THE ICELANDIC TRANSLATIONS FROM MIDDLE ENGLISH

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The entire known corpus of Icelandic translations from Middle English, comprising four vellum manuscripts in the Arnamagnæan Collection, can now be traced to a common source. Twenty-nine different exempla or islensk ævintýri, as members of the Icelandic genre are sometimes called, have been recorded on thirty leaves. The dating and localization of the original translation is of cultural and historical interest and of literary importance, not only for the genre itself, but also for the dating of several Icelandic romances.

Two manuscripts, AM 238 XX, fol, and AM 696 VII, 4to, were published for the first time in 1970. Besides increasing the inventory of extant Icelandic exempla by almost ten percent, the four leaves contain three animal fables which are among the oldest attested in Icelandic literature. Two of the fables eventually led to the identification of a Middle English sister manuscript to the one used by the original Icelandic translator. A third manuscript, AM 624, 4to, was edited in 1882 by Hugo Gering, who believed eight of the eighteen exempla to be from Middle English, found Latin parallels for only three others, and left the remaining seven unidentified. Jónaitis ævintýri, the lengthiest of the two exempla in the fourth manuscript, AM 123, 8vo, was printed in 1944, and Björn Pórólfsson identified its Middle English provenance.

Dating the extant manuscripts on linguistic evidence alone can be only approximate until fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Icelandic has undergone more intensive study. Kristian Kállund has dated 238, 696, and 624 to the fifteenth century, and 123 to

1 Here called the Icelandic Gesta Augmenta for convenience. An extension of my grant from the George C. Marshall Memorial Fund in Denmark gave me the opportunity to complete this article at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen.
2 Peter A. Jorgensen, "Ten Icelandic Exempla and Their Middle English Source", Opuscula IV, in Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana XXX (København, 1970), 177-207. First references to MSS. in this article will be by the full call number, thereafter only by the numerals.
4 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Leit í gær til lenda (Reykjavík, 1944), 95-102.
5 Björn Pórólfsson, Rimur fjórin 1600, in Sæfi Fjöðurfjölsóga um Island og Íslanda IX (Kaufmannshøfn, 1934), 465.
first half of the thirteenth century, and the rest either from expanded manuscripts of Odo's tales or from expanded prose recensions of Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*. The second Middle English manuscript, *Kk.1.6*, is evidently somewhat younger than 9066 and contains fewer exempla, usually in shortened versions, and deviates more from the Icelandic versions than does 9066. Two other English translations from the unexpanded *Gesta Romanorum* exist, both independent of 9066 and 1.6, but of interest in studying the language of the missing Middle English version and its immediate Latin precursor. The oldest of them, Harly 7333, is a mid fifteenth-century manuscript translated from a Latin version closely related to Harly 5239 or Harly 2270, and contains texts parallel to seven Icelandic exempla. The other independent translation, preserved in a printed edition by Wynkyn de Worde from 1510-1515, has yet to have more than eight exempla edited, but it is evident from these that the texts have been shortened more than have those of the other three Middle English manuscripts.

Below are listed the exempla found in the extant Icelandic *Gesta Augmenta* along with the Middle English manuscripts in which they occur and the most closely related Latin collections from which these in turn were derived.

**AM 238 XX, fol.**


by Wilhelm Dick, *Die Gesta Romanorum nach der Innsbrucker ... Handschrift, in Erlanger Beiträge zur englischen Philologie VII* (Erlangen, Leipzig, 1890).


15 Described in Heritate, pp. xx-xxii. Used to footnote 9066 in the editions of Madden and Heritate.

16 Described in Heritate, pp. xxii, xxii. Edited in both Madden and in Heritate.

17 Described in Heritate, pp. xxii-xxii. Edited in Madden, pp. 466-503 and in Heritate, pp. 429-444.

CA. 1600, while Gering placed 624 near the middle of the fifteenth century. Fortunately, 624 contains a version of the *Visio Pauli* in a hand which has been identified as that of Jón Porvaldsdótt (d. ca. 1514), mentioned as a priest in 1474, who became connected with the church at Hóskuldstaður on Skagastönd around 1492. For at least three years, 1495-1498, he was *officialis* at the see of Hólar in Hjaltadal and became abbot of the monastery at Dóneyrar in 1505. Because 624 contains such a large body of various learned religious treatises, the most likely repository for such an assortment would have been the important bishop’s seat at Hólar, meaning that Jón Porvaldsdótt was one of the seven scribes of 624 in the last decade of the fifteenth century, before he assumed the more prominent position of abbot. In the discussion below of the Middle English source for the exempla in 624, further circumstantial evidence for the localization at Hólar will be adduced.

Evidence from the short fragment 238 indicates it to be about the same age as 624, perhaps even slightly older, but without knowing the dialect, age, training, and talent of the scribes involved, exact datings in this period based purely on the available linguistic information cannot be made. 696 contains the younger forms found in each of the previous two manuscripts, plus the adverb *giarmam* for *giarmn*, and employs the graphic variant *r*-rotunda in word-initial position. The absence of other sixteenth-century forms would allow an approximate dating of 696 to the second quarter of that century. With the notable exception of *suio* instead of *so*, most of the younger characteristics found in 696 are also present in 123. Later forms such as *hvor* for *hvrr*, use of the relative *ed*, and various orthographic geminations are common, but a number of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century traits not present in 123, such as *jeg* for *eg*, *baug* for *ba*, and *aldrei* for *aldri*, would prompt a dating of 123 to the very end of the sixteenth century.

The Middle English manuscript which was the source of the Icelandic texts has apparently been lost, but there survive two fifteenth-century Middle English versions which throw light on the missing manuscript and on its complicated history. *Additional 9066* contains 96 tales translated from a Latin manuscript conglomerate such as *Harly 219 or Douce 169*. Forty of the exempla in 9066 stem from the *Gesta Romanorum*, thirteen from the fables collected by the Englishman Odo of Cheriton in the
9. Three Friends Tested (frag.)
   9066, 7333; Expanded Odo
   AM 696 VII, 410
6. Woman’s Tongue in Devil’s Purse (frag.)
   9066
5. Priest Prays for Mother in Hell
   9066; Expanded Odo?
10. The Sick Lion, the Fox, and the Wolf (frag.)
    9066; Expanded Odo?
    AM 624, 410
11. The Rich Man and the Widow
    9066; Odo
12. The Woman Unconfessed
    9066
13. The Woman and the Crucifix
    9066
14. Man Tread by Unicorn (frag.)
    9066, 7333; Odo
    Lacuna
15. The Dead Thief and His Friend (frag.)
    Handlyng Synne
16. Perjuror Struck Dead
    Handlyng Synne
17. Two Knights Reconciled
    Handlyng Synne
18. The Dead Guest
19. The Penitent Sick Man
20. The Wife of the Priest
    Handlyng Synne
21. Infanticide and Drops of Blood
    9066; Expanded Odo
22. Shortened Suffering
23. Death from Remorse after Incest and Parricide
    9066
24. The Slanderous Monk
    Handlyng Synne
25. The Impenitent Swearer
    9066; Handlyng Synne
26. The Wax Image
    7333; Gesta Romanorum
27. Skeletons Desert Cemetery
28. Three Truths

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9066, 7333; Gesta Romanorum
AM 123, 8vo

26. The Wax Image
   7333; Gesta Romanorum

29. Jónatas
   9066, 7333, 1.6; Gesta Romanorum

Two of these exempla, nos. 5 and 26, exist in two overlapping versions, making a study of the Icelandic stemma possible. Neither 238 nor 696 could have been copied from the other, for each has several passages in common with the Middle English which are absent in the other Icelandic variant. Likewise 123 and 624 must have a common source (node X, below), for the younger manuscript retains correct renderings of the Middle English, while the older has obscured the original sense. There remain to be mentioned seven paper variants of no. 29, Jónatas svíntýri, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although a complete study of their relationships to each other is still lacking, it is evident that they cannot be derived from the vellum 123.

In the stemma of the Icelandic Gesta Augmenta and its English and Latin predecessors given below, nodes X and Y have been depicted as being independently derived from the original Icelandic translation, and although two other relationships are possible, the one chosen seems to be the most probable. Only if node Y were younger than 624 could it have been derived from the lacuna between tales 14 and 15, but the linguistic evidence would indicate 238 to be about the same age or older than 624. The length of the missing gap in the still very thick manuscript 624 cannot be determined with certainty, but even if it had been an entire gathering of five double leaves, one more than the usual number, there would not have been text enough to fill the extant leaves of 238 plus a minimum of one double leaf constituting the innermost folio of the gathering to which 238 originally belonged. On the other hand, node X could have been identical with node Y, but this implies a relationship between the two branches for which no evidence exists. Furthermore, it will be shown below that a half century or more separates the original translation (W) from the oldest extant manuscripts, more than enough time for various branches to have developed.

Although few source manuscripts discovered for Icelandic translations correspond more closely than does 9066 with the Icelandic Gesta Augmenta, the number of Middle

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26. See Jorgensen, pp. 185-186. Their common source will be labelled Y.
27. If overlaid mine 123, 38v15; in þe wordle (sic) 7333 (Heritage, p. 2, l. 23); missing in 624, 79,13.
   28. If ek skryt eigi þe þríðra stína 123, 39v17; if I saye the third syrne 7333 (Heritage, p. 3, l. 12); if eg skyt
       j þríðia stína 624, 80,15. sees 123, 39v20; ny 7333 (Heritage, p. 3, l. 16); nu 624, 80,18.
29. One branch of the paper MSS. preserves a sentence not present in the parchment MS: enn varar
     þú konum Lbs. 1754, 8vo, 1b17, Lbs. 1767, 4to, p. 225, l. 4; but be were ware of womans companye
     9066 (Heritage, p. 181, l. 31); absent in the remaining Icelandic versions.
30. A lacuna of six double leaves in 624 (roughly 24,700 letters and spaces less 1800 for the end of
     exemplum 14 and the beginning of 15), would leave just enough text to fill the leaves of 238 (19,300
     letters and spaces plus 3000 for the beginning of exemplum 1 and the end of 9) only if tales 1 and 14
     had had their moralizations omitted and if the preserved folio of 238 was the second (and not the
     third or fourth) innermost in its gathering.
English manuscripts which have existed must be increased by one (here called V), for neither 9066 nor 1.6 can be the exact source of the Icelandic texts. The relationship between the various English manuscripts can be determined to a certain extent. Mistakes in 9066, not found in 1.6 or in the Icelandic versions, indicate that neither 1.6 nor V could have been copied from 9066. 1.6 and 9066 could not have been derived from V, for the Icelandic texts preserve more passages from the Latin than could be accounted for by chance omission in the Middle English versions. Furthermore, neither 9066 nor V could have been copied from the obviously younger 1.6. In the stemma of the Gestum Augmenta given above, the available evidence could not contradict joining 1.6 to node T or between T and V, but 9066 and 1.6 have so many parallel passages not present in the Icelandic, 7333, or the Latin, that their derivation from an additional intermediate manuscript U is most probable.

The are nine Icelandic tales with no parallel Middle English prose text. Five of them, nos. 15, 16, 17, 20, and 24, are found in the Middle English verses of Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, written in the year 1303 and based on William of Waddington's Manuel des Péché. The verses are so close to the Icelandic parallels that a link between the two collections cannot be doubted; however, an additional exemplum, found both in 9066 and in the Handlyng Synne, indicates that the tales from the Handlyng Synne could not have been translated directly into Icelandic without an intermediate Middle English prose manuscript. 9066 radically changes the happy ending of no. 25, The Impotent Swearer, in the same way as does the Icelandic with a textual correspondence to that language even closer than that existing between the versified English version and the Icelandic, to which the parallel beginning portions of all three variants attest.

The remaining four exempla, nos. 18, 19, 22, and 27, have not yet had their immediate sources identified, but similar stories are found in Latin manuscripts of English provenance. No. 27, Skeletons Desert Cemetery, deviates only slightly from versions in manuscripts now found throughout England. The apologue about the monk who wished to have his suffering shortened (no. 22) was likewise popular in medieval England, although the Icelandic version differs in that the monk manages to endure the abbreviated but intensified distress. Exemplum 19, concerning the sick man who repents when a vision of Christ gives him a drop of His blood, is almost identical to a tale in the collection attributed to Étienne de Bourbon. The remaining story of the dead guest who neither eats nor drinks probably has its roots in a folk tale. The beginning of the Icelandic text, Pat var einn mann (sic) i Englandi, shows that the tale had

\[\text{tyrne to his contre ... 1.6; ... sidan j sit hierad ... 123, 42r7, the clothe 9066 (Heritage, p. 188, l. 24); a parte of the clothe 1.6; han part af kladinu 123, 43r1 (Sveinsson, p. 99, l. 27).}\]

\[\text{duo homines (Dick, p. 99, l. 5); j sit squiers 7333 (Heritage, p. 189, l. 17); if riddar 123, 43v15 (Sveinsson, p. 100, l. 30); men 1.6, 9066; and examples in footnote 24.}\]

\[\text{Heritage, pp. xix, xx, has dated 1.6 to the end of the fifteenth century and 9066 to about 1440, the latter dated by Herbert, III, 255, to the second half of the fifteenth century. V must be older than 624 (1490-1500), the original Icelandic translation (W), and at least one intervening Icelandic copy (X).}\]

\[\text{E.g.: and toke withe hym if smale botels of wyne, and (also) brode 1.6 (9066) (Heritage, p. 186, l. 36); absent in 7333, Harley 219, Icelandic versions; and editions of Oesterley and Dick.}\]

\[\text{Both edited in parallel columns by Furnivall, op. cit.}\]

\[\text{The tale is summarized and the MSS. listed in Herbert, III, 531-532.}\]

\[\text{Cf. Herbert, III, 630; 96, 401, 418, 437, 469, 610; 546; 558.}\]

\[\text{Edited by A. Lecoy de la Marche, Anecdoties Historiques Légendes et Apologies ... d'Étienne de Bourbon ... (Paris, 1877), 85-86. A MS. of Étienne's collection is found in the British Museum, Herbert, III, 78-87.}\]
already been localized to England and indicates that the source manuscript had been written or copied there. 38

The Latin sources for several exempla found in the Icelandic and English versions of the Gesta Augmenta can now be traced to Odo of Cheriton or to expanded collections of his apologues. Exemplum 14, Man Tred by Unicorn, is attested in 624 only by the initial four dozen words, a fragment evidently too short to deserve more than a footnote in Gering’s edition. 39 His source commentary mentions only that the story was “well known”, and indeed, it occurs in most of the popular medieval exempla collections. 40 Both of the chief Latin contributors to the Middle English source, Odo and the Gesta Romanorum, contain the tale, but the version in Odo corresponds almost verbatim to the Icelandic. 41 Furthermore, Odo replaces the honey in the tree found in other collections by the divergent reading poma, translated in 9066 by appils, not an unusual medieval gloss. On the other hand, 7333, which was based on a manuscript of the Gesta Romanorum proper, translates Latin mel correctly as honey ‘honey’.

The tale of the sick lion, the fox, and the wolf (no. 10) has been attributed to “Alfred of England”, whose work has been lost, but who is named as the source by Marie de France in her versified translations which contain this fable. 42 A link between the exempla of Odo and those of Alfred was postulated by Mall in 1885, who based his hypothesis on a quote found both in Odo and Marie. 43 The evidence in favor of a connection between Alfred and Odo is strengthened by having a fable found in Marie’s work appear again in 9066, an English collection partly dependent on the exempla of Odo. 44 This apologue is not known from the oldest manuscripts of Odo’s works, however, and it is possible that the tale first came into the stanza at Q in the Expanded Odo.

The Rich Man and the Widow, no. 11, certainly stems from the original collection of Odo, for it is attested in the oldest vellum manuscripts, i.e., Arundel 292, f. 13v, Additional 11579, f. 110v, and Royal 7 C i, f. 128r, all housed in the British Museum. Exemplum 21, Infanticide and Drops of Blood, appears to be an example of the methodology employed by medieval ‘editors’, for it is evidently a combination of two ad-

38 On this widespread folktales, see Leander Peto’s, Der Tote als Gast. Volkskunde und Exempel, in FF Communications, LXIV, No. 200 (Helsinki, 1968). MS. Additional 16589 in the British Museum contains an exemplum roughly similar to the Icelandic version, Herbert, III, 470.

39 Gering, I, p. VIII.


41 Hervieux, III, 626; IV, 217.


43 Mall, pp. 202-203.

44 The fable has ceased to be an independent exemplum in 9066, being embedded in a moral treatise comparing the six cases of a noun to six kinds of pride, and begins: “The fourte case is accusatif case and are thet accessen theye neighbours”, Heritage, pp. 417-418.

45 jacent tales found in the Expanded Odo. The first tells of a woman who confessed all but one sin committed in her youth. She repents and has a vision of Christ, who bids her touch the wound in His side. Her hand becomes stained with blood until she has confessed. The second exemplum, dealing with a widow denounced by the devil for incest and infanticide but saved by the Virgin, was probably used to embellish the beginning of the former. 45 The beginning of a third exemplum in Icelandic, no. 5, Priet Prays for Mother in Hell, is found in the Expanded Odo. 45 That the end of the version as preserved in 9066 was not unique to that manuscript in medieval Iceland is attested by the Middle English Alphabet of Tales in no. 697, A Man Does Penance for his Mother. 45

In addition to the four exempla with no Middle English and only approximate Latin sources identified (nos. 18, 19, 22, 27 discussed above), five others found in 9066 do not have close parallels in the collections of Odo, the Gesta Romanorum, or in the Handlyng Synne (nos. 4, 6, 12, 13, and 23). Exemplum 4 is found with the nail in the balance as a drop of blood in sundry manuscripts of English provenance, including the Speculum Laiorum, an alphabetical compendium drawn from many sources. 46 A rather close parallel to no. 23 is found in the Alphabetum Narrationum, a Latin collection of exempla to be used in sermons, and in a Northumbrian translation from the fifteenth century. 47 Of these nine tales with a source older than 9066 still not precisely identified, eight deal with sundry vices and their forgiveness through the proper amount of penance, being similar in theme and structure to many of the poems in the Handlyng Synne. The most plausible hypothesis to account for the entry of these exempla into the stanza would be an expanded Middle English prose treatment of the Handlyng Synne (S).

The original Icelandic translation (W) is difficult to date on the basis of the linguistic information alone, although this evidence can furnish the limits for an enlightening historical inquiry. The original translation from English must fall between nodes T and XY in the stanza. XY must be older than 624 and 238 (the last decade of the fifteenth century at the latest), while T must be older than 9066 (1440 or mid fifteenth century) and younger than R (early fifteenth century). 48

45 Both Latin tales are found in Harley 219, 34r-v (Hervieux, II, pp. 696-697), of which only the first is preserved in an exact translation in 9066 (Heritage, p. 393). The fusion of the two exempla must have taken place between nodes T and W in the stanza. The Icelandic text in 624 does not correspond as exactly to 9066 as in the other tales, but isolated passages show that the two MSS. are definitely related, e.g., that she durst as he lay in her bodde (Heritage, p. 393, ll. 7-9), at hon Jordi engem presst at sesja. Sva bar til einna nött sem hon ló i stinn sing (Gering, I, XII, 12. 13-14).

46 Hervieux, II, 671-672.

47 Edited by Mary M. Banks in Early English Text Society, Original Series, Nos. 126, 127 (London, 1904, 1905), 467.

48 Descended in Herbert, III, 370-373, 395. Cf. also pp. 519, 539.

49 The Alphabetum Narrationem is described in Herbert, III, 423-429, while the translation is found in Banks, pp. 143-146.

50 The date of the first Latin MSS. in England of the Gesta Romanorum proper, the terminus a quo
Just before the second decade of the fifteenth century, English interest in Iceland, at least as a trading partner, does not seem to have existed, and it is improbable that merchants would have had an interest in transporting religious manuscripts in English or the talent for judging and translating their contents. It is much more likely that the Middle English source (V) was brought to Iceland during a period of ecclesiastical contact between the two countries. Iceland has had only three English bishops in its history: Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton 1426-1437, Jón Blosvík 1435-1441, and Robert Wodborn 1441, and only the first of these ever set foot in Iceland. After a brief visit to the country in the summer of 1425, during which he was not very hospitably received, Craxton returned to Hólar during the summer of 1429 and left again in 1434, apparently never returning to Iceland to assume his new office as Bishop of Skáholt. He is referred to in Icelandic sources as Jón Vilhjálmsson, and it is possible that he was of Norwegian descent, but raised in England.

There is no evidence that the bishop's Icelandic was ever good enough to produce such an idiomatic translation, nor is it certain that a man of his station, beset by numerous secular problems, would have undertaken such a task. Various Anglicisms in the translation could indicate the translator to be either a foreigner or a bilingual Iceland. whose native tongue had fallen into disuse, but they may be due to slavish copying or stylistic borrowing by a native Iceland.

One of the few men in Iceland at the time with access to the English manuscript and knowledge of English equal to the task of turning out such an exact translation could well have been Jón Egilsson, Bishop Craxton's notarius publicus from 1429 to 1434. At this time both Craxton and Jón Egilsson were situated in Hólar, where the manuscript 624 most probably originated some three or four years later. Numerous Norwegians in the documents written by Jón Egilsson indicate that he might have been a Norwegian, but it is possible that he either had learned his art in Bergen or had been overly influenced by Norwegian, which had greatly affected the Icelandic diplomatic

for R, must be set at the end of the fourteenth century, Herbert, III, 190; Maddens, p. 51; Hartage, p. xv.

Cf. Björn Órnsteinsson, Enskild Ældst i Íslanda (Reykjavik, 1970), 25.


Björn Órnsteinsson, p. 84. The surname "Craxton" evidently stems from an undated abridgment of the letter by the Pope appointing Craxton as Bishop of Hólar, see no. 23 in Diplomatarium Islandicum. Írlanda, ForntidaUtag (Reykjavik, 1907-1915), 32. His home or the location of his religious training in England may have been in the West Midlands, for the three known Middle English MSS were copied there. Elsbeth Shelkirk has attempted to locate the dialects and has found 3066 to be from Warwickshire, 166 from Oxfordshire, and 7333 from Derbyshire; "Die Sprache der mittelniederländischen Gestismen nach der lateinischen Seite und im Verhältnis zu Sprechsprache unterrichte", unpubl. diss., Jena, 1925.

E.g., the use of the prepositions við leman and við atvan in 238, 2v12, 14b; loanwords such as ephemera, ephemera, 144a, 2v12, 14b; and synthetic borrowings (adv. subj. before the verbs) 238, 1v12, 2v6-7.
or from a chronicle, especially when a younger version, namely the Middle English translation, supplies the motif of the castle of the Ieper king surrounded by the heads of sundry unsuccessful physicians, found in the Icelandic version, but not in the unrelated Latin versions.

There are surprisingly many details in the Icelandic text of Jónatas avintýri also present in Viktors saga ok Blávus. At one point in the saga, Viktor is disguised as the merchant Samarian (influenced by the name Jónatas?) and lures the woman who had robbed him of the self-renewing treasure chest given him by his mother onto his magic carpet, which flies far away to a mighty forest. The queen asks Samarian to pick fruit (aldin) for her, and as he reaches out for an apple (sic, epíli), she pushes him off the carpet. (In Jónatas avintýri we are told that the tree is filled with epíli og aldine, and as the hero eats of the former, he is smitten with leprosy.) The queen, who knows how to fly a carpet, returns home to rule with the treasure, while Samarian has the clothes torn from his body as he makes his way to his home, where he is challenged by a knight (his sworn brother, who fails to recognize him). In the third encounter Viktor is disguised as a monk and can heal all illnesses, becoming so famous that he heals people from all over the kingdom. The queen sends messengers to fetch him after she has fallen ill and does not recognize him. At this point Viktors saga diverges from avintýri, but it is apparent that the saga could only be indebted to the Icelandic translation from Middle English for so many motifs, which means that Viktors saga must have been written after the beginning of English ecclesiastical influence in Iceland (ca. 1429) and before the first extant manuscript of the saga (ca. 1470).

Dating Viktors saga some three quarters of a century later than did Sveinsson has ramifications for previously postulated saga relationships. Sigurðar saga þögla, which is found in a mid to late fourteenth-century manuscript, could obviously not have borrowed from Viktors saga. There are very few similarities between the two, and the motifs of brothers who battle vikings and giants, charmed weapons, gifts from dwarfs, sword edges which can’t be dulled, shape changers, and the wooing of a maiden queen, as well as the few vague verbal similarities are so common that they could as easily have been borrowed from Sigurðar saga þögla by Viktors saga as vice versa. Since Viktors saga is first attested some hundred years later than is Sigurðar saga þögla, it is quite unlikely that the latter contains the borrowed motifs.

Gibbons saga could not have borrowed from Viktors saga, either, since it is attested in two manuscripts from the second half of the fourteenth century. In the case of Gibbons saga, however, the motifs and verbal correspondences it has in common with Viktors saga are quite explicit. The heroes in both sagas set out to woo the queen of India (Florentia in Gibbons saga, Fulgidia in Viktors saga), about whose beauty they have heard from trusty helpers. Each hero is invited to a banquet by the queen and asks for her hand in marriage, but in neither case is she positively disposed. Gibbon receives nothing but a hostile army sent against him and is left lying wounded on the battlefield, while Viktor has his hair shorn, his head turreted, and the skin flayed from him before being left in the forest, but both are rescued by helpers. In the return engagement each hero is aided by his companion in the guise of a monk and by a dwarf before the queen is finally deified.

It is quite probable that the two sagas are related, but because Gibbons saga is older than Viktors saga, the latter must have borrowed the motifs from the former. This view is supported by their last common motif mentioned above, for the monk in Gibbons saga who “acted as if he had a father to avenge on the lady’s maidenhood” is really the disguised hero doing roughly that which he had set out to do. In Viktors saga, however, the motif does not fit in naturally with the rest of the plot, being apparently plucked from another source without the implications of its transplant having been considered. The monk in the latter saga is Blávus, sworn brother of the hero, who decides to take his turn at winning the hand of the queen, but after robbing her of her maidenhood, he sends her back to be Viktor’s wife. More surprising is the revelation that Fulgidia is, in fact, Blávus’ own sister, for it suddenly makes the frivolous description of their illicit relationship out of place.

The blind incest motif in Viktors saga could well have come about after names were borrowed from a saga in which siblings called Blávus and Fulgidia appear. Valdimars saga mentions a brother and sister names Blávus and Flórida, but whether Viktors saga drew upon this saga for their relationship or on a saga which was their common source is difficult to judge. When the time came in Viktors saga to reveal the identity of the sworn brother whose past had been kept obscure, the author was simply still faithfully employing the material which he had read or heard before. The name Fulgidia is known from at least one other source, Viljáðims saga sjóðs, but since Viktors saga has now been dated to be roughly coeval with the extant manuscripts of both Valdimars saga and Viljáðims saga sjóðs, the argument that these two works must be younger than Viktors saga because they are attested so late loses its weight.

87 Edited by R. I. Page, Gibbons saga, in Editiones Arnamagnaeanae, Series B, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1960). For the dating of the MSS., see Kálf, I, 574, 725 and Page, pp. IX-XXI.

88 Two pages of verbal correspondences are listed by Sveinsson in Viktors saga ok Blávus on pp. CXXXIV-CXXXV. Especially striking is: logandi eldr gledandi um allan vogvilmill, er stóð saman kvívum, in Kristjánsson’s edition p. 7, II. 16-17 (and footnote) and logandi eldr gledandi alla vegra bratt frá, er stóð saman kvívum, in Gibbons saga, Page’s edition p. 51, II. 7-8.

89 Valdimars saga is known from two fifteenth-century MSS., Kálf, I, 708, 754, while Viljáðims saga sjóðs is extant in three MSS. from the fourteenth century, Kálf, I, 576, 727-728, 739. Both sagas have been edited in Loth, I, 53-78; IV, 3-136.
The only saga for which the evidence strongly indicates a borrowing from *Viktors saga* is *Sigrgarðs saga frækna.* This relationship would pose no challenge to the mid fifteenth-century dating of *Viktors saga,* since the borrower is first attested in a late fifteenth-century manuscript, allowing ample time for the original composition to have borrowed motifs from *Viktors saga.* In *Sigrgarðs saga* the hero also hears of the skill and beauty of a foreign queen and sets out with a superb fleet to woo her. He is invited to a banquet, proposes to her, and after some hesitation, she consents to grant him her favors in exchange for his splendid standard. Offered a bedtime drink, Sigrgarðr even takes the precaution of having the queen drink first, but falls asleep before they are united. *Sigrgarðs saga* then adds two repetitions of the bedtime scene on the following nights before the hero, in much the same manner as Viktor, has his naked flesh beaten with cudgels. Sigrgarðr’s companions come to his aid, fight off the queen’s soldiers, and sail home. The second attempt to obtain the queen also bears many resemblances to *Viktors saga.* Sigrgarðr switches identity with a merchant named Jónas after buying from him a ship, splendid gifts, and a carpet with runes sewn in it, which, if read correctly, enable it to fly. “Jónas” then lures the queen onto his carpet with his valuable treasures, as in *Viktors saga,* and as he reads the runes and the carpet begins to rise, the queen quickly pushes the hero to the ground. At the beginning of the third journey, the heroes in both saga amass a large fleet and an army, but each then encounters widely differing enemies before eventually arriving in the land of the queen again.

*Sigrgarðs saga* cannot be derived directly from *Jónatas avintýr,* for the hero has both its first journey in common with *Viktors saga* as well as numerous details, such as the setting out to woo a queen of legendary beauty, the chasitement of the hero, the disguise as a merchant, and the description of the carpet. Not even the name of the merchant Jónas or Jónar in *Sigrgarðs saga* must necessarily be derived from Jónatás in the *avintýr,* for the manuscripts of *Viktoresrurmir forna* write Samarion only once, otherwise Ion. The most closely related saga manuscript, also the oldest, often writes Samar Jon, indicating that the exotic element was originally considered an epithet.

On the other hand, it is quite unlikely that *Sigrgarðs saga* supplied its motifs to *Viktors saga,* for the manuscripts of the latter are older and more frequent in the fifteenth century. More conclusive is the manner in which each saga handles their common motifs, for several inconsistencies in *Sigrgarðs saga* not present in *Viktors saga* betray the former as the borrower. The sleeping potion episode is developed logically in *Viktors saga,* for the flagon is first brought in by the queen’s maidservant, and the hero, suspecting deception, takes the precaution of having the queen drink first. The reader is then told that Viktor has failed to see the cup’s false bottom, so that when he drinks, he immediately falls asleep. In *Sigrgarðs saga,* the queen takes up a golden vessel, the hero has her drink first, and promptly falls asleep before the queen has finished drinking. In the repetition of the scene the following night Sigrgarðr is on his guard not to drink too much in bed, then immediately commands his servant to bring him something to drink. He evidently partsakes first of the brew, the queen follows suit and falls asleep. The hero dismisses all the servants and promptly falls asleep again. It is apparent that the compiler of *Sigrgarðs saga* has not been completely successful in his attempt to substitute an overindulgence of alcohol for the sleeping potion in a double-bottomed goblet. Also the flying carpet in *Viktors saga* is obviously an integral part of the story, for it is introduced and described in the first chapter, where it is used by Blávus to make his entrance. Samarion is then encountered in the fourth chapter, when Blávus buys a fleet and an army from him for their viking raids. In the twelfth chapter Viktor gathers a fleet and many treasures together while at home, borrows the magic carpet from his sworn brother, and disguises himself as the famous merchant. The corresponding episode in *Sigrgarðs saga,* however, is obviously an insertion. Jónas is abruptly introduced as the owner of a flying carpet and many precious treasures, which are then described. Mention of his ship is omitted in all the vellum manuscripts and one learns only later that the hero has also purchased a ship. The simple disguise Viktor assumes is embellished in *Sigrgarðs saga* by making the hero and the merchant exchange appearances, but the queen evidently has little trouble recognizing Sigrgarðr.

The dependency of *Sigrgarðs saga* on *Viktors saga* means that its composition must lie between that of *Viktors saga* and the last quarter of the fifteenth century, when its oldest manuscript is attested. A *terminus ante quem* for *Viktors saga* is supplied by *Viktoresrurmir forna,* the oldest poetic version based upon the saga. The rhyming of vð and á, generally considered characteristic of only the oldest *rurmir,* makes one unwilling to date the poetical version much younger than the mid fifteenth century, which would accord quite well with the dating proposed by Finnur Jónsson. Thus it would not seem unlikely that *Viktoresrurmir forna* was composed in the score of years around 1450 and *Viktors saga ok Blávus,* therefore, about 1440, plus or minus a decade or so, which would leave roughly the third quarter of the fifteenth century for the composition of *Sigrgarðs saga frækna.*

The half decade proposed here for the original Icelandic translation of the Middle English exempla collection, 1429-1434, accords well with all the available literary, linguistic, and historical evidence. The translation must be older than manu-
scripts 624 and 238 (ca. 1490) with at least one intermediate manuscript, and older than ca. 1470, the date of the oldest saga manuscript which borrowed motifs from one of the collection's exempla. On the other hand, it must be younger than the Latin source which came to England at the end of the fourteenth century and which first had to be combined with a second Latin exempla collection and a Middle English work before finding its way into the hands of a person bilingual in English and Icelandic. The lack of other Icelandic translations from Middle English suggests a source of only short duration and the religious nature of the work points to ecclesiastical initiative. All these criteria were fulfilled during the second quarter of the fifteenth century when Hólar became the seat of the first and only English bishop to reside in Iceland.

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