 'fo systur' (*Stj* III p. 641) [foster-sisters], rather than with companions of any gender as in the Vulgate: 'sociis ac sodalibus' (Judg 11.38) [friends and companions]. The word *fósysstir* [foster-sister] is quite rare, appearing most often in religious works (see Entry: 'fósysstir', ONP). Therefore, this change perhaps also emphasises her virginity and piety.

After her death, the daughter is mourned annually by the women of Israel (*Stj* III pp. 641-642). For a figure to receive such a remembrance, she must have been well-regarded by her community, suggesting that the reader should also look upon her positively. The daughter's death and its ongoing lamentation sharply contrasts with the demise of Jezebel and the treatment of her body, which Jehu states will tarnish her reputation forever (*Stj* III p. 1162). While Jezebel's use of her verbal power only drives her to ruin, Jephthah's daughter uses her voice to carve out a celebration that will continue her legacy. Bal (1989, pp. 225-

228) argues that the annual ritual that celebrates the daughter's life is connected to her sojourn in the mountains; by bartering for two months of life, the daughter establishes a tradition that preserves her memory in perpetuity.

The father's struggle to sacrifice his daughter, which even requires multiple incitements in some versions of *Stjórn III*, also emphasises the positive depiction of the woman. As Stiebert (2013, pp. 93-94) writes, 'The virgin daughter sacrifice [...] stresses not inconsequentiality but its opposite: the high value and possibly also love for the daughter'. The daughter is thus portrayed in a positive light, even though she performs incitements in *Stjórn III*.

Conclusion: Jephthah's Daughter in Stjórn III

In this story driven entirely by speech acts, a faithless male vow is contrasted with the good incitement(s) of Jephthah's daughter. Through her directives, which are described with the verb *eggja* in some manuscript versions, the daughter carves out her fate within the confines of the male world and sparks a female tradition of remembrance. This figure thus exemplifies the positive legacy of women who use their incitements to uphold men's moral and religious values.

The daughter, however, does not attempt to break the confines of her father's earlier vow. Acting within these patriarchal verbal constraints, the daughter is praised. If she had not accepted her father's verbal authority, inciting him instead to abandon his foolish promise

and save her life, she might have received a different depiction, perhaps as a Jezebel, swindling men away from their religious obligations.

John Hyrcanus' Mother

Towards the end of the first part of *Gyðinga saga*, an unnamed woman is brought forth and tortured in view of her son, John Hyrcanus (*Gyð* 21:109). The mother calls out, instructing her son to ignore her torments and keep fighting their enemies. Julia Wilker (2017, p. 87) has connected the depiction of this mother in Josephus (the ultimate source of the story) to the Maccabean mother discussed above. Though there are clear similarities, John's mother differs from the Maccabean mother in that her incitement fails, and she becomes victim rather than martyr. This female verbal impotence is emphasised in *Gyðinga saga*.

John's Mother in the Sources

This part of *Gyðinga saga* primarily translates I Maccabees, but the story of John's mother is not found in this source. The translator instead uses Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (*HS* 1525B),³²⁰ which has Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*AJud* 13.XIII) and *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJud* 1.II.4) as its source.³²¹ Josephus' source for this scene is unclear.³²²

³²⁰ See Fersch, 1982, p. 121; Wolf, 1990b, pp. 141-148; 1995, pp. lxxxviii-xcv.

³²¹ On the use of Josephus in *Gyðinga saga*, see the Introduction.

³²² See Joseph Sievers, 1989, p. 133, and Julia Wilker, 2017.

The First Book of Maccabees (I Macc 16.16-24) describes how Ptolemy (the son of Abubus) murders Simon, John's father, and attempts to assassinate John.³²³ In Josephus, he also captures John's mother and brothers, leading to an additional scene absent from I Maccabees. John chases Ptolemy, laying siege to his city. Although John has the stronger force, Josephus describes how he is weakened when Ptolemy tortures his mother and brothers on the city walls, threatening to kill them should John continue his siege. John hesitates, but his mother incites him to continue fighting:

Mater vero ejus nihil plagis, aut intentata nece perterrita, manus protendens, filium precabatur, ne vel suis fractus injuriis, parceret impio: siquidem ipsa sibi mortem a Ptolemaeo propositam immortalitate duceret meliorem, dum modo ille poenas eorum, quae in domum suam contra fas ad misisset, expenderet. (*BJud* 1.II.4)

[However, his mother, who was not frightened by the wounds or the threatened death, stretching out her hands, begged her son that he would not be disheartened by the injuries to spare the wicked one: since she considered the death proposed by Ptolemy to be better for her than immortality, but only as long as he suffers punishment for these unlawful actions which he had cast upon their house.]

Hearing her plea, John continues his siege, but he grows ever weaker as he witnesses the further tortures of his family. The siege stretches on until, according to Josephus (*AJud* 13.XIII; *BJud* 1.II.4), the year of the Sabbath arrives, in which Jews are forbidden from warfare. Wilker (2017, p. 83) considers this note on the Sabbath to be 'primarily an excuse to legitimize John Hyrcanus' surprising withdrawal'. John retreats, and Ptolemy kills his mother

³²³ This Ptolemy is not part of the Ptolemaic dynasty discussed in the previous chapter.

and brothers. As Wilker (2017, p. 80) notes, ‘the narrative falls flat and comes to a rapid end that has no impact on the following events’.

Despite the narrative disappointment of this story, Wilker (2017, p. 90) notes that it functioned as ‘an example of fortitude and courage and as a narrative of inner turmoil and *pathos*’ (Wilker’s emphasis). The mother is clearly glorified by Josephus. Grace Aguilar (*WI* p. 720), for example, notes her ‘noble and unshrinking courage’, and both Wilker (2017, p. 84) and Joseph Sievers (1989, p. 132) call the mother a ‘heroine’. The narrative preserved in the *Historia Scholastica* (*HS* 1525B), however, alters the view of this courageous mother.

Comestor shortens this narrative and minimises the importance of the mother. The account in the Patrologia Latina edition of his *Historia* reads as follows: ‘Matre tamen clamante, ne pro se sineret scelus Ptolemæi inultum; mortem enim suam sic indicaret immortalitate meliorem. Ob hoc diutius tractata obsidione septimus advenit annus feriatus a Judæis’ (*HS* 1525B) [The mother, however, called out that she would not allow the wickedness of Ptolemy to go unpunished for her sake; thus she showed that her death would be better than immortality. On account of this prolonged siege, the seventh year arrived, a holiday for the Jews]. The mother’s stoicism has been omitted, her speech shortened, and John’s response significantly minimised. The ‘courage’, ‘inner turmoil’ and ‘*pathos*’ (Wilker, 2017, p. 90; Wilker’s emphasis) that define the story in Josephus are thus absent from the *Historia*

Scholastica (at least, in the *Patrologia Latina* edition), and thus likely did not make their way to the Old Norse translator.

John's Mother in Gyðinga saga

The Old Norse translator further reduces the mother's story and renders her speech act completely impotent. The account begins with a fairly detailed description of the torture and its emotional effect on John (*Gyð* 21:109). Then the mother speaks: 'modir hans kallar. ok bidr hann æigi fra huerfa. ne lata vhefndan glæp tholomeí. ok dæmir sítt lif dauda verra' (*Gyð* 21:109) [His mother calls out and bids him to not turn away, nor let Ptolemy's crime go unavenged, as she judges her life to be worse than death]. This follows Comestor (*HS* 1525B) in preserving the mother's speech but minimising her courage and stoicism. The mother is more direct in the Old Norse than in Comestor and Josephus, explicitly telling her son not to 'fra huerfa' (*Gyð* 21:109) [turn away]. John, however, does the exact opposite; immediately after his mother's cry for revenge, 'hann huerfr þo fra. þuiat þa kom in annus remissionís. er gydingar. hallda allt heilagt ut' (*Gyð* 21:109-110) [he turns away anyway, because then the year of remission began, which the Jews keep entirely holy].

If the narrative in Josephus is anticlimactic, it is even more so in *Gyðinga saga*. The mother's speech act does not evoke any response in her son; there is no emotional

deliberation, and no extension of the siege.³²⁴ It is possible that the philo-Semitic translator was more interested in the Jewish law described here than in the mother's speech, thus creating a narrative that glosses over any drama or pathos to instead focus on the Sabbath year. The translator seems to emphasise the importance of the Sabbath year more than the *Patrologia Latina* edition of Comestor's text, which only calls it a 'feriatus' (*HS* 1525B) [holiday]. This additional emphasis seems to have been taken from some Latin source, since the Latin loanwords *annus remissionis* [year of remission] are used. This term could have been found in the translator's version of the *Historia Scholastica*, or some other text, though there is notably no evidence for this observation of the Sabbath year outside of Josephus.³²⁵ The translator's interest in this Jewish holiday might have distracted him from his concern with female verbal power.

After John retreats, his mother and brothers are killed by Ptolemy. Despite her attempts to make herself a martyr for the sake of justice and vengeance, she is killed as a victim alongside her voiceless sons. She does not have the death of a martyr, like the Maccabean mother, nor a celebration in her honour, like Jephthah's daughter. Her death is depicted simply in the line: 'let *hann drepa bædi hana. ok sua sueínana*' (*Gyð* 21:110) [he (Ptolemy) had both her and the boys killed].

³²⁴ On siege warfare in *Gyðinga saga*, see Cole, 2015a, pp. 212-213.

³²⁵ See Sievers, 1990, pp. 135-136; James C. VanderKam, 2004, p. 288; Wilker, 2017, p. 83.

The Mother's Speech Act

Like the other figures in this chapter, the mother uses her voice with the intention of shaping her destiny, transforming herself into a martyr rather than a victim; unlike the other figures, she clearly fails. The speech act used in this passage is of the directive type, though (unlike with the mother and daughter analysed above) this is not described with the verb *eggja*. Perhaps, having failed to successfully drive her son to action, the mother's speech act does not earn this verb of incitement. The word *eggja* is, however, used a few lines earlier to describe John's urging of his men into battle. This is in line with traditions of male-to-male incitement, in which men frequently egg on other men in scenes of war (for example, *Eg ÍF* 2 54:141). The proximity of this verb to a female directive in *Gyðinga saga* might nonetheless carry its inciting associations onto the woman's words.

Notably, the speech act of John's mother calls for revenge. Although female incitement is not always linked to vengeance, the concepts are frequently connected (see Chapter One). The mother's desire for revenge, *hefnd*, in the Old Norse seems to have its source in the demand that Ptolemy receive *poenae* (*BJud* 1.II.4) [punishments] for his actions in Comestor and Josephus. The translator transforms this into a demand for vengeance (one of the conventions of incitement), painting the mother as a hopeless *Hetzerin*.

A Positive Depiction?

In the *Íslendingasögur*, revenge is pursued to the bitter end, effecting further bloodshed, especially when a woman's incitement is involved. John, however, ignores his mother's passionate incitement to avenge his father's murder; his retreat even results in further familial deaths. This subverts any narrative expectations that might have carried over from the feud cycles of the *Íslendingasögur*, perhaps emphasising the text's narrative disappointments. This might even sway reader sentiment in favour of the mother, whose advice seems mostly sound. Had John continued fighting with vigour, he may well have overcome Ptolemy, saving the lives of his remaining family and avenging his father's death. Retreating, he instead allows his enemy to escape unpunished.

The altered timeframe of the retreat in *Gyðinga saga* might nonetheless question a positive reading of the mother. In Josephus and Comestor, the mother's speech act draws out the siege until the Sabbath year; the mother's incitement thus occurs sometime before this. The Old Norse translator, however, describes John's retreat immediately following the mother's speech act, implying that the mother incites her son to fight during the Sabbath year. Taking the text's interpretation of this holy year at face value, the mother encourages her son to abandon his religious observation of the peaceful Sabbath year for the sake of revenge. This reading aligns the mother with figures like Jezebel who incite their husbands

to turn away from God rather than the holy martyrs like Jephthah's daughter and the Maccabean mother who urge relatives to uphold their religious vows and values.

This reading is nonetheless challenged by an earlier moment in *Gyðinga saga* that demonstrates the wisdom of the mother's words. When Ptolemy sends assassins to kill him, John only escapes because he hears of their coming. In *Gyðinga saga*, it is the mother who sends the intelligence that saves John's life: 'Einn madr sendr af modur johannis sagdi honum tidíndín' (*Gyð* 21:108) [A man sent by John's mother told him the news]. This differs from the account in the source for this passage, the Vulgate: 'praecurrens quidam nuntiavit Iohanni in Gazara [...] quia misit te quoque interfici' (I Macc 16.21) [a certain one running before warned John in Gazara that "Ptolemy sent also for the death of you"]. There is no mention of the mother here; in the *Historia Scholastica*, Comestor even indicates that the messenger was a defector from Ptolemy's assassins (*HS* 1520D). The Old Norse translator, however, renarrates the story to frame the mother as the ultimate source of the intelligence. Elsewhere in AM 226 fol., the translator stresses women's role in divulging and disseminating intelligence. For example, Fulvia and Sempronia in *Rómverja saga* (*Róm* 36:179, 37:181, 40:194) know and share information about political plots, and Samson's seductresses (considered in the previous chapter) are important sources of information for the Philistines. In the story of John's mother, however, the woman's role in sharing intelligence is clearly a

positive one that saves her son's life. The wisdom of the mother in this scene encourages positive interpretations of her later incitement.

The Mother's Body

The Old Norse translator not only strips the mother's speech act of its influence; he also strips her body of its clothes. Her torture is described as follows: 'lætr tholomeus leida *framm* a veginn modur hans ok brædr. ok af klæda. ok hud strykia *sua* fast. at allr þeirra likamr flaut i blodi' (*Gyð* 21:109) [Ptolemy had his mother and brothers led forth on the wall and stripped and whipped so hard that all their bodies flowed with blood]. Neither Josephus nor Comestor (in the available editions) include the detail about the stripping of the bodies. The exposure of the mother's body perhaps emulates the earlier depictions of the Maccabean martyrs. The Maccabean mother exposes her torso to her sons, revealing the marks of past pregnancies (*Gyð* 2:13), but, before this, two women are stripped of clothing and tortured for circumcising their sons; the women's nakedness is mentioned twice in this short account (*Gyð* 2:8-9). The nakedness of all these mothers is introduced by the Old Norse translator, perhaps to emulate the focus on naked female bodies in hagiography. Saint Agnes, for example, is dragged naked to a brothel as part of her torture.³²⁶ The translator introduces the torture techniques used on virgin martyrs in his depictions of motherly martyrdom.

³²⁶ On St Agnes in Old Norse literature, see Van Deusen, 2021.

John's mother could not make herself a martyr with her speech act, which is rendered entirely impotent in the Old Norse. However, by introducing a hagiographic nakedness, the translator perhaps aligns this mother's tortures with those of the holy martyrs, who similarly cry out their defiance as they are tormented. In *Gyðinga saga*, the mother thus seems to achieve the status of martyr, but it is primarily through her exposed and tormented body rather than an influential speech act.

Conclusion: John's Mother in Gyðinga saga

The Old Norse translation of this story is defined by narrative failure and impotent female speech, in sharp contrast to the other examples explored in this thesis. The translator omits any mention in the source material of the effects of the mother's speech on her son, minimising the mother's role and rendering her incitement completely ineffective. Although, like Jephthah's daughter and the Maccabean mother, John's mother tries to gain some influence over her death with her voice, she is ultimately unsuccessful. Despite this, this figure in *Gyðinga saga* still appears to be a positive example of an inciter woman. Her advice seems mostly sound, and her hagiographic nakedness perhaps elevates her status. Unlike the examples in previous chapters, obeying female incitement here may well have prevented further injustices, suggesting that it is not always folly to listen to women. This wise incitement, however, necessitates the neglect of religious observations. Even in this

hagiographic incitement scene, there is an underlying suggestion that female incitement leads men away from their religious duties.

Conclusion: Holy Hetzerinnen

These three figures, linked by their namelessness, self-sacrifice, and speech acts are important examples of the positive applications of female incitement within AM 226 fol. At the same time, when comparing the figures against their source texts (for the two mothers) or the other manuscript witnesses (for the daughter), it becomes clear that the translator-compiler of AM 226 fol. has minimised the narrative significance of their verbal power. While these holy *Hetzerinnen* provide clear evidence that women's counsel is not always cold, they also demonstrate the translator's different approach with the positively-coded inciter women. While he alters and expands upon the scenes involving the evil inciters and serpentine seductresses, heaping on additional condemnation at times, the translator actively avoids drawing too much attention to the good speech acts of women.

In this manuscript designed by and for men, these stories do not read as models of pious behaviour (and the proper use of speech acts) to be used and emulated by women. Instead, they offer to men the possibility that sometimes the women around them might have something useful to say. The short accounts of these nameless figures, two of which occur in *Gyðinga saga* at the end of the manuscript, nevertheless risk slipping into obscurity in a large

manuscript filled with many stories of powerful men, women, and speech acts. Though they present the possibility that women can use their verbal powers for good, these stories are overshadowed by the repeated tales of dangerous female influence that populate much of the manuscript.

The positively-coded speech acts of the women explored in this chapter also function in a sphere that might be deemed an acceptable space for women's participation. Both the Maccabean mother and Jephthah's daughter urge their male relatives to remain true to their religious duties, in line with the maternal responsibility for religion in the family (especially in Judaism, with matrilineal descent). This might explain the lukewarm depiction of these figures, who perform within (or adjacent to) an acceptable female role.

Nevertheless, the women in each case use their voices to access a sphere of influence from which they are otherwise excluded. The Maccabean mother is not asked to eat pork, unlike her sons and the old man Eleazar; Jephthah's daughter has no influence over her father's initial vow; and John's mother has no real control over her son's war plans. In contrast, Jezebel's primary verbal sin is inciting her husband to worship her pagan gods: an action that could be seen as within the woman's role of religious responsibility. Though the holy *Hetzerinnen* uphold rather than destabilise the status quo, they nonetheless access (or attempt to access) male spheres of action and influence through their speech act. In the process, they define themselves and their legacies.

Conclusion

This thesis was intended as a study of women, but it has become in many ways a study of men, of male attitudes towards women's verbal power. The male translator presents multiple warnings for his male readers about the disastrous effects of women's influence, not unlike certain male podcasters in the present day. The condemnation of the voiced woman grows as she speaks commands, incitements, and seductions. Some examples are given of the words of wise women, who incite men but do not necessarily rock the boat in their speech acts. The male translator, however, lingers over the destructive and disobedient female voice. This thesis thus reveals a male insecurity regarding the limited options of power available to women in medieval Icelandic society: an insecurity that has passed through the layers of male translators, compilers, redactors, and scribes summed up in this thesis as 'the translator'.

Conducting a literary study on the texts of one manuscript, informed by New Philology and translation studies, has come with its challenges. I have grown increasingly convinced by the 'renarration' frameworks proposed by Mona Baker (2024; 2020) and Glückhardt, Kleinschmidt, and Spohn (eds, 2019). The texts examined here for the most part cannot be described as word-for-word or sense-for-sense translations but instead offer a renarration of the story found in its source(s). Each stage in the process from source to AM 226 fol. can be considered a kind of renarration: first through translation, then through compilation, redaction, or editing, as well as more minor types of renarration in scribal change

and error during copying. Considering the Norse translations as renarrations also encourages a re-evaluation of any divide between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ texts, since Walther (2019, pp. 186–189) has argued that ‘native’ texts like the *Íslendingasögur* can also be considered renarrations (of oral histories). Whether renarrating local or foreign-language material, similar processes of textual production are involved. The renarrations themselves cannot be called ‘native’ or ‘foreign’, since they are all created in Iceland or Scandinavia by the local people. Through the renarration framework, texts across Old Norse literary genres can be drawn together: *Íslendingasögur* studies can benefit from the approaches of translation and renarration theory, while the study of the translations is gifted a more central place in Old Norse scholarship.

To write about the texts of AM 226 fol. in comparison with their sources, this study has resurrected a single composite author named ‘the translator’. This ‘translator’, a Frankenstein’s monster comprised of the parts of several (male) text producers, has been blamed for much in this thesis: all changes, omissions, and additions identified through comparison between the closest available surviving copy of the source material and the text as it stands in AM 226 fol. I will take this opportunity to remind the reader that all such conclusions have the underlying assumption that this is *as far as can be discerned from the material available*. I have deemed the creation of this ‘translator’ necessary to simply put words on the page.

At several points, however, I have found myself questioning both the ethics and the accuracy of my own monstrous creation. At times it has seemed feasible to suggest that certain changes might have taken place in a specific stage of text production, thus deconstructing ‘the translator’ and revealing the gaps between the seams. Perhaps Arsinoe, for example, became the sister of Caesar rather than Ptolemy through the misunderstanding of a later redactor or copyist, who did not have access to the original text to check the identity of this Ptolemaic queen. The idea of a ‘translator’ in the singular, though aligning with much literary scholarship that speaks of a ‘saga author’, seems to undermine the New Philological principles that inspired this study. Though I stand by the need for some grammatical agent in the analysis, particularly in studies that compare source against target text, were I to start this study from scratch, I would instead give this agency to the process rather than a fabricated ‘translator’. Instead of ‘The translator adds/omits/changes...’, there could be ‘The renarration adds/omits/changes...’, or perhaps even the plural ‘renarrations’ to encompass the multiple textual changes between the source and the extant manuscript version. Rather than ascribing agency to an inanimate text or to an imagined author, it can be given to the text creation processes performed in various stages by real human beings in the medieval scriptoria. This approach might benefit future studies of the Old Norse translations.

The focus on AM 226 fol. has provided a rich tapestry for the study of the female voice, combining understudied texts from different genres that are not often considered

together. It contains far more fascinating depictions of women's power than could be adequately studied in this thesis, which has had to select only the most glistening of moments for analysis. At the same time, AM 226 fol. is just one among the multitudes of surviving manuscripts containing religious and learned material. Many of these manuscripts are unstudied, unedited, and even insufficiently catalogued. There is much still to be learnt from the study of such texts about women, gender, and the written culture of the medieval North. Research into texts and manuscripts written by/for women would be particularly valuable.

This thesis has also illuminated several avenues for further study of the more popular texts in the Old Norse canon. The image of the seductress as a poisonous herptile, for example, seems to appear across the corpus; further research into this trope would be fruitful. The study of translations has also illuminated absence: themes, ideas, or physical items included in the source but excluded from the translation. Why might the renarrations have removed the references to Jezebel's makeup, and why, for that matter, are there shockingly few depictions of cosmetics in Old Norse literature? Did medieval Icelanders and Norwegians have different attitudes to female virginity than their continental counterparts, and could that explain why the renarrations consistently omit references to female virginity in *Stjórn*? Further research, considering the 'native' and 'foreign' texts together, might shed light on these questions.

While informing scholarly research into the Old Norse translated texts, this thesis has nonetheless had as its central aim a contribution to the understandings of women and women's power in Old Norse literature. Through the analysis of several figures in comparison with their counterparts in the source material, I have revealed a particular concern in the Norse renarrations with the female voice and its ability to influence men. Though this is a manuscript designed by and for men, and the conclusions of this thesis can undoubtedly inform the study of men and masculinity, it has nonetheless been read by women throughout history. From 'Auðni Benediktsdóttir', who wrote her name in runes on folio 95r, to the present scholar who has interacted with the manuscript only through online facsimiles and editions, women have and continue to engage with AM 226 fol. Though male anxieties pervade the renarrations, they do not have to define the reading. While acknowledging the misogyny that pervades the text, which only depicts the obedient or selfless female speech acts positively, I hope I have also highlighted shining moments of female power, agency, and independence. Jezebel leads her own female cult of worship that she fiercely protects with her words. Samson's seductresses prioritise their families, lives, and livelihoods over the fickle love of a man. Jephthah's daughter cultivates female community and ritual. The Maccabean martyr chooses divine love over the world. Eve might eat the apple and condemn mankind, but one can admire her independence as she does so.

In defining the female voice as treacherous and destructive, the Old Norse renarrations attempt to silence women. It is, however, possible to recover their voices from the wreckage of misogyny that (re)narrates them. The female voice is powerful: it scares, incites, inspires, seduces, and terrifies men. Law and social norms might restrict women's access to certain spaces, but they cannot take away the voice. Even when they cut out tongues, the myth of Philomela reveals that women will always find a way to speak. The female voice, beyond the easy control of men, disrupts, resists, and influences the male systems of power set up to exclude it.

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: Adam, Eve, and the snake, bottom margin of fol. 1v in the manuscript Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 227 fol. Obtained from: Entry, 'AM 227 fol.', Handrit, <<https://handrit.is/>> [accessed March 2023]
Image source: The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

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References for the most part follow the Modern Humanities Research Association author-date style. As this system, with its focus on publication date, is awkward when referencing classical and medieval texts, I have instead used abbreviations (following the ONP or the conventions of the field when possible) to refer to primary texts. Such texts are listed under their abbreviation in the bibliography. The references for all primary texts follow the MHRA style that de-prioritises publication date (citation-in-notes system). All other references follow the MHRA author-date style.

Icelanders are listed by forename rather than patronymic.

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