

The Ties that Bind

Exploring Love in the Family in Medieval Iceland

Aaron Sheldon
PhD
University of York
Medieval Studies
December 2023

Abstract

The history of emotions has recently been gaining traction. In Old Norse studies, however, emotions remain a new field of study and are largely relegated to literary research. Emotions are thus described as literary representations of emotions; they are not deemed historical. This thesis works against that prevailing idea, interpreting the depictions of emotions as reflective of the culture that created them. This study also shows how emotions can be starting points in explorations of medieval Icelandic culture. In pursuing this argument, this project explores how love was understood to be expressed between 2-person relationships within the family, showing how love was a motivator, as much as a consequence, of action.

This thesis begins with the Introduction, in which the project's aims and central questions are stated, before exploring what constitutes a saga, the primary material of this research. In addition, the methodology for pursuing an exploration of familial relationships is created; this is accomplished by surveying different disciplinary approaches to find a model for emotions, before reviewing the literature on Old Norse emotions and kinship. Chapter 1 investigates mother-daughter relationships, observing how these women desired contact with, and protected, one another. The consequences of lower levels of love are also studied. Chapter 2 considers father-son pairings, studying how love, through grief, drove fathers to suicide after their sons' deaths, followed by how father-son love correlated with reciprocal acts. Chapter 3 covers father-daughter relations in discussing bridal negotiations. After surveying the laws and expectations, the thesis excavates the ideas of love to be found in these negotiations. Chapter 4 explores mother-son pairs, examining how these relationships contained protection and trust as expressions of love. This thesis concludes with what expressions of love are common between these relationships, and how this field of study possesses myriad opportunities for further research.

Front Matter

List of Contents

Abstract	i
Front Matter	ii
List of Contents	ii
Conventions	iv
Abbreviations	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Declaration	viii
Introduction: Locating Old Norse Emotions	1
Thesis Aims	2
Research Questions	5
Sagas as a Source	5
What is an Emotion?	26
Old Norse Emotions and Familial Relationships: The Field so far	50
Proto-Methodology	59
Methodology	63
Discussion Overview	64
Chapter 1: Love in <i>Mæðgur</i> Relationships	66
Contact	70
Protection	90
Less Love	101
Conclusion	107
Chapter 2: Love in <i>Feðgar</i> Relationships	110
The ‘Bed of Grief’	113
Reciprocal Relations	129
Conclusion	148
Chapter 3: Love in <i>Feðgin</i> Relationships	151
Church, Laws, and Sagas: Understanding Old Norse Marriage	157
Finding Love in Bridal Negotiations	164
Conclusion	184

Chapter 4: Love in <i>Mæðgin</i> Relationships	187
Protection	191
Trust	205
Conclusion	223
Conclusions	226
Discussion Summaries	229
Old Norse Studies, Parent-Child Relationships, and Love	231
The Staying Power of Emotions?	235
Concluding Thoughts	237
Bibliography	238
Primary Sources	238
Primary Sources in Translation	241
Reference Works and Databases	242
Secondary Sources	243
Theses	256

Conventions

This work will regularly use the term ‘Old Norse’. Generally, this denotes the Old West Norse language and literature. However, I will also be using it as a phrase synonymous with ‘medieval Icelandic’; therefore, for the purposes of this work, ‘Old Norse culture’ is equivalent to ‘medieval Icelandic culture’, and the like.

In quoting from the editions of Old Norse works, I have used the orthography present within that edition, even though practices vary between editors; for example, some use *q* while others may use *ö*. Personal and place names, in my translations and discussion, will retain the edition’s orthography and be provided in normalised Old Norse nominative forms. For example, I will use the Old Norse ‘Hallgerðr’, rather than the modern Icelandic ‘Hallgerður’ or the anglicised ‘Hallgerd’. The only exceptions will be quotations from other sources.

Modern scholarly terminology, unless quoted from another source, will be used with modern orthography. For example, I will use *Íslendingasögur* rather than *Íslendingasöggur*.

In keeping with Icelandic academic conventions, Icelandic authors who possess patronyms or matronyms, rather than family names, will be referred to with both their forename and patronym or matronym in the text. Furthermore, in the bibliography, they will be indexed by their forename rather than their patronym or matronym.

Some of the Icelandic authors I cite are cited with an anglicised form of their name. This has been done to adhere to how their names are printed on their works. For example, I will refer to Guðbrandur Vigfússon as Gudbrand Vigfusson, for that is how his name appears on *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, and I will refer to Sif Rikharðsdóttir as Sif Rikhardsdottir, for that is how her name appears on her various works.

All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. I have sought to balance the vocabulary’s meaning with the idiomatic elements of the passages, so as to keep with the Old Norse manner of expressing ideas.

Some translated passages will retain an Old Norse word; this has been done because either the word has no simple English counterpart or because the English counterpart loses a critical nuance. In these cases, the word will be further studied soon after the translated passage.

Generally, translated passages will not have double quotation marks. The exceptions to this are cases in which direct speech is involved. If a translation is partially direct speech, the quotation marks will encase the speech parts. Similarly, if a translation is entirely direct speech, the entire translated passage will possess quotation marks.

Abbreviations

Primary

<i>Ásm</i>	<i>Ásmundarsaga kappabana</i>
<i>Band</i>	<i>Bandamanna saga</i>
<i>Bós</i>	<i>Bósa saga ok Herrauðs</i>
<i>Dpl</i>	<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>
<i>Eb</i>	<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>
<i>Eg</i>	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>
<i>Eir</i>	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>
<i>Fbr</i>	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>
<i>Finnb</i>	<i>Finnboga saga</i>
<i>Flj</i>	<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>
<i>Gr</i>	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i>
<i>Gullþ</i>	<i>Gull-Þóris saga*</i>
<i>GunnK</i>	<i>Gunnars saga Keldugsnúpsfífls</i>
<i>Gunnl</i>	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>
<i>Hallfr</i>	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>
<i>Hauk</i>	<i>Haukdæla þáttur</i>
<i>Háv</i>	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i>
<i>Heið</i>	<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>
<i>Heiðr</i>	<i>Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks</i>
<i>Ísl</i>	<i>Íslendinga saga</i>
<i>Kjaln</i>	<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>
<i>Korm</i>	<i>Kormáks saga</i>
<i>Laxd</i>	<i>Laxdæla saga</i>
<i>Ldn</i>	<i>Landnámabók</i>
<i>Ljósv</i>	<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i>
<i>Nj</i>	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i>
<i>PsG</i>	<i>Prestsaga Guðmundar Arasonar</i>
<i>Ragn</i>	<i>Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans</i>
<i>Reykd</i>	<i>Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>
<i>St</i>	<i>Sturlu saga</i>
<i>Svarfd</i>	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>
<i>Þórð</i>	<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>
<i>Þorg</i>	<i>Þorgils saga ok Hafliða</i>
<i>ÞStang</i>	<i>Þorsteins þáttur Stangarhoggis</i>
<i>Vígl</i>	<i>Víglundar saga</i>
<i>Vqls</i>	<i>Vqlsunga saga</i>

* *Gull-Þóris saga* can also be referred to as *Þorskfirðinga saga*. All references to this text will use the title *Gull-Þóris saga*.

Reference Works and Databases

<i>CVD</i>	<i>An Icelandic-English Dictionary</i> , ed. Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson.
<i>ENL</i>	<i>The Earliest Norwegian Laws</i>
<i>ISM</i>	<i>Icelandic Saga Map</i>
<i>Jb</i>	<i>Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland</i>
<i>Laws I</i>	<i>Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I</i>
<i>Laws II</i>	<i>Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II</i>
<i>LMNL</i>	<i>A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law</i>
<i>ONP</i>	<i>Dictionary of Old Norse Prose</i>

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to the Lord, my God. Without Him, I would not be where I am today and this work would not exist. I am so very thankful for everything You do for me.

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/R012733/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities. I would, thus, like to thank the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities for supporting my research throughout these years (2019-2023), along with its provision of grants, for supplies during the pandemic, and awards, which allowed me to visit and present at multiple conferences.

My supervisors, Matthew Townend and Pragya Vohra, have been more than I could have ever hoped for. Not only have they been thorough in their advice, but they have been supportive from day one, believing in the merits of my work even when I could not. Their guidance has been very instructive; I have improved as an Old Norse scholar as well as a general historian through their tutelage. Thank you both for everything. I am also extremely grateful to Craig Taylor for stepping in as a temporary supervisor. His direct questions helped me rethink what aspects of my work were obvious to a reader and what was not. Your insights have helped sharpen this work even further. My research has also benefitted from Fay Bound Alberti's expertise; her knowledge in the history of emotions helped me to find the balance between Old Norse studies and the history of emotions. Thank you for that guidance.

With a thesis dedicated to the role of love, it should come as little surprise that I am indebted to the love and support of my friends and family, in its completion. In being part of the community at the University of York's Centre for Medieval Studies, I have been blessed with the friendships of incredible people. These friendships have sustained me, intellectually as well as emotionally. I am eternally grateful to claim friendship with Laura Atkinson, Hannah Armstrong, Katy Bennet, Alicia Maddalena, Sarah McKeagney, Marisa Michaud, Brittany Orton, Basil Price, Isobel Staton, Robyn Stewart, among many others who have stood by me in this work. Further afield, I would like to thank Anu Rae for her relentless enthusiasm in my research. And my thanks go to Felix Lummer and Eugenia Vorobeva, for happily sharing their thoughts and time with me at various conferences.

To my sisters, Terri Moffat and Laurie Coombe, thank you for your love and friendship over the many years of my life, and for supporting me this whole time. I can only hope to repay the many kindnesses you have shown me. I owe much to the Fung family. Not only did they take me in as a son, but they took us in during the pandemic, providing a warm and loving space in which I could work and still be with loved ones.

Finally, to my amazing wife, Jasmine Fung. There is too much to thank you for, so I will try to be brief. I greatly cherish the many talks we had about the history of emotions, as well as the times you listened to me go into excruciating detail. On that note, thank you so much for reminding me to see the bigger picture whenever I fail to see the wood for the trees; it has been extremely helpful. You have been a stable rock in difficult times, and I am grateful for all that you do. And so, thanks to you, I can say this cheesy line with certainty; I know what love is.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

A succinct overview of sections from my discussion on the 'bed of grief', in Chapter 2, can be found in the proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North (Reykjavík, April 15-17, 2021).

Introduction: Locating Old Norse Emotions

Þórhalli Ásgrímssyni brá svá við, er honum var sagt, at Njáll, fóstri hans, var dauðr ok hann hafði inni brunnit, at hann þrútnaði allr ok blóðbogi stóð ór hvárritveggju hlustinni, ok varð eigi stóðvat, ok fell hann í óvit, ok þá stóðvaðisk. Eptir þat stóð hann upp ok kvað sér lítilmannliga verða¹

Þórhallr Ásgrímsson was so affected, when he was told that his foster-father Njáll was dead and that [Njáll] had been burned inside his house, that [Þórhallr] swelled all over and a gush of blood streamed out of both ears, and it could not be stopped, and he fell unconscious, and then it stopped. After that, he stood up and said that he had borne this news in a little-manly manner.

The death of Njáll brings about an eruptive reaction from Þórhallr. Not eruptive in the violent sense, as many may expect from the depiction of a medieval Icelandic man whose foster-father has recently been killed, in his own home, but eruptive in the sense of the expulsion of bodily fluids and an outpouring of emotion. Despite the matter-of-fact manner in which this passage details the scene, it is not typical for this saga genre to present such expressive displays. Indeed, “people’s initial impression of sagas is that the saga world is coldly unemotional”.² Even Þórhallr himself recognises that he has transgressed some boundary that he should not have, remarking how he had behaved *lítilmannliga*, or ‘in a little-manly manner’:

“ok þat munda ek vilja, at ek hefnda þessa á þeim, er hann brenndu inni, er nú hefir mik hent.” Þeir sǫgðu, at engi mundi virða honum þetta til skammar, en hann kvað ekki mega taka fyrir þat, hvat menn mælti.³

“And I would wish that I take vengeance upon those [men], who had burned [Njáll] inside, for what I have just done.” They said that none would regard his actions as shameful, but he said that he is unable to stop what people would say.

¹ *Nj*, 344.

² William Ian Miller, “Emotions and the Sagas,” in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. Gísli Pálsson (Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992), 90. Also see Alison Finlay, “‘Intolerable Love’: *Tristrams saga* and the Carlisle *Tristan* Fragment,” *Medium Ævum* 73, no. 2 (2004); Robert Cook, “Gunnarr and Hallgerðr: A Failed Romance,” in *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, ed. Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008); Carolyne Larrington, “Learning to Feel in the Old Norse Camelot?,” *Scandinavian Studies* 87, no. 1 (2015).

³ *Nj*, 344-345.

Despite the reassurances from those around him, Þórhallr is fully aware that he has broken the social code expected of him. He understands that he has behaved *lítillmannliga* and we can see this echoed in his companions' attempts to assuage such thoughts. However, Þórhallr knows that people talk. No matter what his thoughts on his recent behaviour are, he knows that people can, and will, view such behaviour as shameful.

Thesis Aims

This short excerpt from *Brennu-Njáls saga* is the basis on which the present research originated from, and thus epitomises what I will examine and explore in the coming pages. So much is contained within these few sentences, bubbling under the surface, and yet the emotional connotations are not immediately clear to us, for we are not granted any insight into Þórhallr's mind nor are we provided with any explicit narratorial statement. We must discern the emotional content for ourselves.

Indeed, multiple scholars have commented on this element of saga narrative, observing how the saga authors neglect to guide their audience to a certain point, instead leaving it up to the audience themselves. As O'Donoghue remarks, "[i]n saga narrative, focalization – the way events are presented from the viewpoint of one or more of the characters in the narrative – is typically wholly external, that is, events are seen from the perspective of a narrator who stands outside the world of the narrative".⁴ Following this idea, Miller notes how saga authors thus "relegate us to the same techniques we use to discern motive in our own lives".⁵ The audience, then is provided with no guidance to aid in understanding Þórhallr's feelings. Without such guidance, the audience is left to fill this vacuum of understanding with their own perceptions of what emotions and feelings the scene depicts. This would not be a big problem for a medieval Icelander reading or listening to these sagas, as they would fill that gap with their personal understanding of emotions, which were contemporary to the saga authors.⁶

⁴ Heather O'Donoghue, *Old Norse Icelandic Literature: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 35. Also see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Emotions of a Vulnerable Viking: Negotiations of Masculinity in *Egils saga*," in *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, eds. Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), 154.

⁵ William Ian Miller, *'Why is your Axe Bloody?': A Reading of Njáls Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13. Also see Ármann Jakobsson, "*Egils saga* and Empathy: Emotions and Moral Issues in a Dysfunctional Saga Family," *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 1 (2008); Low Soon Ai, "The Mirthless Content of Skarphedinn's Grin," *Medium Ævum* 65, no. 1 (1996).

⁶ This will be further discussed in 'Sagas as a Source'.

A modern reader, however, does not exist in the medieval Icelandic culture and so does not know the cultural milieu. Consequently, this means a modern reader would likely interpret the scenes in a manner very different to the saga author's intentions; the lack of narratorial guidance would prompt a modern reader to draw from their own knowledge and experience of emotions. Therefore, the problem with relying upon our own modern perceptions is that they do not likely map onto the Old Norse culture's conception of emotions, which can easily cause modern readers to fall into reading anachronistically – this is not necessarily a problem for readers who are reading the sagas for leisure. Furthermore, the physiological depiction in the aforementioned scene, from *Brennu-Njáls saga*, is so incongruous with the modern, scientific understanding of the human body that we can struggle to know how to detect what emotion(s) are being presented to us. We know that shame came after the expression but what caused this shame to appear? Considering that his foster-father was murdered in his own home, Þórhallr's emotional expression could be attributed to a range of emotions.

We could imagine this scene to be presenting Þórhallr as angry. He could simply be angry at the murderers for what they have done. He could also be angry for what he must now do; due to the culture and society of his time, Þórhallr would be compelled to seek vengeance. If he were to refuse, or fail, to obtain reprisal, this would “bring about a kind of social death” as he would fall into disrepute for being unreliable in support and vengeance matters.⁷ Claiming vengeance was not necessarily a simple affair, either. Grettir Ásmundarson, from *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, remarks that “þræll einn þegar hefnisk, en argr aldri” (“a slave takes revenge immediately, and a coward never [does]”).⁸ If Grettir speaks true, there was a timescale that an avenger had to adhere to in order to obtain vengeance in an acceptable way, which one could imagine would have proved exasperating as well as frustrating.

We could also consider that this expression is emerging from grief; having learned of Njáll's death, Þórhallr is deeply saddened with such bad tidings. However, Þórhallr seeks to hold his emotions inside himself and not show them to those around him. The problem, though, is that his grief is too large to contain and, thus, his emotions burst out from him. Was expressing grief problematic enough in medieval Iceland to warrant shame for behaviour such

⁷ William Ian Miller, *Humiliation: And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 121.

⁸ *Gr*, 44.

as Þórhallr's? Lockett notes that Old English poems have a repeating motif of how men should keep their emotions "locked up in situations in which speaking and weeping would be shameful or detrimental to his relationships with other men and hence to his reputation".⁹ By Old English standards, then, Þórhallr has failed in this self-restraint. Indeed, Ármann Jakobsson observes that Þórhallr has a "concern that [his] lack of restraint makes [him] less manly".¹⁰ This concern for his masculinity, via his failed emotional restraint, would fit nicely with his subsequent admittance of inappropriate behaviour. His inappropriate explosion of grief arose because of the men who killed Njáll and, therefore, Þórhallr desired vengeance for their actions.

These are but a few potential understandings of the emotional connotations in this scene. Nevertheless, as I shall discuss later in 'Chapter 2: Love in *Feðgar* Relationships', I believe that the key emotion the audience is intended to perceive in Þórhallr's messy expression is actually love for his foster-father, made keenly visible through his grief. The relationship between Þórhallr and Njáll may be one borne out of fosterage but that does not prevent it from being a strong bond; indeed, fosterage relationships are comparable to natal relationships in medieval Iceland.¹¹

As my brief case study suggests, the aim of this thesis is to examine the relationships between inter-generational family members, as expressed in the textual sources, and so discern the historical emotional culture of love in those relationships which existed in medieval Iceland. While this project does discuss familial relationships, I am not exploring what constituted a familial unit for the medieval Icelanders.¹² I am instead exploring how love was understood to exist within intergenerational familial relationships as these relationships share similarities and differences which have not yet been fully explored. How does a mother-daughter relationship compare to a father-daughter one, for example?

As the sagas are being used as the primary sources, this thesis seeks to create an interdisciplinary study of emotions, using the saga literature as a historical source. There has

⁹ Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 80-81.

¹⁰ Ármann Jakobsson, "Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls saga*," *Viator* 38, no. 1 (2007): 204.

¹¹ This is elaborated upon in 'Old Norse Emotions and Familial Relationships: The Field so far' and onwards.

¹² For an overview of how a familial unit consisted of a son, a mother, and the mother's brother, see Jan Bremmer, "Avunculate and Fosterage," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 4 (1976), especially 69-70 for medieval Iceland. Also see Bart Jaski, "Cú Chulainn, *gormac* and *dalta* of the Ulstermen," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 37 (1999); Peter Parkes, "Celtic Fosterage: Adoptive Kinship and Clientage in Northwest Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (2006).

been much hesitation to utilise sagas for historical purposes, but I intend to show how we can use the sagas for the purpose of studying historical Old Norse emotions. I will be doing this via a lexical study of emotion words, that is, words deemed to correspond to an emotion, as well as a comparative study of the various saga cases depicting emotions and emotional expressions.

Research Questions

How are we to go about finding these historical emotions, though, especially when the sagas are so reticent with their emotional portrayals? Before we can start considering those historical emotions, we must first deal with the issue of how to model an emotion, in such a way that works for the source material I am using. This sounds like a simple question but has yet to find a consensual answer.¹³

Having established a workable model for this project, there are a number of questions that can guide us in locating the historical emotions of the Old Norse peoples. First, how much insight can we gain into the emotional culture of medieval Iceland through a lexical and comparative study of the Old Norse sagas, a corpus of literature from Iceland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? Secondly, what can we learn about the expressions of love between inter-generational family members from the Old Norse culture? And do these emotional expressions differ between groups or are they homogenous, and, if so, how? Thirdly, how does the use of love terminology vary in its usage across the sagas? Is a love term always necessary to attribute love to a relationship and/or action? What else can we glean? Finally, what further questions arise from my research here, and pave the way for future studies?

Before we can proceed, however, we must discuss the source material that I am investigating, since knowing more about the sagas as a historical source will allow us to determine a model of emotion that is suitable for the task at hand.

Sagas as a Source

So, we have seen how people can initially conceive of the sagas as being unemotional yet we have also seen that this is not the case; the sagas, indeed, possess emotions and

¹³ For the difficulty in finding a widely accepted definition for what an emotion is, in history, see Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2011), especially 23.

emotional displays. But what exactly is a saga? And why am I using it for a study on historical emotions?

Numerous scholars have dedicated considerable amounts of their introductions, or even whole books, to that question; what is a saga? I will endeavour to summarise the key discussions appropriate to this work so as to provide the starting point from which we may proceed to our main concern about sagas as a source, that is, how can we use sagas as a historical source for the emotional culture of the medieval Icelanders of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries?¹⁴

Oral or Textual Origins?¹⁵

Perhaps the best starting point would be what the word ‘saga’ literally means. The word derives from the Old Norse verb *segja*, or ‘to say’. Using this, Oren Falk succinctly translates ‘saga’ as “‘what is said’ or ‘tale’”.¹⁶ Given how ‘saga’ derives from a verb that indicates verbal speech, it should come as little surprise that there has been a lot of discussion on the topic of the origins of the sagas, a textual source, which still haunts Old Norse scholarship today.¹⁷

Indeed, Callow lists some of the questions that come up when people read the sagas; “who wrote them, or at least wrote them *down*? When were they committed to writing?” and when we consider the thematic and character overlaps between sagas, “[a]re the shared characters and plots the result of skilled authorial borrowings, the product of lost oral traditions, or both?”¹⁸

Callow’s list is not helped by the fact that many saga narrators used, and quoted, skaldic poetry “as historical sources and to embellish the narrative”.¹⁹ While poetry is not

¹⁴ For further reading on the various elements that compose a saga, see Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, ed. *The Routledge Research Companion to The Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (London: Routledge, 2017); Heather O’Donoghue, *Narrative in the Icelandic Family Saga: Meanings of Time in Old Norse Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

¹⁵ For a thorough survey of the scholarship trends around this question, see Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), especially 17-48

¹⁶ Oren Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland: This Spattered Isle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 8.

¹⁷ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 35.

¹⁸ Chris Callow, “Dating and Origins,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), 15. Italics in original.

¹⁹ Anthony Faulkes, introduction to *Edda*, by Snorri Sturluson (London: Everyman, 1987), xiii.

within the purview of this project, it is useful to note that it serves as evidence to support an oral tradition.²⁰

Nevertheless, all of these questions boil down to the larger question implicit in Callow's third question; were the sagas literary constructions or were they textual recordings of an oral tradition? Or were sagas a mix of the two? The answer to this question dictates what era the emotions we observe belong to. If these sagas are simply constructions of medieval Iceland from the thirteenth century and fourteenth century, then the emotions belong to that period of time. If they are textual records of an oral tradition, then the emotional content possibly belongs to the period from which the oral tale began. If it is a mix of the two, which era do we pin the emotions to? We must know this in order to use sagas for a historical study of emotions. Indeed, Gísli Sigurðsson remarks as much, saying "[a]ll research depends on how we answer the question of origins".²¹

Two opposing theories arose from Callow's questions, albeit long ago; first came the Free-Prose Theory, in the nineteenth century, followed by the Book-Prose Theory, in the early twentieth century. The Free-Prose Theory states that sagas "were oral compositions made at the time of the events which they described, and that these were orally transmitted verbatim until they were transcribed into writing".²² The Book-Prose Theory emerged in reaction to this, claiming that "the major sagas were works of literary creation by literary authors... and were based on little, sometimes on no, pre-existing textual or traditional material".²³ Confronted with these polarised theories, many scholars have concluded that sagas were a result of both oral tales and literary construction, if varying in degree.²⁴ Indeed, Theodore Andersson

²⁰ My reasoning for focussing on saga prose rather than poetry can be found in 'Proto-Methodology'. For a fuller discussion on oral traditions and the dating of the poetry in the sagas, see Karl G. Johansson, "The Selfish Skald: The Problematic Case of the Self of the Poet of *Sonatorrek*," in *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, ed. Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020); Kari Ellen Gade, "The Dating and Attributions of Verses in the Skald Sagas," in *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. Russell Gilbert Poole (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001).

²¹ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 329.

²² Paul Bibire, "On Reading the Icelandic Sagas: Approaches to Old Icelandic Texts," in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement Before 1300*, ed. Beverley Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor, and Gareth Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11.

²³ Bibire, "On Reading the Icelandic Sagas," 11. For a fuller survey of the two theories, see Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, especially 39-41.

²⁴ For a survey of scholarly opinions, see Bibire, "On Reading the Icelandic Sagas"; Callow, "Dating and Origins". For the stance of sagas being comprised of both oral tradition and literary construction, see Hermann Pálsson, introduction to *The Confederates and Hen-Thorir: Two Icelandic Sagas* (Edinburgh: Southside, 1975), 7; Robert Kellogg, introduction to *The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), xxxiv; Theodore

remarks that this middle ground is probably the only element of saga origins about which Old Norse scholars agree.²⁵

Following this middle-of-the-road argument as well, Carol Clover, in the 1980s sketched out her hypothesis for how the sagas came into being. She states that the sagas were “composed of independently performed *þættir*”.²⁶ *þættir* is the nominative plural form of *þáttr*, which translates to ‘a strand (of rope/yarn)’ and thus ‘a tale’.²⁷ Thus, Clover is saying that sagas were created from multiple ‘strands’ of a narrative. These narrative parts, she says, “were first disseminated by those who knew them best” due to the events occurring recently for said individuals; this framework of narrative then became familiar to the community as a whole and so no one person needed to remember the whole story.²⁸ Instead, people could remember and “contribute “their” parts” to the storytelling, without a need to explain the various contexts, because “[t]o the audience familiar with the larger framework, the chronological and causal relationship of these anecdotes to each other and to the wholes of which they were understood to be parts would be self-evident”.²⁹ As time passed, this material “increasingly became the business of fewer and more talented” individuals, who could narrate larger sections of the narrative.³⁰

For Clover, then, people would retell contemporary events and stories to others, resulting in the narrative being diffused throughout the community. Various individuals would remember parts which were relevant to themselves, or they found especially interesting, and retell them; the key contexts would already be known to the individual(s) listening. After a time, more of these *þættir* would be known by a single individual who would retell them as a longer sequence. From there, a compiler could record all of these sequences from the individuals and create a textual saga. In this situation, we can understand the emotional depictions we find in the sagas to be representative, and evocative, of the time in which the saga compiler lived, rather than the time in which the oral tale originated. The saga compiler

M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3; Ben Waggoner, introduction to *The Sagas of Ragnar Lodbrok* (New Haven: Troth Publications, 2009), xv.

²⁵ Theodore M. Andersson, “From Tradition to Literature in the Sagas,” in *Oral Art Forms and their Passage into Writing*, ed. Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008), 7.

²⁶ Carol J. Clover, “The Long Prose Form,” *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 101 (1986): 30. In many saga literature volumes you may find today, there is a distinction between sagas and *þættir*; see *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, 5 vols., ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997).

²⁷ *CVD*, 732.

²⁸ Clover, “The Long Prose,” 34.

²⁹ Clover, “The Long Prose,” 34.

³⁰ Clover, “The Long Prose,” 35.

would have impressed upon the narrative an emotional representation that the audience could understand.

Andersson, however, sees Clover's model as doing a disservice to the medieval Icelandic people. By studying three sagas that were composed at approximately the same time yet differed in style and composition, Andersson observes that the length of time between the text and the events being told are likely what shapes the saga's style.³¹ Andersson notes that the saga that speaks of events 40-75 years older than the other two saga's events has acquired a form, style, and depth, which the other two lack.³² It was not entirely the efforts of a compiler which affected the saga's creation, then, but the time in between too. This would suggest that there had been a refinement process throughout the oral transmission of those events into a saga. In other words, Andersson believes that the events were remembered and recounted but were developed and refined over their years of transmission before their written composition. Moving on, he comments on how the sheer number of narrative devices employed in the sagas to foreshadow and draw parallels are much more suited to a whole narrative rather than standalone strands of narrative.³³ What use is a foreshadowing prophetic dream if there is no culmination of said foreshadowing? As a result of his observations, then, Andersson does not disagree with Clover's idea of short episodes being recounted to others but Clover's supposition that the whole saga could not exist before a compiler came along and gathered them together.³⁴ Instead, he understands the stories to have been malleable and flexible in their oral form, depending "on the occasion and the skill of the teller".³⁵

Andersson's valid criticisms, here, could be understood to have thrown my study of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century emotions, drawn from the sagas, into disarray. While Andersson recognises that the narratives would have been refined and developed over time, he does not specify whether he means the content itself or the narrative devices and style, or both. Thus, it could be asked that if the tales could be transmitted more or less entirely from one generation to the next, then what time period are the sagas' emotional representations of and from? We need not worry, though, for Gísli Sigurðsson paints a clearer picture from

³¹ Theodore M. Andersson, "The Long Prose Form in Medieval Iceland," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101, no. 3 (2002): 404-405.

³² Andersson, "The Long Prose Form," 405.

³³ Andersson, "The Long Prose Form," 406-407.

³⁴ Andersson, "The Long Prose Form," 405.

³⁵ Andersson, "From Tradition," 15.

which we can work. He states that “an immediate consequence of individuals and societies preserving their records of former times in oral form is that this knowledge undergoes constant renewal. It is both ancient and modern at the same time, not one or the other”.³⁶ He then continues, saying “that stories preserved orally are subject to constant change and, just like purely written works, are influenced by the present and colored by the prevailing values of their times”.³⁷ In other words, the sagas are a fusion of the ancient (pre-saga period) and the contemporary (saga period). We cannot separate these elements but this does not inhibit a study of the emotional culture of medieval Iceland. Indeed, the sagas were influenced by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century ideas and values; as a result, I can speak of the sagas as a cultural product of those centuries, thus allowing me to study them as reflections of medieval Iceland’s emotional culture.

A consequent area of saga origins that we must work with, as well, is what Clunies Ross identifies with regards to a communal-based memory origin for the sagas; she notes how “[w]e would expect to find variability in the witnesses where they overlap”.³⁸ This expectation arises from how “[a]s with all human societies, some people know more than others and individuals have different approaches to a potential narrative, depending on their social and personal connections”.³⁹ Indeed, we can see such discrepancies in the sagas. For instance, in *Droplaugarsona saga*, we have a woman called Droplaug who goes to visit her mother and drowns, with her two slaves, on the return journey; that place was then called *brælavík*, or ‘slaves’ inlet’.⁴⁰ Similarly, in *Fljótsdæla saga*, we are presented with a woman called Þorlaug who goes to visit her father and drowns, with her two slaves, on the return journey; that place was then called *brælavík* as well.⁴¹ The key parts of the narrative remain the same; a daughter goes to see a parent across the river but dies with her slaves on the return journey, resulting in that location being named after the slaves. The specific details, however, are different. While both women have similar sounding names, they are different – Droplaug and Þorlaug.

³⁶ Gísli Sigurðsson, “Orality Harnessed: How to Read Written Sagas from an Oral Culture?,” in *Oral Art Forms and their Passage into Writing*, ed. Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008), 22. Also see Gísli Sigurðsson, “Poet, Singer of Tales, Storyteller, and Author,” in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Ranković et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012).

³⁷ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 29.

³⁸ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 43.

³⁹ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 43.

⁴⁰ *Dpl*, 143-144. We will return to this specific incident in ‘Chapter 1: Love in in *Mæðgur* Relationships’.

⁴¹ *Flj*, 238-239.

The parents are also different – in one it is the mother being visited and in the other, it is the father. Which of these two characters is the historical figure? Was there even a historical figure that these characters were based on? In some historical studies, this may be a major point of study. This project, however, neither needs nor intends to answer those questions, since the search for historical emotions does not require those answers to move forward.

Indeed, considering the prior scholarship on saga origins, a historical study of emotions can resolutely proceed to observe the emotional culture of the medieval Icelanders. We have seen how the sagas existed as various stories and narratives, both short and long, passed amongst people and communities over the many years, experiencing refinement and development as they existed. Eventually, these stories were written down, alterations then only possible in the copying of the narratives. This is the current assumption that scholars generally work under, despite our desire for certainty, for “[t]he paucity of hard evidence... obliges us, like it or not, to operate in terms of theories”.⁴² While the sagas will possess elements from both the ancient and contemporary Icelandic peoples, the emotions are an element that we can ascribe to the saga contemporaries, that is, the medieval Icelanders. But how can one be sure of this? The reason for such a declaration is that the sagas, especially the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur*, must reflect emotional ideas that generally resonate with the audience in order for the audience to enjoy and partake in them. Even those sagas that are more fantastical in nature (*fornaldarsögur*, or ‘legendary sagas’, and *riddarasögur*, or ‘sagas of knights’) can be shown to reflect the emotional culture of medieval Iceland, when approached with the appropriate care.⁴³ In other words, as the oral stories developed and were refined, they were still being presented to an ever-changing audience; they had to constantly be comprehensible, in style and substance, to be enjoyable. Thus, any shifts in the tale had to keep in line with the audience. As the Old Norse oral tales were finally committed to writing, the emotional culture of that time was also recorded, allowing us scholars to study medieval Icelandic emotions.

Some scholars before me have already reached this conclusion as well. Bandlien, in his study on love and marriage, approaches the sagas “as documents of the time they were

⁴² Clover, “The Long Prose,” 36-37. Also see Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 330.

⁴³ See Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, trans. Randi C. Eldevik (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002), 290-295; Carolyne Larrington, “Awkward Adolescents: Male Maturation in Norse Literature,” in *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*, ed. Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

written” so as to locate the historical ideologies and mentalities of the Old Norse culture.⁴⁴ In looking at empathy between brothers, Ármann Jakobsson states how the empathetic event “is not depicted or commented upon in the narrative” but that it must be inferred.⁴⁵ He goes on to say that his interpretation is the only possible one and that the audience must have been aware of the empathetic choice.⁴⁶ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir puts it succinctly, saying “although the sagas are literary creations composed to be effective narratives, in another way, they are ‘true’ stories that enabled writers and their audiences to address themes and problems that resonated strongly with them”.⁴⁷

Following on from Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s statement, we can also use fantastic events for our study of historical emotions, albeit with considerable caution, for they can still display a general emotional idea. For example, Þórhallr Ásgrímsson’s explosion of blood, after Njáll’s death, is probably not a historical event. It may have been deemed a possibility by the medieval Icelanders or may have simply been an exaggeration made for entertainment; today’s society, however, cannot accept it as realistic.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the physiological event still provides us with a trove of information to work with. As Miller states, “fictions are constrained by the ranges of the possible in the culture and hence have useful social information to reveal”.⁴⁹ Indeed, we have already seen that Þórhallr’s actions are judged to be little-manly behaviour, but it also shows us, more generally, that a man may collapse from emotions surrounding the death of a loved one, despite knowing that he should not allow himself to do that. Therefore, from a seemingly unrealistic event, we can learn that male displays of emotion may have been restricted and deemed undesirable. Of course, this one incident cannot on its own be accepted as representative of the Old Norse milieu, and so requires further investigation.

⁴⁴ Bjørn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, trans. Betsy van der Hoek (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 15. Bandlien also sketches out four different methods by which scholars can approach the sagas as a source; see Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 14-15.

⁴⁵ Ármann Jakobsson, “Egils saga and Empathy,” 15.

⁴⁶ Ármann Jakobsson, “Egils saga and Empathy,” 15.

⁴⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 18. Also see Andersson, “From Tradition,” 9.

⁴⁸ For how medieval Iceland possessed an understanding of humoral theory, which details how blood could escape from the ears, see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, “Humoral Theory in the Medieval North: An Old Norse Translation of *Epistula Vindiciani* in Hauksbók”, *Gripla* 29 (2018): especially 51-55.

⁴⁹ William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 46.

Sagas, then, are a viable source for a study of the emotional culture of medieval Iceland as the tales would have evolved over time, being refined and developed with narrative devices yet always maintaining the task of offering audiences meaningful and compelling narratives. To do this, the tales had to suit, and be comprehensible, to the audience.

Dating the Sagas

We have briefly discussed the dating of the sagas so far, but we need to give it some consideration with regard to the history of emotions, before continuing any further. Indeed, as touched upon earlier, the time period that I am studying is approximately the thirteenth century, running into the fourteenth century. Saga writing in Iceland, overall, however, “began in the late twelfth century, flourished throughout the thirteenth and into the fourteenth, and continued after a fashion beyond”.⁵⁰ Sagas, then, were being written for over 200 years in Iceland. The reason that the time period of my study does not map directly onto the saga-writing timeline is that the saga genres that I am focusing on have been generally dated to the thirteenth century, with some outliers either side.⁵¹ This means that my survey of historical emotions covers a period of approximately 100 years. This is not an extreme amount of time to be covering, for a century cannot erase one emotional culture and wholly replace it with a new one, rather, the emotional culture may have slightly changed over that time yet would have remained recognisable to the medieval Icelanders, regardless.

Intertextuality

Despite the completeness of individual sagas, they are also interconnected and intertextual texts. As Clover has pointed out, “[a]t some level, each individual saga is a response to the sagas preceding it and a standard for those to come”.⁵² As we will eventually observe, the sagas share motifs and ideas, granting us a window by which we can begin to analyse the emotional content and expressions depicted within the sagas. Indeed, Andersson states that “[i]t is hard to believe that the author of *Laxdæla saga* did not know *Egils saga* and did not engage in an almost polemical debate with the earlier text on matters of regional and ancestral preeminence. It is equally hard to believe that the author of *Njáls saga* did not know

⁵⁰ Falk, *Violence and Risk*, 8.

⁵¹ Falk, *Violence and Risk*, 9. For a table that portrays this, see Falk, *Violence and Risk*, 9.

⁵² Carol J. Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 200-201.

Laxdæla saga and did not view the dream world of that text with a skepticism bordering on disdain”.⁵³ Consequently, the sagas interact with one another, revealing tensions, emotions, and ideas in general about the world that the Old Norse people lived within. As will become clear, this intertextuality is a key element of my research methodology, showing those prevalent ideas of medieval Icelanders as well as allowing me to navigate the obscure passages of some saga texts. Through their intertextuality, we can see the repetition of ideas, motifs, and expressions of emotions; these recurring ideas illustrate that such conceptualisations of emotion existed within medieval Iceland.

The Question of Authorship⁵⁴

I have summarised the oral origins of the sagas and how these tales were eventually written down and preserved, but who were the ones that actually recorded the sagas? Depending on who did the writing, we would need to consider the possible ramifications of that individual’s intention, if any. This is especially relevant to the history of emotions, for we must consider whether the saga compiler sought to portray their contemporary culture of emotion or if they wanted to provide a model for people to aspire to.

The short answer to the question above is that we are not certain who recorded the sagas. There are some sagas of which the author is known, or strongly suspected, but these are the exception to the rule. *Íslendinga saga*, for example, is generally believed to have been written by Sturla Þórðarson and *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* is regularly considered a work of the renowned Snorri Sturluson.⁵⁵ As Clunies Ross remarks, “[i]f people knew who wrote the texts we now possess, they evidently did not think it worthwhile setting down that knowledge in the written record”.⁵⁶ She continues, noting how “the verb *samansetja* or *setja saman* ‘to bring together, compile’ was frequently applied to the act of creating a particular text, even in cases when the authorship of the author was known”.⁵⁷ Thus, the sagas that were written were not new; there was an oral tradition behind them, as we have discussed, that preceded

⁵³ Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, 210.

⁵⁴ For a general discussion on medieval authorship, see Slavica Ranković et al., ed., *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012), especially Part 3 for a discussion specifically on Old Norse authorship.

⁵⁵ Both of these men can be found in *Íslendinga saga*, in which Snorri Sturluson’s death is depicted. See *Ísl.*

⁵⁶ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 50.

⁵⁷ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 50.

and informed the text's creation. Is it acceptable, then, for us to ascribe a writer or author to these sagas, which had such communal memory behind their creation?

Even though the saga was compiled from communally-known events, this does not prevent there having been an author who set forth a specific interpretation of those events. Indeed, we still do this today; historians present their interpretations of events, which are consensually known. Thus, the saga recording role could be "an ideologically motivated position... and it must not be confused with the very real abilities of saga writers to shape their narratives using a variety of literary conventions".⁵⁸ For instance, Snorri Sturluson was a descendant of Egill Skallagrímsson and, if he did compose *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, he may have sought "to rally the forces of his Sturlungar and Mýrar kinsmen to the standard of their common ancestor" through its composition, or he may have wanted "to express personal repentance for the outcome of [his] dealings with Sighvatr and Sturla" who were his brothers.⁵⁹

After Tulinius suggests the above two possible rationales behind Snorri Sturluson's composing of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, he goes on to suggest a third one; "it may be that when [Snorri] wrote the saga he was motivated by nothing more than a wish to compose a compelling tale about his famous poet ancestor designed to entertain an audience close to him".⁶⁰ Compared to the first two, this third rationale is less politically charged. Nevertheless, even if Snorri intended only to write with the third rationale in mind, that does not exclude the possibility of a different intent being inferred by the audience. Moreover, Snorri may have composed the saga with the intention of incorporating all three rationales; an action can contain multitudes of intent. It does not have to be that each action possesses a single reason behind it.

So, not only do we have possible influences from the oral tradition that can be difficult to identify but we also have difficulties with authorship, itself; without knowing the authors, we cannot easily access their authorial intent or ideological influences. We, then, must infer the ideas from what little we have.

⁵⁸ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 51.

⁵⁹ Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Enigma of Egill: The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*, trans. Victoria Cribb (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2014), 275. The Mýrar people are those claiming descent from Egill Skallagrímsson; it comes from the land upon which Egill's father, Skallagrímur, lay his claim, upon arriving in Iceland. See *Eg*, 75, 276.

⁶⁰ Tulinius, *The Enigma of Egill*, 276.

Even when we possess evidence of authorial intent, however, what the intent was can remain obscure to us. For example, what was the authorial reason for *Kjalnesinga saga* appearing to continue and conclude in the separate *Jökuls þáttr Búasonar*? Indeed, towards the end of *Kjalnesinga saga* we are introduced to a character called Jökull who claims to be the son of Búi; after Búi denies the claim, the two have a wrestling match to measure whether Jökull has the strength of Búi's lineage, "ok í því var sem kippt væri báðum fótum senn undan Búa, ok fell hann áfram, ok þar varð við brestr hár ok mikill" (and it was as though both of Búi's feet were pulled from under him and he fell forward, and this was accompanied by a big and mighty crash).⁶¹ Having mortally wounded his father, "Jökli þötti verk sitt svá illt" (Jökull thought his deed so evil), that he then flees abroad, "en síðan höfum vér önga sögu heyrð frá honum" (and, since then, we have no stories belonging to [Jökull]).⁶²

Despite Jökull's escape from his actions, and the saga, both the manuscripts and the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition place *Jökuls þáttr Búasonar* – which translates as 'Jökull Búason's tale' and so is the continuation of Jökull's story – immediately after *Kjalnesinga saga*.⁶³ Now, it may seem an obvious decision in that the central character of *Kjalnesinga saga* was Búi and so the saga ends soon after his death, yet that is not what always happens in the sagas. Indeed, after Grettir's death in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, the saga does not conclude but continues alongside Grettir's half-brother, Þorsteinn.⁶⁴ The story now follows Þorsteinn in obtaining vengeance against the man who had slain Grettir and then travelled to Constantinople. After the vengeance, however, we are then treated to a phase of the saga dedicated to Þorsteinn's affair with a married woman before his eventual marriage to her and their life afterwards.⁶⁵ So, why was Jökull's story demarcated from that of his father's, while Þorsteinn's was permitted to reside within the same story as his brother's? Jökull's story does primarily occur outside of Iceland but Þorsteinn's does, too. Perhaps the author of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* wanted the audience to know the fate of Grettir's killer, and yet Jökull was Búi's slayer. Maybe *Jökuls þáttr Búasonar* is a later construction, a reaction to *Kjalnesinga saga*'s statement that there were no stories of Jökull. Regardless, in the narrative division, and

⁶¹ *Kjaln*, 43.

⁶² *Kjaln*, 43.

⁶³ For the edited volume, see *Íslenzk fornrit* XIV, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959). For manuscripts, see AM 504 4to; AM 551 b 4to; JS 28 fol..

⁶⁴ *Gr*, 270-271.

⁶⁵ *Gr*, 274-290.

lack thereof, we can see how the author may imprint their will into the textual form of the sagas.

We can also see evidence for authorial will, without knowing exactly its purpose, in how there is variation in the different copies of the same saga. Indeed, Eriksen has looked at different manuscripts of *Brennu-Njáls saga* and observed how chapters are distributed varyingly within them, along with a differing size of the ornamentation and size of the initial letter of the new chapters.⁶⁶ As a result, Eriksen has noted how the difference in chapter structure between two manuscripts shifts the reader's attention between two opposing groups; one manuscript focuses on an individual while the other manuscript focuses on a group.⁶⁷ And this has led Eriksen to confirm how the narrative is open to interpretation; "the narrative is motivated by the Christian mentality of the writer and scribe, or by the norms of the pre-Christian honor-based society which is portrayed in the saga, or by a combination of these two, spiced up with human emotional triggers, universal for all cultures".⁶⁸

What this all means for us is that there are myriad elements to consider when we try to understand the influence of the saga 'author' on the texts we now have. It is little wonder that Mundal concludes that "[t]he notion of the author – in our contemporary understanding of the concept – is not found very often in Old Norse culture".⁶⁹ As a result, it can be difficult for scholars to try and pinpoint the exact origins of the ideological and cultural influences within a saga's narrative.

Nevertheless, this does not have to hamper our study of historical emotions. We may not know the identity of the individual who compiled the sagas into textual form but that does not prevent us from knowing the context in which they worked and the expectations of them at that time. Indeed, multiple scholars have concluded that the saga 'author' could not stray too far from the realms of possibility when constructing the textual saga, instead drawing from their contemporary culture.⁷⁰ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, for example, in her studies on Old

⁶⁶ Stefka G. Eriksen, "Medieval Page-turners: Interpreting Revenge in *Njáls saga* in Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) and Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.)," in *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, ed. Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 157-160.

⁶⁷ Eriksen, "Medieval Page-turners," 170.

⁶⁸ Eriksen, "Medieval Page-turners," 172.

⁶⁹ Else Mundal, "Modes of Authorship and Types of Text in Old Norse Culture," in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Ranković et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012), 225.

⁷⁰ See William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 45; Bjørn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 16; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 17-18.

Norse women states that the “[s]aga authors writing in a realistic genre were likely restricted to a more limited range of plausible female characters and situations in which they could appear”.⁷¹ As a result, the cultural ideas we come across in the saga narratives most likely reflect the cultural ideas of the saga author and their contemporary culture. Naturally, this includes their ideas of what emotions were socially acceptable and how those emotions manifested.

For the sake of simplicity, whenever I refer to a saga ‘author’ or ‘compiler’, moving forward, the definition I will be working under will be that the individual(s) who gathered and composed the oral stories into textual form will be the ‘author’ or ‘compiler’.

A Christian Context

With the authors being largely unknown, we can instead look to the time period in which the sagas were written so as to get a better understanding of the sagas’ context and how that will affect a history of emotions.

First and foremost, the sagas were written in a Christian culture. Iceland became Christian in 999/1000 A.D. during the Alþingi, which Jochens succinctly describes as “the legislative and juridical body of the country”.⁷² It was at the Alþingi that the medieval Icelanders agreed that Iceland would be a Christian country yet would tolerate pagan practices away from public eyes.⁷³ We can see as much in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, in which we are informed as to how the people present at the Alþingi made the decision. It is stated “at menn skulu allir vera kristnir hér á landi ok trúa á einn guð, fǫður ok son ok anda helgan, en láta af allri skurðgoðavillu... skal fjǫrbaugssǫk á vera, ef víst verður, en ef leyniliga er með farit, þá skal vera vítislaust” (“that all men in this land shall be Christians and believe in one God – Father and Son and Holy Ghost – and forsake all idolatry... If a case like this occurs, but it is practised secretly, then it shall be without punishment”).⁷⁴ We are then told that “en þessi heiðni var ǫll af numin fám vetrum síðar, at eigi skyldi þetta heldr á laun gera en opinberliga” (but this

⁷¹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

⁷² Jenny Jochens, “Late and Peaceful: Iceland’s Conversion through Arbitration in 1000,” *Speculum* 74, no. 3 (1999): 621.

⁷³ For a brief overview of the Christianisation of Iceland, see Jochens, “Late and Peaceful”.

⁷⁴ *Nj*, 272.

heathenry was all abolished a few winters later, so that [this heathenry] could not be practised in secrecy nor in public).⁷⁵

By the time the sagas were starting to be written, then, Iceland had been a Christian country for the majority of two centuries and pagan worship had been since outlawed. Therefore, the saga authors would all have been working in a Christian context. Due to the broadness, and vagueness, of what exactly a Christian context means for our studies of the sagas, there has been considerable debate as to whether the saga authors were specifically clerical or lay.⁷⁶ However, there is little information available to us about the authors and their involvement with the Icelandic Church. If we assume that the authors were clerically trained, we must ask whether they were a part of the Church or trained by a relative, or fosterer. If they were, indeed, clerics, who did they work for? They could have worked for the Church, as dictated by the Norwegian crown, or they could have been working for a local *goði* (a chieftain and secular leader), who had set up their own church. We hear as much in *Heiðarvíga saga*, in which a man has built his own church that holds services; the saga states that “Snorri gengr til kirkju, er hann hafði þar gera látit” (Snorri goes to the church, which he had had built there).⁷⁷ Yet the existence of personal churches raises another question: are the saga authors, cleric or not, staying true to their source material or are they adjusting it to suit their own, or another’s, agendas? Indeed, we have already mentioned how Snorri Sturluson may have utilised his potential ancestry to a specific end, and that provided no certain answers. Bandlien, however, reminds us to critically consider our expectations regarding Christian influences, in his study of Old Norse marriage and love.⁷⁸ He states that “[b]oth laws and sagas written from the end of the twelfth century can be perceived as being influenced by theological trends. At the same time... when the sagas show a woman’s will playing a role in marriage matters, this should not necessarily be attributed to ecclesiastical stealth propaganda”.⁷⁹ The sagas were probably ideologically influenced by Christian doctrine but we should not consequently assume that the sagas are not culturally reflective of medieval Iceland. Both can be true at the same time, for the author would have been both an Icelander

⁷⁵ *Nj*, 272.

⁷⁶ For a summary of the debates, see Haki Antonsson, “Christian Themes,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), 283-285.

⁷⁷ *Heið*, 246. For the law codes on the expectations of a priest-in-training, see *Laws I*, 34-35.

⁷⁸ We will return to these ideas in ‘Chapter 3: Love in *Feðgin* Relationships’.

⁷⁹ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 156.

and an individual working in a Christian context. In other words, while a text may have some explicitly Christian content, the whole text would have been influenced by Christianity, for that was the context of the time of saga composition.

Furthermore, while the saga authors may have chosen to include their own moral underpinnings or some guiding Christian ideologies as they committed the oral tales to writing, they could not have manipulated the source material too much. As Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir remarks, “[t]he Christian, learned scribes who wrote the manuscripts were somewhat bound by honouring the tradition, but they were also trained in subjects such as grammar and rhetoric and familiar with contemporary European literature, including medieval romances”.⁸⁰ The authors and texts, then, had to adhere to the cultural conventions of medieval Iceland.

Overall, then, the Christian status of medieval Iceland does impinge upon our investigation into the emotional culture of medieval Iceland, as shown through the saga texts. The saga authors may have been clerical or lay, under the authority of a *goði* or the Church; we cannot satisfactorily answer as to which the authors belong, yet we do know that they lived and worked in a Christian context.⁸¹ Thus, it should not be surprising that the saga texts contain Christian ideas. Medieval Icelandic culture was a Christian culture, after all.

Silent Reading or Performance; Who is the Audience?

One question that I did not raise in the previous section, despite its relevance, was about whose emotions are being mirrored in the sagas. I have alluded to it, but not yet discussed it, for the answer is to be found in answering this section’s question. Were the sagas read in quiet contemplation, akin to how modern novels are read, or were they read aloud to groups and households, akin to a performance? In finding that answer, we thus learn of the specific community that the sagas’ emotional depictions reflect and, thus, speak to. If sagas were only read alone and in silence, this would indicate that sagas were only available to the literate, but if the sagas were spoken aloud or performed, that would suggest a much wider audience for the sagas.

⁸⁰ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 17.

⁸¹ For a brief survey of Christian influences in *Flóamanna saga*, see Annette Lassen, “Perseverance and Purity in *Flóamanna saga*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 118, no. 3 (2019).

In order to answer this question, we could look to the sagas, themselves, for answers. Indeed, in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, we find a passage detailing the entertainment being held at a wedding; it observes how “Hrólfr frá Skálmarnesi sagði sögu frá Hröngviði víkingi ok frá Óláfi Liðsmannakonungi ok haugbroti Þráins berserks ok Hrómundi Gripssyni... Ingimundr prestr sagði sögu Orms Barreyjarskálds” (Hrólfr of Skálmarnes told the saga of Hröngviðr the Viking, and Óláfr King of Warriors, and the cairn-breaker Þráinn the berserk, and Hrómundr Gripsson... Ingimundr the priest told the saga of Orm Barreyarskáld).⁸² We can see that the details are unclear as to whether the saga entertainment was from memory or manuscripts. The passage uses the past tense form of *segja*, ‘to say’, for the saga entertainment but does not tell us if a manuscript was present or not for the two speakers. In reference to this passage, Lönnroth believes that Hrólfr and Ingimundr were speaking from memory or even improvisation.⁸³ However, Lönnroth goes on to state that after the sagas had been written down, “we can be certain that the written texts were often read aloud in social contexts”.⁸⁴ Indeed, it would be somewhat easier for a literate storyteller, or performer, to tell the saga’s narrative if they had a copy of it in front of them. O’Connor, however, urges caution in taking firm stances, saying “[v]ery little is known, although much has been speculated, about how sagas were communicated to their audiences in mediaeval Iceland; and what the saga-texts tell us about such practices cannot be taken as a complete or impartial picture of what happened”.⁸⁵

O’Connor is right to urge caution. Fortunately, we can look to neighbouring geographical areas to assuage any concerns with accepting the saga’s portrayal as realistic. One such work is Coleman’s observations of late medieval England and France, and how reading was a public activity as much as it was private. In her work, Coleman points to the difficulties of summarising the implications of her observations, for “the texts point in so many directions – but that is one of the most important facts about them”.⁸⁶ Since her texts point her towards multiple directions, Coleman sees how reading was “complex in nature and

⁸² *Þorg*, 38

⁸³ Lars Lönnroth, “Old Norse Text as Performance,” *Scripta Islandica* 60 (2009): 52.

⁸⁴ Lönnroth, “Old Norse Text,” 52-53.

⁸⁵ Ralph O’Connor, “History or Fiction? Truth-claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-sagas,” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15 (2005): 118. For discussions on the imaginary audiences of the sagas, see O’Connor, “History or Fiction?”; Pernille Hermann, “Literacy,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁸⁶ Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 126.

function”.⁸⁷ Not only were texts read aloud by various peoples – some in a professional standing, some not – but the audience received a range of experiences, from amusement to propaganda to role models, all the while acting as they wished – some members listened raptly while others spoke over the reader or even left the room.⁸⁸ If texts and stories were read aloud and shared in various settings with various audiences, in medieval England and France, why should we expect medieval Iceland to be any different? It is especially important to remember that the medieval Icelanders had a strong heritage of oral tradition; they had no reason to suddenly abandon oral storytelling. As Coleman states, “nothing prevented the same individual from reading privately one time and publicly another”.⁸⁹

Drawing from a modern Iceland, O’Connor takes on board the idea of the *kvöldvaka*, or ‘evening wake’, positing that this was a tradition from medieval Iceland that continued to the modern period, the time at which we begin to have evidence for the *kvöldvaka*.⁹⁰ I do not believe this idea to be too large a leap of faith, as it would regularly provide the medieval Icelanders with entertainment during the long nights of winter; in December, for example, parts of Iceland have almost 20 hours of darkness. Such extended periods of time in the household are great occasions for regular storytelling; Coleman observes a similar pattern, in that the public reading of romances allowed for episodic reading in nightly instalments.⁹¹

Taking all of this into consideration, the sagas were probably read aloud in medieval Iceland and these readings were likely held in the household – the social hub. However, it is highly unlikely that the textual sagas were read in a poor household, that of a poor freeman with no property of his own, due to the high costs of creating a saga text. Nevertheless, this would not necessarily exclude the poorer Icelanders from hearing the sagas being read, as they may be present in the larger households of the *goði*, when a saga is being read. Thus, the sagas would have been enjoyed by the various strata of Old Norse culture, rather than solely the literate elite. Thus, the audience for the sagas is very wide in terms of demographic; sagas could entertain the ones with a higher status as much as they could entertain those with a lower status. This means that the community in which I am exploring emotions is very broad

⁸⁷ Coleman, *Public Reading*, 126.

⁸⁸ Coleman, *Public Reading*, 126.

⁸⁹ Coleman, *Public Reading*, 109.

⁹⁰ O’Connor, “History or Fiction?,” 119-120.

⁹¹ Coleman, *Public Reading*, 126-127. For the probably long durations of public recitals, see Andersson, “From Tradition,” especially 10.

in terms of status; this will be mitigated, however, by my studying of specific groups in that community.

Saga Genres

So far, we have discussed the sagas, in general, with some allusions to specific types, or genres, of saga. There has been considerable debate and discussion on the topic and so I will not be delving too far into that, for it is not the purpose of my work, here.⁹² However, it is important to keep in mind that most of the terms regarding saga genres are modern constructions placed upon the sagas. As Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir notes, “judging from manuscript evidence, the schism between fiction and nonfiction, historiography and entertainment, and different genres, as perceived by modern scholars, was likely less important in the medieval period than today”.⁹³ Indeed, “the saga is a modally mixed literary form, and individual sagas cannot always be cleanly slotted into this or that sub-group, but may display characteristics of more than one”.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this does not at all indicate that medieval Icelanders, themselves, did not notice differences in style between sagas or categorise the various sagas in some way. Furthermore, the modern categorisation of sagas into genres is not inherently wrong simply because the categories are modern; problems only arise when we begin to judge the quality of a saga based on the genre scholars have assigned it. Keeping this all in mind, I will be using ‘genre’ simply as a tool for organising the sagas into general corpuses for study. Thus, we will now move to consider what sagas I am using and my reasons for doing so.

My focus resides predominantly on two saga genres; they are the *Íslendingasögur*, or the ‘sagas of Icelanders’, and a sub-section of the *samtíðarsögur*, or the ‘contemporary sagas’. Bampi states that the *Íslendingasögur* “are generally held to be marked by a certain degree of realism, although supernatural and fantastic elements... are also present” and “[t]he events narrated in these texts are set in the time between the colonization of Iceland, which began

⁹² For a general survey of the debate, and the resulting genre classifications, see Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 13-36; Massimiliano Bampi, “Genre,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017); Massimiliano Bampi, “Genre,” in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdóttir (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020).

⁹³ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 3.

⁹⁴ Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 28.

in the 870s, and the conversion to Christianity around 1000, or shortly after that”.⁹⁵ The *samtíðarsögur*, on the other hand, “recount events that took place between 1117 and 1291” centred around the power struggles of oligarchic families and bishops, in Iceland.⁹⁶ As a result of the *samtíðarsögur* possessing two sets of characters, it can be further separated into two sub-groups; these are the *Sturlunga sögur*, or ‘sagas of the Sturlungs’ and the *Biskupa sögur*, or ‘sagas of bishops.’⁹⁷ For the purposes of my project, I will be studying the *Sturlunga sögur* alongside the *Íslendingasögur*.

So, why have I selected these two saga corpuses? There are multiple reasons for this, perhaps the most important of which is that they are both primarily concerned with events happening in Iceland, and the Icelanders involved. As a result, I can again state with confidence that the scenarios we see in those sagas are indicative of the emotional culture of medieval Iceland. While it is true that the *Biskupa sögur* are also primarily concerned with Iceland, I want to ensure that the emotional culture I explore is that of medieval Icelanders, not the emotional culture of medieval Icelandic bishops. Moreover, the selected saga corpuses are generally estimated to have been compiled in the same approximate time period, and so lend themselves to a socio-historical study of the aforementioned timeframe, as there will be similarities upon which we can draw.⁹⁸

While the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur* are the core of this project, I will also occasionally draw from the *fornaldarsögur* to help elucidate some of the obscure themes and motifs in my exploration of medieval Icelandic love in the family. This obscurity generally emerges when the saga provides no information as to the event occurring, and so I utilise the *fornaldarsögur* to provide the missing context. Despite their supernatural elements, the *fornaldarsögur* do not negatively affect my research, for, as Vésteinn Ólason notes, in these saga genres “we also find recognizable scenes from daily life”.⁹⁹ They are, thus, valid for a

⁹⁵ Bampi, “Genre,” in *The Routledge Research Companion*, 5.

⁹⁶ Bampi, “Genre,” in *The Routledge Research Companion*, 5.

⁹⁷ For her division of the *samtíðarsögur* into two categories, see Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 35-36.

⁹⁸ For examples of scholarly use of both the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur*, see Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*; Chris Callow, *Landscape, Tradition and Power in Medieval Iceland: Dalir and the Eyjafjörður Region c. 870-c.1265* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

⁹⁹ Vésteinn Ólason, “The Icelandic Saga as a Kind of Literature with Special Reference to its Representation of Reality,” in *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross*, ed. Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 47. Also see Tulinius, *The Matter of the North*, 290-295.

study of the emotional culture of medieval Iceland. However, my current focus is aligned with Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's statement that "[s]aga authors writing in a realistic genre were likely restricted to a more limited range of plausible female characters and situations... than their counterparts who produced fantastic literature".¹⁰⁰ In other words, by prioritising the *Íslendingasögur* and the *Sturlunga sögur*, I can ensure that my conclusions on the emotional culture of medieval Iceland are rooted firmly in the plausible.

Summary

In this section, we have seen how there is a lot to be said about sagas as a source, the aim of which has been to show how they are a valid source for historical studies in emotion, despite their complex context.

The saga manuscripts that we possess were not the creation of a single individual. They are the result of a long oral tradition being recorded into a written format for posterity. These oral accounts were not static but show evidence of having been reshaped over time to suit the audience as well as having been refined for entertainment purposes. However, this does not mean that the saga compilers did not also impress their own ideas into the texts, as they committed them to writing. Therefore, the written sagas provide us with a cultural snapshot of the time in which they were written, allowing us to infer the emotional culture of the audience who would have enjoyed the sagas.

The main sagas that I have selected for this project – those belonging to the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur* – are believed to have been written in and around the thirteenth century. As I am not restricting myself to a single saga, this means that my selection is providing me with an emotional culture spanning over a century. While this culture may have shifted slightly over that time, it could not have changed so much as to be wholly new; a culture cannot become unrecognisable to its members over just one century.

In order to access the emotional culture of medieval Iceland, and any culture, we cannot rely on a single source of information. Therefore, I will be reading the sagas together, with intertextuality in mind, so that I can observe the recurring patterns of emotional expression. If an emotional expression appears multiple times across the sagas, it suggests

¹⁰⁰ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 6.

that this expression had a place in medieval Iceland; the expression was understood as a means by which an emotion could be articulated.

For most of the sagas, we do not know who composed them. What we do know is that, in order to produce textual sagas, the saga compilers drew upon both medieval Iceland's rich oral tradition and their contemporary values, whilst writing within a Christian culture. Regardless of any intentions they may have had, saga authors were somewhat restricted in what they could write, or even add; it had to fit in with the emotional culture of the time.

Despite being textual in form, the sagas were likely read aloud and read privately. With a strong tradition in oral storytelling, it makes sense that they would continue to tell stories publicly; they simply had a text to draw from if their memory faltered. As a result, the audience of the sagas must have included people from multiple backgrounds, rather than just the elite, for anyone close enough to the storyteller could listen in.

The core genres of my project – the *Íslendingasögur* and the *Sturlunga sögur* – have been selected for their focus on Iceland and its inhabitants, along with the fact that they were composed in, approximately, the same time period. Alongside these, I draw upon a few sagas from the *fornaldarsögur* to elucidate any themes that are obscure in my core genres. Overall, prioritising the *Íslendingasögur* and the *Sturlunga sögur* allows me to confirm that my analysis works within the realm of the plausible in exploring the emotional culture of medieval Iceland.

Having now discussed the key components of what constitutes a saga, I will now move into the development of a methodology to use Old Norse sagas in a historical study of emotions in medieval Iceland. The first key concept to explore is what exactly an emotion is.

What is an Emotion?

In the scholarly study of emotions, we are forever confronted with the question of what an emotion is. The question is not always answered, or even discussed, but it is ever-present. I do not seek to answer the question, for it is not the focus of this project; it is necessary, however, to suggest a model from which to study the emotional relationships of medieval Iceland. To establish such a model, we must consider the theories of what an emotion is and determine which theories could be used for a historical study, moreover, which theories could work with the Old Norse sagas as the primary source.

Overall, there remains great debate, in and between disciplines, as to what an emotion is comprised of. The two major groups in this debate are universalists, who consider emotions to be pan-cultural, and social constructivists, who consider emotions to be constructed from the culture within which they exist. Radenović agrees that these are the two main categories in theories of emotion, further noting how universalist theories are “usually embraced by psychologists and biologists”, while social constructivist theories are “accepted often by anthropologists and sociologists”.¹⁰¹ However, Rosenwein recognises that exceedingly few people have accepted the idea that all emotions are constructed, noting the subdivisions within the body of social constructivism: ‘strong’ social constructivists argue that all emotions are constructed and there are no universal emotions, while ‘weak’ social constructivists believe societies shape individual emotional expression.¹⁰² A major issue with the ‘strong’ stance is that, taken to its logical conclusion, it is consequently impossible to understand another person’s emotions, let alone another culture’s emotional lexicon. It makes any attempt to understand emotions outside of oneself impossible, and so would, naturally, make the history of emotions a redundant discipline.¹⁰³ ‘Weak’ social constructivism, then, is the attempt to balance the universality of emotion with the socially constructed elements of emotion.

Before we delve further into these conceptions of emotion to discern an effective model for this work, we must briefly consider what pitfalls await us in the historical study of emotions.

Avoiding Anachronisms

First and foremost is the word ‘emotion’ itself. As Boddice remarks, “the very word ‘emotions’ already implies a conceptual and experiential category that has no real meaning in the vast majority of the historical record” and is Anglophone in origin as well as being inherently skewed towards the thinking of nineteenth-century psychologists and physiologists.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, in his work on the subject, Dixon explores the origins of ‘emotion’,

¹⁰¹ Ljiljana Radenović, “Beyond Universalism/Social Constructivism Debate in the History of Emotions: The Case of Acedia,” *Theoria* 62, no. 4 (2019): 8. Also see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰² Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 837.

¹⁰³ As shown by the existence of this project, I do not subscribe to such a ‘strong’ position.

¹⁰⁴ Rob Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 13.

how it is a modern category and how it “is rather a blunt instrument when it comes to constructing histories of ideas about feelings, passions, affections and sentiments” – terms which largely predate ‘emotion’.¹⁰⁵ They make good points; these are ideas we must be considerate of in any historical study of emotions. However, as I have already stated, the purpose of this work is not to answer the question of what an emotion is; I only require a working definition with which to explore Old Norse love in familial relationships. Furthermore, Rosenwein has pointed out that the terms that predate ‘emotions’ are not as clear-cut as scholars would like to believe; she notes that ‘passions’ could encompass words that were also signified by ‘affections’.¹⁰⁶ Thus, I will follow Rosenwein’s example of using the word ‘emotion’ as a catch-all term, “with full knowledge that it is a convenience: a constructed term that refers to affective reactions of all sorts, intensities, and durations”.¹⁰⁷

When we begin studying historical emotions, we must be cautious of wandering into anachronisms and impressing upon them a modern connotation. This is because, as Miller observes, “once we name an emotion it takes on a life of its own”.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, as soon as we discuss emotions in a historical sense, it is very easy for us to imbue that historical emotion with our own ideas, expectations, and experiences in our attempt to comprehend the emotional content of what we are witnessing. And this phenomenon is not unique to the history of emotions but is a recurring element of life.

For example, in translating any text, the translator must make a choice of what they deem fitting; they could gather as much information as they could, but, in the end, it is still a choice they have made from their own knowledge and own experiences. Another example would be discussions about the weather. Person A may send a letter to Person B commenting on how the weather is ‘hot’, when it is 25°C. Person B, not knowing the temperature for where Person A is, may understand ‘hot’ to be 40°C and thus believe Person A is experiencing temperatures of 40°C, which is not true. And so, while the concept, or word, remains the

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 242.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4. For a succinct summary of pre-emotion terms, see Andrew Lynch, “‘What Cheer?’ Emotion and Action in the Arthurian World,” in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, ed. Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 48-49.

¹⁰⁷ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 31.

same, the people's understanding of it can be vastly different depending on the individual's personal experiences, ideas, and expectations.

But I am not saying that this is entirely problematic for the study of historical emotions. Indeed, the complexity of the subject of emotion benefits from the various points of view; each person can bring a slight nuance to the historical emotion. For example, Þórhallr's bloody expression of emotion can be understood as grief, anger, and love; it could even be a mixture of all three. The cause for concern is when the emotion is not historicised and contextualised, when the modern idea of an emotion is given priority over the historical. In a similar way, Benton claims that if a modern audience finds "Lancelot a sympathetic figure because he was guided by love rather than reason, it is because modern attitudes differ from medieval ones".¹⁰⁹ Benton concludes as much by stating that "[i]n terms of the conventional standards of the court of Champagne, Chrétien [de Troyes]'s Lancelot was not more of a hero for loving Guinevere [King Arthur's wife], but a felon" for becoming involved with Guinevere.¹¹⁰ Benton goes on to say how "Chrétien has gone out of his way to describe behavior he could be sure the courtly audience would condemn".¹¹¹ A modern attitude, then, can be detrimental in understanding what the contemporary audience's views are.

Returning to emotions, the modern understanding can also be obscure. As Benton's understanding of Lancelot's behaviour shows, audience ideals and values change with time and location; the ideals and values shift depending on the context of the audience. Similarly, emotional expression can be understood differently between contexts. Take the raising of the mouth's corners that we call a smile, or grin, for example. In the modern West, it is generally understood to be an expression of happiness or a sign of friendliness. Despite this being the predominant understanding of the expression, that does not mean it cannot signify other things, such as a self-satisfied smugness, depending on the context.¹¹²

We see this same need for context in the saga literature. Miller notes, referencing the scene from *Laxdæla saga* in which Guðrún is confronted by her husband's killers, how most of the men read her smile as being indicative of an ambivalence towards her husband, and

¹⁰⁹ John F. Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 110.

¹¹⁰ Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality*, 110.

¹¹¹ Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality*, 110.

¹¹² This matches up with Clifford Geertz's discussion of how ethnography is 'thick description', the various potential layers of meaning behind an action. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), especially 5-10.

were confused by it, suggesting that it was an inappropriate expression for this scenario.¹¹³ Ai continues with this idea, commenting how “Guðrún is exploiting behavioural norms in an attempt to mislead”.¹¹⁴ Indeed, one of the men in that killing party comments “hygg ek, at henni gengi þat meir til leiðiorðs við oss, at hon vildi vita sem gørst, hverir men hefði verit í þessi ferð” (“I think, rather, that she walked and talked with us, because she wanted to know exactly which men had taken part in this journey”).¹¹⁵ In this scene, then, the smile is shown as understandable in two very different ways – ambivalence and a misleading performance. Ai, however, goes on to showcase yet another understanding of saga smiles, specifically the ‘grin’ – using multiple sources, Ai notes how “there is nothing friendly about Old Icelandic grins... the grin... is a completely self-assured expression”.¹¹⁶

We, as scholars, then, must be wary of placing our personal understandings on familiar-looking historical emotions, and emotional expressions, as they do not necessarily match. And yet, we must also be vigilant with emotional expressions that are not familiar. Indeed, with our modern minds and understanding of biology, it can be easy to dismiss some physiological impossibilities and not give them the examination they deserve. For example, we might struggle with most of Þórhallr’s response to hearing of his foster-father’s death; the fainting is plausible but the swelling is suspicious, and the blood gushing from the ears is extremely dubious with regard to medical possibility. As a result, this scene could be simply dismissed as unrealistic and representative of the sagas’ lack of historicity. However, that would be poor scholarship. Instead, for this scene, we must prioritise medieval Icelanders’ views. Did they consider it a possible reality, despite what our modern sciences today suggest? Or did they also deem it an impossibility and, if so, why did they write it in their literature?

In order to answer these questions, we must look back to medieval Icelanders’ cultural conceptualisations of emotions and the possibilities of the human body, and not “treat the body here as an absolute limit”.¹¹⁷ We can get an idea of this through the fact that some medieval Icelanders would likely have known about humoral theory – a medical system prevalent in medieval Europe, and beyond, which designates humans as each having a balance

¹¹³ Miller, “Emotions and the Sagas,” 91.

¹¹⁴ Ai, “The Mirthless Content,” 104.

¹¹⁵ *Laxd*, 169.

¹¹⁶ Ai, “The Mirthless Content,” 103.

¹¹⁷ Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 299.

of four humours – because of an Old Norse treatise on the subject.¹¹⁸ Through her discussion on how this Old Norse treatise was drawn from a specific Latin text along with the general trends of medieval thought, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir outlines the Old Norse model of humoral theory as there are some slight variations from the typical model.¹¹⁹ However, what is specifically of interest to us is how humoral theory is connected to emotions and emotional expression.

According to humoral theory, an individual who possesses an equal balance of the four humours (red/yellow bile, blood, black bile, and phlegm) is healthy in both body and mind.¹²⁰ When one humour becomes predominant, however, it alters the emotional character of the individual. An abundance in red bile, or red blood, could cause one to be hot-tempered and volatile, for example.¹²¹ Alternatively, blood, also known as right blood, could make one gentle and well-intentioned when dominant in the body.¹²² Alongside this, there was the idea that the different seasons and different age groups of one's life would also affect one's humoral balance, thus prompting a change in an individual's emotional disposition.¹²³

Being aware of humoral theory's presence in medieval Iceland helps us to understand the scene of blood pouring from Þórhallr's ears due to his foster-father's death, something modern medicine would struggle to explain. This is because humoral theory describes the ears as being the bodily exit for red bile.¹²⁴ Therefore, we now have a causal link between Njáll's death and Þórhallr's resulting expression of emotion; Njáll's death triggered Þórhallr's body to possess an overabundance of red bile, which escaped his body through its natural exit of his ears. Humoral theory, then, would suggest that blood gushing from one's ears as a result

¹¹⁸ Christopher Crocker, "Emotions," in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), 243. For a discussion on the origins and development of humoral theory, see R. J. Hankinson, "Humours and Humoral Theory," in *The Routledge History of Disease*, ed. Mark Jackson (Oxon: Routledge, 2017).

¹¹⁹ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North."

¹²⁰ Jacques Bos, "The Rise and Decline of Character: Humoral Psychology in Ancient and Early Modern Medical Theory," *History of the Human Sciences* 22, no. 3 (2009): 36. Cf. Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 50, in which her sources use the term 'red bile' rather than 'yellow bile'. I will henceforth use the term 'red bile', as that corresponds to the Old Norse conceptualisation of humoral theory.

¹²¹ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 52; Jacques Bos, "The Rise and Decline of Character," 37.

¹²² Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 53; Jacques Bos, "The Rise and Decline of Character," 37.

¹²³ R. J. Hankinson, "Humours and Humoral Theory," 29-30; Jacques Bos, "The Rise and Decline of Character," 31.

¹²⁴ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 54.

of one's emotions was considered a physiological possibility at the time.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, it is not readily apparent as to how widespread this knowledge was in medieval Iceland, yet its existence suggests that the humoral theory was, at least, "important to an Icelandic literary man of high social standing", if not the literary elite as well.¹²⁶ As such individuals would have been the ones who created the sagas, it is then understandable that humoral theory emerges in Þórhallr's response to Njáll's death.

In her studies on Anglo-Saxon psychologies, Lockett also recommends the prioritising of contemporary ideas when exploring medieval psychologies. She states that the "Western practitioner's fundamental attitude toward other cultures' mind-body holisms" must be reorientated, especially considering how the Western mind-body dualism is the global minority.¹²⁷ Indeed, Lockett goes on to state that Old English medical evidence "does not characterize the brain as the seat of the mind".¹²⁸ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir also observed this in her comparison of skaldic poetry and Old Norse prose, noting that her sources predominantly showed the chest as the site of emotion and cognition.¹²⁹ If the Anglo-Saxons and Old Norse sources did not view the mind as existing within the brain, what are the consequences of that? Lockett explains that Anglo-Saxons understood that "the breast or heart [could] contain every mental activity or attribute" and so "a 'roomy heart' [was] the bodily symptom of an extraordinarily good emotional or intellectual state".¹³⁰

In a similar vein on medieval understandings of the body, Benton observes how some medieval medical treatises indicated that an ovum was released during orgasm and that the natural consequences of this idea was that "a woman who conceived had taken pleasure in

¹²⁵ For how a character's angry and jealous actions are communicated to the reader through his physiology, as according to humoral theory, see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 49-50; *Band*, 361-363.

¹²⁶ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North," 59-60.

¹²⁷ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 10.

¹²⁸ Leslie Lockett, "The Limited Role of the Brain in Mental and Emotional Activity According to Anglo-Saxon Medical Learning," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture*, ed. Alice Jorgenson, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 36.

¹²⁹ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "The Head, The Heart, and the Breast: Bodily Conceptions of Emotion and Cognition in Old Norse Skaldic Poetry," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 15 (2019): 56-57.

¹³⁰ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 72, 89. For how, in Old Norse literature, the heart could be physically examined to reveal the individual's character, see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, "The Head, The Heart, and The Breast," 48.

intercourse”.¹³¹ Without this knowledge, it could be difficult for readers to fully comprehend a community’s response to rape, when the victim consequently conceived.¹³²

As these examples show, a knowledge of the society and its cultural nuances is necessary when studying historical emotions, along with a caution of allowing personal ideas to influence the understanding of the emotion. Therefore, a historian must explore the contextual layers, facets, and ideas that surround a historical emotion in order to study it.

Finding a Model for Emotions

That being said, we still require a model for what an emotion is, otherwise any exploration will have no guidance to work with. This is a seemingly simple task with no simple answer.¹³³ The elements that come to mind when discussing emotions, for most Western people, are the ‘feelings’ and the ‘expressions’, or ‘actions.’ People, then, can feel sad or feel happy and their emotional expressions change accordingly. Is this a good enough set of criteria for our model of ‘emotion’, though?

I would say that the two components of feeling and expression are almost enough to constitute a model for emotion. As I have already discussed, we need to always be conscious of the culture and context in which the feelings and expressions occur, for they inform the emotion’s expression. Otherwise, we then fail to acknowledge the differences between peoples and cultures. Thus, I would include cultural expectations in the mix of what constitutes an emotion, alongside feelings and expressions. I show myself, then, to be a proponent of weak social constructivism, in that I believe culture and society impact the construction of emotion but do not entirely create it. As Radenović notes, this is an unsurprising stance for a historian as a history of emotions requires a historical precedent, rather than a biological one, to be considered for historical study.¹³⁴ This tripartite model – of

¹³¹ John F. Benton, “Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love,” in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 32.

¹³² Also see Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), especially 77.

¹³³ On the difficulty of defining emotion, see Paul R. Kleinginna Jr. and Anne M. Kleinginna, “A Categorized List of Emotion Definitions, with Suggestions for a Consensual Definition,” *Motivation and Emotion* 5, no. 4 (1981); Richard S. Lazarus, *Emotion and Adaptation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jeroen Deploige, “Studying Emotions: The Medievalist as Human Scientist?,” in *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th-16th Century)*, ed. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); Frevert, *Emotions in History*; Susan Lanzoni, “Introduction to the Special Section on the History of Emotions,” *History of Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2021).

¹³⁴ Radenović, “Beyond Universalism/Social Constructivism,” 8.

feelings, expressions, and cultural expectations – is fairly simple in its criteria for what constitutes an emotion, but this simplicity allows us to utilise a wide range of tools, alongside the model, in the study of historical emotions.

To have arrived at this model, I surveyed various literatures on what an emotion is from both sides of the universalist-constructivist debate, in order to find what worked and what did not. So what approaches are available to scholars in their search for a model for emotions, then?

Scholars could attempt to utilise the sciences and psychology to help illuminate what an emotion is. The nineteenth-century psychologist, William James, divides emotion into two categories: there are, what he calls, the ‘coarser’ emotions and the ‘subtler’ emotions.¹³⁵ James describes the ‘coarser’ emotions as ones “in which every one recognizes a strong organic reverberation”, such as “grief, fear, rage, love”, while stating that ‘subtler’ emotions are “the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic feelings” which are “genuinely *cerebral* forms of pleasure and displeasure” and “whose organic reverberation is less obvious and strong”.¹³⁶ In other words, James is saying that there are emotions which are primarily physiological and then there are emotions which are primarily intellectual. This concept of ‘subtle’ emotions, then, arises from those feelings which have no physical sensations and are purely mental, or intellectual. For the arousal of this form of emotion, he gives examples of intellectual pursuits, such as: mathematics, music, and art.¹³⁷ He goes on to state that with these ‘subtle’ emotions, “our state of mind can hardly be called emotional at all” but admits that “the moral and intellectual cognitions hardly ever do exist thus unaccompanied”.¹³⁸ Despite their intellectuality, then, the ‘subtle’ emotions are still connected to the physiological ‘coarse’ emotions.

My concern with this splitting of emotion into two categories is that it raises questions of elitism, in that it can be seen to connect societal status with emotional expression, or rather, its lack thereof. For instance, what does it mean when an individual has no access to occasions which would arouse the ‘subtle’ emotions, due to personal circumstance? Could that make them less of a human, or an inferior person? This question of elitism is also not helped by

¹³⁵ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918), 2:449.

¹³⁶ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 449, 468. Italics in original.

¹³⁷ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 468.

¹³⁸ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 471.

James's statement of how regular exposure to aesthetic and intellectual matters "has blunted mere emotional excitability as much as it has sharpened taste and judgement" enabling access to 'intellectual emotion', or the 'subtle' emotion.¹³⁹ This would suggest that those who are emotional have a poorer taste and judgement than those who are unemotional, and this consequently feeds into further divisions between people, while holding unemotional intellectuality as a sign of expertise and eliteness. This concept becomes further problematic if we consider it in the light of perceiving different cultures. For example, a stereotypical English attribute which has been widely cited is the 'stiff upper lip', where the individual seeks to remain outwardly unemotional despite what they are feeling. This national stereotype could be perceived as indicative of having a blunted emotional excitability, potentially suggesting that English people therefore have sharper tastes and judgement than a nation whose stereotype suggests a higher degree of emotional expression. While James's idea does incorporate 'feeling' and 'expression' components, as general Western thought today does, there are too many concerning areas in this conceptualisation of emotions for it to serve as a model for this project, and so we shall move forward to more modern theories.

The renowned psychologist and anthropologist, Paul Ekman, has played a large role in the scientific study of emotions and so must be mentioned in this survey. Many people recognise Ekman for his claim that there are universal basic emotions, rendered visible via the face; he calls them 'basic' for "[t]here are a number of separate emotions which differ one from another in important ways" and "[e]volution played an important role in shaping both the unique and the common features which these emotions display".¹⁴⁰ Many scholars have crafted their own ideas of 'basic emotions' and these have ranged widely – some have argued for six basic emotions and others have argued for twenty-two.¹⁴¹ For Ekman, there were six basic emotions, consisting of "anger, fear, sadness, enjoyment, disgust, and surprise".¹⁴² He does, however, ponder whether he should also include "contempt, shame, guilt,

¹³⁹ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 471.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Ekman, "An Argument for Basic Emotions," *Cognition and Emotion* 6, no. 3-4 (1992): 170. Cf. Anne Schmidt, "Showing Emotions, Reading Emotions," trans. Keith Tribe, in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000*, ed. Ute Frevert et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁴¹ For a general overview, see Dacher J. Keltner, "Towards a Consensual Taxonomy of Emotions," *Cognition and Emotion* 33, no. 1 (2019). For how the human voice can communicate 22 different emotions, see Emiliana R. Simon-Thomas, Dacher J. Keltner, Disa Sauter, Lara Sinicropi-Yao, and Anna Abramson, "The Voice Conveys Specific Emotions: Evidence from Vocal Burst Displays," *Emotion* 9, no. 6 (2009).

¹⁴² Ekman, "An Argument for Basic Emotions," 170.

embarrassment, and awe” as other basic emotions.¹⁴³ To account for all the variant terms for similar emotional states – happiness and joy, for example – Ekman expands these basic emotions. He calls them ‘emotion families’ and so “[e]ach member of an emotion family shares certain characteristics, for example, commonalities in expression, in physiological activity” among others.¹⁴⁴ He then goes on to provide an example of an emotion family, saying “in all members of the anger family the brows are lowered and drawn together” and “variations in the family of anger facial expressions are hypothesised to reflect whether or not the anger is controlled... simulated or spontaneous”.¹⁴⁵ His reasoning behind this concept of basic emotions is a set of nine characteristics which he believes distinguish basic emotions from one another and other mental states. The list comprises of ‘distinctive universal signals’, ‘presence in other primates’, ‘distinctive physiology’, ‘distinctive universals in antecedent events’, ‘coherence among emotional response’, ‘quick onset’, ‘brief duration’, ‘automatic appraisal’, and ‘unbidden occurrence’.¹⁴⁶ Ekman goes on to conclude that there remain other emotions to be examined and discussed for their potential of being a basic emotion; he then attempts to fill the gaps his model leaves with regard to our knowledge of emotions.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps the most obvious concern I have with Ekman’s taxonomy is the lack of emotions that we might expect to see, such as love. With Ekman’s approach, love is not a basic emotion but is an ‘affective state’, or is ‘emotion-related’, and thus must be part of an emotion family; but which one? An immediate answer may be ‘enjoyment’ and that is not surprising; many people enjoy their love with their loved ones. But what about unrequited love? Loving someone and knowing they do not or will never love you back is not enjoyable; instead, it can evoke sadness or even anger. Ekman does try to deal with love, describing it as one of his emotional attitudes, which are “more sustained, and typically involve more than one emotion”.¹⁴⁸ For Ekman, then, if an emotional state, such as love, is able to last longer than the immediate sensation, it is not an emotion but an emotional attitude. However, is it not possible to be sad for an extended duration when you are in mourning for the loss of a loved one?

¹⁴³ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 170.

¹⁴⁴ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 172.

¹⁴⁵ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 172.

¹⁴⁶ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 175.

¹⁴⁷ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 193-194.

¹⁴⁸ Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” 194.

Sabini and Silver take note of this in their investigation into the validity of Ekman's model. In a quick discussion on anger, they explore how it is acceptable to say that someone has been angry for 40 years over a past wrong and yet we do not expect that individual to have shown the signs of anger for every moment of those decades.¹⁴⁹ Instead of Ekman's categorisation, they observe anger in both a dispositional sense and an episodic one, before stating that sadness "can endure in some sense for years".¹⁵⁰ Ekman's answer to this problem is to regard grief as an emotional plot, a complex "involving settings and stories in which emotions occur".¹⁵¹ According to Ekman, then, grief does not fall into the emotion family of sadness. Ekman goes on to say how "[w]e know in grief a death has occurred, in sadness we only know that the person has suffered an important loss, but not what kind of loss".¹⁵² The difference, then, is that knowing the object of an emotional state makes it an emotional plot. What are we to say of anger, though? Is it possible to be angry at nothing in particular? Is anger thus an emotional plot rather than an emotional state? Does anger not require an object to be angry with?

Furthermore, Ekman's model raises the question of translation issues. All of his model's emotion words are in English. Does he consider these to be indicative of the basic emotions of humanity? Would that not be Anglo-centric? It is not right to assume that the other languages of the world have the same understanding of a word that the Anglophone peoples do. For example, should modern Icelanders consider *dapur*, *hryggur*, or the English 'sad' as a basic emotion?¹⁵³ To choose the third results in Anglo-centrism yet which of the first two maps onto Ekman's sadness without falling into emotional attitudes, or the like, is uncertain. Indeed, Keltner calls for more non-Western samples of potential emotion categories.¹⁵⁴ However, Keltner also neglects to discuss whether the English words are unduly given precedence.

Problems keep coming up with Ekman's model but the attempts he makes to diffuse some of them only cause more questions to emerge. Many of these questions seem to arise from Ekman's drive to subsume all emotional experience under his six basic emotions. This is

¹⁴⁹ John Sabini and Maury Silver, "Ekman's Basic Emotions: Why not Love and Jealousy?," *Cognition and Emotion* 19, no. 5 (2005): 701.

¹⁵⁰ Sabini and Silver, "Ekman's Basic Emotions," 701.

¹⁵¹ Ekman, "An Argument for Basic Emotions," 194.

¹⁵² Ekman, "An Argument for Basic Emotions," 194.

¹⁵³ Both of these Icelandic words could translate as sad, yet they have different connotations and etymologies.

¹⁵⁴ Keltner, "Towards a Consensual Taxonomy," 17.

an ongoing trend in psychology, as “[p]sychologists have longed to reduce the list [of emotions] to some subset from which the other emotions could somehow be constructed”.¹⁵⁵ In the field of psychology, maybe a short and workable list of emotions can help speed up the process of helping people with their emotional health. For a historical study, this artificial list could be problematic in two major ways. Firstly, by potentially leading historians to try and force their historical agents’ emotional experiences into these artificial boxes, this model could destroy any historical nuances, through ignoring historical conceptualisations of what we call emotions, and risk restricting the scholarly scope to a set of basic emotions, regardless of the number. Second, this reliance on facial expressions is not conducive to historical explorations of emotion as we do not always have sources that reference or show such emotional expressivity.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, this model of reducing emotional expressions to a list of basic emotions will not be useful in this study and so we will need to look elsewhere.

The scientist Michel Cabanac creates a four-dimensional model of consciousness in his search to quantify the concept of emotion. The four dimensions of this model are: the ‘qualitative dimension’, the ‘intensive dimension’, the ‘hedonic dimension’, and the ‘time dimension’.¹⁵⁷ The ‘qualitative’ dimension consists of the idea that “[d]ifferent emotions are simply responses to different stimuli”, and these stimuli can be from perception or imagination.¹⁵⁸ Recognising how several authors have connected intensity with emotion, Cabanac sees the ‘intensive dimension’ as a necessary component of emotion and that a low-intensity stimulus “would unlikely arouse emotion”.¹⁵⁹ For the ‘hedonic dimension’, Cabanac states that emotions all possess a quality of pleasure or displeasure, going on to state that the “hedonic dimension is what... defines emotion”.¹⁶⁰ In other words, an emotion is inherently pleasurable or displeasurable; there is no middle ground. The ‘time dimension’ is simply the acceptance that emotions have “a limited duration” after their arousal.¹⁶¹ With this all

¹⁵⁵ Sabini and Silver, “Ekman’s Basic Emotions,” 694.

¹⁵⁶ For potential alternatives to facial expressions, see Keltner, “Towards a Consensual Taxonomy,” 17.

¹⁵⁷ Michel Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” *Behavioural Processes* 60 (2002): 70-76.

¹⁵⁸ Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 72.

¹⁵⁹ Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 73.

¹⁶⁰ Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 76.

¹⁶¹ Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 76.

sketched out, Cabanac concludes that “[e]motion is any mental experience with high intensity and high hedonicity”.¹⁶²

Cabanac, here, has attempted to be exhaustive with this model, shaping it to be as inclusive of various emotions as possible, prioritising neither positive ones nor negative ones. It may be useful for scientific and biological ideas of emotion, which suits his discipline, but my concerns with his model arise when we try to consider his ideas outside of the scientific realm. Indeed, he raises the topic himself. Cabanac briefly considers how emotional concepts may not exist in languages other than the one in which it originated; to illustrate this, he mentions how ancient Greek uses one word for what Anglophones would call heat and temperature, concluding that the two concepts therefore did not exist for ancient Greeks as it does for Anglophones.¹⁶³ Does the lack of a term for something, though, necessitate that it does not exist within that culture? To use a non-emotional concept, should we say that a non-francophone individual has no knowledge of *l’appel du vide* simply because they do not know of a cognate for it in their language?¹⁶⁴

We now find ourselves in the discussion on the relationship between language and thought, often known as the Sapir-Whorf debate, or the Whorfian hypothesis. The central question of this discourse “is whether people who speak different languages think differently”.¹⁶⁵ This hypothesis posits that the “semantics of a language can affect the way in which its speakers perceive and conceptualize the world”.¹⁶⁶ Linguistic determinism, or the ‘strong’ form of the Whorfian hypothesis, dictates that “language forces you to think and perceive only in certain ways”.¹⁶⁷ If this were the case, we would be unable to translate across languages with any degree of accuracy and would not have a need to introduce new terminology into our language. The weaker form of this hypothesis, called linguistic relativity, argues for a less forceful approach. As Agar describes it, “[l]anguage isn’t a prison; it’s a room you’re comfortable with... the usual way of seeing the world and talking about it”.¹⁶⁸ When

¹⁶² Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 76.

¹⁶³ Cabanac, “What is Emotion?,” 72.

¹⁶⁴ *L’appel du vide* (literally ‘the call of the void’) is the concept of an intrusive thought suggesting that the individual do something small but fatal, such as taking a step onto the tracks of an oncoming train.

¹⁶⁵ Phillip Wolff and Kevin J. Holmes, “Linguistic Relativity,” *WIREs Cognitive Science* 2, no. 3 (2011): 253.

¹⁶⁶ Wolff and Holmes, “Linguistic Relativity,” 253.

¹⁶⁷ Harriet Joseph Ottenheimer and Judith M. S. Pine, *The Anthropology of Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*, 4th ed. (Wadsworth: Cengage, 2018), 37.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Agar, *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 68.

you learn of other cultures and languages, you also learn “that other languages lay down other habitual patterns of seeing and thinking and talking and acting” and “it’s not impossible to move from one to another, but it’s not easy either”.¹⁶⁹ Linguistic relativity, then, claims that an individual’s language provides them with a model to understand and engage with the world; they are fully capable, though, of adopting a new model from their experience in another language.

Let us return to the French example of *l’appel du vide* and the question I posed. I believe it would be wrong to suggest, as Cabanac does with his ancient Greek example, that a non-francophone individual could not know or understand the idea behind the phrase *l’appel du vide*. Instead, I would argue closer to linguistic relativism, seeing language to be a tool for understanding the world rather than the determinant. Indeed, a non-francophone may have a ‘eureka’ moment when they find the phrase *l’appel du vide* because it renders intelligible a concept that they knew but could not satisfactorily explain nor describe. Therefore, I disagree with Cabanac’s suggestion that emotions cannot exist outside of the language or culture that they originated within. Similar to translating a word across languages, it can be difficult to understand an emotion, or emotional expression, from another culture’s lexicon but that does not mean we do not have the capacity to understand it.

Following on from this, should we say that it is impossible for a modern individual to feel a historical emotion? For example, is it impossible for a modern individual to experience the emotion *acedia*? In Antiquity, *acedia* was generally considered to be relegated to monasteries and “seems in this early period to have been understood in at least two, possibly three ways”; these consisted of “a specific, perhaps mildly depressive illness brought on by an excess of solitude and physical deprivation... [a] malicious boredom... [a] clinically defined notion of severe melancholia”.¹⁷⁰ Frevert remarks how *acedia* was characterised by feelings of guilt and sin, thus concluding that it is a lost emotion as modern people would not ascribe guilt and sin to the emotional content of *acedia*.¹⁷¹ Is this the case, though? Can we be certain that this emotion is not felt by some people in the world, even if they do not have a convenient term for it?¹⁷² These questions, while worthwhile, are not encompassed by this project.

¹⁶⁹ Agar, *Language Shock*, 68.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Toohey, “Acedia in Late Classical Antiquity,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 15, no. 2 (1990): 346.

¹⁷¹ Frevert, *Emotions in History*, 33-36.

¹⁷² For example, the media outlet ‘The Conversation’ published an article during the COVID-19 lockdown which called for a revival of the word *acedia* in order to help legitimise and distinguish people’s feelings during the

There is another issue with Cabanac's model which must be mentioned. Cabanac fails to nuance the 'qualitative dimension' and his statement that different emotions arise from different stimuli; according to the article's statements, a certain stimulus evokes a certain emotional response – there is no variation. This conceptualisation of emotion responses cannot be adopted, for what, then, are we to say of a family's emotional response to the stimulus that is a family member's death? Perhaps some people would be sad at the death. Others may be both sad and relieved if the individual had been suffering a long while before their death. And yet others may be happy if they were expecting to receive a large inheritance. This all illustrates that context matters. It is not as simple as a certain stimulus causing a certain response; we must consider the relationships of the people, and objects, involved. I bring objects into this discussion on the basis that they also contribute to the emotional world. For example, if I break my favourite mug, I will be sad. My wife, however, will be happy since she dislikes the mug. This single stimulus would create two opposing emotional states due to differences in opinion on tasteful décor; context really is a necessity, then.

Working against this idea of an axiomatic experience of emotion is 'the circumplex model of affect'. This model takes into consideration how different people have varying emotional temperaments and that people recognise "emotions as ambiguous and overlapping experiences".¹⁷³ Furthermore, it takes issue with the predominant theory of basic emotions largely on the grounds that the basic emotions theory is not particularly helpful or useful "in the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry".¹⁷⁴ The circumplex model states that "[e]ach and every affective experience is the consequence of a linear combination" of the valence and arousal systems.¹⁷⁵ Valence is the equivalent of Cabanac's 'hedonic dimension', while arousal is the degree to which the emotional state is perceived.¹⁷⁶ Using the cooperation of valence and arousal, this theory is able to explore how similar physiological responses can occur from opposing emotions. Experiencing "the threat of physical harm, for example, can variously

pandemic lockdowns. See Jonathan L. Zecher, "Acedia: The Lost Name for the Emotion We're All Feeling Right Now," *The Conversation*, August 27, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/acedia-the-lost-name-for-the-emotion-were-all-feeling-right-now-144058>.

¹⁷³ Jonathan Posner, James A. Russell, and Bradley S. Peterson, "The Circumplex Model of Affect: An Integrative Approach to Affective Neuroscience, Cognitive Development, and Psychopathology," *Development and Psychopathology* 17 (2005): 719, 727-728.

¹⁷⁴ Posner, Russell, and Peterson, "The Circumplex Model," 715.

¹⁷⁵ Posner, Russell, and Peterson, "The Circumplex Model," 719.

¹⁷⁶ For a graph depicting valence and arousal, see Posner, Russell, and Peterson, "The Circumplex Model," 725.

produce a pleasurable excitement, as when on a roller coaster... or alternatively intense fear, as... when falling from a precipice".¹⁷⁷

Where this model shows its unsuitability for our purposes is when, as with Cabanac's model, we attempt to bring it into the realm of historical study, regardless of its scientific validity. How could we seek to measure the arousal and valence of historical figures, when we cannot use the tools of neuroscience on them? At best, we could deliberate and speculate on the varying levels of valence and arousal of their historical emotions, as we receive them, but this would involve too much of our personal understandings of an emotion's valence and arousal. It would, thus, be a historian's job to fill in the blanks, so to speak, and this practice would inherently be anachronistic.

The disciplines of neuroscience and psychology cannot, in the end, provide a workable model for a historical study of emotions. What, then, are the social sciences talking about when they refer to emotions? Just like the sciences, there is no unanimity to what comprises an emotion. We can hear this in Deploige's comments on the field of history. He comments how "[h]istorians often reproach themselves and their colleagues for a lack of accurate definitions and clear-cut concepts in their research" and yet "it turns out that the numerous current definitions of emotions differ as much from each other as do the numerous presuppositions and points of view from which these emotions can be studied".¹⁷⁸ In other words, there are multiple definitions and there is no general agreement amongst scholars in the humanities.

Because of this difficulty in finding an agreed definition, some scholars consider historical emotions to be "unfeasible to investigate" as they "are by definition fluid and unstable... and remain hidden inside the human body".¹⁷⁹ Others have "shied away from" the history of emotions on the grounds that "[e]motions have seemed tangential (if not fundamentally opposed) to the historical enterprise".¹⁸⁰ Despite such beliefs, the history of emotions has boomed in the last few decades, with explorations of various topics in manifold eras and regions.¹⁸¹ This has not created a unanimous understanding of what constitutes an

¹⁷⁷ Posner, Russell, and Peterson, "The Circumplex Model," 723.

¹⁷⁸ Deploige, "Studying Emotions," 5.

¹⁷⁹ Frevert, *Emotions in History*, 26.

¹⁸⁰ Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," 821.

¹⁸¹ For a thorough survey of the growth of the history of emotions, see the introduction of: Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.

emotion, however. Indeed, Rosenwein, a leading academic in the field, neglects to define what constitutes an emotion within the introductions of her two books on anger and love, respectively, instead offering a model by which to explore emotions.¹⁸² Many scholars have acted similarly to Rosenwein, choosing to skip the search for a definition so as to focus upon their research interests.¹⁸³ While I also may not be searching for a definition of emotion, I still need a model, so I will survey some of the workable models.

One such key conceptualisation of emotions has been that they are childish and naïve impulses. This notion is most associated with the sociologist Norbert Elias and his ‘civilising process’. To summarise, Elias states that societies start off as warrior societies but slowly and naturally become more complex and self-restrained.¹⁸⁴ In a warrior society, he claims, an individual (a man) “could openly indulge his inclinations... but he paid for this... with a greater chance of direct and open fear... He had less control of his passions; he was more controlled by them”.¹⁸⁵ As the warrior society slowly becomes more complex in its social institutions and the individual becomes more dependent on society as a whole, the individual becomes more self-restrained, less emotional.¹⁸⁶ To illustrate this, he imagines society as a road. The warrior society is a simple country road, where an individual must be ever vigilant to survive and thrive; the complex society is the various roads of a big city, where an individual is generally safe due to everyone self-regulating through their adherence to shared rules.¹⁸⁷ In his conclusion to this section, he states that self-regulation is extensive in the Western world, despite its variations.¹⁸⁸

Fortunately, as Rosenwein observes, there have been attempts to upset Elias’s grand narrative but, unfortunately, some of these attempts have only sought to push further back

¹⁸² Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Anger: The Conflicted History of an Emotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 1-8; Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Love: A History in Five Fantasies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 1-8. As exhibited in her previous work, Rosenwein uses ‘emotion’ as a convenient umbrella term, and is aware of the underlying discussions, debates, and manifold definitions; see Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 4.

¹⁸³ For example, see Paul Freedman, “Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Hans van Wees, “A Brief History of Tears: Gender Differentiation in Archaic Greece,” in *When Men were Men: Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Lin Foxhall and John Salmon (London: Routledge, 1998); Claire Langhamer, “Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain,” *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 2 (2012).

¹⁸⁴ Norbert Elias, *On Civilization, Power, and Knowledge: Selected Writings*, ed. Stephen Mennell and Johan Goudsblom (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 50-53.

¹⁸⁵ Elias, *On Civilization*, 59.

¹⁸⁶ Elias, *On Civilization*, 59.

¹⁸⁷ Elias, *On Civilization*, 52-53.

¹⁸⁸ Elias, *On Civilization*, 64.

the 'childhood' of humanity rather than remove the idea altogether.¹⁸⁹ This is frustrating for scholars of both the medieval and antiquity, for Elias's idea of the civilising process merely uses these periods as a convenient foil to showcase the 'development' and 'progress' of the modern world. In his work on disgust, Miller also notes how Elias presents a "caricatured picture of a vulgar uninhibited childlike medieval people" and Miller remarks how the case studies he explores reveal inconsistencies in Elias's theory.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Pollock is correct in her comments on how "[c]ultures construe and make use of emotions in a variety of dissimilar ways" and so "what historians should be examining is not so much the growing repression of 'uncivilized' emotions, as the different conventions in existence at different points in time."¹⁹¹ Unlike Elias, then, we should not try to locate a grand narrative of emotions through time but see the emotions in their contextual timeframes and study them there.

Moving away from grand narratives, we come across Reddy's focus on emotional utterances centred upon the speaker, what he calls 'emotives'. Reddy states that an emotion statement, such as 'I am angry', "is an effort by the speaker to offer an interpretation of something that is observable to no other actor".¹⁹² He goes on to say how the attempt to characterise one's emotional state has effects on the emotional state – by saying 'I am angry', one could become angrier, less so, or feel no different.¹⁹³ There can also be second-person emotives; by saying 'you are angry', the other person may become angrier or less so.¹⁹⁴ However, if an emotional utterance is said about an absent third party, there is no emotive to be found, as the person being described is not present and remains unaffected by the statement.¹⁹⁵ For Reddy, then, emotions are altered by the act of being verbalised and so are created through the verbalisation.

A big problem with this concept is that Reddy's focus on emotional utterances can lead nowhere, in a historical study. If an emotional utterance can make one sadder, less sad, or

¹⁸⁹ Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Thinking Historically about Medieval Emotions," *History Compass* 8, no. 8 (2010): 830.

¹⁹⁰ Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 151, 170. For further discussion on Elias's model alongside disgust, see Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, chapter 7, especially 170-178.

¹⁹¹ Linda A. Pollock, "Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 569.

¹⁹² William Reddy, "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 3 (1997): 331.

¹⁹³ William Reddy, "Sentimentalism and its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution," *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 116.

¹⁹⁴ Reddy, "Sentimentalism and its Erasure," 117.

¹⁹⁵ Reddy, "Sentimentalism and its Erasure," 117.

make no change, how is a historian to identify which change occurs if there is no context or extra information to work with? If the individual is lying, what can the historian do to know the individual is lying?

Perhaps this is why Reddy also brings up the idea of 'emotional regimes'. He describes this as "the set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime".¹⁹⁶ In order to access the historical emotives, you must go through the emotional regime. How exactly do you find the historical emotional regime, though? You could try exploring official documents for discussion on public behaviour or look to public documents detailing how people have broken the societal expectations. Indeed, Reddy, in his article exploring the French Revolution, discusses some of the ideas in that emotional regime; he details the rise and fall of sentimentalism and how this was part of the Jacobin regime's legislation.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, the Stearnses use public advice literature to locate a historical society's emotional standards, rather than the elite's discussions on theology and the social sciences.¹⁹⁸ So, there are some sources a historian can use to locate emotional regimes.

However, these sources which Reddy and the Stearnses explore are all modern. How are we to explore the emotional regime of medieval people? Medieval historians do not always have access to the sorts of prescriptive and descriptive documents that Reddy and the Stearnses are suggesting – diaries, autobiographies, letters, advice literature, or the like – to provide us with an emotional and cultural backdrop of historical peoples. So how should we proceed for a medieval study? Sif Rikhardsdottir, in her book *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, succeeds in her medieval study on emotions by not becoming preoccupied with the sources that Reddy and the Stearnses use. Indeed, drawing upon Reddy, she uses a literary variation of emotives and moves away from Reddy's political conceptualisation of 'emotional regime'. She instead utilises the base idea "of 'emotional regimes' to designate the reigning stance with

¹⁹⁶ William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 129. Also see Boddice, *A History of Feelings*, 17.

¹⁹⁷ Reddy, "Sentimentalism and its Erasure," 141.

¹⁹⁸ Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 249. For information on the Stearnses's methodology of studying historical emotions, see Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985). For a critique of their methodology, see Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions", 824-826.

respect to emotions and emotionality at any given time in history”.¹⁹⁹ Sif Rikhardsdottir does not take Reddy’s model as it is but remoulds it to suit her research.

So, Reddy’s models of emotives and emotional regimes can be used for the study of historical emotions in the modern period. By drawing from the emotional regime of the time and place, one can use the emotives uttered by people to discern some emotional content from that statement. As one pushes further back in time, though, the availability of sources for the emotive and emotional regime method reduces significantly; it can become difficult to use. Thus, scholars must adapt the concept to their needs if they wish to use it, such as including more elements as to what constitutes an emotive or emotional regime.

On that note, Rosenwein observes that many historians who follow Reddy’s line of thought go a step further than solely vocabulary, by choosing to bring in the physical gestures due to their stronger visibility in the sources.²⁰⁰ Indeed, the cultural historian, Ute Frevert, does this – Frevert takes Reddy’s idea of emotives but includes physical gestures and expressions. Like Reddy, she concludes that it is futile to distinguish “between the “emotion itself” and its expression”.²⁰¹ For Frevert, distinguishing between a preconscious state and the consequent expression is problematic for, she says, “it tends to overestimate the degree of consciousness that accompanies the expression of a feeling; on the other hand, it underestimates the constructive impact of that process”.²⁰² She concludes that “we should consider the expression as emotion *tout court* and not reduce it to the external part of something much greater that unfortunately does not “come before us” so that historians can never reach it”.²⁰³ *Tout court* is an expression that approximates to ‘simply’ – for Frevert, the expression of feeling is the same as the emotion. So, Frevert sees that there is a feeling, or preconscious state, and that this feeling is transformed via its expression, verbal or physical – this follows Reddy’s emotives. This expression, or emotive, she says, should be what historians consider an emotion and what they should be seeking, as the initial feeling cannot be located.

In all of this discussion of emotives and final expressions, we can see echoes of Hochschild’s work on feelings. Hochschild disagreed with the biological-leaning idea that

¹⁹⁹ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translation, Voices, Contexts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), 28n6. Also see Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, especially 124, 129, 323-324.

²⁰⁰ Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions,” 839.

²⁰¹ Ute Frevert, “The History of Emotions,” in *Handbook of Emotions*, 4th ed., ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeanette M. Haviland-Jones (New York: The Guildford Press, 2016), 57.

²⁰² Frevert, “The History of Emotions,” 56.

²⁰³ Frevert, “The History of Emotions,” 57. Italics in original.

emotions were “a sealed biological event” which was brought on by external stimuli; for her, “[t]he very act of managing emotion can be seen as part of what the emotion becomes”.²⁰⁴ For these scholars, then, what we are capable of studying in the history of emotions is only the final expression. As a result, Reddy, Frevert, and Hochschild consider a historical expression to be the same as a historical emotion.

There is a logic to these variations that is highly appealing and scholarly. It helps simplify the complexity of emotions to just an expression, or utterance, which can be located and explored. However, this rationale meanders rather close to treating historical people not as people; their initial feelings are being dismissed as irrelevant. While we cannot ever truly know what someone’s internal feelings were nor what ideas went through their mind, is it then acceptable to dismiss those preconscious states as unworthy of consideration?

We can see in Barclay’s work on the nineteenth-century male body that it is possible to retain the initial feeling without attempting to describe or find it. She remarks that “emotion is not the free-flowing expression of the soul, or a straightforward biological response to stimuli, but a cultural expression of feeling that is created, not prior to, but through performance”.²⁰⁵ So, Barclay understands an ‘emotion’ to consist of a feeling, a culture, and a performative element, believing that culture and society impact the construction of an ‘emotion’ and are a necessary element for scholars to consider, when attempting to understand a historical emotion. While Barclay agrees with Frevert that an emotion possesses both a feeling and an expression component, Barclay does not equate the initial feeling with the action and call that an emotion. Indeed, despite Barclay’s agreement with Frevert, that a preconscious state exists alongside the emotional expression, Barclay does not dismiss the preconscious state, as Frevert does, but simply accepts that textual “descriptions... cannot capture what is being felt by those described”.²⁰⁶ Even if the original feeling cannot be found, Barclay states that it still exists and is fundamentally different to the emotion and the expression.

Both Frevert and Barclay proceed with similar, yet differing, conceptualisations of what an emotion consists of. They are useful and workable for the study of historical emotions, but

²⁰⁴ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 32-33.

²⁰⁵ Katie Barclay, “Performing Emotion and Reading the Male Body in the Irish Court, c. 1800-1845,” *Journal of Social History* 51, no. 2 (2017): 296.

²⁰⁶ Barclay, “Performing Emotion,” 296.

what the historian must decide for themselves is the emphasis and weight that they give this preconscious state; is it something too inconsequential to regard as different to an emotion or is it a constituent part which is inaccessible? I believe it is the latter.

Responding to the models offered by the Stearnses and Reddy, Rosenwein offered her own model for the study of emotions, one that opposes the idea of a grand narrative in which people become more 'rational', and less 'emotional', over time. Rather than study the emotions themselves, Rosenwein seeks to "uncover systems of feeling" via, what she calls, 'emotional communities'.²⁰⁷ What this means is that Rosenwein is observing how communities – and individuals in those communities – assess, define, and understand their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, "and the modes of expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore".²⁰⁸ Furthermore, individuals do not exist in a single community; people move between communities and adjust their emotional behaviours according to the various communities they enter.²⁰⁹ For example, the emotional expressions I share with my wife (a community consisting of my wife and I) are not the same as the ones I share with my sisters (a community consisting of my two elder sisters and myself) nor the ones I share with my friends (a community consisting of my fellow scholars and myself). In order to locate the emotions of the time and communities that she is interested in, Rosenwein studies the texts that the community produced to locate which words were linked to the heart.²¹⁰ After locating her emotion words, she then "studie[s] the contexts in which their emotions arose, and [she] analyze[s] their sequences, as very often one emotion followed another in consistent patterns".²¹¹ For Rosenwein, then, in order to determine the emotional culture of an emotional community, one should study the texts produced by that community and locate the words associated with the heart; these heart-words, thus, correspond to the emotional culture of the emotional community.

In his interview with the creators of the big three methods for studying historical emotions, Plamper reiterates the concerns that some scholars have had with Rosenwein's method; he highlights that the issue lies with Rosenwein's use of "highly elaborate textual

²⁰⁷ Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," 842.

²⁰⁸ Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," 842.

²⁰⁹ Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," 842. Also see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Emotions: Some Historical Observations," *History of Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2021): 108.

²¹⁰ Rosenwein, "Emotions: Some Historical Observations," 109.

²¹¹ Rosenwein, "Emotions: Some Historical Observations," 109.

artifacts”, sources that some deem should not be used for an “emotions-historical reading” because of the text’s genre or figurative speech.²¹² In response, Rosenwein does not “deny that literature and texts have many agendas besides expressing emotions” remarking that “they may be didactic, idealizing, satirical, or demonizing”.²¹³ She states, however, that this is not so different to other forms of confessions of feelings and so concludes that we cannot find ““emotional communities” that are not, at the same time, “communities of emotional styles and/or norms””.²¹⁴ In other words, all expressions of emotion can be entangled with other possible ideas, or motives, whether the expression be spoken, gesticulated, or textual. Emotions “are always embedded in gestures and words, and they must always be expressed in some way” meaning that to differentiate between a ““real emotion” and an “emotion as expressed in a certain way”” is impossible.²¹⁵

We have looked at the major groupings for a model of emotion that is suitable for the study of the Old Norse sagas, that is, universalism and social constructivism. There has been a wide range of vocabulary and theories within those two groups and, having observed their various strengths and weaknesses, I will work with a simpler and more all-encompassing model. My model corresponds most to Barclay’s, in that I believe an emotion to be constructed from three elements: the feeling, the cultural expectations, and the expression (gestural, verbal, somatic, and such). I accept that I cannot ever reach the initial feeling of someone’s emotions; even if a diary were to consist of someone’s thoughts, the process of recording them would have brought in the other two elements of culture and expression, resulting in an emotion rather than a feeling. This is not a problem; it is simply something to accept and move on from. Additionally, I will be drawing from Rosenwein’s methods for my study but that will be further discussed in the ‘Methodology’ section. Furthermore, I will not be adopting a singular set of technical vocabulary from the various models we have seen. Instead, I will be utilising such terminology where appropriate so as to enhance my analysis.

This model of emotions may not be acceptable to everyone – some may want a more psycho-analytical basis to work from, for example – but that is not a bad thing. I want my

²¹² Jan Plamper et al., “The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns,” *History and Theory* 49, no. 2 (2010): 258. Also see Bonnie Effros, review of *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, by Barbara Rosenwein, *H-France Review* 8, no. 103 (2008).

²¹³ Plamper et al., “The History of Emotions,” 259.

²¹⁴ Plamper et al., “The History of Emotions,” 259.

²¹⁵ Plamper et al., “The History of Emotions,” 258-259.

model to “operat[e] with a certain modest methodological vitality rather than impressing itself upon a wiggling world like a snap-on grid of shape-setting interpretability”.²¹⁶ This way, I can utilise a variety of methodologies and approaches to locate and explore emotion, rather than rely on a single manner of looking at emotion.

Old Norse Emotions and Familial Relationships: The Field so far

Approaches to Old Norse Emotions

Considering that the field of the history of emotions is relatively new and has only burgeoned in the last few decades, it should come as little surprise that the study of emotions in the Old Norse sagas has also only recently appeared. In the scholarship on emotions, specifically, I would judge there to be two strands of thought on the study of Old Norse emotions, both of which are viable and worthwhile, and can be exemplified by a major work.

One of these strands opens studies of saga emotion with the sagas that are Old Norse translations of Continental literature and courtly romances. An example of such a work is *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, an Icelandic translation of the romance, *Tristan and Isolde*, which “diverges significantly from [the] French source”; the “long passages describing the psychology of [the author’s] characters’ love are often truncated or condensed in the Old Norse text”.²¹⁷ In comparing the Old Norse text with its Continental original, ideas of how the cultures differ in emotional expression, and understanding, can be explored, which can lead to new understandings of Old Norse emotions. This method also provides an investigative avenue by which to study the degree of Continental influence on the construction of saga narratives.

A major work I would highlight for this is Sif Rikhardsdóttir’s 2017 book, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, which takes the aforementioned approach as her springboard. For instance, she notes in her first chapter how the Old Norse version of the romance, *Yvain*, is altered to fit the Old Norse saga tradition via a reduction in emotional vocabulary.²¹⁸ Using this exploration and its findings, Sif Rikhardsdóttir goes on to explore the same concepts within native texts before ultimately returning to translated ones; it nevertheless began with a

²¹⁶ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 4.

²¹⁷ Heidi Støa, “The Lover and the Statue: Idolatrous Love in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 87, no. 1 (2015): 129.

²¹⁸ Sif Rikhardsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 34.

comparative study of translated and native texts. Through this research, Sif Rikhardsdottir seeks to explore “the role played by emotive scripts”; these scripts are what “stipulate the behavioural codes that frame the act of decoding characters’ actions, gestures and vocal declarations”.²¹⁹ In other words, she wants to examine the sagas’ scripts which allowed the audience to decode and thus understand the emotions being expressed by the saga characters. While Sif Rikhardsdottir’s work does draw from the idea of emotives, she is not studying the same concept as Reddy; “Reddy’s conception of emotives is... explicitly aimed at particular emotional expressions within texts... whereas the focus [in her work] is on emotive *literary* representation that frames both the emotional ideology of the text and its generic ‘horizon of feeling’”.²²⁰ She is, therefore, not seeking out historical emotions, which Reddy is trying to do, but rather reach the emotional behavioural codes that allowed the Old Norse audience to reach the emotional expressions present in the sagas. Indeed, she remarks that the “conventions of emotional depiction may reflect the emotional behaviour of the actual reading communities they served (and in many cases perhaps do so rather accurately), but they are nevertheless *literary* representations of emotional behaviour”.²²¹ I do not disagree with Sif Rikhardsdottir on this point for the texts are inherently literary and she acknowledges that the sagas’ portrayals of emotional expressions can be reflective of the culture in which they originated and can thus reflect the historical emotions of that culture. Nevertheless, we do differ in our foci; Sif Rikhardsdottir is concerned with showcasing the literary artistry of the sagas whereas I intend to illuminate the emotional culture behind the sagas’ literary representations of emotional behaviour.

This starting point of employing sagas that are translated versions of Continental tales in order to reach more general saga conclusions can be traced through the years back to the 1980s, when Kalinke published her work, *King Arthur, North-by-Northwest*, in which she explores how Arthurian romances were transmitted to the Old Norse peoples.²²² This exploration continued with Kalinke’s 1990 *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* and her

²¹⁹ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 23-24.

²²⁰ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 18. Italics in original.

²²¹ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 11. Italics in original.

²²² Marianne E. Kalinke, *King Arthur: North-by-Northwest: The Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1981).

2011 edited volume *The Arthur of the North*.²²³ Alongside Kalinke's later works but with more of a focus on the emotions, Larrington published the article "Learning to Feel" on the subject of *Parcevals saga*, exploring how this specific romance was altered and the repercussions of this on saga writing.²²⁴ Similarly, Sif Rikhardsdottir published *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse* and "Translating Emotion"; the first primarily deals with the reasons for the romances' modification while the latter discusses the Old Norse penchant for deducing a character's emotional interior.²²⁵

The second strand of saga emotion scholarship takes as its starting point the native saga corpuses, using them to draw conclusions about Old Norse emotions. A principal player in this strand is Miller with his works on various elements of Old Norse culture. In his 1993 work *Humiliation*, Miller explains that "[w]e are not without light... in recovering the emotional life of the sagas... There are many sagas, and after reading them with care one discerns that certain actions tend to elicit similar responses".²²⁶ Miller, then, proffers the idea of intertextual and intratextual reading to help comprehend emotional expressions that are ambiguous. Indeed, he questions the idea of cold, unfeeling characters, as he discusses the characters of Hallgerðr, from *Brennu-Njáls saga*, who laughs about the death of her husband to his killer, and Guðrún, from *Laxdæla saga*, who smiles at the men who slew her husband.²²⁷ The scene with Guðrún, Miller explains, reveals to us the variety of meanings that can be associated with a smile; "[the men] expected signs of grief, tears and wailing, not signs of casual cordiality" but Miller notes that, intertextually, smiles "are markers more often of hostility than of amiability".²²⁸ Therefore, this scene, in the context of other sagas, informs the reader how smiles could be understood to be amicable, hence the men's confusion, but that they also were signs of future threat.

In a similar vein to Miller, Bandlien, in his 2005 book *Strategies of Passion*, uses sagas alongside other source material to explore the intersection of love, marriage, consent, and

²²³ Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Marianne E. Kalinke, ed., *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus' Realms* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011).

²²⁴ Larrington, "Learning to Feel."

²²⁵ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012); Sif Rikhardsdottir, "Translating Emotion: Vocalisation and Embodiment in Yvain and Ívens Saga," in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, ed. Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

²²⁶ Miller, *Humiliation*, 114.

²²⁷ Miller, *Humiliation*, 96. Also see *Nj*, 50-51; *Laxd*, 168-169.

²²⁸ Miller, *Humiliation*, 96.

society.²²⁹ However, he goes further than that, painting a timeline of how this intersection changed with time and new ideas. As will soon become abundantly clear in my discussion, I utilise this idea of intra- and intertextual reading often in my investigations into love in the family.

Before we move into surveying what scholarship of Old Norse emotions is available, I would like to quickly state that both of these approaches to understanding emotions are incredibly useful and contribute to this field in a major way. Although this work draws more upon the latter approach, it would not exist if not for the former one as well; both have been instrumental in informing this project.

Studies in Old Norse Emotions

A chief reason for this project's existence is the field of Old Norse love; little has been discussed on the topic of familial love. Indeed, I have already mentioned a few of them but there is large body of emotions scholarship dedicated to romantic love in the sagas. In his 2001 book, *Chaos and Love*, Bredsdorff explores how erotic and sexual urges drives the conflicts and narratives of the sagas.²³⁰ Coming three years after Bandlien's *Strategies of Passion*, the edited volume *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland* was published in honour of Kalinke, in 2008.²³¹ Within it are, unsurprisingly, chapters dedicated to the topic of depictions of romantic love in the sagas. In his study of the marriage between Gunnarr and Hallgerðr in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Cook reaches the conclusion that Hallgerðr loved Gunnarr not for himself but for the heroic ideal that he once evoked.²³² Theodore Andersson, meanwhile, explores the differing depictions of men and women in verse and poetry, before concluding that "the chief symptom of love in both legend and saga is melancholy".²³³ Similar

²²⁹ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*.

²³⁰ Thomas Bredsdorff, *Chaos and Love: The Philosophy of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, trans. John Tucker (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001).

²³¹ Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin, ed., *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke* (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008).

²³² Cook, "Gunnarr and Hallgerðr," 24.

²³³ Theodore M. Andersson, "The Native Romance of Gunnlaugr and Helga the Fair," in *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, ed. Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008), 59.

in negativity, Margrét Eggertsdóttir studies the masculine pursuit of love and how the sagas suggest that “men who let themselves be controlled by love are viewed negatively”.²³⁴

Moving away from a specific focus on love, there are a variety of shorter works on different emotions, showing the blooming possibilities of a history of emotions for medieval Iceland. There is Le Goff’s work on laughter in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, for example, in which he explores how laughter was connected to death and fate, concluding that it served as “lucid and brave pessimism” for the hero destined to die.²³⁵ There has been a discussion on whether a character’s red-facedness originated from his holy fervour or from his father denying him a masculine role, and thus shaming him.²³⁶ Looking at external expressions of emotion, there is Ai’s work, which I have previously referenced, on the smile and how that facial expression held multiple meanings.²³⁷ Tackling the emotion of empathy, Jakobsson explores how, in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, the empathy, as well as the audience’s knowledge and understanding of empathy, can be inferred from the text.²³⁸ Mills explores the various reasons behind a man’s weeping and how this may interact with the idea of masculine honour.²³⁹ In more recent years, however, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir has been producing various articles on the subject of Old Norse emotions, stemming from her doctoral thesis. For example, in her 2018 work, she examines the Old Norse treatise *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*, or “on the nature of man and his blood”, illustrating how humoral theory existed in medieval Iceland, whilst also presenting her conclusion that the second section of this text was a translation of the popular Latin text, *Epistula Vindiciani*.²⁴⁰ As a result, it is possible to see saga expressions of emotion as resulting from certain humoral balances.²⁴¹ In her work of the following year, through surveying both

²³⁴ Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “The Anomalous Pursuit of Love in *Kormaks saga*,” trans. Philip Roughton, in *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, ed. Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008), 97.

²³⁵ Jacques Le Goff, “Laughter in *Brennu-Njáls saga*,” trans. Paul Andrews, in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. Gísli Pálsson (Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992), 164.

²³⁶ Thomas D. Hill, “Guðlaugr Snorrason: The Red Faced Saint and the Refusal of Violence,” *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 2 (1995); William Sayers, “The Honor of Guðlaugr Snorrason and Einarr Þambarskelfir: A Reply,” *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 4 (1995); Thomas D. Hill, “The Red Faced Saint, Again,” *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 4 (1995).

²³⁷ Ai, “The Mirthless Content,” 102-104.

²³⁸ Ármann Jakobsson, “*Egils saga* and Empathy,” 13-16.

²³⁹ Kristen Mills, “Grief, Gender, and Genre: Male Weeping in Snorri’s Account of Baldr’s Death, Kings’ Sagas, and *Gesta Danorum*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113, no. 4 (2014): 495.

²⁴⁰ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, “Humoral Theory in the Medieval North.” Here, I have drawn upon her translation for *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*.

²⁴¹ For how a man’s tar-like blood displayed his melancholic mental state, which prompted him to kill, see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, “Humoral Theory in the Medieval North,” 50.

skaldic poetry and two prominent sagas, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir concludes that the Old Norse understood emotion and cognition to be, predominantly, located in the chest and not in the head, as was mentioned earlier.²⁴²

Having surveyed some of the available literature on medieval Icelandic emotions, I will also summarise some of the key ideas from kinship studies, for they have also impacted my work here.

Familial Relationships

Kinship in medieval Iceland has been a point of great interest for scholars over the years, for there is much discussion of kinship and their obligations within the sagas and laws. In order for me to discuss the emotional relationships of intergenerational kin, I must discuss some of the studies of those who came before me, as they set the many foundational layers that allow me to do this work.

Over a century ago, in 1913, Phillpotts investigated the structure of kindred in medieval Iceland as part of a larger exploration of kindred in the medieval period. She remarked upon the disintegration of kinship as the Icelanders emigrated from Norway and settled in Iceland, a place in which they had no major kinship ties to draw upon. She states that “[e]ven if the original emigrants had been accustomed in Norway to the support of such distant relatives, their descendants in Iceland would have grown used to doing without them” in that first century of settlement.²⁴³ By the thirteenth century, she notes that “[t]he disintegration of the kindred seems even more complete” than it was in the previous centuries.²⁴⁴ Rather than kinship, Phillpotts sees the relationship between *goði* and *þing-maðr* as “the central fact in the Icelandic constitution”; with an absence of kinship ties, this relationship was of chief importance.²⁴⁵ According to Phillpotts, then, kinship had all but disappeared in the emigration to Iceland, leaving a vacuum that was summarily filled by the bonds between a *goði* and his *þing-menn*.

Kinship studies in medieval Iceland then went into a fallow period, until the late twentieth century. At this time, Hastrup employed an anthropological approach, and created

²⁴² Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, “The Head, The Heart, and the Breast,” 56-57.

²⁴³ Bertha Surtees Phillpotts, *Kindred and Clan in the Middle Ages and After: A Study in the Sociology of the Teutonic Races* (Cambridge: The University Press 1913), 37.

²⁴⁴ Phillpotts, *Kindred and Clan*, 34.

²⁴⁵ Phillpotts, *Kindred and Clan*, 37.

a composite study on medieval Icelandic kinship through a comparison of the saga literature and the law codes. Rather than attempting to classify the kinship of medieval Iceland, Hastrup seeks to “demonstrate how both the terminology and the models upon which medieval Icelandic kinship were based were inherently ambiguous”.²⁴⁶ Indeed, she raises the Old Norse term *ætt*, describing it as a kin group “basic to the conceptualization of kinship in medieval Iceland” and yet “[t]he variation in possible interpretations indicates some degree of ambiguity inherent in the term”.²⁴⁷ Despite the inherent ambiguity of kinship in medieval Iceland, Hastrup succeeds in locating some general patterns of kinship structure; she notes that “[t]he analysis of the models of kinship showed a coexistence of two basic principles, a lateral and a lineal one” and both were “socially significant dimensions of the kinship universe”.²⁴⁸ In other words, kinship was drawn from those relatives of one’s generation (possibly also including friends and similar relationships) as well as those relatives from previous and subsequent generations; both were of great importance, though. Nevertheless, these two axes of kinship “provide a model for conceiving of ‘my kin group’ as separated from the otherwise amorphous social space”.²⁴⁹ While Hastrup does not offer an easy classification system of what kinship consisted of for medieval Icelanders, she succeeds in her goal of showing the ambiguity of their idea of kinship whilst also giving us a general sense of what kinship consisted of within medieval Iceland.

Similar to Phillipotts’s line of thought, Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, in his 2017 book *Viking Friendship*, sees kinship in medieval Iceland as less significant to an individual in comparison to friendship, by prioritising power and status in his research. Drawing from the law codes, he regards kinship as encompassing one’s parents, children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and cousins, with it occasionally including a more distant relation if they were a secular leader.²⁵⁰ Utilising Hastrup’s bilateral structure of kinship, in which “a person could trace his kin through both the male and female lines”, Jón Víðar Sigurðsson concludes that “[i]n a bilateral kinship system, it is difficult for

²⁴⁶ Kirsten Hastrup, *Island of Anthropology: Studies in Past and Present Iceland* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1990), 44.

²⁴⁷ Hastrup, *Island of Anthropology*, 45.

²⁴⁸ Hastrup, *Island of Anthropology*, 57; Kirsten Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 102.

²⁴⁹ Hastrup, *Culture and History*, 102

²⁵⁰ Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900-1300* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 104.

individuals to maintain equally close contact with all their relatives”.²⁵¹ He, thus, continues his analysis into the social bonds of kinship and friendship, remarking how “[i]n Iceland, one had to make choices, and what determined one’s choice was a kinsman’s power. It was more important to nurture a relationship with a secular leader, even though he was a distant relation, than with a brother”.²⁵² His concluding thoughts on the matter of kinship and friendship is that “[t]here was no strong notion that kinsmen should unite in conflicts. Blood was not a guarantee of support. The multi-faceted overlapping of family relations saw to this. Friendship was generally of greater significance”.²⁵³ Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, then, understands kinship to be marked by blood relations, within a certain degree, but that these relations were inferior to friendship, for friendship could escape the possible conflicts of interest that overlapping kinship could cause and, consequently, were more worthwhile.

Seeking to illustrate the transience and mutability of kinship, Olley, in her 2022 work *Kinship in Old Norse Myth and Legend*, proposes “[a] focus on kinship as narrative, arising in the telling of the story and sustained by tension while also striving for closure, allow[ing] an inclusive approach” rather than trying to force such relationships to conform to categorical boxes.²⁵⁴ Indeed, she understands medieval Icelandic kinship to be “biosocial, transpersonal and, above all, voluntary rather than predetermined... a managed construction rather than a pre-social fact”.²⁵⁵ In other words, kinship was not some abstract construction that the medieval Icelanders all knew and adhered to; it was a fluid concept that people chose to partake in with others. It therefore makes sense how “[t]he deeds of one person have implications for all their kin because they lead interdependent lives”.²⁵⁶ Kin choose to recognise each other as kin and so their lives become somewhat entangled. Similar to Hastrup’s conclusions on the variability of who was deemed ‘kin’, Olley states that “it is possible to talk of kinship existing in Old Norse society, albeit not in the categorical form”; we must view kinship as a lived experience rather than a social category.²⁵⁷

I see great merit in Olley’s perspective on how kinship was understood in medieval Iceland. She, as well as Hastrup, views kinship more as a series of relationships with others,

²⁵¹ Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 104-105. Also see Hastrup, *Island of Anthropology*, 50-58.

²⁵² Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 105.

²⁵³ Jón Víðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 115.

²⁵⁴ Katherine Marie Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse Myth and Legend* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2022), 3.

²⁵⁵ Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse*, 214.

²⁵⁶ Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse*, 26.

²⁵⁷ Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse*, 214.

rather than an unambiguous social category in which individuals inherently knew and followed. Thus, their approaches to kinship allow for adaptability. Indeed, as the construction of this project revolves around forms of kinship, I will be taking a stance similar to that of Olley and Hastrup, in that I will not be rigid in my understanding of kinship. Rather, I subsume multiple types of kin-based relationships under a single term, for I see similarities in their depictions of emotions.

To be clear, what I mean by this is that I will be using four dyadic terms, drawn from medieval Iceland, in my research to explore intergenerational relationships within the family. These terms are *mæðgur* (mother and daughter), *feðgar* (father and son), *feðgin* (father and daughter), and *mæðgin* (mother and son).²⁵⁸ *Feðgin* typically translates to ‘parents’, in the Old Norse texts, with one possible use in the parent-child manner that I am using.²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, I am using it as a term for ‘father and daughter’ so as to mirror the other three terms; the term also exists in modern Icelandic in the parent-child sense, so is thus applicable on that basis, too. Under these four terms, however, I also include the other intergenerational relationships that are similar. For example, for this project, *mæðgur* is an umbrella term for mothers and daughters, grandmothers and granddaughters, aunts and nieces, foster-mothers and foster-daughters, as well as mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

Why do I subsume these various relationships under a single umbrella term? Simply put, it is because, as we have already seen with Hastrup and Olley, kinship is somewhat amorphous. Indeed, Hastrup notes how “[i]n a few cases the legal aspect of foster ‘kinship’ was identical with real kinship... Certainly this must have seemed natural, considering the strong emotional bonds that often resulted from fostering”.²⁶⁰ As Sahlins puts it, “[t]he constructed modes of kinship are like those predicated on birth... love and nurture, giving food or partaking in it together, working together... as well as adoption and marriage, are so many grounds of kinship”.²⁶¹ If a fosterage relationship has the same dynamics and experiences as a biological relationship, then only biology separates them, and biology is of little importance in discussing these relationships. Furthermore, the multiple relationships I subsume under

²⁵⁸ For how studies of parent-child relationships are a necessary point by which to study kinship, see Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse*, 3.

²⁵⁹ This possible use appears in *Jónsbók*, in the section on taxation. See *Jb*, 28-29.

²⁶⁰ Hastrup, *Culture and History*, 99.

²⁶¹ Marshall Sahlins, “What Kinship is (Part One),” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 1 (2011): 14.

those four terms all share the same respective intergenerational variations in gender and age, and thus do not deviate from the core aspect of the four umbrella terms. Therefore, I use these four terms to guide my research in exploring how love was understood to exist within intergenerational relationships in the family.

Proto-Methodology

Although this project developed in fascinating and astonishing ways, into the current study on love within the Old Norse family, it began quite differently, as an idea to catalogue and compare the usage of love terminology in the sagas, the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur* specifically, so as to explore the Old Norse emotional culture of love. I have chosen to discuss it here, for this early methodology informed the one that this thesis now uses.

So as to achieve this catalogue of the usage of love terminology, this early method demanded a close reading of the aforementioned saga corpuses for any scenes involving love terms. Whenever one of these scenes was located, the appropriate information was extracted from the saga and compiled into a digital database. This information included the saga the word was found in, the specific love term, the relationship between those involved, which member of the relationship was expressing the love, and the context in which the love was expressed. The result of this was a database of saga scenes consisting primarily of romantic love and familial love; I will expand upon this shortly. Originally, the next step would have been to use the data to search for any major correlations and patterns in the expressions of love.

During this process, however, it soon became evident that relying solely on scenes with love terms could restrict an exploration of the Old Norse culture of love, for two prominent reasons. First, there were multiple occasions in which I was confronted with a sequence of events that possessed strong similarities to scenes with love terms, yet the sequence in question contained no love terms. Second, if I were to focus solely upon cataloguing love terms and seeking patterns, I would struggle to illustrate the emotional culture of medieval Iceland and its inhabitants. Gareth Lloyd Evans, in his *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*, came to a similar conclusion. He noted how Old Norse words that could correspond to Modern English's 'masculinity' appeared to help in uncovering the "model of Old Norse masculinity" but actually revealed "little about the qualitative content of saga

masculinity” – they instead “function as bywords, the signification of which would have been understood by the audiences for which the sagas were written”.²⁶²

As a result, I felt that my method by which to explore the Old Norse emotional culture was insufficient and so I adapted my project. I put into my database any scenes which were reminiscent of those ones with love terms, for explicit statements of emotion are not the single method by which emotions could be expressed by saga characters. Furthermore, I re-examined my database and looked to the scholarship on Old Norse love – I noted that there was yet work to be done on familial love in medieval Iceland and that my database had many entries that could help illuminate such a topic. I thus concluded that my study could benefit the field, as well as other sub-disciplines of Old Norse studies, by instead exploring love in the family through the relationships between intergenerational family members.

Nevertheless, I had to make an additional change to my project as I explored love terminology in the sagas. As the database grew, I decided to exclude the sagas’ poetry, despite the fact that poems are regularly regarded as providing “direct access to the personal voice in the text... offer[ing] insights into characters’ emotive interiorities” and have thus served as a cornerstone of locating emotional expression in the sagas.²⁶³ My reasoning for this decision was twofold. The foremost reason was that this project simply cannot explore both the prose and the poetry in the time available; in other words, such a scope would have been too large. The second reason emerges from the first, in that I had to reduce the scope so as to render this project more viable. I could have focused on the prose or the poetry and I chose the prose, the basis for which was in moving away from a poem-centric study. Poetry has served as an important medium by which to locate emotions in the sagas and so much work has already been achieved. For example, *Sonatorrek*, the renowned poem that Egill composes following the death of his sons has received considerable scholarly attention.²⁶⁴ What has not received as much attention, however, is Egill’s actions within the prose around the poem and how they

²⁶² Gareth Lloyd Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 23-24.

²⁶³ Sif Rikhardsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 81.

²⁶⁴ See, for example, Joseph Harris, “Sacrifice and Guilt in *Sonatorrek*,” in *Studien zum Altgermanischen*, ed. Heiko Uecker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, “Religious Ideas in *Sonatorrek*,” *Saga-Book* 25 (1998-2001); Bjarne Markussen, “Poetic Justice: Law and Elegy in Egil Skallagrímsson’s *Sonatorrek*,” *Law and Literature* 28, no. 2 (2016); Sif Rikhardsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, ch. 3; Pete Sandberg, “*Sonatorrek*. Egil Skallagrímsson’s Critique of Death,” *Saga-Book* 43 (2019); Karl G. Johansson, “The Selfish Skald”; William Sayers, “Guilt, Grief, Grievance, and the Encrypted Name in Egil Skallagrímsson’s *Sonatorrek*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 92, no. 2 (2020).

follow a pattern recognisable in other sagas. Indeed, while poetry is significant, this does not consequently prevent prose from also being important. Thus, I wanted to maintain, as others have done, that the saga prose remains worthwhile in locating Old Norse cultural expressions of emotion.

The Love Words and The Results of the Database

In the creation of this database, under the umbrella term ‘love’, I chose four Old Norse love terms to seek and record; these were *ást*, *elska*, *elskr*, and *unna*. *Ást* is a noun that translates as ‘love’ and is often used as a part of compound words.²⁶⁵ *Elska* can be either a verb or a noun, translating as ‘to love’ or ‘love’ respectively.²⁶⁶ *Elskr [at]* is an adjective that can translate as ‘to be fond of’ or ‘to be loving towards’.²⁶⁷ The final love word is *unna*, a verb that translates as ‘to love’.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, these are not all of the Old Norse words, or expressions, that can correspond to love; in her work on exploring emotion words in *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, for example, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir includes *kærr*, or ‘dear, beloved’, and its associated compound words, along with *leggja hug á*, or ‘to lay to heart, to take interest in, to be in love with’.²⁶⁹ The reason for selecting the four love terms chosen was practical in nature; I chose them because they were direct in illustrating love being present in the relationship and I did not include other applicable terms due to the time constraints of this project.

The result of my exploration for love terminology in the sagas is a database with many entries on the sagas’ use of love terms, along with even more entries that possess no love terms. So as to demonstrate the various frequencies of, specifically, the terms’ usage, as well as make some comments on the contexts in which the terms were used, I will draw upon the *Íslendingasögur* entries, which amount to over 200 entries in my database.

The broadest statement to make regards the distribution of the relationships that are stated to have love within them. In grouping the four love terms together, it becomes possible

²⁶⁵ CVD, 46.

²⁶⁶ CVD, 127.

²⁶⁷ CVD, 127.

²⁶⁸ CVD, 654-655.

²⁶⁹ Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, “The Language of Feeling in *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga*: Construction of an Emotional Lexis,” *Scripta Islandica* 71 (2020): 19, 31. Also see CVD, 290-291, 368.

to see that approximately 45% of the love terms are used for romantic purposes, in that the word is being used in the context of married couples and lovers. Similar in frequency to romantic love is that of kinship love, in that this usage also appears in about 45% of my database's entries. By kinship love, I am referring to those four relationships that are the subject of this project, as well as those of siblings, foster-siblings, cousins, sworn-siblings, and the like. If we exclusively refer to the four relationships of this project, however, that number drops to roughly 30% of the database. The remaining 10% of the love terms consist of miscellaneous entries that do not neatly map onto romantic or kinship.

Despite these variant terms for what modern English deems as simply 'love', the *Íslendingasögur* showed variation in their usage within relationships, suggesting that these Old Norse words possess differing connotations, evoking different ideas with the different words. For the sake of clarity, I will compare and discuss two relationships through the exploration of the individual love terms. They are the categories of 'romantic' and 'familial'; by romantic, I am considering those relationships between married couples as well as lovers (45% of the database); by familial, I am referring to those four relationships that are the subject of this project (30% of the database). I do not discuss the other forms here since romantic and familial were the most plentiful.

Indeed, while I tracked the words' usage, I detected that *unna* was the most common love term used throughout the database, occurring in over half of the total entries. Furthermore, it possesses a roughly equal distribution between romantic love and familial love. In terms of overall trends in familial love, *unna* was predominantly used in expressing the older of the pair's love for the younger, with a number of those expressions of love being centred around the younger characters' personalities. Additionally, half of those familial entries belong to *feðgar* relationships alone, with the main depiction of *feðgar* love being how the younger of the men was the most loved of all the older one's children. While *feðgin* and *mæðgin* pairings are notably present, their trends cannot match the scale of that of *feðgar* pairs and the general trends of *unna*. Nevertheless, in both *feðgin* and *mæðgin* relationships, we are told that, in many cases, there was a great level of love present between those involved. *Mæðgur* relationships, on the other hand, are barely present in terms of lexical entries. Despite that, a trend that is visible is the connection between love and companionship.

Following *unna* in frequency was *ást*, making up roughly 40% of the whole database. The romantic form of *ást* appears twice as much as familial *ást*. Similar to *unna*, a majority of the familial entries depict an older character's love for a younger one, and, again, half of the *ást* uses are dedicated to *feðgar* pairings. The main trend visible in *feðgar* expressions of *ást* is a low level of love for the younger man, most of which are connected to a son who refuses to do work. The remaining three relationships did not possess enough entries to observe a pattern. However, two general trends of familial love were noticeable; one was how love was connected to one's capabilities and the other was that almost a third of *ást* entries were used to discuss low levels of love.

In comparison to *unna* and *ást*, *elskr* and both forms of *elska* are barely present in my database. On the occasions they were used, their usage was typically dedicated to romantic relationships, so much so that locating a trend for their familial use is not currently possible. This relative scarcity of Old Norse *elska*, however, is especially interesting when we consider that modern Icelandic, and similar descendant languages from Old Norse, vastly favour(s) the verb *elska* over the verb *unna*.

It thus appears that these four love terms were favoured for romantic usage, but not by much. The spread of these love terms indicates that there is a strong concept of familial love in the *Íslendingasögur*, which itself suggests that medieval Icelanders had a keen understanding of familial love.

Methodology

As was earlier explained, I will be using four dyadic relationships for my project, each with a chapter devoted to its study. This schema aligns with Rosenwein's idea of emotional communities; these are communities in which its members define, comprehend, tolerate, and express a certain range of emotions. Moreover, these communities can exist between two people as easily as they can exist for a large group, and an individual is not restricted to a single emotional community; people can pass between multiple emotional communities. Indeed, I will be viewing these dyadic relationships as emotional communities, in that these kinship pairs may express love to one another in certain ways that are not necessarily the same as expressions of love in other relationships.

In order to locate those expressions of love, I begin with a lexical study approach, searching across the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur* for the use of love words – *ást*, *elska*, *elskr*, and *unna* – with regard to the respective emotional community that I am investigating. Having found that love terminology, I then use the context of the scene in which the love term appears to search for similar contexts, which may or may not have love terms themselves. This is achieved through intertextual and intratextual reading. As a result of this, I can then speak of how these expressions of love existed in medieval Iceland, as the sagas, and the characters within, serve as conduits by which the contemporary emotional culture can be rendered accessible.

Using this approach, not only am I able to see how love was expressed in these relationships but I can demonstrate the pattern and consistency of such expressions of love. Because expressions of love are recurrent in the sagas, there is strong evidence that the medieval Icelanders understood that love could be expressed in such a way in their own relationships.

Discussion Overview

In ‘Chapter 1: Love in *Mæðgur* Relationships’, I dig into the saga depictions of *mæðgur* pairs, and their interactions, in order to illustrate the possibilities of a study based on emotions. Using my methodology, I highlight three areas in which conceptualisations of *mæðgur* love can be observed within the sagas. The first motif of love I discuss is ‘protection’, in that the pair of women are shown to express their love for one another in seeking to protect their wellbeing. This manifests in a physical manner as well as a mental and emotional one. The second theme of love I explore is that of contact. By this, I mean that *mæðgur* women who love one another show a strong desire to maintain contact after they have been separated for some reason. This contact appears as a desire for news and information but also through living in close proximity. In exploring the third expression of love, I change tack and instead locate the consequences of low levels of love; in looking at what resulted from a lower level of love, we can therefore infer what a higher level of love brought about. As a result, the third section investigates how maternal love and marital prospects were connected; a loving mother would aid a daughter in getting a suitably great husband.

‘Chapter 2: Love in *Feðgar* Relationships’ moves from the bond between women and does the same exploration with the male equivalent. In discerning how fathers and sons

showed their love for one another, I locate two manners by which their love was rendered visible. Firstly, I study what I call the ‘bed of grief’ and how men interacted with it. This term describes the bed in which men – typically fathers – retreat to after the death of their beloved sons. Indeed, the sagas repeatedly describe how fathers would die soon after their sons, following them to the grave. Following that, I discuss how *feðgar* pairs exist within a structure of reciprocal obligation. Excavating a single source in depth, I note how the love between a father and son could grow, or wane, depending on the success of reciprocal acts. In other words, as the love between them grew, so did the amount of reciprocation between them.

My ‘Chapter 3: Love in *Feðgin* Relationships’ shifts from exploring multiple themes to just one. A large and understudied subject with regard to emotions, I examine the bridal negotiations that occur between fathers and daughters. Before getting into the case studies, I summarise the betrothal and marriage situation of medieval Iceland, so as to provide a foundation from which I can study the relationships. While common in this marital context, *feðgin* pairs are exceedingly brief in detail. Therefore, I read the sagas intertextually, as well as intratextually, so as to help clarify the scenarios in which I find these relationships. As a result, I compare the fathers’ and daughters’ respective views on the betrothal process, allowing me to see how fathers may be understood to be loving, as well as self-serving, in their choice of son-in-law, and how daughters felt unloved through their father’s choices.

Finally, ‘Chapter 4: Love in *Mæðgin* Relationships’ explores how mothers and sons showed their love for one another. This chapter comprises of two themes, each with its own case study. As done before, I delve into the various contexts of these scenes in order to illustrate the manners in which these *mæðgin* expressions of love are displayed. My first segment is about protection, how a mother can indirectly protect her son by providing him with what he needs to survive, after her husband refuses to provide anything. The topic that concludes my discussions on the four dyadic relationships of this thesis is how love can appear as trust between those in a *mæðgin* pairing. This section starts with an ambiguous statement of love, which requires a contextualisation of magic and several other saga scenes; finding this context, however, allows me to gain a deeper understanding as to why love and trust are linked in this obscure scenario.

Chapter 1: Love in *Mæðgur* Relationships

This first chapter will explore familial love in the Old Norse sagas through the *mæðgur* relationship. *Mæðgur* translates to ‘mother and daughter’.²⁷⁰ As stated earlier in the subsection titled ‘Familial Relationships’, I shall be using the word *mæðgur* as an umbrella term consisting of relationships between mothers and daughters, as well as similar inter-generational relationships. As was stated in that subsection, and as will become clear throughout this chapter, these comparable relationships had some fundamental similarities in the manner in which their love was depicted and consequently understood in medieval Iceland.

Thus far, there has been an increasing body of scholarly research into women and their lives in the Old Norse world. This growing body of academic literature has allowed us to gain considerable insight into the lives of Old Norse women and has laid the foundations that have allowed this chapter to be written.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a boom in scholarship on women in medieval Iceland. In 1986, Clover investigated the topic of maiden warriors and how they functioned as male figures. Drawing from the *fornaldarsögur*, she takes an anthropological approach rather than a psychoanalytical one, observing how women in the tales took on the role of a man to fill breaches in the male line.²⁷¹ Continuing this idea of women participating in masculinity, in 1993 Clover explores the ideas of masculinity and femininity in the Old Norse sources, arriving at the conclusion that these categories were so movable as to indicate “a one-sex, one-gender model”.²⁷² Instead of imagining gender as a binary of male and female, Clover utilises the pre-eighteenth-century idea that the female body is the inverse of the male to suggest that we consider the Old Norse model for the sexes “more as a gender continuum” in which the masculine side of the continuum is the ideal.²⁷³ Everyone was measured against that ideal and consequently placed on that spectrum of ‘maleness’.

²⁷⁰ CVD, 442.

²⁷¹ Carol J. Clover, “Maiden Warriors and Other Sons,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85, no. 1 (1986).

²⁷² Carol J. Clover, “Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe,” *Speculum* 68, no. 2 (1993): 386.

²⁷³ Clover, “Regardless of Sex,” 377. Cf. Oren Falk, “Beardless Wonders: ‘Gaman vas Söxu’ (The Sex Was Great),” in *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, ed. Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

Judith Jesch's *Women in the Viking Age* appeared in 1991, covering various aspects of women's lives in medieval Scandinavia. Approaching the subject from a range of interdisciplinary avenues, including archaeology, art, runestones, and literature, Jesch locates the women and aspects of their lives in this period of history, despite the "predominantly masculine discourse throughout most of the Viking Age" and its cultural products.²⁷⁴ Writing prolifically on the subject of women throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Jochens published her *Women in Old Norse Society* in 1995. Basing her study upon the law codes and three saga genres (*Íslendingasögur*, *konungasögur*, or 'kings's sagas', and the *samtíðarsögur*), Jochens explores different aspects of a woman's life, ranging from her marriage to her times of leisure to her daily work.²⁷⁵ In 1996, she followed up with *Old Norse Images of Women*, in which she looks at the roles in which Old Norse women were portrayed; some of these were mythical in nature while others were more grounded in the social fabric of Old Norse culture.²⁷⁶ Such foundational works as these prompted further investigations into women, and gender, in the Old Norse world.²⁷⁷

In the last decade, these scholars and works have been joined by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, and her two works on women – *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power*, and *Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World* – both of which cover various aspects of Old Norse womanhood.²⁷⁸ *Women in Old Norse Literature* explores the various literary roles available to women and how those roles give rise to questions of female power, instead of the many studies which primarily focused upon the woman in the role of inciter. In *Valkyrie*, continuing her study of female roles in depictions of women, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir explores these elements and their intersection with the different life stages of a woman.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991), 205-206.

²⁷⁵ Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁷⁶ Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

²⁷⁷ Also see Else Mundal, "Women and Old Norse Narrative," in *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative: The European Tradition*, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994); Stephen Grundy, "The Viking's Mother: Relations Between Mothers and their Grown Sons in Icelandic Sagas," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Routledge, 1996); Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo, "The Giantess as Foster-Mother in Old Norse Literature," *Scandinavian Studies* 78, no. 1 (2006); Jeffrey Turco, "Gender, Violence, and the "Enigma" of Gísla saga," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 3 (2016).

²⁷⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*.

²⁷⁹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*.

Research specifically focusing upon *mæðgur* relationships, however, has not grown as much as general womanhood has. In the 1996 edited volume, *Medieval Mothering*, Jochens investigates motherhood more generally, looking at the rarity of loving mothers and raising the question of whether maternal love emerged with the introduction of Christianity.²⁸⁰ In specifically discussing mother-daughter relationships, Jochens concludes that “[i]nformation about mothers and daughters – not to speak about a loving relationship – is extremely rare”.²⁸¹ Indeed, she remarks that love may “have been present in the saga age but unarticulated in the texts.”²⁸² Since then, scholarly approaches have been further developed and the history of emotions has emerged as a historical sub-discipline; we are now in a better position to locate love within such relationships, even when those relationships are scarce within the sources.

While the body of scholarly research on women in the sagas has been steadily growing, there still remains many avenues for scholars to explore. This chapter will explore one of those avenues, that is, love in *mæðgur* pairs, and I will do so in three ways. First, while Jochens speaks of the rarity of mother-daughter relationships, this chapter will demonstrate that the strides in scholarship over the last few decades allow me to initiate a sustained examination and that there remains more to be explored. Second, I will study the relationships between women, as opposed to the roles of women; in other words, I will examine the relationship rather than the individual. The one work which comes close to this is Van Deusen’s article “Sworn Sisterhood? On the (Near-) Absence of Female Friendship from the *Íslendingasögur*”, in which she also discusses relationships between women, as opposed to women themselves.²⁸³ However, while Van Deusen explores friendship and the sagas’ negative portrayals of extra-kin female relationships, I concentrate on *mæðgur* relationships, specifically, and how love was expressed in those relationships. Third, I will illustrate how embarking on a study from an origin in emotions, rather than power or honour, can illuminate cultural elements of *mæðgur* relationships in medieval Iceland that may otherwise go unnoticed.

²⁸⁰ Jenny Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Routledge, 1996).

²⁸¹ Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” 212.

²⁸² Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” 217.

²⁸³ Natalie Van Deusen, “Sworn Sisterhood? On the (Near-) Absence of Female Friendship from the *Íslendingasögur*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 1 (2014).

In order to study the *mæðgur* relationships, I will start with the case studies which possess love terminology, drawn from my lexical database, so as to establish that section's theme as well as the contexts surrounding the saga's use of the love terms. After that, I will move into the scenarios that do not have any love terms yet love can be inferred in those scenarios by drawing upon the contexts I observed prior. Furthermore, I will explore the silences present in the sagas' depictions of *mæðgur* relationships, and so illuminate the meanings behind the sagas' silence.

This chapter will not cover every occasion of love in *mæðgur* relationships, but I anticipate that it will serve as a springboard from which further research can be achieved, on *mæðgur* relationships as well as female relationships more generally.

This chapter is split into three main themes to help present the manners in which we can observe the representations of love within *mæðgur* relationships. First, we will look to contact, by which I mean maintaining communication and desiring to be in close proximity. Second, we will follow the notion of protection. By this I mean not only physical protection but also include supporting and attending to someone; in other words, the protection of one's wellbeing. Third, the final section will look to the opposite side of the above segments, exploring what it means, in a *mæðgur* relationship, when love exists in a reduced state.

These themes were drawn from the lexical entries I recorded in my reading of the sagas. The use of love terminology within *mæðgur* pairs was not common and so the themes of this chapter utilise most of the lexical data I found, along with the scenes that possess no love terminology. As we will soon see, many of these case studies that possess love terms are not that of a mother-daughter relationship but that of the other relationships deemed as equivalent under the term of *mæðgur*. While these various interpersonal relationships that fall under *mæðgur* are socially equivalent, it is noteworthy that while the fosterage relationships are as common as the biological ones in utilising love terminology, it is only the biological *mæðgur* relationships that sees a use of love terminology to depict a low level of love, or lack thereof. While it could be said that this shows fosterage relationships to have been more loving overall, it can be also argued that love between a mother and daughter was somewhat expected and it was thus the lack of love that was worth writing about. To sum up, there were few occasions in the sagas in which love terms were used for a *mæðgur* relationship, most of which are referenced in this chapter, and they informed the upcoming themes, in which I draw upon additional saga episodes so as to further explore these concepts.

Due to the number of case studies and my thematic structure, I will not work through this chapter saga by saga but will adhere to the aforementioned sections, returning to the same sagas when appropriate.

Contact

As previously noted, the first theme through which we will explore how love manifested within *mæðgur* relationships is contact. By looking at the contexts surrounding the love words in the following case studies, we will observe how one such expression of love was contact; this emerges from the sagas in two similar ways. One is how *mæðgur* women wanted to be in close proximity, and the other, which is also related to the close proximity, is that these women desired communication from one another. In other words, one way in which a *mæðgur* pair expressed love was the maintenance, or desired maintenance, of contact.

Opening our thematic discussion on *mæðgur* relationships is *Laxdæla saga*, a thirteenth-century work which Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir remarks is “often cited as a saga particularly interested in women”.²⁸⁴ Similarly, Auerbach comments on how, in the saga, “several variations of female effectiveness are set before the reader, illustrating the ability of females to be potent”.²⁸⁵ It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that this saga starts this section’s thematic journey.²⁸⁶

We can see love through contact when we look at the well-renowned Guðrún of *Laxdæla saga*, in which she and her granddaughter were often in close proximity. We learn of this *mæðgur* pair early in their relationship and see its effects when the granddaughter grows up. Before we learn of them, however, we are informed about Bolli, Guðrún’s son, and his decision to travel abroad; Bolli says that “þykkir maðr við þat fávíss verða, ef hann kannar ekki víðara en hér Ísland” (“a man is thought to become foolish, if he explores no more than this country, Iceland”).²⁸⁷ This sets the scene for the *mæðgur*’s subsequent introduction: “Þau Bolli

²⁸⁴ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 131. Cook and Jakobsson are two such scholars who state the saga is interested in women; see Robert Cook, “Women and Men in Laxdæla saga,” *Skáldskaparmál 2* (1992): 36-9; Ármann Jakobsson, “Laxdæla Dreaming: A Saga Heroine Invents Her Own Life,” *Leeds Studies in English, New Series* 39 (2008): 43.

²⁸⁵ Loren Auerbach, “Female Experience and Authorial Intention in *Laxdæla saga*,” *Saga Book* 25 (1998-2001): 36.

²⁸⁶ Much scholarship on the women in this saga focuses on the major female characters; Melkorka and Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir are prime examples of such. For a detailed account of the many women, and their effectiveness, within this saga, see Auerbach, “Female Experience,” 30-36.

²⁸⁷ *Laxd*, 211.

ok Þórdís áttu eina dóttur; sú hét Herdís; þeiri mey bauð Guðrún til fósturs. Hon var þá vetrqomul, er hon fór til Helgafells. Þórdís var ok lqngum þar; var Guðrún ok allvel til hennar” (Bolli and Þórdís had a daughter, who was called Herdís; Guðrún offered to foster their daughter. [Herdís] was one winter old when she came to Helgafell. Þórdís was also there for a long while; Guðrún was very kind to [Þórdís]).²⁸⁸ Guðrún, then, treats both daughter-in-law and granddaughter well; the saga never explicitly tells us of any love between Guðrún and her daughter-in-law, however. After the death of her husband, Guðrún becomes a woman of faith, going to the church every night, for extended periods of time, to pray and “Herdís Bolladóttir fór jafnan með henni um nætrnar. Guðrún unni mikit Herdís!” (Herdís Bolladóttir always went with [Guðrún] in the nights. Guðrún loved Herdís greatly).²⁸⁹ Soon after, despite us already observing the fact, we are again told that “Herdís Bolladóttir óx upp at Helgafelli, ok var hon allra kvenna vænst” (Herdís Bolladóttir grew up at Helgafell, and she was the finest of all women).²⁹⁰ The saga may have chosen to remind the audience at this point because time had moved on and Herdís was soon to be married. Indeed, by this point in the saga, Herdís was approximately sixteen years old and so had spent approximately fifteen years of her life with Guðrún.²⁹¹

The saga states that Guðrún *unni mikit*, or ‘greatly loved’, and this follows on from the sheer abundance of contact these women shared in. The key aspect to look to, however, is the nightly prayers that the two conducted. By the time of Herdís reaching sixteen years of age, Guðrún’s husband has been dead for five years, meaning Herdís would have been approximately eleven at the time when Guðrún developed her faith.²⁹² Therefore, the saga indicates that Herdís accompanied her grandmother every night for at least five years, before her marriage. It is little wonder, then, that Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir remarks that “[t]he touching examples of fondness between adults and girls lead us to believe that in Norse society, young girls were often loveable companions”.²⁹³ We must remember, too, that the saga specified that these prayers’ durations were long; this means that the *mæðgur* pair were

²⁸⁸ *Laxd*, 212.

²⁸⁹ *Laxd*, 223.

²⁹⁰ *Laxd*, 226.

²⁹¹ So as to use the character of Gellir to estimate Herdís’s age to be sixteen, see *Laxd*, 204-227.

²⁹² For how Guðrún “var fyrst nunna á Íslandi ok einsetukona” (was the first nun, and anchoress, of Iceland), see *Laxd*, 228. For Guðrún’s mourning, both public and private, and her introspection, see Stefanie Gropper, “The Human Condition,” in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdóttir (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), 181.

²⁹³ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 30.

not only sharing the day but the nights too. That is a lot of time to be together. It is, thus, informative that after the saga tells us of Herdís accompanying Guðrún to her nightly prayers, we are given a short sentence stating Guðrún's great love for Herdís, alluding that the two are linked. I am not attempting to state that contact was the only manner in which the audience would have been expected to understand that love was being expressed between Guðrún and Herdís, but the saga provides nothing more to explore. Nevertheless, we shall follow this thread of love through contact into other sagas to observe how this was a recurring manner in which *mæðgur* pairs were understood to express their love.

We can also see this close proximity in *Finnboga saga*, in which a fosterage *mæðgur* pairing stay within a day's travelling distance. This saga scene is too detailed and noteworthy to not be quoted in full:

Maðr hét Gestr... Syrpa hét kona hans. Hon hafði fósturat þorgerði fyrr meir, þá er hon var barn; ok unni hon henni mikit ok lét hana fara með sér, þá er hon var gipt þangat á Eyri. Var hon vel kunnandi allt þat, er hon skyldi gera. Hverju kykvendi var hon leiðiligri at sjá, ok lítit var Ásbirni um hana ok þótti hon ærit nær ganga þorgerði. Fyrir því lét hon Syrpu brott fara ok gipti hana Gest. Átti hon lítit fé eða ekki áðr, annat en þat, er þorgerðr lagði til hennar, en hann átti þó eigi mikit. Gestr hafði it mesta kvánríki, því at hann var mannæli mikit ok veslingr.²⁹⁴

There was a man called Gestr... Syrpa was his wife. She had previously fostered þorgerðr, when [þorgerðr] was a child; [þorgerðr] loved [Syrpa] greatly and [þorgerðr] caused [Syrpa] to go with her, when [þorgerðr] was given away in marriage there at Eyrr. [Syrpa] was well aware of all that which she should do. [Syrpa] was more hideous than any living creature to see, and Ásbjörn liked her little and it seemed to him that [Syrpa] was close enough to þorgerðr. Therefore, [þorgerðr] had Syrpa leave and gave [Syrpa] in marriage to Gest. [Syrpa] had little or no money, other than that which þorgerðr gave her, and [Gestr] too had not much money. Gestr was largely dominated by his wife, for he was a great fool and wretch.

Despite a relatively detailed introduction, Gestr and Syrpa are by no means major characters in this saga. They are poor and not deemed noble; their primary purpose is the safekeeping of the saga's eponymous hero, Finnbogi (known as Urðarköttr in the early chapters), in his

²⁹⁴ *Finnb*, 255-6.

infancy, after his father had demanded that he be left to die from exposure.²⁹⁵ Furthermore, they are not present in the saga for long; once Urðarköttr begins to live with his biological parents, Gestr and Syrpa return to their home and are then out of the saga.²⁹⁶ Despite this short span of the saga, there is a great amount to excavate about Syrpa and the relationship she shares with her higher-status foster-daughter, Þorgerðr.

Perhaps most obvious in presenting the love in their *mæðgur* relationship is the saga's statement that Þorgerðr *unni mikit*, or 'loved greatly', Syrpa, her foster-mother. We are not told of Syrpa's reciprocation of that love; we can only infer it from her position as a foster-mother and her interactions with Þorgerðr. This is contrary to what we saw with Guðrún, as here it is the younger member of the *mæðgur* relationship who is stated as loving her maternal figure. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has similarly observed such relationships, stating that "[m]any characters in the sagas care for their lower-class foster-mothers, and... this suggests that the Norse took seriously their duty to provide the elderly with a home".²⁹⁷ However, I believe that it is more than duty that drives Þorgerðr's actions, as well as the Norse peoples' actions; since she loves Syrpa, Þorgerðr wants to look after her and keep her close, especially as Þorgerðr is going to a new home with new people. Love and duty were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

It may seem obvious that people would want to keep one's loved ones close, but the Western study of history has, in the past, undervalued such concepts, hence the need for the history of emotions. Boddice has observed how "[i]n general, the historiographical record... tends to mark emotions as effects of events" but he asserts that "the affective life of humans is as much a moving force as anything else".²⁹⁸ Therefore, this desire to keep loved ones close merits study and observation.

Despite Þorgerðr's wish to keep Syrpa close, her husband, Ásbjörn, dislikes Syrpa and considers her too attached to Þorgerðr. This is not elaborated on at all, so we can only infer as to why he dislikes her. By placing the statements close to each other, the saga author may be trying to attribute Ásbjörn's dislike for Syrpa to her ugliness. In his study, Gallo links Syrpa to giantesses, through her ugliness as well as her name, "which is widespread among

²⁹⁵ See *Finnb*, 254-263.

²⁹⁶ *Finnb*, 262-3.

²⁹⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 176-177.

²⁹⁸ Boddice, *A History of Feelings*, 15.

giantesses”.²⁹⁹ With a giantess-like figure and name, perhaps the audience is to understand that Ásbjörn is disturbed by Syrpa and her capabilities, and so he wishes her to leave as soon as possible.³⁰⁰ While not explicit, the saga strongly indicates that Ásbjörn’s dislike for her is the reason for Syrpa’s departure from the household, through the use of *fyrir því*, or ‘therefore’, in the cited paragraph. Nevertheless, Ásbjörn’s loathing of Syrpa does not prevent Þorgerðr from keeping her beloved foster-mother close.

Indeed, Syrpa was kept in close proximity to Þorgerðr through her marriage to Gestr. We know that Gestr’s farm was close to Ásbjörn’s household, since, during Urðarköttr’s upbringing at Gestr’s farm, “hleypr hann þangat hvern dag” ([Urðarköttr] runs to [Eyrr] every day”), despite Syrpa’s concerns that he would be recognised as not being their child.³⁰¹ For Urðarköttr to be able to make a return journey to Eyrr from the farm every day and without staying overnight, the two places must have been in close proximity. We can also know this from Eyrr’s, and the surrounding area’s, topography.³⁰² Immediately east and south of Eyrr are abrupt mountainous regions; 1km to the north is the shoreline and the west has a northward-running river which has another mountainous region on its other side. Furthermore, we also know that “Urðarköttr rann oft til fjöru” (Urðarköttr often ran to the shore) and, one day, from the beach “streitist nú af nýju við fiskinn, ok dregr heim í tún til Syrpu, fóstur sinnar” (he now struggles anew with the fish, and drags it into the home yard to Syrpa, his foster-mother).³⁰³ This indicates that Gestr’s homestead must also have been relatively close to the shoreline, further suggesting a close proximity between his household and Ásbjörn’s. We also know that it was not mere chance that Syrpa was married to Gestr, the saga clearly states that Þorgerðr was the one with agency; she gave Syrpa in marriage, which means that Þorgerðr took on the role of *giftingarmaðr* (the individual who had the right to give a woman in marriage) and so

²⁹⁹ Gallo, “The Giantess as Foster-Mother,” 15.

³⁰⁰ For a general discussion of monstrous women and how they represent the anxieties, as well as desires, of Old Norse masculinity, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, ch. 3. For how Greenland acts as a space for such challenges to gender and sexual norms, see Basil Arnould Price, “Greenland as a Horizon: Approaching Queer Utopianism in *Flóamanna Saga*,” in *Medieval Mobilities: Gendered Bodies, Spaces, and Movements*, ed. Basil Arnould Price, Jane Bonsall, and Meagan Khoury (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2023), especially 232-234.

³⁰¹ *Finnb*, 258.

³⁰² Gestr’s farm, Tóptum, cannot be found on the available maps and so we must rely on Eyrr’s location. Perhaps this indicates Tóptum’s, or even Gestr’s, insignificance? See *ISM*; “Landabréf,” in *Íslensk fornrit XIV*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959). For how it was generally the large and wealthy households that caught the saga author’s attention, see William Ian Miller, “Some Aspects of Householding in the Medieval Icelandic Commonwealth,” *Continuity and Change* 3, no. 3 (1988): 332.

³⁰³ *Finnb*, 258-259.

negotiated the betrothal. Þorgerðr may have allowed this marriage solely because of the proximity of Gestr's farm to Eyrr, allowing these *mæðgur* women to maintain contact.

Was betrothing Syrpa the only choice available to Þorgerðr, though, or would the saga's audience have expected another result? According to the saga, Þorgerðr is responding to Ásbjörn; he dislikes Syrpa and so Þorgerðr takes action to remedy the situation, as he so wishes. Nevertheless, did she have to betroth Syrpa? Was that the only option available or did the text need this outcome? Considering the situation, Þorgerðr had three options available to her: keep Syrpa in the household, send Syrpa to another household, or marry her off into another household. Only the last two choices were actually viable, however, when the saga itself and the *Grágás* laws are considered.

Regardless of Þorgerðr's wishes, keeping Syrpa in the Eyrr household was not an option. We learn this when the saga later tells us of how Þorgerðr had had Urðarköttr exposed "fyrir reiði ok grimmleik bónda míns, Ásbjarnar" ("because of the anger and cruelty of my husband, Ásbjörn").³⁰⁴ If Þorgerðr submitted to Ásbjörn's wishes with her newborn child, because of her keen awareness of what might happen if he were counteracted, it is unlikely that she would have countered him in regard to Syrpa's habitation at Eyrr, when his distaste for Syrpa was so evident.

Sending Syrpa to another household would not have been difficult for Þorgerðr. First, considering Syrpa's position as a foster-mother to a freewoman, Syrpa was almost certainly of a lower status; a servant if not a slave. Gallo comments how Syrpa would have had a low status as a slave, and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir states how fosterage in the parental home "was often the job of lower class people".³⁰⁵ Holding such a position, Syrpa could be transferred from Eyrr to a number of different households to take up work there, rather than remain at Eyrr. Indeed, the saga records, earlier on, the homestead of Þorgerðr's brother, Þorgeirr, through his title *Ljósvetningagoða*, or 'goði of Ljósvatn'.³⁰⁶ Also, Ljósvatn is not a totally unacceptable distance to send someone in Syrpa's position, as it is approximately 60km away from Eyrr. Thus, Syrpa could have been kept in the family and moved to serve Þorgeirr. Alternatively, Syrpa could have been sent to the other farms in the valley in which Eyrr sits;

³⁰⁴ *Finnb*, 262.

³⁰⁵ Gallo, "The Giantess as Foster-Mother," 12-13; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 28. For how servants could also be poor relatives, see: Miller, "Some Aspects of Householding," 330.

³⁰⁶ *Finnb*, 253.

there are, at least, another two notable farms (Brettingsstaðir and Jökulsá) to the north-northwest of Eyrr, all closer than Ljósvatn, with the possibility for smaller, unremarkable farms, too.³⁰⁷

The final option available was Syrpa's marriage. It is important to note that, generally, "[s]uch people [as Syrpa] must have had dim prospects of marrying."³⁰⁸ These diminished prospects emerge from the *Grágás* laws; they stipulate that if the people getting married own too little, "then their penalty is lesser outlawry, unless the woman is past childbearing".³⁰⁹ Furthermore, "[l]esser outlawry is also the penalty for the man who gives a woman in betrothal in such circumstances" unless he can maintain the dependants himself.³¹⁰ However, these laws would not affect Syrpa, for the saga states how "Þorgerðr... hugði, at fóstra hennar mundi svá gömul, at hon mundi eigi barn mega eiga" (Þorgerðr... thought that her foster-mother must be so old, that she could not be able to bear a child).³¹¹ Thus, Syrpa could be married without penalty. It is unknown, however, how many men were available for Syrpa to be betrothed to – the saga makes no mention of such information – and so we could only guess. As previously mentioned, there are the two relatively close farmsteads, as well as any unmentioned farms, but this does not allow us to get any closer to an answer; we can still only guess.

Despite the availability of the option to simply send Syrpa to another household, Þorgerðr made the choice to marry Syrpa to Gestr, a decision that held great importance for the narrative in that it saved Urðarköttr's life. It is unclear as to Syrpa's overall marital prospects, due to her station, but Þorgerðr managed to betroth her, regardless. And why did Þorgerðr go through all this? As just mentioned, it was narratively significant. However, the audience can also infer that Þorgerðr did this out of love; to keep Syrpa in close proximity, and thus regular contact, as we have already discussed. But do we know that Gestr's household was closer than the other farmsteads? We do not. However, choosing Gestr specifically allows for further contact.

It is Gestr's poor financial situation that ensures regular contact between the two households. Gestr's poor finances are not elaborated upon by the text, but that is not as

³⁰⁷ See *ISM*; "Landabréf".

³⁰⁸ Miller, "Some Aspects of Householding," 330.

³⁰⁹ *Laws II*, 61.

³¹⁰ *Laws II*, 62.

³¹¹ *Finnb*, 257.

important as what is able to arise from such a state. The saga states that Þorgerðr gave Syrpa most of, if not all, the money that Syrpa brought into the marriage with Gestr. It is not clear whether this was in the form of a dowry or regular payments; if the latter, this would further indicate regular contact between the households, if not the women themselves, which would allow the women to keep updated on each other. Nevertheless, the saga later tells us, after baby Urðarköttr has been found by Gestr, that “Gestr kom á Eyri ok sagði Þorgerði, at Syrpa, fóstura hennar, hefði barn fætt, ok kvað hvárki vera mat né hvíluklæði” (Gestr arrived at Eyri and told Þorgerðr that Syrpa, her foster-mother, had given birth to a child, and he said that they had neither food nor bedclothes).³¹² Not only do Syrpa’s funds originate from Þorgerðr but Syrpa’s household is also somewhat reliant on Þorgerðr for material needs. Again, such a condition would warrant frequent contact to obtain those materials. Furthermore, the saga explicitly maintains that there was recurrent contact; Syrpa sent Gestr to collect some “brúngras því at hon gerði mart fósturu sinni, þat er hon þurfti at hafa” (*brúngras* because [Syrpa] made many [things] for her foster-daughter, that which Þorgerðr needed to have).³¹³ Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson translate *brúngras* as ‘brown grass’ but state that it probably implies Icelandic moss.³¹⁴ In his translation, Kennedy also translates this term as ‘moss’.³¹⁵ The contents of this sentence, therefore, would suggest that Syrpa was crafting something with the moss, and that Þorgerðr needed something made with moss. Considering the context and the absorptive properties of moss, the audience could understand this as Syrpa creating bandages for the pregnant Þorgerðr, thus revealing that Syrpa was in regular enough contact to be aware of the due date for Þorgerðr’s birth. Alternatively, this moss could have been used to make menstrual pads, before Þorgerðr became pregnant.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, both uses for the moss suggest that Syrpa and Þorgerðr were close enough to be in regular contact so as to cater to such needs. Indeed, what we see here is the result of regular contact; Syrpa is creating items to help Þorgerðr.

³¹² *Finnb*, 257.

³¹³ *Finnb*, 256.

³¹⁴ *CVD*, 84.

³¹⁵ “The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty,” trans. John Kennedy, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 3, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 222.

³¹⁶ For how Sphagnum (a genus of moss) can be used for its absorbent properties, see Eric S. J. Harris, “Ethnobotany: Traditional Uses and Folk Classification of Bryophytes,” *The Bryologist* 111, no. 2 (2008): especially 177, 205-6. Harris states that Icelanders used Sphagnum for cradle linings but cites sources from the 1700s and later; therefore, the absorbent qualities could still have been utilised for bandages and menstrual pads in the centuries prior.

Through this episode, therefore, we find multiple elements of love between Syrpa and Þorgerðr. Because of her love for Syrpa, Þorgerðr was able to engineer a situation in which Syrpa remained close in proximity, meaning the women could stay in regular contact with one another. Þorgerðr achieved as much by betrothing Syrpa to a poor man who lived nearby; unable to be fully self-sustainable, Gestr and Syrpa were somewhat reliant on Þorgerðr for aid, again ensuring regular contact with this *mæðgur* relationship. We will return to this scene, again, to explore the element of protection in this relationship, as well.

We now return to *Laxdæla saga*, but at an earlier point, in which we continue to see love expressed through the desire for communication and close proximity between the women in a *mæðgur* relationship. Before the analysis can start, though, some contextualisation is required.

Early in the saga we observe a man, called Hǫskuldr, attending a royal assembly, and its festivities within which he learns of slave-women being sold; he enters the slave tent and says “at hann vill kaupa ambátt nǫkkura” (“that he wants to purchase a slave-woman”).³¹⁷ This slave-woman is later revealed to be an Irish princess, called Melkorka, who we learn “var þaðan hertekin fimmtán vetra gǫmul” (was abducted from [Ireland] at the age of fifteen).³¹⁸ Hǫskuldr purchases Melkorka and brings her back to Iceland with him “ok á ofanverðum vetri þeim fœddi frilla Hǫskulds sveinbarn... Hann bað sveinninn kalla Óláf” (and in the later part of winter, Hǫskuldr’s slave-woman gave birth to a boy... He requested that people call the boy Óláfr).³¹⁹ Óláfr grows up into a notable man yet cannot escape his origin; eventually, Melkorka helps him prepare for a journey to Ireland to meet his highborn kinsmen, stating “Eigi nenni ek, at þú sér ambáttarsonr kallaðr lengr” (“I cannot bear that you be called the son of a slave-woman any longer”).³²⁰ Before Óláfr leaves for Ireland, Melkorka gives him a gold ring to show her father, King Mýrkjartan, and “enn fekk hon honum í hǫnd kníf ok belti ok bað hann selja fósturu sinni, - “get ek, at hon dyllisk eigi við þessar jartegnir”” (she also placed into his hands a knife and belt, and she requested that he hand them over to her foster-mother, - “I guess that she will not ignore these tokens”).³²¹ Óláfr then travels to Ireland and meets with Mýrkjartan on the shores of Ireland, resulting in a passage too detailed to paraphrase:

³¹⁷ *Laxd*, 23.

³¹⁸ *Laxd*, 27-28.

³¹⁹ *Laxd*, 27.

³²⁰ *Laxd*, 50.

³²¹ *Laxd*, 51.

Konung reið þá til Dyflinnar, ok þykkja mǫnnum þetta mikil tíðendi, er þar var dóttursonr konungs í fǫr með honum, þeirar er þaðan var fyrir löngu hertekin, fimmtán vetra gǫmul. En þó brá fósturu Melkorku mest við þessi tíðendi, er þá lá í kǫr ok sótti bæði at stríð ok elli; en þó gekk hon þá staflaust á fund Óláfs. Þá mælti konungr til Óláfs: “Hér er nú komin fóstura Melkorku ok mun hon vilja hafa tíðendasǫgn af þér um hennar hag.”³²²

King [Mýrkjartan] then rode to Dublin, and people consider it great news, that the son of [Melkorka], the daughter of the king, was on the journey with him; she had been abducted from there long ago, at fifteen winters old. And Melkorka’s foster-mother was most affected by these tidings, who was then laying bedridden in both *stríð* and old age. She then set out and went, without her cane, to find Óláfr. Then the king said to Óláfr: “Melkorka’s foster-mother has now arrived, and she will want to have news, from you, about [Melkorka’s] condition.

The timeline between Melkorka’s abduction and Óláfr meeting Mýrkjartan is at least eighteen years; we know Óláfr’s age since the saga says that upon reaching Norway, on his journey to Ireland, Óláfr tells the king “Nú em ek átján vetra” (“I am now eighteen winters old”).³²³ Unfortunately, we do not know the exact length of time between Melkorka’s abduction and Hǫskuldr’s purchase of her; the saga does not elaborate and so we can only be certain that the minimum length of time was eighteen years. With the context in place, we can move to the discussion of the love in this *mæðgur* relationship.

Unlike the previous two *mæðgur* pairs, Melkorka and her foster-mother have no love terms attributed to them; the foster-mother is mentioned in only three sections of the saga and is only present for one of them.³²⁴ Despite the lack of love terms, we can still accept that love existed between them by inferring from what the saga gives us and by drawing upon the prior examples. Indeed, Van Deusen agrees that love was present and comments on the

³²² *Laxd*, 58.

³²³ *Laxd*, 53.

³²⁴ The first time has Melkorka give Óláfr the knife and belt, which are to be given to the foster-mother; the second is when Óláfr meets the foster-mother; the third is Melkorka’s question on why Óláfr did not bring the foster-mother back to Iceland. See *Laxd*, 51, 58, 61. Also, Melkorka’s foster-mother is unnamed in the saga and so shall be referred to as ‘foster-mother’.

noteworthiness of “the love described in *Laxdæla saga* between the Irish princess Melkorka and her wet nurse”.³²⁵

As we will explore more fully in the next chapter on *feðgar* relationships, we can use portrayals of grief and how that is symptomatic of love to explore this relationship. Indeed, the use of *stríð* in describing the foster-mother is quite peculiar, as the word can be translated in slightly different ways. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson offer “woe, grief, affliction... a strife, combat” as possible translations.³²⁶ The first group are the likeliest candidates (it is difficult to consider a bedridden woman in combat) as they each share in the essence of debilitation, which corresponds with a bedridden woman. Kunz translates this use of *stríð* as “illness”.³²⁷ Considering the range of words, I believe illness to be too ambiguous. Is the foster-mother afflicted by a physical illness? A mental one? What Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson suggest is rather an emotional ailment; Melkorka’s foster-mother is not just ‘ill’, she is afflicted with grief and woe for her long-lost foster-daughter. While this can be easily described as an illness of the heart, using the term ‘illness’ provides too many variables and will often lead people to assume a physical ailment, rather than a mental or, even less likely, an emotional one. I will, thus, translate *stríð* as grief, so as to encompass the physical, mental, and emotional components that grief contains. Therefore, if we consider the foster-mother as having ailed from grief, the subsequent actions comfortably fit with the concept of love and grief in this *mæðgur* relationship.

Furthermore, if we look to a later point in the same saga, we come across *stríð* again, and a similar sense of grief is depicted, albeit for the dead husband of Hrefna, rather than a lost foster-daughter. After her husband’s death, Hrefna “var mjök harmþrungin” (was greatly *harmþrunginn*) and went north with her brothers; then “hon lifði litla hríð, síðan er hon kom norðr, ok er þat sagn manna, at hon hafi sprungit af stríði” (she lived only a little while, after she went north, and people say that she died from *stríð*).³²⁸ The word *harmþrunginn* is an interesting one, for it does not simply inform the audience that Hrefna was upset with her husband’s death but that she was ‘filled with grief’ or ‘swollen with grief’.³²⁹ While ‘filled’ is a

³²⁵ Van Deusen, “Sworn Sisterhood?,” 67. Also, Van Deusen believes there to be love without any need of love terminology.

³²⁶ *CVD*, 598.

³²⁷ “The Saga of the People of Laxardal,” trans. Keneva Kunz, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 28.

³²⁸ *Laxd*, 158.

³²⁹ *CVD*, 240.

workable translation, it does not carry the implication of tautness that the verb *þröngva* (the participle of which is *þrunginn*) carries.³³⁰ This sense of a taut, swollen body is strongly reminiscent of Þorhallr, from *Brennu-Njáls saga*, in which his body swells after the death of his foster-father.³³¹ This sense of swelling from strong emotions continues into that next sentence with *strið*. Indeed, an alternative translation to my more direct “she died from *strið*” is Kunz’s translation, which captures some of the implicit physicality of Hrefna’s emotions. Kunz translates it as “she had been shattered by her grief”.³³² Both translations are acceptable but differ due to the meanings behind *sprungit*, the past participle of *springa*; the second meaning for *springa* is “to burst, split” but under that heading is “to die from over-exertion, grief, or the like”.³³³ With the meaning behind *sprungit*, then, Hrefna is being again depicted as bursting from the grief inside her. All of the description of Hrefna’s grief indicates that there is a physical dimension to Hrefna’s grief, much like Þorhallr. Therefore, the saga suggests that Hrefna was swollen with grief, physically as well as mentally for her dead husband and this emotional swelling eventually burst, or shattered, thus killing her.³³⁴

Putting the saga’s later use of *strið* in dialogue with the foster-mother’s grief over Melkorka, we can apply this understanding to the foster-mother and perceive the depth of her grief for the loss of Melkorka. Left in the dark as to what had happened to Melkorka, the foster-mother could not escape her grief, and this emotional turmoil thus resulted in her becoming bed-bound. Perhaps the audience would understand that she had become swollen, like Hrefna and Þorhallr, but the saga does not report as such.³³⁵

Following from this is the need to consider how Mýrkjartan knew what the nurse would want before she had even reached Óláfr and himself. The saga gives no indication that the king is prepared for the nurse’s visit or knows how exactly she has been affected by this news

³³⁰ CVD, 748.

³³¹ For the discussion on Þorhallr’s swelling body, see Chapter 1: Setting the Scene, 1-4. For further discussions of swelling and *harmr*, or ‘grief’, see Chapter 4: Love in *Feðgar* Relationships.

³³² “The Saga of the People of Laxardal,” 81. Interestingly, Hrefna’s physical swelling has emotion directly attributed to it, whereas Þorhallr’s swelling is left to inference. Could this be due to a cultural understanding of how women and men expressed, or were expected to express, emotions differently?

³³³ CVD, 584.

³³⁴ There is only one other use of *strið* in the *Íslendingasögur* corpus; see *ONP*. That use appears in *Þórðar saga hreðu*, in which it is used in the sense of combat, see *Þórð*, 189. It appears more often outside the *Íslendingasögur* corpus. For *strið* being used when two sons mourn the loss of their beloved father, see *Ísl*, 290. For its use where a man grieves over the lost opportunities following the death of a woman, rather than grieving over the woman, see *St*, 182.

³³⁵ For how grief could lead to becoming bed-bound as well as leading to death, see Chapter 2: Love in *Feðgar* Relationships.

– only the audience knows. There are two plausible ways by which Mýrkjartan could be expected to know what she was going to say. The first is that the foster-mother had repeatedly asked for news concerning Melkorka over the years since Melkorka’s abduction; this is a strong possibility considering the eighteen years of knowing nothing of what became of Melkorka, and this may have resonated with the audience. The second is that she, as a foster-mother, was expected to crave news of her long-lost foster-daughter, by the king as well as the saga audience, because of the bonds within their *mæðgur* relationship. Both are plausible and are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, no matter which was the reason for Mýrkjartan’s prescient comment, we can observe that there was an undeniable bond between Melkorka and her foster-mother, despite the many years since they last saw each other.

What are we to make of the foster-mother’s reaction to the news of Óláfr’s arrival? Not only did she leave her bed, despite her ailments, she then searched for Óláfr without her cane. While the saga does not state it directly, leaving her cane behind is a critical element. If the saga had not mentioned the cane, the audience could assume she never had one or that it was so normal that it did not warrant attention. However, by mentioning it being left behind, the saga marks it as a usual tool to aid her movement, that she has abruptly abandoned. It is as if the lure of positive news cures her debilitating ailments, that is, grief. Suddenly, the cane is no longer necessary – it is either forgotten, or would be a hindrance in her rejuvenated state – and so the foster-mother searches for Melkorka’s son. With there being news relating to Melkorka, she is able to leave her bed as she grieves no longer. This ending of grief, and overall improved condition, continues past Óláfr’s departure, for “var kerling hress þann vetr allan” (the old woman was healthy for the rest of that winter).³³⁶ Since Óláfr travels away from Ireland soon after Mýrkjartan’s speech, which occurs near the end of winter, the saga is unable to account for her health afterwards; it is possible that she remains in good health afterwards, due to learning of Melkorka’s current situation of comparable comfort. Therefore, the saga indicates that news of Melkorka brought a positive emotional change to her foster-mother, taking her out of grief. With no information regarding her foster-daughter, the foster-mother fell into grief, and upon receiving good news regarding her foster-daughter, the foster-mother escaped grief. In other words, it was love that brought grief to the foster-mother and it was love that brought her out of grief.

³³⁶ *Laxd*, 58.

What else can be said about the love in this relationship? The main interaction between Óláfr and the foster-mother is where we can look for further insights. After Óláfr tells her of Melkorka's comfort in Iceland, "[þ]á seldi Óláfr henni knifinn ok beltit, ok kenndi kerling gripina ok varð grátfeigin; kvað þat bæði vera, at sonr Melkorku var skörligr, – "enda á hann til þess varit"" (Óláfr then delivered the knife and the belt to her, and the old woman recognised the objects and tears of joy came to her eyes; she said that Melkorka's son was both excellent, - "and also that it is in his nature to be excellent").³³⁷ The key emotional expression here is the foster-mother's tears of joy, and these tears are caused by two elements; the recognisable knife and belt that Melkorka wanted the foster-mother to receive, and Óláfr's excellent character. Why do these warrant tears of joy? Let us first look at the objects, before looking at Óláfr.

The foster-mother must have a personal knowledge of these objects, as she recognises them after the many years between Melkorka's abduction and this point in the saga. Furthermore, the direct statements from both Melkorka and the saga add a significance to the objects; this importance is not clear to us, as the saga refuses to elaborate. Nevertheless, we can still study this recognition and what it means.

Indeed, the objects could not be random; they must have been immediately recognisable as Melkorka's, such as the gold ring *Mýrkjartan* "gæfir henni at tannfé" (gave [Melkorka] upon her teething); upon seeing the ring, "gerðisk rauðr mjök ásýndar (his face became very red).³³⁸ The foster-mother may have originally gifted the knife and belt to Melkorka herself, thus making them personal to the both of them as opposed to just generally recognisable; this, then, would make the objects' return to the foster-mother more emotionally potent.

Brady suggests that the knife and belt may be an Irish symbolic token of sovereignty given to Óláfr by Melkorka.³³⁹ If this was the case, perhaps Melkorka was given the knife and belt due to her royal blood, and so it was an immediately recognisable symbol of her royal status. However, Brady does admit that this sovereignty motif was likely reshaped to fit the

³³⁷ *Laxd*, 58.

³³⁸ *Laxd*, 57.

³³⁹ Lindy Brady, "An Irish Sovereignty Motif in *Laxdæla saga*," *Scandinavian Studies* 88, no. 1 (2016): 68.

Icelandic storytelling tradition, consequently depicting Icelandic attitudes to kingship rather than Irish ones.³⁴⁰

Even if this motif was reshaped, why would Melkorka request that Óláfr give the tokens of royal sovereignty to her foster-mother, who was likely in a servile position? As symbols of royal authority, would they not be better suited to go to Mýrkjartan or Óláfr, as they are the ones with royal blood? The only answer that makes sense is that Melkorka wants her foster-mother to receive an unmistakable symbol of Melkorka's survival and wellbeing. She does not want her foster-mother to grieve over her and so Melkorka communicates with her via Óláfr as the messenger.

Regardless of the symbolism behind the knife and belt, what we do know is that they were instantly recognisable as belonging to Melkorka. Otherwise, the saga is silent on the matter. What we can see from this, however, is that the foster-mother recognised objects inherently reminiscent of Melkorka and cried from joy, as these are signs of Melkorka's being alive. The foster-mother finally received news about her beloved foster-daughter and, fortunately for her, it was good news.

Then there is Óláfr himself. By this point, Óláfr had not won renown from battles; the main information the saga reveals is, as usual, in his introduction – “Óláfr vex upp með Þórði godda ok gerisk mikill maðr ok sterkr; svá var hann vænn maðr, at eigi fekksk hans jafningi... var hann því auðkenndr frá öllum mönnum” (Óláfr grows up with Þórðr goddi and becomes a big and strong man; he was such a handsome man, that none could be found that were his equal... he was thus distinguished from all other men).³⁴¹ While he may not be renowned in battle, the saga sets him up as a notable man of distinction, with a royal heritage. Unsurprisingly, these characteristics have a place in bringing Óláfr offers of kingship, as Brady observes in her article.³⁴² What does a kingly Óláfr bring to this discussion of love in this *mæðgur* relationship, though? For that, we look beyond Óláfr, for it is less Óláfr himself but what he represents and communicates. Indeed, by answering the foster-mother's questions, he “transmits a familial affection from one woman to another”.³⁴³ Óláfr is thus a conduit by

³⁴⁰ Brady, “An Irish Sovereignty Motif,” 72, 74.

³⁴¹ *Laxd*, 38-39.

³⁴² See Brady, “An Irish Sovereignty Motif”.

³⁴³ Robert Kellogg, “Sex and the Vernacular in Medieval Iceland,” in *Proceedings of The First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 21-29 August 1971*, ed. Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson, and Desmond Slay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1973), 255.

which the *mæðgur* pair can communicate, and so the foster-mother learns of Melkorka's survival and success. Thus, the foster-mother's desire for information and communication is satisfied. Furthermore, if we consider Óláfr's kingly nature, we can infer what this meant for the foster-mother. Not only has Melkorka successfully raised a son, despite having been abducted and sold into slavery, she has raised a regal son of distinction, who was deemed worthy to rule Ireland by King Mýrkjartan.³⁴⁴ Melkorka has made her foster-mother proud.

What about Melkorka? Is it possible for the audience to see that she loves her foster-mother in return? Like with the foster-mother, we are not given a direct statement about Melkorka's love for her foster-mother; we must, therefore, infer it. We have already seen how Melkorka sent the knife and belt to her foster-mother – a sign that she was alive and well – but other than that, there is only one other point at which Melkorka mentions her foster-mother. That occasion is upon Óláfr's return to Iceland.

Brátt spurði hon, ef fóstura hennar lifði; Óláfr kvað hana at vísu lifa. Melkorka spýrr þá, hví hann vildi eigi veita henni eptirlæti þat, at flytja hana til Íslands. Þá svarar Óláfr: "Ekki fýstu men þess, móðir, at ek flytta fósturu þína af Írlandi." "Svá má vera," segir hon. Þat fannsk á, at henni þótti þetta mjök í móti *skapi*.³⁴⁵

[Melkorka] soon asked if her foster-mother lived; Óláfr said that she was certainly alive. Melkorka then asks why he did not want to give her that joy of bringing her to Iceland. Óláfr then answers: "They did not want me, mother, to take your foster-mother from Ireland." "So it may be," she says. It was evident that she thought this greatly against her *skapi*.

After taking an aside to explain how obvious Melkorka's disappointment was, the saga promptly moves forward and it is not stated why the foster-mother was not allowed to travel to Iceland. Indeed, there is not even an explanation when Óláfr, in Ireland, asks to bring the foster-mother to Iceland; all that we are told is that "Óláfr beiddisk at flytja fósturu Melkorku á brott með sér; konungr kvað þess enga þörf, ok fór hon eigi" (Óláfr requested to take Melkorka's foster-mother abroad with him; the king said that there was no need for this, and so she did not travel).³⁴⁶ Although both passages provide no reasoning behind the refusal,

³⁴⁴ For the events in Ireland, including the offer of kingship, see *Laxd*, 55-59.

³⁴⁵ *Laxd*, 61.

³⁴⁶ *Laxd*, 59.

what we can alternatively look to is the fact that both raise the idea of taking the foster-mother to Iceland. Melkorka makes no mention of desiring this, before learning of Mýrkjartan's refusal, and it is a lone sentence for Óláfr; there is nothing prior to indicate that this travel arrangement would emerge. However, that is useful in itself. If we consider the lack of elaboration on the topic, the case may be that the notion of a foster-mother going to live with her foster-daughter was so commonplace to the audience that it merited no explanation. As we saw with Þorgerðr and Syrpa earlier in this section, Þorgerðr loved Syrpa, her foster-mother, and Syrpa would have continued to stay with Þorgerðr due to the love in their relationship, if not for the husband's dislike of Syrpa.³⁴⁷ Indeed, these examples prove Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's statement that "[t]he bond between low-born foster-parents and their female ward is often characterized by intimacy and trust... and it is understood as lifelong".³⁴⁸

Is this enough to state that there was love? To provide further evidence, we can also look at Melkorka's thoughts on the idea of receiving her foster-mother. This can all be found in her response to Óláfr's failure to bring the foster-mother to Iceland. When she acknowledged that her kinsmen prevented the foster-mother's travel, the saga takes an aside to tell the audience that Melkorka found this to be against her *skapi*. *Skap*, the nominative of *skapi*, does not easily translate to English. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson give it three archetypal meanings, each with variant sub-meanings; for us, the appropriate ones are 'condition of mind', 'temper', 'mood', 'mind', and 'heart'.³⁴⁹ These nouns all relate to a person's psychology and their interiority, each with slightly different connotations.³⁵⁰ By looking at these terms, we can see the overall idea is that the foster-mother not arriving was displeasing to Melkorka; it was against her wishes, so to speak. Therefore, Melkorka would have been pleased if her foster-mother had arrived, for that would have fulfilled her desire to be close in proximity to her foster-mother.

³⁴⁷ For how a mother, Arneiðr, gives her farm to her sons and marries off her other daughter, so as to accompany her daughter, Droplaug, to Iceland, see *Flj*, 232. Arneiðr subsequently cohabitates with Droplaug and her husband.

³⁴⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 29.

³⁴⁹ *CVD*, 537. The second meaning given to *skap* is fate and destiny, while the third is another spelling for *skaf*, or 'a scraping'. For further details on fate and fate's role in the cultural area of Scandinavia during the Viking Age and the early medieval period, see Karen Bek-Pedersen, *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Press, 2011); Carolyne Larrington, review of *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology*, by Karen Bek-Pedersen, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2 (2013).

³⁵⁰ For a reminder of how the Old Norse heart and mind are almost one and the same, see Chapter 2: Developing a Methodology, 31.

Does wanting to receive someone equal love, though? This is where we must look again at what Melkorka says to her son. The saga reports that she asks: “hví hann vildi eigi veita henni eptirlæti þat, at flytja hana til Íslands” (why [Óláfr] did not want to give her that joy of bringing her to Iceland).³⁵¹ The key element here is that Melkorka says that *eptirlæti* would have resulted from the foster-mother’s arrival to Iceland; the sentence is not entirely clear on who would have gained that joy, since it says ‘she’ will gain it.³⁵² However, for our purposes, it does not matter who gained the joy, for both reveal the depth of affection that Melkorka held for her foster-mother. If the foster-mother was the one to gain the joy, then this shows that Melkorka knew her foster-mother well and that she cares about her foster-mother’s wellbeing. This explains her disappointment as one of being unable to be close to the woman who raised her.³⁵³ If the joy would have been for Melkorka, then this indicates that she would have been happier if the foster-mother had come to Iceland. If Melkorka would have been happier upon her foster-mother’s arrival, then there must be a reason for that increased happiness; the only viable reason is love and affection for her foster-mother.

What are we to take from the relationship between Melkorka and her foster-mother? Despite the lack of love terminology in these few short scenes, there are multiple instances that strongly indicate that love was present in this *mæðgur* relationship. Losing a loved one caused the foster-mother to become afflicted with grief, resulting in her retreating to bed; only the fortunate news of Óláfr’s arrival aided her escape from grief and her bedridden state. Furthermore, the foster-mother was joyous upon learning of Melkorka’s being alive and well, and how Óláfr was a magnificent man. Melkorka also reciprocated that love, shown through her disappointment that her foster-mother did not go to her in Iceland, and how that was against her wishes. This case study, however, cannot be said to be a realistic example of how *mæðgur* love existed in medieval Iceland, for it is too unique through its use of royalty. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the emotions were unrecognisable to the audience. Indeed, the various elements we discussed point to a concept of love through contact, in that this *mæðgur* pair sought news of one another and wanted to be close in proximity, both emblematic of their love for one another; this still aligns with the previous examples. In

³⁵¹ *Laxd*, 61.

³⁵² For how *eptirlæti* can translate as either ‘enjoyment’ or ‘indulgence’, see *CVD*, 131. For an example of its use with sexual connotations, see *Nj*, 24.

³⁵³ While there could be an element of duty, it is unlikely to be the chief aspect of Melkorka’s disappointment, for it is difficult to conceive of *eptirlæti* arising from duty, considering its alternative translation is ‘indulgence’.

essence, the emotional content of this *mæðgur* pair would have been recognisable to the audience, despite the royal elements of the narrative.

Providing us with comparatively little information, yet portraying love through contact, is *Droplaugarsona saga*, in which the *mæðgur* relationship consists of Droplaug and her mother Ingibjörg. This is not the renowned matriarch Droplaug; it can be confusing as both Droplaugs are introduced early in the saga.³⁵⁴ There is no informative introduction for Droplaug and Ingibjörg, or their relationship. Instead, all we are given to work with is the following:

Þat var siðr í þann tíma at fœra konum þeim kost, er á sæng hvíldu. Ok svá bar tíl, at Droplaug fór at finna Ingibjörgu, móður sína, á Bersastaði, ok fóru með henni tveir þrælar... Droplaug var eina nótt uppi þar, því at mannboð skyldi vera á Oddsstöðum einni nótt síðar, en þat var litlu fyrir várþing.³⁵⁵

It was a custom in that time to bring food to those women, who had lain in childbirth. And so this happened, that Droplaug went to visit Ingibjörg, her mother, at Bersastaðir, and travelled with her two slaves... Droplaug was up there for one night, because there would be a banquet at Oddsstaðir one night later, and that was not long before the spring assembly.

Immediately after this scene, Droplaug and her slaves begin their journey home to Oddsstaðir to be there for the banquet but, on that journey, they start crossing a frozen river before “drukknuðu þau þar öll” (they all drowned there).³⁵⁶ Despite this abrupt death, we can still observe the close contact that this mother and daughter shared through the journey Droplaug took. First, this *mæðgur* pair must have been in regular contact with one another. How else could Droplaug have become aware of her mother’s recent childbirth? Some news must have passed between the two households, for Droplaug to have heard of Ingibjörg’s recent delivery and subsequently plan the journey to fulfil the custom of which the saga informs us. Alongside the regular contact is the distance between the two women; it was approximately 12km, as the crow flies.³⁵⁷ How else could Droplaug have successfully

³⁵⁴ Cf. *Flj*, 238-239, in which there is only one Droplaug, the matriarch, and the other woman is called Þorlaug. Furthermore, Þorlaug is stated as going to visit her father, not her mother.

³⁵⁵ *Dpl*, 143-144.

³⁵⁶ *Dpl*, 144.

³⁵⁷ See *ISM*; “Kort,” in *Íslensk fornrit XI*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1950).

scheduled a visit to Ingibjörg just before a banquet at her own home? If the distance were too great, Droplaug would have likely waited until after the banquet and the spring assembly before visiting, but this was not the case. Furthermore, Droplaug only stayed for one night with her mother; the journey could not have been longer than a day's ride then. This *mæðgur* pair were in regular contact with one another as well as being quite close in proximity, and it seems they were readily able and willing to visit one another, if Droplaug's behaviour is anything to draw from. This information suggests a level of love in this *mæðgur*; visiting your mother the night before you host a banquet cannot be duty alone.

If we also take a look at the contemporary saga, *Íslendinga saga*, we continue to see this connection between contact and love via the *mæðgur* relationship between Hallbera, Snorri Sturluson's daughter, and her grandmother, Guðný. In this particular scene, there is no direct interaction nor outright declaration of love for us to observe but there are consequences for us to consider. These consequences result from Snorri's actions; he was preparing to travel to Norway and so transferred his property to his brother, Þórðr, "en fyrir búit í Reykjaholti setti hann Guðnýju, móður sína" (but over the inhabitants of Reykjaholt [Snorri] set Guðný, his mother) since she had previously managed Þórðr's estates.³⁵⁸ The saga then states how "þat sumar, áðr Snorri fór utan, gifti hann Hallberu, dóttur sína, Árna, syni Magnúss Ámundasonar... Váru þau í Reykjaholti lengstum þau misseri, því at ekki nýtti af henni um samvistur, ef þau váru eigi þar" (that summer, before Snorri travelled abroad, he gave Hallbera, his daughter, in marriage to Árni, son of Magnús Ámundason... They were at Reykjaholt for most of that year because he would not *nýtti* her, during their marriage, if they were not there).³⁵⁹

It is not immediately clear what the saga means by *nýtti*. It's derived from *nýta* which in turn is derived from *njóta*, which has multiple possible translations.³⁶⁰ Both words carry the possible meanings of 'to use', 'to consume', 'to benefit from', 'to enjoy one another' and 'to live together'. McGrew translates that last part as "she took little pleasure in her marriage unless they lived there".³⁶¹ It is likely that what this means is that Hallbera would not be intimate with Árni unless she was living in Reykjaholt.

³⁵⁸ *Ísl*, 73.

³⁵⁹ *Ísl*, 73.

³⁶⁰ *CVD*, 456, 460.

³⁶¹ "The Saga of the Icelanders," in *Sturlunga Saga: Volume I: The Saga of Hvamm-Sturla and The Saga of Icelanders*, trans. Julia H. McGrew (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 164.

The saga gives no reason as to why Hallbera is withholding intimacy from Árni; it merely states that it would only happen if they were at Reykjaholt. What, then, can the audience discern from this scene? The fact that Hallbera decided to withhold this from her husband is the main element to consider. We see in other sagas similar scenes of withheld intimacy, which were used by the women to obtain what they desired. For example, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, one husband is told by his wife “Ef þú fylgir Kára illa, þá skalt þú þat vita, at þú skalt aldri koma í minna rekkju sinn síðan” (“If you help Kári poorly, then you will know that you shall never come into my bed ever again”).³⁶² Returning to *Íslendinga saga*, the saga does not explain what this desire is, leaving the audience to figure it out. Considering that the placement of the paragraph about the grandmother’s establishment at Reykjaholt is directly before Hallbera’s marriage and subsequent withheld intimacy, this may be the object of Hallbera’s desire, so to speak. Indeed, McGrew’s translation also supports this idea of Hallbera’s desire being cohabitation with Guðný. However, her translation is also vague as to why that is. Nevertheless, if we look to the scenes we have looked at so far, the reason behind it becomes clearer. Like the younger women of their respective *mæðgur* relationships who we have already discussed, Hallbera wants to be closer to her grandmother, because she loves her grandmother, and does not feel happy being away from her. Therefore, Hallbera does what she can to get closer to them; she persuades her husband to do as she wills.

This section has explored the theme of contact and how it was one manner in which love was expressed between *mæðgur* women. Despite many of these women becoming separated and consequently living apart, they strove to maintain a line of contact; this emerged through the two primary elements of communication and proximity. These women could influence the situations in which they found themselves in order to maintain contact, even when the odds were stacked against them.

Protection

We will now be moving on to the second topic in our exploration of how love was expressed in *mæðgur* relationships. That topic is protection. While much of the protection will be physical in nature, I am also including mental and emotional protection under this term. In

³⁶² Nj, 429.

other words, this section will investigate how the women in these relationships had an active role in looking out for the other woman's wellbeing.

This section on how love in *mæðgur* relationships was understood through protection begins with a mother protecting her infant daughter from harm. This episode is found in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, through the actions Jófríðr takes immediately after she has given birth. Her husband, Þorsteinn, about to travel to the Þing, says “þú ert með barni, ok skal þat barn út bera, ef þú fæðir meybarn, en upp fæda, ef sveinn er” (“You are with child, and [you] shall expose it, if you give birth to a girl, but raise [it], if it is a boy”).³⁶³ Disliking this situation, Jófríðr speaks out against his decision; “Þorsteinn svarar: “Veizt þú skaplyndi mitt,” segir hann, “at eigi mun hlýðisamt verða, ef af er brugðit”” (Þorsteinn answers: “You know my *skaplyndi*,” he says, “nothing good will happen, if [my *skaplyndi*] is deviated from”).³⁶⁴ It is worth noting that this sentence is undoubtedly a threat to prevent Jófríðr's disobedience, due to the fact that nothing good will come of her disobedience. It becomes even more so when we consider the various translations for *skaplyndi*; it can translate as “mind, temper, disposition”.³⁶⁵ In her translation, Attwood suggests it is referring to Þorsteinn's ‘temper’.³⁶⁶ However, it is not certain whether Attwood is using the term in its neutral sense, more akin to ‘disposition’ or ‘temperament’, or with the implicit connotation of anger that ‘temper’ can also possess.³⁶⁷ I believe either ‘disposition’ or ‘temper’ would be the most appropriate translations for *skaplyndi*, for both can be linked to aggression and could feasibly precede Þorsteinn's talk of the implicitly negative result of Jófríðr's disobedience. Furthermore, by reminding Jófríðr that “you know my *skaplyndi*”, Þorsteinn indicates to the audience that Jófríðr has already experienced his *skaplyndi* and so would be keenly aware of the repercussions for disobedience.

Despite these threats, however, Jófríðr, having just given birth, tells the shepherd to take her new-born daughter to Þorgerðr Egilsdóttir to be raised in secret “ok þeim ástaraugum renni ek til barns þessa, at víst eigi nenni ek, at þat sé út borit... en Þorgerðr skal fá þér fari

³⁶³ *Gunnl*, 55-56.

³⁶⁴ *Gunnl*, 56. For further discussion on Þorsteinn's possible motives for this decision, see ‘Chapter 3: Love in *Feðgin* Relationships’.

³⁶⁵ *CVD*, 538; Cf. *CVD*, 401, for the suggested translation of *skaplyndi* as ‘temper’ under the word *lyndi*.

³⁶⁶ “The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue,” trans. Katrina C. Attwood, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 1, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 308.

³⁶⁷ For example, see *Gr*, 169, 276; *Háv*, 302, 342, 345; *Nj*, 30-31, 87, 105, 420 for their uses of *skaplyndi*. These uses are also inconclusive in what would be the most accurate translation.

vestr þar ok vist um haf” (“and I look at this child [with] these eyes of love, that I cannot bear, by any means, to see it [be] exposed... and Þorgerðr shall procure for you passage across the sea and an abode there in the west”).³⁶⁸ With her eyes full of love, Jófríðr goes against her husband’s wishes and keeps the baby alive, risking her own safety in the process.

Thus, we are told directly that Jófríðr has love for her daughter, through the use of *ástaraugu*, ‘eyes of love’, and so we see *mæðgur* love manifest through Jófríðr protecting her daughter as well as her taking a risk by disobeying her husband. We can also be certain that Jófríðr took a risk, for her disobedience comes to light six years later, when Þorgerðr reveals all to Þorsteinn, “ok biðr hann fyrirgefa sér ok konu sinni þessi afbrigði” (and begged him to forgive her and his wife for this transgression).³⁶⁹ While Þorsteinn does not blame them, Þorgerðr’s request for forgiveness indicates to the audience that there was a perceived risk for their deception.

Alongside this risk to herself, Jófríðr also sacrifices her loving attachment to her child in seeking to protect the child. Indeed, “[k]onur vildu þat bera at henni, en hon kvað þess litla þorrf” (The women wanted to take [the baby] to [Jófríðr], but she said there was little need of this).³⁷⁰ At first, this may appear to be harsh and unloving behaviour, but if we instead consider the circumstances in which Jófríðr finds herself, we know that she cannot keep the child under any circumstance; to keep her child safe, Jófríðr is willing to sacrifice any attachment between her and her child. Therefore, this denial, and sacrifice, of attachment is in itself an affirmation of love. If Jófríðr were to keep the child until Þorsteinn returned, she and the child would become attached over that time, which could result in two scenarios, both of which would involve suffering. The lesser of the two would have Jófríðr send the child away after their attachment to one another, making their separation much harder than if it were done earlier. The second, and more harrowing, would be Þorsteinn returning, while the infant was still there; with his disposition on the matter unchanged, it is possible he would harm the child and Jófríðr. The best option, for both, was the one Jófríðr took. Thus, through this episode, the author shows Jófríðr taking risks and making sacrifices to protect her daughter from harm, all of which can be seen to manifest out of her love for her newborn daughter.

³⁶⁸ *Gunnl*, 56.

³⁶⁹ *Gunnl*, 57-58.

³⁷⁰ *Gunnl*, 56.

We now return to *Finnboga saga*, in which we can observe another form of protective love, albeit less serious than protection from suffering, or death. As we have already seen, Syrpa was married to Gestr and many elements of the marriage pointed towards Þorgerðr and Syrpa expressing their *mæðgur* love through the maintenance of contact despite the marriage separating them. Similar to how Syrpa's marriage to Gestr allowed for that continued contact, Gestr's character once again serves as the focal point, albeit for protection this time. However, we now focus on the man himself rather than his farmstead. Indeed, it is strange that Þorgerðr gives her beloved foster-mother in marriage to Gestr, a man the saga scathingly describes as having little wealth and how he "hafði it mesta kvánríki, því at hann var mannæli mikít ok veslingr" (was largely dominated by his wife, for he was a great fool and wretch).³⁷¹ This is because he does not fall into the typical mould an audience may expect of desirable husbands for one's female relative. In *Bandamanna saga*, Gellir refuses to betroth either of his daughters unless the men "at bæði sé stórauðigr ok hafi staðfestur góðar, kynríkir ok vel mannaðir sjálfir" ("are both very wealthy and have good stability, are of great family and are well-bred individuals").³⁷² Similarly, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, a man who divorced his wife mere moments ago was allowed to marry a young woman for "maðr er auðigr at fé ok gorr at sér um allt ok it mesta mikilmenni" ("the man is wealthy and accomplished in every respect and the most powerful man").³⁷³ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir observes that this marriage "is thus presented as a brilliant coup" for the family of the young woman.³⁷⁴ Gestr, on the other hand, seems to be the opposite of these 'desirable' men; he is poor, wretched, and weak.

So, why Gestr? In what ways could the audience have understood this decision? Perhaps Gestr was chosen because he was the closest in status to Syrpa; they are both poor, for example. Indeed, Miller's remarks on how marriages were supposed 'to be *jafnræði*', or 'an equal match', would support this idea, if they are actually *jafnræði*.³⁷⁵ While this may play a role in Þorgerðr's decision, I would argue that Þorgerðr chose him, for Syrpa, because of his conventionally negative characteristics. It is these same characteristics that allow Syrpa to dominate him and be the head of the household. The word used for Gestr's domination is

³⁷¹ *Finnb*, 256.

³⁷² *Band*, 339-340.

³⁷³ *Nj*, 90.

³⁷⁴ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 40.

³⁷⁵ William Ian Miller, 'Why is your Axe Bloody?': *A Reading of Njáls Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 40.

kvánríki, which translates to ‘uxoriousness’.³⁷⁶ In other words, by having *kvánríki*, Gestr was excessively fond of, or dependent on, his wife, Syrpa. Despite this, I, along with other translations and scholarly works, have instead translated *hafa kvánríki* along the lines of ‘to be dominated by his wife’.³⁷⁷ Despite the differing connotations between excessive fondness and a wife’s domination of her husband, the saga’s intentions behind the use of *kvánríki* are the same; the saga’s author wants Gestr to be perceived in a weak and submissive manner, and that is the important component for this discussion. This word’s only other use in the *Íslendingasögur* corpus is in *Brennu-Njáls saga*.³⁷⁸ Looking for legal support, Flosi is refused by Sqrli, who states that he will support his father-in-law, whichever side he chooses. Flosi responds with “finn ek þat á svörum þínum, at þú hefir kvánríki” (“I find that, by your answer, you are dominated by [your] wife”).³⁷⁹ Both Gestr and Sqrli are depicted negatively through the use of *kvánríki*.³⁸⁰ Alongside *kvánríki*, we also have an example of how Syrpa is the dominant spouse; when Gestr initially balks at the idea of pretending that Urðarköttr was their child, “[h]on bað hann þegja ok eigi þora annat at segja en þat, er hon vill” (she asked him to be silent and not dare say anything other than what she wants).³⁸¹

How does depicting Syrpa’s dominance over Gestr illustrate the *mæðgur* love, as expressed through protection, between Þorgerðr and Syrpa? How is giving one’s foster-mother to such a lowly man recognisable as love? By giving Syrpa to a weak man, Þorgerðr ensures that Syrpa now has a home of her own. From this, Syrpa becomes the de facto ruler of the household and establishes the household in a way that suits her, which we have seen through Syrpa ordering Gestr to enact her will. Therefore, by giving Syrpa to a wretched man, we can observe Þorgerðr’s love through her gifting Syrpa a more comfortable position to live with, compared to the alternatives of continued servitude or injury. Þorgerðr protects Syrpa from such alternatives.

³⁷⁶ CVD, 360.

³⁷⁷ See Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 50-51; “The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty,” 222; Gallo, “The Giantess as Foster-Mother,” 15.

³⁷⁸ This is according to the *ONP*.

³⁷⁹ *Nj*, 351.

³⁸⁰ Lönnroth suggests that Sqrli’s depiction follows the motif of the ‘cowardly host’, see Lönnroth, *Njáls Saga*, 51. For how this could also be indicative of a patron-client relationship between Sqrli and his father-in-law, see Ruth Mazo Karras, “Marriage and the Creation of Kin in the Sagas,” *Scandinavian Studies* 75, no. 4 (2003): 477-478.

³⁸¹ *Finnb*, 256.

In *Íslendinga saga*, one of the *Sturlunga sögur*, we come across foster-mother Arngerðr and her foster-daughter, Guðný, amidst an attack on the building they were sleeping in. No background information is given upon their introduction in the saga, so we are not given any love terms to work with, either. The scene starts with Sturla Sighvatsson, Guðný's father, riding away from the homestead and subsequently describes how, the day after, "nú gera Vatnsfirðingar atgöngu" (Now the Vatnsfirðings make [their] attack).³⁸² Immediately after the foster pair's introduction, "ok er hon varð vör við ófriðinn, slökti hon ljós í skálanum ok hljóp til hvílnnar, þar er mærin lá. Hon tók dýnuna ok breiddi á sik, en meyna lagði hon við stokkinn hjá sér ok undir sik ok gerði yfir krossmark ok bað guð gæta" (and when [Arngerðr] became aware of the un-peace, she extinguished the lights in the hall and ran to the bed, there where the girl was lying. [Arngerðr] took the bedding and covered themselves with it, then she placed the girl beside, and underneath, her along the bedboard and she made the sign of the cross over them and asked God to protect them).³⁸³

What we see here is Arngerðr protecting Guðný in all possible ways. She douses the lights so that they will be less visible to the attackers and then hides with the girl under the bedding to further reduce visibility. While Arngerðr is likely frightened, fear is not the only motivator for the actions taken, for if it were, she need not have remained with the young Guðný. Indeed, Arngerðr deliberately placed herself between any would-be attackers and Guðný, by lying over Guðný. She is willing to sacrifice herself to protect Guðný from harm, as the only available ways to strike at Guðný are from underneath the bed or through Arngerðr. As we saw with Jófríðr's willingness to risk punishment from her husband in disobeying him, Arngerðr is willing to risk her body and life to protect her foster-daughter, indicating the love she has for her foster-daughter. Fortunately, their bed is not attacked.

The reason for this fortune, the saga implies, is God's protection. The saga tells us that Arngerðr prayed to God before it describes how the attackers came in and tore through everything as they went through; however, "í þat eitt rúm kom ekki högg, er mærin Guðný lá í" (in that one bed came no strike, in which the girl, Guðný, was lying).³⁸⁴ If we focus on the saga author's use of *eitt*, we can perceive their implication that God's protection was present, for it is otherwise redundant. While I have translated *eitt* (the nominative masculine is *einn*)

³⁸² *Ísl*, 165.

³⁸³ *Ísl*, 165-166.

³⁸⁴ *Ísl*, 166.

as ‘one’, it can also be translated as ‘lone’, ‘single’, and ‘certain’.³⁸⁵ Drawing on these words’ connotations of specificity, there is the strong implication of this bed being the only one to not be attacked, as if by the grace of God. If we follow this reasoning, the saga therefore suggests that God spared Arngerðr and Guðný from the violence. While this may have been intended as an authorial gesture to God’s love and grace, we can also use it to observe how certain that violence would have been otherwise. If God’s aid was what protected them, then, without Him, Arngerðr would certainly have been struck, and Guðný may have suffered a blow herself. This again illustrates the risk Arngerðr took upon herself in protecting Guðný, because of her love for Guðný. While this fosterage relationship is not described with love terms, there is a definite echo of Jófríðr’s self-sacrificial love in Arngerðr’s actions.

Later in the same saga, we have an affinal *mæðgur* pairing – Gróa and her daughter-in-law, Ingibjörg – in which their reciprocal attempts to protect each other, and sacrifice themselves, reveal the love in their *mæðgur* relationship. This scene arises out of Eyjólftr’s desire “at sækja Gizur ok sonu hans annathvært með vápnum eða með eldi, ef eigi fengi þeir öðruvís sótt” (to attack Gizurr and his sons either with weapons, or with fire if they could not otherwise overcome).³⁸⁶ Amidst the consequent flames, these two women are reunited as they seek a way outside, upon which “Gróa varð fegin henni mjök ok segir, at eitt skyldi yfir þær ganga báðar” (Gróa became very pleased and says that one fate should befall them both).³⁸⁷ This joy does not last long, however.

Þær Gróa ok Ingibjörg gengu nú út at durunum. Gróa bað Ingibjörgu útgöngu. Þat heyrði Kolbeinn grön, frændi hennar, ok bað hana út ganga til sín. Hon kvaðst eigi þat vilja, nema hon köri mann með sér. Kolbeinn kvað eigi þat mundu. Gróa bað hana út ganga, - “en ek verð at leita sveinsins Þorláks, systursonar míns,” segir hon... Sveinninn hafði út hlaupit áðr³⁸⁸

Gróa and Ingibjörg now went out to the door. Gróa asked that Ingibjörg be allowed to leave the house. Kolbeinn grön, her kinsman, heard that and asked her to come out to him. She said she does not want that unless she had the choice to take a person with her. Kolbeinn said that would not happen. Gróa asked her to leave, -

³⁸⁵ *CVD*, 122.

³⁸⁶ *Ísl*, 432.

³⁸⁷ *Ísl*, 439.

³⁸⁸ *Ísl*, 440.

“and I must search for the boy, Þorlákr, my nephew,” [Gróa] says... The boy had jumped out earlier.

What we have in this section are three elements to study, each of which references love through protection despite the absence of love terms. First, we can look at Gróa’s request to the man preventing the house’s inhabitants from escaping through the front door. Despite what she said earlier about the same fate befalling the both of them, Gróa prioritises Ingibjörg’s safety by asking that she be let out, leaving herself out of the equation.

This, however, leads to our second element. Despite Gróa’s intentions otherwise, Ingibjörg seeks to adhere to one fate for the both of them. She asks her kinsman to let her bring someone else with her to safety, otherwise she would stay and perish. Ingibjörg, then, chooses death over abandoning her mother-in-law, here, instead of the easy option of saving herself. We have seen self-sacrifice in this chapter already, and it still strongly suggests that there is love involved. How else should the audience understand someone willing to sacrifice themselves in such circumstances? We also know that Ingibjörg was prepared to die in the blaze, because we later read how “Kolbeinn grön hljóp inn í eldinn eftir Ingibjörgu ok bar hana út til kirkju” (Kolbeinn grön ran into the fire after Ingibjörg and carried her out to the church).³⁸⁹ Ingibjörg remained steadfast and did not budge; she preferred death to living without her mother-in-law.

Our third element comes back to Gróa’s actions, where she again asks Ingibjörg to leave the house voluntarily. This time, however, she adds the qualifier that she must search for her nephew, who, we are soon told, had already escaped the burning building. Again, Gróa ignores her earlier declaration of a single fate befalling them, so as to save Ingibjörg. Why does she mention the nephew, though? If she had needed to search for him, why did she declare the one fate in the first place? Indeed, that would have risked two lives, instead of just her own, in the search for Þorlákr. The key question, then, is whether Gróa already knew that Þorlákr had escaped. Considering the author’s placement of the nephew’s escape so soon after Gróa’s sentence about searching for him as well as the shift in tone with the one fate, there is a strong possibility that the author wanted to portray Gróa as merely providing an excuse to allow her to sacrifice

³⁸⁹ *Ísl*, 440.

herself, thus removing the reason keeping Ingibjörg inside the burning building. While we cannot know this for sure, the relationships that we have observed in this chapter strongly indicate that Gróa cared deeply enough to prioritise the other woman in her *mæðgur* relationship.

We shall now move away from the physical forms of protection we have seen so far and study a scene which displays mental and emotional protection. This episode arises in *Heiðarvíga saga*, in which we come across the slaughter of Þorsteinn and his sons in their home, enacted by a man called Snorri Þorgrímsson. After Þorsteinn and his sons' deaths, the saga reports how:

Kona hans kemr heim ór seli sama dróttinsdags morgun, lítilli stundu eptir þat, þeir Snorri eru brott riðnir, ok ætlar at fœra þeim feðgum hreinar skyrtur; tvær dœtr hennar ungar eru með henni; ríða þær nú at túngarðinum ok stíga þar af baki, ok biðr hon þær at bíða sín þar. Hon gengr heim at bænum ok sér þar vegs um merki; ok þá hon hefir litit á, hverir þar liggja vegnir, gengr hon brott ok stígr strax á hest ok getr eigi um fyrir þeim, hvers hon hafi heima vqr orðit. Þær spyrja, hvat valdi, hon komi svá skjótt aptr. Hon kvað ørendit eigi hafa krafit lengri dvalar³⁹⁰

[Þorsteinn's] wife comes homeward from the shieling that same Sunday morning, a little while after Snorri and his men had ridden away, intending to bring clean shirts to [her husband] and sons. Her two young daughters are with her, and they now ride to the homestead walls and there they dismount their horses; she asks them to wait for her there. She walks towards the farmhouse and she sees there the remains of what happened. When she has seen all who were lying there slain, she walks away and immediately mounts her horse and she does not tell her daughters what she has learned there. They ask, why she returns so swiftly. She said the errand demanded no more time than that.

Maybe the audience is to understand that it was the unusual quiet that alerted the mother that something was awry at home. Nevertheless, she chose not to bring her two young daughters along. She alone goes to discover what has transpired and, upon her return, refuses to say what she had seen; this was a good choice because “[b]era þeir nú líkin saman í kps þar í túninu” ([Snorri and his men] now bear the bodies together in a heap there in the

³⁹⁰ *Heið*, 249-250.

courtyard).³⁹¹ Furthermore, we know the daughters must have been curious about what had happened, since they probingly ask her why she has returned so quickly. The mother refuses to elaborate.

The reason I highlight this scene for love, despite the lack of love terminology, is due to the differences in how sons may have been treated in the same situation; they would probably have been shown the corpses. Indeed, *Laxdæla saga* portrays a mother taking her living sons to the household of the man who slew one of her other sons; ““Veit ek at vísu,” segir hon, “at hér býr Bolli, bróðurbani yðvarr, ok furðu ólíkir urðu þér yðrum frændum gøfgum”” (“I certainly know,” she says, “that Bolli lives here, the slayer of your brother, and [that] you have become nothing like your noble kin”).³⁹² While this is not an identical situation, there is a comparative point in the fact that the mother, here, is shown to have provided her sons with a visual stimulus; they had now seen the home of the man who had killed their brother. Would it be possible for them to simply forget such a sight? Þorsteinn’s wife, however, chose not to give such visual stimuli to her daughters. Admittedly, there is a difference between seeing a heap of the broken bodies of your father and brothers, and the household of your brother’s killer. Yet, not much later in *Laxdæla saga*, we have the depiction of another mother, Guðrún, who presents to her sons the bloodied clothes of their dead father; despite them having been four years old and younger at the time, she reprimands her sons, saying “Þessi sǫmu klæði, er þit sjáið hér, frýja ykkur fǫðurhefnda” (“These same clothes, which you see here, challenge you [to seek] revenge for your father”).³⁹³ Miller comments on this “bloody-token ceremony” and how it “has resemblances to obligation-creating rituals... it also has them with obligations-transferring ceremonies”.³⁹⁴ In this ceremony, the grievant would use this ritual of presenting an object, identifiable as belonging to the deceased and stained with their blood, to determine when vengeance should be taken and could even select a primary avenger.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, the presence of blood was significant, for “blood, or bloody clothing, would serve as well as the victim’s head” in creating the obligation.³⁹⁶ These cases, and Miller’s observations, suggest that sons would likely have been shown the bodies instead of being shielded from them, so

³⁹¹ *Heið*, 249.

³⁹² *Laxd*, 162.

³⁹³ *Laxd*, 170, 179.

³⁹⁴ William Ian Miller, “Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England,” *Law and History Review* 1, no. 2 (1983): 188.

³⁹⁵ Miller, “Choosing the Avenger,” 190-191.

³⁹⁶ Miller, “Choosing the Avenger,” 185.

as to begin the process of vengeance. This is undoubtedly due to how the culture and honour system worked; sons would be expected to avenge, while daughters would not.

Even though the daughters of Þorsteinn would not be expected to avenge their father and brothers, one of the women present would need to inform some male kin of the incident so as to begin the process, and Þorsteinn's wife later does this by reporting the deaths to her kinsman.³⁹⁷ How does this scene portray love within the *mæðgur* relationship, though, when there is so little interaction? Love is observable when we consider how the mother protects her daughter from unnecessary pain and trauma.³⁹⁸ While we cannot tell if the daughters necessarily care for their father and brothers, there remains a strong likelihood of suffering from being confronted with the mutilated bodies of their kin. Thus, the mother is doing what she can to prevent them from suffering, akin to how Jófriðr sent her daughter away in *Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu*, and consequently protects their emotional and mental wellbeing. By having that exchange between mother and daughters, the text offers a brief glimpse as to how a mother could protect her daughters emotionally, rather than physically, showing an awareness of what would make them suffer and a love of not wanting that for them. Such a scenario is a rather serious case in which *mæðgur* love would have been presented to an audience but that does not mean it was unrealistic for medieval Iceland. It could even have been the author's attempt to illustrate how best to handle such a situation. Nevertheless, it shows a mother being loving to her daughters, despite the lack of love terminology.

In this part of the chapter, we explored how love could manifest in the form of protection and, consequently, a concern for one's wellbeing within *mæðgur* relationships. Moving from the saga's use of love terminology to the circumstances in the scenarios, we observed how *mæðgur* women would protect the other woman, often risking themselves in the process, due to the love they shared. While we have primarily discussed the physical forms of protection, we have also considered the mental and emotional protection that could occur between those in a *mæðgur* relationship.

³⁹⁷ *Heið*, 250.

³⁹⁸ We do not know the age of the daughters, but age would not necessarily diminish pain and trauma, so it is irrelevant here.

Less Love

So far, then, we have come across multiple occasions in which the members of *mæðgur* relationships have loved one another and cared for each other through contact and protection. Perhaps the best place, now, is the opposite side of the coin. What does it mean to not be loved as much? By looking at the consequences of a deficit of love, we will see that a lack of love from the mother could break a daughter's chances of a good life.

Starting this section off is the contemporary *Íslendinga saga*, from which we have seen episodes of great love and sacrifice. The episode is as follows:

Þuríður Gizurardóttir svarar svá, at hon unni Halldóru, dóttur sinni, því hæra en Álfheiði, at hon myndi hana þeim einum manni gefa, er þat þætti frændum jafnaðr. En Álfheiði lézt hon gefa mundu, ef eigi þætti ósæmiliga fyrir henni sét³⁹⁹

Þuríður Gizurardóttir thus answers, that she loved Halldóra, her daughter, so much higher than Álfheiður, that she would give [Halldóra] in marriage only to a man who was considered by her kinsmen to be of equal status. But she said that she would give Álfheiður in marriage, if [Álfheiður] was not considered dishonourably provided for.

What can we say about this passage, other than this showing a clear case of favouritism? This partiality towards one daughter comes up when “hóf Sighvatr bónorð sitt ok bað Halldóru Tumadóttur” (Sighvatr began his proposal of marriage and he asked for Halldóra Tumadóttir).⁴⁰⁰ The saga does not simply tell us the family's answer to his proposal, but takes an aside to inform the audience about how much Þuríður loved her daughter, Halldóra, more than her other daughter, Álfheiður, and that Halldóra would only be married to a man considered worthy of her status. This is not to say that Álfheiður was unloved; she was loved, albeit to a lower degree compared to her sister, and would still be married to an honourable man. This was not a bad situation in which to be. The saga, however, makes it clear that there is something different between the two sisters and, hence, they are receiving different treatment. What is there about Álfheiður and Þuríður's relationship then, that has caused these differing levels of love?

³⁹⁹ *Ísl*, 10.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ísl*, 10.

Unfortunately, and unsurprisingly, the saga does not elaborate. The saga swiftly moves on, discussing the events before Halldóra and Sighvatr's wedding, and how "fór Halldóra til bús við Sighvati í Hjarðarholt, ok váru þeira samfarir góðar" (Halldóra, with Sighvatr, moved into the household at Hjarðarholt, and their wedded life was good).⁴⁰¹ The next occasion we hear of Álfheiðr is much later, in which we learn of a man's death in a blizzard; the saga then informs us "Guðrún var móðir hans, dóttir Álfheiðar Tumadóttur" (Guðrún was his mother; she was the daughter of Álfheiðr Tumadóttir); Álfheiðr had become a grandmother by the time we next hear of her.⁴⁰² She could even be dead; the saga says nothing more of her other than her relation to this dead man. Álfheiðr, then, is only in the saga for two scenes, and neither scene elaborates on her relationship with her mother. What does the author intend the audience to learn from this when no elaboration is given?

To answer this, we could attempt conjecture; we might surmise, for example, that Halldóra was older and so received better treatment but, without evidence, the idea falls flat. We could also consider how Álfheiðr chose not to name her daughter after her mother. Indeed, "the name could be given after a family member who had the qualifications, prestige and respect which the family wanted for the child's future" and "would preferably be after one of the grandparents".⁴⁰³ However, "[i]n Old Norse society, names were customarily given by the father."⁴⁰⁴ Regrettably, we do not know if Álfheiðr's husband was alive and so able to name his daughter. Even so, *Brennu-Njáls saga* possesses two occasions in which it is a woman who names the child, rather than the child's father.⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, what we can do is look at how Þuríðr is said to have loved Halldóra *hæra*, or 'higher', than Álfheiðr, when one might reasonably expect *meira*, or 'more'.⁴⁰⁶

In Modern English, speaking of 'higher love' could convey multiple meanings. It could suggest a love for something higher than humans – God, perhaps; it could also be understood

⁴⁰¹ *Ísl*, 11.

⁴⁰² *Ísl*, 472.

⁴⁰³ Sigrid H. H. Kaland, "Children and Society in the Viking Age," in *Children, Identity and the Past*, ed. Liv Helga Dommasnes and Melanie Wrigglesworth (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 58. For how a man asks his wife to name their child after him, if it is a boy, see *Svarfd*, 190-191. For how a mother names her son after her recently deceased husband, see *Laxd*, 169-170.

⁴⁰⁴ Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse*, 170.

⁴⁰⁵ For how a mother and grandmother, respectively, choose the child's name, despite the father being alive, see *Nj*, 46, 149. With the mother, her husband (the father of the child) even asks her what they should name the child.

⁴⁰⁶ While 'higher' is the more accurate translation, 'more' is a more readable translation. For her use of 'more' instead of 'higher', see "The Saga of the Icelanders," 123.

as regarding one's true love over other loves. In this scene, though, it is about a mother and her daughters. By considering that it is being used comparatively, the principal idea that fits the term is hierarchy.

What I mean by hierarchy here is that the mother has consciously placed her two daughters into a hierarchy, with regards to how much she loves each of them. As we have already observed, this has a knock-on effect. By being more loved, Halldóra has only the best of potential suitors; Álfheiður, however, could be given in marriage to a wider pool of potential husbands, and so, by extension, her worth has been lowered. By scrutinising the text's use of *hæra*, we can observe this hierarchy of love, from Þuríður towards her daughters, in which a lesser love results in lesser prospects and a greater love results in greater prospects. As previously stated, we cannot delve too far into the reasoning behind the differing loves, as they will only be conjecture, but we can see the results of those differing amounts of love. Indeed, it does not even matter, for the purposes of this project, whether Álfheiður achieved a marriage as great as her sister.⁴⁰⁷ What matters is that the option of a lower standard of husband, for Álfheiður, was acceptable to Þuríður, because of a lesser love for her daughter.

We continue to see this idea of love and hierarchy in *Víglundar saga*, in which the mother, Þorbjörg, has little to no love for her daughter, Ketilríður. Kalinke observes that "Þorbjörg's hatred of her daughter appears to be entirely unmotivated" but admits that while "one is tempted to seek the key to Þorbjörg's heartless dislike of her daughter in Ketilríður's relationship to her father and in his absolute love for her", it is only conjecture.⁴⁰⁸ Although she admits the speculation is still worth considering, Kalinke makes no decisive move in this regard, despite the veritable trove of information available in this scene when compared to the relationship between Þuríður and her daughters. Kalinke is correct to say that any reasons we can surmise for Þorbjörg's dislike of her daughter can only be conjecture, however, for the saga makes no statement for the reasons behind it. As a result, I, too, will not attempt to establish a reason behind Þorbjörg's aversion to Ketilríður. Instead, I will focus on the results of the low level of love, and thus what we can learn from their *mæðgur* relationship.

⁴⁰⁷ We are not told who Álfheiður is married to; we only hear of her daughter and grandson.

⁴⁰⁸ Marianne E. Kalinke, "Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters: "Hver er að ráða?"" in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 176-177.

The relationship between mother and daughter is first established after Ketilríðr's introduction. We are told that the father "Hólmkell unni dóttur sinni mikit, svá at hann mátti ekki í móti henni láta, en Þorbjörg munum minna" (Hólmkell loved his daughter a great deal, so much so that he could not work against her, but Þorbjörg loved her less so).⁴⁰⁹ Kalinke was correct; we are given no explanation for this low level of love from Þorbjörg. However, this is not enough to conclude that Þorbjörg does not love her daughter; it is possible that she may just be unable to match her husband's extreme level of love. This idea, however, is quickly curtailed, with Ketilríðr recognising that "hefir hon lítit ástríki á mér" ("she has little love-wealth towards me").⁴¹⁰ Undeniably, the text wants to state that there is a low level of love here. Unlike with Álfheiðr, who received a comparatively lower love than her sister, Ketilríðr receives a low level, if any love at all, from her mother. How exactly does this map onto the idea of hierarchy?

If we place Ketilríðr at the lowest level on the hierarchy, considering her low level of love, and relate this to her marriage prospects, we can see some consequences of her low placement. This comes up, soon after Ketilríðr becomes ten years old; "[ö]ngvar hannyrðir vildi Þorbjörg at Fossi kenna dóttur sinni" (Þorbjörg did not want to teach her daughter any *hannyrðir*, at Foss).⁴¹¹ What would the Old Norse make of such a refusal to teach? First, we must understand how important *hannyrðir* are. *Hannyrð*, the singular form of *hannyrðir*, translates as 'handiness, skill, fine work, esp[ecially] used of ladies' needlework, embroidery, or the like'.⁴¹² Jochens describes *hannyrð* as 'needlework', while Larrington uses 'handwork' instead.⁴¹³ Taking these possible translations and connotations together, I will use *hannyrðir* in the broad sense of 'handiwork', as this can cover the various forms of items – mostly textile – that women created and maintained. Indeed, in his exploration of medieval Icelandic education, Patzuk-Russell remarks "that for secular women in Iceland, *hannyrðir* itself could still function as the core of a worthy and prestigious education".⁴¹⁴ We can see as much, when

⁴⁰⁹ *Vígl*, 75.

⁴¹⁰ *Vígl*, 76.

⁴¹¹ *Vígl*, 75. For her agreement that the low level of love results in a refusal to teach Ketilríðr, see Jochens, "Old Norse Motherhood," 212-213.

⁴¹² *CVD*, 239.

⁴¹³ Jochens, "Old Norse Motherhood," 213; Carolyne Larrington, "*Völsunga Saga, Ragnars Saga* and Romance in Old Norse: Revisiting Relationships," in *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Developments*, ed. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012), 257.

⁴¹⁴ Ryder Patzuk-Russell, *The Development of Education in Medieval Iceland* (Berlin: Medieval Institute Publications, 2021), 46.

we locate the word in other sagas; it can be found in *Ásmundar saga kappabana* in which we are told the Danish king's daughter "var fræg víða um lönd af vænleik sínum ok hannyrðum" (was famous far and wide across the land for her physical beauty and her handiwork).⁴¹⁵

Indeed, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir explains how textile production, a primary part of *hannyrðir*, was "a female activity on the whole" and "was not some quaint hobby but a serious business: on one hand, one needed tools and raw material, and, on the other, skilled labour and technical knowledge".⁴¹⁶ *Hannyrðir*, therefore, could require a woman to oversee the various stages of textile production, as it "involve[ed] a range of actors and processes on a daily basis and year-round"⁴¹⁷ This fits neatly with how "high-ranking women... seem to have had a clearly defined role and realm of power *innan stokks* "within the domestic sphere" as heads of households".⁴¹⁸ After describing the lengthy process for textile creation, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir concludes "it goes without saying that clothing and other textile items for household use were enormously expensive".⁴¹⁹ Indeed, "[t]he work that had to be performed in order to cover simple household requirements for textiles would have been quite substantial".⁴²⁰ These suggest that there was a lot of work to be done for *hannyrðir*, and that it was a core element of a woman's upbringing.

Therefore, this importance of *hannyrðir* indicates that Þorbjörg has made a choice to not teach her daughter any handicrafts, an important skillset for her life ahead. This becomes especially noteworthy when we consider what was stated immediately before Þorbjörg's unwillingness. Indeed, we are informed that "[þ]á er Víglundar var tíu vetra, en Trausti ellefu, váru öngvir þar í sveitum jafnstærkir... Þar fóru eptir aðrar þeira listir, enda sparði Þorgrímr ekki af at kenna sonum sínum" (When Víglundr was ten winters old, and Trausti was eleven, there was no one in the district of equal strength to them... Next came those skills, which Þorgrímr

⁴¹⁵ *Ásm*, 342. Many of the sagas that contain *hannyrðir*, or its various inflections, are not from the core genres that I am studying, but this has been used to illustrate how *hannyrðir* was understood. For how *hannyrðir* are linked to royal and clerical people, see Patzuk-Russell, *The Development of Education*, 44-46.

⁴¹⁶ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 82.

⁴¹⁷ Sarah Croix, "Identifying "Occasions" of the Self in Viking-Age Scandinavia: Textile Production as Gendered Performance in Its Social and Spatial Settings," in *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, ed. Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 240.

⁴¹⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 9.

⁴¹⁹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 83.

⁴²⁰ Eva Andersson Strand, "Tools and Textiles – Production and Organisation in Birka and Hedeby," in *Viking Settlements and Viking Society: Papers from the Sixteenth Viking Congress, Reykjavík and Reykholt, 16-23 August 2009*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson, et al. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornleifafélag, 2011), 2.

spared no effort to teach to his sons).⁴²¹ The saga emphasises that Þorgrímr spared no effort to teach his sons skills, and this is followed by Þorbjörg's refusal to teach her daughter any skills. Considering the age of the children and how the sons were unparalleled, the skills being taught were probably those which they would need for the rest of their lives. Trausti and Víglundr were likely instructed in battle and those skills predominantly used by men, while Ketilríðr would have been trained in those skills chiefly used by women, which would have included creating clothes and sails – objects needed by the household.⁴²²

Furthermore, the placement of Þorgrímr's teaching his sons and Þorbjörg's refusal to teach her daughter suggests a comparison; since Þorbjörg comes immediately after Þorgrímr, the audience cannot help but compare the two. This raises the question of duty in that Þorgrímr is teaching his sons masculine skills; was it, thus, his paternal duty to do so? If so, was it Þorbjörg's maternal duty to teach Ketilríðr? Regardless, Þorbjörg refuses to instruct Ketilríðr in these core skills necessary for womanly life, thus lowering her marital prospects; it is not clear why Þorbjörg would allow for a lesser marriage for her daughter but then it is not clear why she does not love Ketilríðr, either. However, it would be clear to the audience that Þorbjörg's lack of love for Ketilríðr resulted in this lack of education; these elements are intertwined. It was only because of her father that Ketilríðr received that education, for “leitaði Hólmkell þangat fóstrs dóttur sinni til Ólofar, at hon kenndi henni hannyrðir, því at Ólof var kölluð bezt mennt allra kvenna á Íslandi” (Hólmkell sought out Ólof for the fostering of his daughter, so that [Ólof] could teach handicrafts to [Ketilríðr], because Ólof was called the most accomplished of all women in Iceland).⁴²³

We can even see, earlier in the saga, that having those skills brought excellent suitors; in Ólof's youth, her father “sendir ok eptir þeim konum, sem hann vissi kurteisastar, ok lætr kenna dóttur sinni allar þær kvenligar listir” (sends after those women, who he knew were the most courteous, and he had them teach his daughter all those womanly skills), so she could surpass all others in handicrafts and other feminine skills.⁴²⁴ As a result, “en þegar hon hafði aldr til, þá völdust til margir ágætir men at biðja hennar” (and as soon as she had come of age,

⁴²¹ *Vígl*, 75.

⁴²² For the various roles women could have had, other than the head of the household, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*; Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*.

⁴²³ *Vígl*, 75.

⁴²⁴ *Vígl*, 64.

many excellent men then came forward to request her hand in marriage).⁴²⁵ Therefore, by having excellent handicraft skills, Ólof was extremely desirable as a marital prospect. While Þorbjörg's choice did result in Ketilríðr receiving a stellar education from Ólof, we should also be aware that Þorbjörg probably did not intend for Ólof to do the teaching. We know Þorbjörg's dislike of Ólof's household for, when her son showed interest in assaulting Ólof, "hon kvað þetta vera vel mælt ok nærri sínu skapi" ([Þorbjörg] said [his plan] was well spoken and in accordance with her will).⁴²⁶ If Þorbjörg wished Ólof ill will, it is unlikely that she would have desired her daughter be taught by Ólof. Therefore, if Ketilríðr had not been trained in *hannyrðir*, she would not have been as desirable a marital candidate, lowering the chances of an excellent suitor seeking her hand. Thus, we are shown by the text how a lack of maternal love could result in lowered marital prospects.

What these two sagas have shown us, then, is how medieval Iceland possessed the perception that there was a hierarchy of love in *mæðgur* relationships, a hierarchy that we are able to observe through the connection between a mother's love and her daughter's marital prospects, as illustrated through the daughter's education. A beloved daughter would be given the best opportunities, by her mother, to obtain a stellar husband. As the daughter fell on a lower tier of the hierarchy, however, the husband was allowed to be of lower quality, as well.

Conclusion

In my investigation, I studied how love was understood to manifest between the women in a *mæðgur* relationship by exploring what few case studies were available and uncovering any patterns. While there has been a recent surge in interest on Old Norse women, there has been no major change in discussing the relationship of the *mæðgur* dyad. In beginning from the topic of love and emotions, though, I have been able to shed some light on this relationship and uncover some aspects of the relationship which heretofore have remained shrouded. Through this study, interesting questions emerged regarding this relationship, all of which highlight the avenues available to scholarship in researching Old Norse women. The questions I highlight here follow two threads of thought. The first set revolve around the sagas' use of love terminology, while the second set materialise from the expressions of love I have highlighted.

⁴²⁵ *Vígl*, 65.

⁴²⁶ *Vígl*, 77.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen love in the *mæðgur* relationships but we have often only had one love term used between the two people. The text does not explicitly inform us that love was reciprocated. Upon further reflection, the majority of episodes we have studied reveal that in fosterage *mæðgur* pairs, it is the foster-daughter who is actively loving and the foster-mother is generally receiving the love. However, with the biological *mæðgur* relationships we have discussed, it appears that it is mostly biological mothers and grandmothers who are loving their daughters and granddaughters. Does this have something to do with how nurturing foster-mothers are often from a lower class than the child they foster? And so was the act of loving another typically understood to belong to the individual of a *mæðgur* pair who was the higher in status? Or should we understand this to mean that it was culturally assumed that a foster-mother would love her foster-daughter, and so was unnecessary to record? This last idea is not improbable, as my database does reflect this by possessing no examples of any older woman in a *mæðgur* pair, other than the biological mother, having a lower level of love for the younger woman. It must be restated, however, that the pool of *mæðgur* relationships to draw from is much smaller than the other three.

With regard to the expressions of love, this discussion has understood love to be a moving force behind the actions that these women took. For instance, a mother's love resulted in her protecting her daughter. However, is it possible to track love as a result of an action as well, and so learn what acts in medieval Iceland could generate love? If we consider contact, for example, can we observe recurring contact creating love between the *mæðgur* women? The *mæðgur* pairs who had lower levels of love from their mothers would suggest that proximity does not inherently foster love but this question would benefit from comprehensive study. Moreover, if we were to consider the topic of lesser love in an expanded sense, with a wider range of sources, would we be able to chart what events could result in a lower level of love?

By using the emotion of love as the starting point, this chapter has discerned new understandings in how *mæðgur* relationships were conceived of within medieval Iceland. Indeed, by starting from emotions, I have been able to showcase some of the manners by which women could express their love for one another. This love could manifest as a desire for contact, as protecting the other, and as an important factor in marital prospects.

Looking at how love manifested as contact in *mæðgur* pairings, I demonstrated how companionship between these women was not duty alone but could possess emotion, too.

To show this, I investigated the scenarios in which contact and love was found. The findings indicate that medieval Icelandic women did not just desire contact with their loved ones but could arrange situations to fulfil that desire. It was not a passive form of love.

In exploring multiple case studies of women striving to protect the other member of their *mæðgur* pair, I noted that this loving protection emerged in multiple forms. It was not only physical protection that one of the woman could provide but mental and emotional protection as well. This manifested, predominantly, in the older woman watching over the younger one, concerned for her wellbeing and livelihood, and keeping her safe. This protection could also be self-sacrificing.

Using an intertextual reading of two sagas, I argued that there appears to be a maternal hierarchy of love for daughters and that the strata upon which a daughter found herself could influence her opportunities for marriage. Alongside this is the concept of womanly education; Þorbjörg did not care much for her daughter and so refused to teach her. This suggested that a lack of maternal love could result in a lack of education which, in turn, could cause lower marital prospects. Unfortunately, these two eloquent and suggestive episodes are the extent of the evidence we possess when looking at scenes of explicit low levels of love in *mæðgur* pairings. As a result of this, the conclusions I draw are tentative for the pool of sources are modest in size. Nevertheless, if we want to make interpretations and inferences, we must use what is before us, and so I have done as much.

Having explored the first dyadic relationship, that of *mæðgur* women, we can now move forward to the next chapter, in which we will explore *feðgar* relationships. In my study of the many relationships between fathers and sons, and the like, I discuss two expressions of love. The first is the 'bed of grief', in which fathers die from grief after their sons' deaths. The second portrayal of *feðgar* love is reciprocal relations, in that love between fathers and sons correlates to the reciprocation that they share.

Chapter 2: Love in *Feðgar* Relationships

This chapter shall be centred around those intergenerational relationships between male family members, or *feðgar* relationships, as I will also refer to them. Unlike the previous chapter's pair, this specific pairing is more common as men, and their activities, are a major focus of the Old Norse sagas. Despite the sagas' attention on men, there has been a general dearth in scholarship as to what it meant to be a man. Indeed, Evans and Hancock note that "a coherent exploration of the works that address masculinities in Old Norse-Icelandic literature... is long overdue".⁴²⁷ As a result, the two of them assembled an edited volume on the topic, *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, so as "to explore the textual performance and representation of masculinities in Old Norse-Icelandic literature and to provide a deeper understanding of masculinities more generally".⁴²⁸

However, only two of the book's chapters deal with the topic of cross-generational relationships between men in the family. One of them is Falk's study on boyhood, in which he researches saga depictions of pre-adult boys. Discussing the future-looking concept of *mannsefni*, or 'a man to be', Falk observes how boyhood, as constructed in the sagas, was "a training period in which [a boy's] potential had to be cultivated and augmented".⁴²⁹ He also notes how a father remarks that "it is his paternal duty towards his sons to 'menna þá' (make men of them)".⁴³⁰ The other work is Hancock's "Male Kinship Obligations", in which she explores some of the roles in intergenerational relationships before moving on to sibling relationships. In her broad exploration, Hancock discerns some of the emotional elements of masculine obligations and notes some of the literature's displays of love.⁴³¹ Even Evans' own book, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*, does not thoroughly discuss *feðgar* relationships as their own concept, instead subordinating these relationships under masculinity more generally; he dedicates one paragraph to what constitutes a good/bad

⁴²⁷ Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, "Introduction," in *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), 1.

⁴²⁸ Evans and Hancock, "Introduction," 2.

⁴²⁹ *CVD*, 407; Oren Falk, "Boyhood, Saga-Style: From *Mannsefni* to *Maðr*," in *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), 33. For the alternate translation of 'a promising young man', which still possesses that sense of futurity, see also the entry for *efni*, *CVD*, 116.

⁴³⁰ Falk, "Boyhood, Saga-Style," 30.

⁴³¹ Jessica Clare Hancock, "'That which a hand gives a hand or a foot gives a foot': Male Kinship Obligations in the Heroic Poetic Edda and *Völsunga saga*," in *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), 223-224.

father and how fathers turn “their sons into socialized men” (74-5).⁴³² It is within Olley’s book, *Kinship in Old Norse Myth and Legend*, in which we come across a chapter dedicated to the relationships between fathers and sons. There, Olley discusses the destabilisation of father-son relationships “and the efforts of saga authors and poets to reconcile these tensions with the patrilineal solidarity between father and son so highly prized by their society”.⁴³³ These works have achieved the important goal of opening up the field of Old Norse studies to explorations of masculinity and manhood. As a result, new avenues are opening up. Indeed, there remains much to be studied and unearthed in regards to what it meant to be a father and what it meant to be a son in the Old Norse sagas and medieval Iceland.

It should come as little surprise, then, that there is very little scholarship on the topic of love within *feðgar* relationships. The main work on this topic is Itnyre’s chapter on emotions between Old Norse fathers and sons, in the edited volume *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*.⁴³⁴ Surveying much material, she covers a broad range of elements within *feðgar* bonds and behaviours, but cannot venture too deep due to that breadth. Furthermore, the history of emotions was not yet established at the time, so she did not have those tools to draw upon. For example, rather than fully exploring grief over a loved one’s death as a topic and goal in itself, Itnyre connects the emotions to the consequent economic loss of the deceased individual before moving on.⁴³⁵ Otherwise, the works on this topic are intermittent. Hancock and Olley both raise the topic of love, in their respective works, but they do not do so in a concentrated manner, for it is not the focus of their works. Even Ármann Jakobsson’s work on empathy in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* uses *feðgar* love (or, in this case, its lack) as a stepping stone to create the context for empathy.⁴³⁶ Thus, a study concentrating on love within *feðgar* relationships is needed to fill the current gap, and this chapter seeks to achieve as much.

By working with love and *feðgar* relationships in the Old Norse sagas, this chapter will add to the growing foundations of research on both masculinity and cross-generational masculine relationships in medieval Iceland, for these elements are intertwined. Understanding how love was understood and expressed inevitably leads to questions of

⁴³² Evans, *Men and Masculinities*, 74-75.

⁴³³ Olley, *Kinship in Old Norse Myth*, 33.

⁴³⁴ See Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre, “The Emotional Universe of Medieval Icelandic Fathers and Sons,” in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).

⁴³⁵ Itnyre, “The Emotional Universe,” 181-182.

⁴³⁶ Ármann Jakobsson. “Egils saga and Empathy,” 15.

masculinity as well as the roles of father and son. However, as these areas are not the focus of my study, some questions will go unanswered and must await further study.

Relationships between men, within and outside of kinship networks, are common within the Old Norse sagas. One may subsequently conclude that there is a consequent trove of *feðgar* relationships with which to explore the manifestations of *feðgar* love. This, however, is not the case. Already emotionally reticent in vocabulary, when compared to the Continent's romances, the sagas generally speak of love in a romantic sense more than in a familial one. What statements of love there are, then, must be fully explored. For example, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Þórhallr is said to love Njáll in an early part of the saga; it is only upon Njáll's death, at a considerably later point in the saga, that Þórhallr's displays of his love for Njáll are made particularly visible.⁴³⁷ A possibly incidental mention of *feðgar* love can help place later events into an emotional perspective.

Therefore, this chapter will be split into two sections, both utilising a love term by which to further explore *feðgar* love and *feðgar* relationships. First, I will study what I call the 'bed of grief', the place fathers go to die after their sons die. This idea has been touched upon by other scholars already but it has not been explored with a focus on the emotional content of the scene; my discussion, therefore, will explore the love that can be found within the 'bed of grief'. This will be achieved through a compilation of case studies, all pointing to this same idea. I shall then move to explore how love could be expressed from one man to the other of the *feðgar* pair through reciprocal actions, such as the provision of supplies. While reciprocity is a well-known cultural element of medieval Iceland, this chapter intends to explore the idea from a new angle, that of emotions and love, so as to illuminate alternative perspectives and so enrich our understanding. Unlike the case studies we have explored so far, this expression of love will explore a single relationship between father and son, and use a range of sources to clarify and illustrate the relationship and reciprocity.

The themes of this chapter were chosen in two different ways. The first topic, that of the 'bed of grief' emerged from numerous entries in the database. Many of these entries, however, do not possess love terminology. Instead, it was the major similarities between them that revealed the pattern of a manner in which love was understood, by the contemporary audience, to manifest. The discussion of *feðgar* reciprocity, our second theme, was not chosen

⁴³⁷ *Nj*, 74, 344, 378, 402. We briefly discussed this scene at the beginning in the Introduction, but will explore the other manifestation of Þórhallr's love and grief in this chapter.

for being numerous in the database. It was instead chosen for how the relationship between the two men noticeably shifted throughout the saga's narrative, whilst also possessing love terminology. In addition, both of these topics, as we shall soon see, have been touched upon by scholarship in the past; I will build upon that scholarship and showcase how much more can be uncovered if we reconsider these ideas from the perspective of emotions. As mentioned in the Introduction, *feðgar* relationships were the most frequently-occurring pairing of the four relationships I am exploring, by a large degree. We should not take this to mean that this relationship was more loving than the other three dyads, though; it instead illustrates the extent to which men were the predominant characters of the sagas. As such, *feðgar* relationships were more common and more narratively developed than the other groupings. Therefore, we can see the prevalence of *feðgar* love terms as simply resulting from the predominance of *feðgar* relationships. Nevertheless, it should come as little surprise that this chapter does not incorporate all of the possible themes of *feðgar* love that were rendered visible through my database. Unlike the previous chapter, much of the discussion in this chapter revolves around biological father-son relationships, with only one example being a fosterage *feðgar* relationship. This follows the general trends of my database also, in that the biological *feðgar* pairing was the most common, followed by fosterage and then other iterations of the relationship. To summarise, there were many examples and themes that I could have drawn upon in creating this chapter on *feðgar* relationship, too many for a single chapter. I thus selected two topics of interest, which have also been previously explored by scholars, in order to explore the Old Norse emotional culture of *feðgar* relationships.

The 'Bed of Grief'

Þá stóð Skeggi upp ok mælti: “Rýta mun göltrinn, ef gríssinn er drepinn”.⁴³⁸

Then Skeggi stood up and said: “The boar shall squeal, if the piglet is slain”.

This short exclamation can be found in *Þórðar saga hreðu*, and what this statement equates to is that the father shall avenge his slain son if the son is killed by another. While this sounds like the start of a discussion on vengeance and feuding, this statement instead serves as

⁴³⁸ *Þórð*, 182. A similar phrase is also found in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans* – “Þá mælti Ragnar: Gnyðja mundu nú grísir, ef þeir vissi, hvat enn gamli þyldi” (Then Ragnarr said: “The piglets would grunt, if they knew, that the old one roared”). See *Ragn*, 210.

contextualisation for the ‘bed of grief’. Indeed, if an individual was killed, a kinsman was expected to take up the case against his kinsman’s slayer and execute justice. However, this act of justice was not reserved solely for a father or son; if neither of these men could seek justice, it could instead be enacted by various male kinsmen.⁴³⁹ In a practical sense, kinship consisted of “making claims on others using the idiom of kinship obligation”.⁴⁴⁰ A man was obligated to find justice for the deceased, along with those injured by another party. If the man took too long to do so, his honour could be called into question. We can see as much in *Bandamanna saga*, in which Þórarinn is reluctant to defend his kinsman from a charge of murder, remarking “Ekki hirði ek þat” (“I do not care about it”) upon being reminded of his kinship obligation.⁴⁴¹ It is only after further convincing and the risk of being said to have acted *lítilmannliga* (“in a little-manly manner”), with the applicable honour loss, that he relents and takes up the defence.⁴⁴² So, it is easy enough for the contemporary audience to comprehend why Skeggi would make the above statement of reacting to a slain son; honour, duty, and expectation bind him to the action. Where is the connection to grief and love, however? For that, we need to first get more context.

Skeggi says the aforementioned sentence, after his son, Eiðr, asks for his father’s cooperation in defending Þórðr, Eiðr’s foster-father, who is being attacked over the purchase of a cloak.⁴⁴³ Although Skeggi does go to Þórðr’s aid, it should be noted that Skeggi has no good will towards Þórðr, despite having previously met with him.⁴⁴⁴ Indeed, “mælast þeir Þórðr ekki við, þó at þeir finnist” ([Skeggi] and Þórðr do not talk to each other, even when they meet each other).⁴⁴⁵ Therefore, we can be assured that Skeggi is not going for Þórðr’s sake, but that Skeggi goes because of his son’s request. Indeed, Skeggi’s above statement, said after Eiðr returns to the besieged Þórðr, suggests a concern for Eiðr’s safety. Skeggi’s concern for

⁴³⁹ For the hierarchy of responsibility for who could be the principal for various killing cases regarding kinsmen, see *Laws I*, 156-160.

⁴⁴⁰ Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 157.

⁴⁴¹ *Band*, 316.

⁴⁴² *Band*, 317. For how Sæmundr is mocked for being slow to aid his nephew, see *Ísl* 95-96. For how Barði is slapped by his mother for sitting in his dead brother’s seat and told not to dare sit there until the dead are avenged, see *Heið*, 254.

⁴⁴³ *Þórð*, 181-182.

⁴⁴⁴ Skeggi did not choose to give Eiðr, in fosterage, to Þórðr; this developed through Eiðr’s original foster-father attempting to cross an unpassable river, almost resulting in the family’s death, with Þórðr subsequently rescuing them. Þórðr then offered Eiðr the opportunity to be fostered by him, to which Eiðr agreed. For further details, see *Þórð*, especially 174-175.

⁴⁴⁵ *Þórð*, 172.

Eiðr hints at an emotional connection, if not fatherly love. Would Skeggi feel grief and sorrow, indicative of love, if Eiðr were to die? So far, there has not been enough evidence to state as such but, to try and answer this, we can look at other scenes in the saga.

Throughout the saga, Skeggi repeatedly attempts to slay Þórðr for killing kinsmen of Skeggi's, only stopping because Eiðr comes between the two men and, usually, allies with Þórðr.⁴⁴⁶ On one of these occasions, Eiðr attempts to make peace between the two parties, by giving Skeggi the ultimatum of either leaving Þórðr in peace or fighting against Þórðr's band of men with Eiðr among them. Consequently, Skeggi says "Þat er líkast, Eiðr, at þú munir verða at ráða, því at eigi mun ek berjast við þik" ("It is most likely, Eiðr, that what you counsel shall come to pass, because I shall not fight against you").⁴⁴⁷ Skeggi is unwilling to risk harming his own son, despite the animosity between Þórðr and himself, and so leaves Þórðr in peace. Skeggi is too concerned about harming his son to wreak vengeance. Miller, in a discussion on the tension and strife amongst kin, observes that "[i]n spite of the stresses that the culture imposed on the father-son bond they rarely led one to oppose the other in such a way as to endanger each other's lives".⁴⁴⁸ Perhaps we could suggest that the tensions impressed upon *feðgar* pairs were not grand enough to force them into slaying one another but I believe that would be minimising the expectations and gravity of the situations, such as Skeggi's. Instead, we should consider that the *feðgar* bond was often too strong for strife to materialise into open hostility to the point of killing.⁴⁴⁹ Indeed, Skeggi's repetition of his concern for his son's wellbeing, in his statement on boars and his refusal to attack, would suggest that there is a strong emotional connection between Skeggi and Eiðr. However, to consolidate that this emotional inference is a sign of love, we shall examine other saga cases of father-son relations to ensure that these *feðgar* scenes portray love.

Indeed, if we can see a paternal concern over filial harm in *feðgar* relationships, what would we see if the sons did come to harm? What if the sons died? Fortunately for us, there are numerous occasions for exploring this avenue. Indeed, it seems only right that we start with *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, within which Egill loses both of his sons and experiences tremendous grief. The reason it is right that we start here is because Egill's grief is followed by

⁴⁴⁶ See *Þórðr*, 189-190, 214, 218, 220, 222.

⁴⁴⁷ *Þórðr*, 214.

⁴⁴⁸ Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 160.

⁴⁴⁹ There are, of course, exceptions. In *Kjalnesinga saga*, for example, Jökull fights and slays his father, Búi, after Búi rejects his paternity; the slaying, however, is unintentional. See *Kjaln*, 43.

the renowned lamentation poem, *Sonatorrek*, which Falk describes as “one of—arguably, foremost among—his masterpieces”.⁴⁵⁰ Falk goes on to say that “*Sonatorrek* is an exquisitely narcissistic, yet also movingly plaintive, dirge, composed as a home remedy for Egill’s suicidal despair at his son’s death”.⁴⁵¹ The suicidal grief that Egill feels is what we are interested in, as it emerges from his love for his sons. Indeed, in discussing Egill and his sons, Sayers observes that “the mutual love is the natural prerequisite for the father’s grief”.⁴⁵² It certainly appears as much, when Egill’s son, Bǫðvarr, is introduced; *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* states “Egill unni honum mikit; var Bǫðvarr ok elskr at honum” (Egill loved [Bǫðvarr] greatly; and Bǫðvarr was lovingly attached to [Egill]).⁴⁵³ Here we have two terms for love, the verb *unna* and the adjective *elskr*. We know, for certain, that love existed in this *feðgar* relationship, but there is little information surrounding this love and its cultural elements. The grief elements, however, soon appear in abundance following Bǫðvarr’s death at sea; the prose on Egill’s subsequent actions is brimming with information and so has been quoted entirely below:

Þann dag spurði Egill þessi tíðendi, ok þegar reið hann at leita líkanna; hann fann rétt lík Bǫðvars; tók hann þat upp ok setti í kné sér ok reið með út í Digranes til haugs Skalla-Gríms. Hann lét þá opna hauginn ok lagði Bǫðvar þar niðr hjá Skalla-Grími; var síðan aptr lokinn hauginn, ok var eigi fyrr lokit en um dagsetrs skeið. Eptir þat reið Egill heim til Borgar, ok er hann kom heim, þá gekk hann þegar til lokrekkju þeirar, er hann var vanr at sofa í; hann lagðisk niðr ok skaut fyrir loku; engi þorðu at krefja hann máls. En svá er sagt, þá er þeir settu Bǫðvar niðr, at Egill var búinn: hosan var strengð fast at beini; hann hafði fustanskyrtíl rauðan, þröngvan upphlutinn ok láz at síðu; en þat er sögn manna, at hann þrútnaði svá, at kyrtillinn rifnaði af honum ok svá hosurnar.⁴⁵⁴

That day Egill heard this news, and he immediately rode to look for the dead bodies; he found Bǫðvarr’s body; he picked it up and placed it across his knees and rode with it out to Digranes, to Skallagrímr’s burial mound. He then opened the mound and he placed Bǫðvarr inside beside Skallagrímr; afterwards, the

⁴⁵⁰ Oren Falk, “*Konutorrek*, “Irreparable Loss of a Wife”: *Egils saga’s* Absent Husband’s Lament,” *Viator* 45, no. 3 (2014): 61. While the scenes I am studying are all located around *Sonatorrek*, I shall not prioritise the poem itself, as discussed in the Introduction. For how the poem’s dating is likely later than generally agreed; see Karl G. Johansson, “The Selfish Skald,” especially 140-142. For the emotional content of *Sonatorrek*, see Markussen, “Poetic Justice”; Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse*; Sayers, “Guilt, Grief, Grievance”.

⁴⁵¹ Falk, “*Konutorrek*,” 61.

⁴⁵² Sayers, “Guilt, Grief, Grievance,” 233.

⁴⁵³ *Eg*, 243.

⁴⁵⁴ *Eg*, 243-244.

mound was closed again, and this was not finished before dusk. After that, Egill rode home to Borg, and when he came home, he then went immediately to his locked bed-closet, in which he was accustomed to sleeping; he lay down and locked the door; no one dared to ask to speak to him. It is said, when they buried Bǫðvarr, that Egill was wearing tight-fitting hose and that he had a tight-chested red fustian kirtle laced at the sides. People say that he swelled so much that the kirtle and hose burst from his body.

From this one passage, there are three interlinked elements of Old Norse culture, and this expression of love through grief, for us to explore. They are the general paucity of emotional terminology, the single use of emotional expression, and the bed of grief.

As Sif Rikhardsdottir has already performed a splendid analysis on this passage, I shall attempt to expand upon her work here.⁴⁵⁵ Regarding the utter lack of emotional terminology in the majority of the above passage, Sif Rikhardsdottir states how the “lack of emotive description induces the reader to visualise the scene” using their own emotional experiences as the foundation.⁴⁵⁶ She further comments that along with the aural void, “[t]he narrative structuring, which ends with the adopted silence of the other characters as well, signals to the reader the momentous emotive significance of the event”.⁴⁵⁷ Indeed, this passage gives us no direct insights into Egill’s mind and emotions; we are not given any emotion words, such as the nouns *harmr* (‘grief’ or ‘sorrow’) or *skaði* (‘harm’ or ‘loss’), to use as a foundation for our understanding. We, as an audience, must piece together the layers of meaning present in the scene in order to comprehend the scene. As such, I would like to specifically highlight two aspects of Bǫðvarr’s burial for discussion, that is, the scene’s aural and emotional void.

Put simply, the sequence of events is as follows: the body is found, the mound is opened, the body is placed inside, the mound is closed; and this is all completed by dusk. Initially, this does not seem irregular. However, the concluding remark that it took until nightfall raises a point for readers to notice; namely, that this is worth noticing. Indeed, each of the locations that Egill travels to/from are quite close (all within approximately 6km of each other) and yet it took Egill until dusk to collect the body, travel to his father’s grave, and bury his son in an already-made mound.⁴⁵⁸ How could this be? It is important, here, to remember

⁴⁵⁵ See Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, chs. 2-3.

⁴⁵⁶ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 72.

⁴⁵⁷ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 73.

⁴⁵⁸ See *ISM*.

that Iceland has an extreme day/night cycle, where summer daylight lasts for approximately 20 hours of the day, which the saga tells us it currently is, exacerbating this incredible length of time we are told it takes Egill to bury his son. Furthermore, we also know that Egill is not alone as he buries Bǫðvarr, despite the overwhelming sense that the saga portrays, as it states “þá er þeir settu Bǫðvar niðr” (when they buried Bǫðvarr).⁴⁵⁹ This means that Egill would have had help to both open and close the mound, meaning that the work would have been completed quicker than if Egill was alone. Once again, we should consider what the saga is not telling us about the actions surrounding the burial, as there is presumably a surplus of time to account for. Unfortunately, Sif Ríkhardsdóttir is correct in stating that the prose only provides the “framework that the reader must imbue with feeling” and, as we have here, activity.⁴⁶⁰ From this scene, we can only speculate at what Egill did at the burial; he may have cried or become angry or behaved stoically. These speculations, however, are inconclusive at best without any evidence. Therefore, it is prudent that we look elsewhere to fill the gaps.

Moving from the aural and emotional void that readers are likely to fill with their personal feelings, we shall move to examine Egill’s major act indicative of emotion, that is, his clothes bursting forth from his body as a result of bodily swelling. Indeed, in maintaining that void the saga does not describe the swelling in Egill’s activities, but rewinds after the sequence to remark on how people said that he swelled at the burial. Still, we are told little. We learn that he swelled but we are given no clear explanation. We are not given any reactions by the onlookers, either, as to whether such displays of emotion were culturally unacceptable, or an expected reaction. Again, we can surmise with what we have but that may lead us to conclude from our own expectations. Instead, let us look back to the scene from *Brennu-Njáls saga*, with which this thesis started, to compare the men’s physical outbursts.

Upon hearing the news of his foster-father’s death by being burned alive, Þórhallr “þrútnaði allr ok blóðbogi stóð ór hvárritveggju hlustinni, ok varð eigi stóðvat, ok fell hann í óvit, ok þá stóðvaðisk” (swelled all over and a gush of blood streamed out of both ears, and it could not be stopped, and he fell unconscious, and then it stopped).⁴⁶¹ Perhaps Egill too fell unconscious and that is why he took the whole day for his journey. Nevertheless, unlike Egill, Þórhallr did not destroy his clothes in the process of swelling up, but had blood pour from his

⁴⁵⁹ *Eg*, 243.

⁴⁶⁰ Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 78.

⁴⁶¹ *Nj*, 344.

ears, and he was a foster-son rather than a father. However, the primary shared element of swelling is here and, also, it is the result of one man of a *feðgar* pair losing the other half. More importantly, *Brennu-Njáls saga* gives us extra information to work with; we get viewpoints regarding the event. Immediately after his explosion of blood, “stóð hann upp ok kvað sér lítilmannliga verða” ([Þórhallr] stood up and said that he had behaved in a little-manly manner).⁴⁶² The people with him tried to reassure him; “[þ]eir sǫgðu, at engi mundi virða honum þetta til skammar, en hann kvað ekki mega taka fyrir þat, hvat men mælti” (they said that nobody would regard that as shame for him, but he said that nothing would be able to stop what people say).⁴⁶³ The onlookers, and Þórhallr himself, offer two viewpoints as to how this scene, and male displays of grief, can be understood. Þórhallr’s behaviour could be either shameful and little-manly, or it could not be. How can one action evoke such opposing views? Why would such behaviour be considered shameful?

Fortunately, Miller has already covered some of these bases. Within his overview of *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Miller discusses these questions by observing how Þórhallr’s behaviour could “prompt as much shame as embarrassment”.⁴⁶⁴ The resulting opinions would depend on who witnessed, or heard about, the event. Miller goes on to state that Þórhallr’s friends “are telling him that his swelling, bleeding, and fainting are the stuff of mere ‘embarrassment’, not shame”.⁴⁶⁵ So, for his friends, this bloody expulsion was not a shameful act but just an embarrassing episode that will be soon forgotten. However, Þórhallr “knows the agonistic world in which he lives, a world of highly competitive honor and shame. People, not even enemies, will use his swelling and seizure to make jokes at his expense”.⁴⁶⁶ It is unsurprising, then, that Þórhallr expects to lose honour through being the victim of ridicule and mockery. But why does expelling blood from one’s body deserve derision? Is it simply an amusing image or is there more to it?

To aid us in answering this scenario, which will consequently illuminate our scene in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, we can look to some of the scholarship that has been researched on the concept of the mind in Old English texts, as they can serve as a comparable entity for

⁴⁶² *Nj*, 344.

⁴⁶³ *Nj*, 345.

⁴⁶⁴ Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 241.

⁴⁶⁵ Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 241.

⁴⁶⁶ Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 241. For how men would monitor other men’s behaviour and how it compared to the masculine ideal, see Evans, *Men and Masculinities*, 44.

our discussion on physical swelling. In his work, Mize notes that “[m]any linguistic and literary traditions commonly represent the mind as a container” and that this includes Old English poetry in which this concept is common.⁴⁶⁷ Lockett uses this idea and draws from the so-called hydraulic model, in which fluids (representative of emotions) move within a pressurised system, to suggest that Old English peoples generally accepted that “the mind is corporeal, localized in or near the heart, and subject to spatial and thermal changes”.⁴⁶⁸ For the Old English peoples, it was not a metaphor but their real understanding of how the body worked.⁴⁶⁹ Matto, however, believes that Lockett’s focus on the hydraulic model, and its use of pressure, “as opposed to a more general schema” such as Mize’s, leads Lockett into prioritising hydraulic metaphors of pressure to fit her argument.⁴⁷⁰ While I stand with Matto’s critique of Lockett’s work, I would like to combine Mize’s more general model of the mind as a container with Lockett’s historically-oriented model of a corporeal mind in the torso that Old English people accepted, so as to help our understanding of why Þórhallr’s bloody expulsion could be mocked.⁴⁷¹

So, for the Old English conceptualisation of the mind, Lockett sums up the mental and physiological phenomena as follows: “[a]n intense thought or emotion is analogous to a source of heat energy”, thus providing heat to the container in which the thought/emotion resides (chest cavity), which may result in the container becoming too ‘hot’ and expanding.⁴⁷² However, it is possible that “the internal pressure may become so intense that it threatens to rupture the walls of the container” after a prolonged period of intense emotions and thoughts.⁴⁷³ Is this rupturing what we see with Þórhallr? Lockett explores Þórhallr’s scene and believes as much, concluding that “[a] certain amount of shame is nonetheless attached to

⁴⁶⁷ Britt Mize, “The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old English Poetry,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006): 57.

⁴⁶⁸ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 12-13. Also see Michael Matto, “A War of Containment: The Heroic Image in The Battle of Maldon,” *Studia Neophilologica* 74, no. 1 (2002): 68.

⁴⁶⁹ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 424.

⁴⁷⁰ Michael Matto, “Vernacular Traditions: Exploring Anglo-Saxon Mentalities,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 1 (2016): 102. For how the hydraulic model tends to portray emotions as passive, through them happening to us, see Robert C. Solomon, *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions are Really Telling Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 12.

⁴⁷¹ For a discussion on where in the body the medieval Icelandic self exists, via the consideration of transforming bodies, see Ármann Jakobsson, “Watch Out for the Skin Deep: Medieval Icelandic Transformations,” *Arts* 12, no. 1 (2022).

⁴⁷² Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 63.

⁴⁷³ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 73.

such an unbridled outward display of grief”.⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, Lockett observes this sentiment recurring throughout the Old English corpus of poetry, in that a man “ought to keep the contents of his breast locked up in situations in which speaking and weeping would be shameful or detrimental to his relationships with other men and hence to his reputation”.⁴⁷⁵ The mind-as-container model, then, follows the saga’s account of how Þórhallr is concerned with a loss to his reputation because of his expulsion of fluids. Does knowing that this historical model of mind-as-container probably existed in medieval Iceland help understand how Þórhallr’s specific expression could deserve mockery? Somewhat, for Þórhallr’s expression was possibly shameful but is that due to it being grief or the intensity of the emotion? Or both?

We are given no context other than that it could be perceived as ‘little-manly’ to have such a display of emotion. So, there is not enough information in *Brennu-Njáls saga* to clarify Egill’s display. However, we can compare Þórhallr’s little-manly behaviour with a little-manly scene in *Víglundar saga*, in which the eponymous protagonist considers murdering the sleeping husband of the woman he loves; this episode can provide insight. Before Víglundr can do anything to the husband, however, his friend tells him: “Varastu... ok ger ekki þat fordæðuverk at drepa sofanda mann. Lát þú öngvan á þér finna, at þú hafir hug á konu þessi, ok berr þik sem karlmannligast” (“Be on your guard... and do not perform that deplorable deed of killing a sleeping man. Let no one find out about you, that you have feeling[s] for this woman; behave like the manliest [of men]”).⁴⁷⁶ According to his friend, Víglundr was about to fail in maintaining an element of his maleness in showing others his emotions regarding a married woman; no matter how badly he wanted to be with this woman, no one could know he held such extreme feelings and so he was not meant to show them. This saga episode suggests, then, that in order to conform to medieval Icelandic ideals of masculinity, Víglundr would have to hide his emotions for this woman, if not his emotions entirely.

Let us, then, return to Þórhallr’s incident. If the manliest behaviour for Víglundr was to not show his emotions, then perhaps it is the same for Þórhallr. It would, thus, be most manly of him to not show his emotions regarding Njáll’s death. Considering Þórhallr’s concern that

⁴⁷⁴ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 147.

⁴⁷⁵ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 80-81. Mize also notes this Old English idea of the mind needing to be a secure container because of the risks of harm and/or shame in the public world. However, Mize does not regard it as a specifically male requirement. See Mize, “The Representation of the Mind”, especially 74.

⁴⁷⁶ *Vígl*, 109.

others will view his behaviour as ‘little-manly’, it seems that he believes he has failed in maintaining a manly demeanour, and can now be mocked for being unmanly. But what about his friends? Why do they not also see it as unmanly? Perhaps it is simply because they are friends and understand Þórhallr; as such, they do not wish to mock their own friend. Alternatively, what if Þórhallr’s behaviour was both manly and unmanly? He both held his intense emotions inside and expressed them, making him perform both a manly act and an unmanly one. Lockett describes, in her model, how the container can rupture if the pressure becomes too much. Þórhallr’s emotions run too high too fast and his body, unable to find a suitable outlet in time, begins rupturing, despite his efforts; he cannot hold these emotions inside, as his body can only swell so much. It is only when he falls unconscious, and can no longer feel his emotions, that the bleeding and swelling subside. Therefore, perhaps his allies telling him that his behaviour was not shameful was a result of his visible struggle to retain the emotional agitation; others, however, would not have seen this struggle and so would mock the end result. Also, even if others did hear about Þórhallr’s manly struggle, they could still focus upon his unmanly expression. While Þórhallr’s explosive emotional expression over his foster-father’s death arose from his grief and love for Njáll, its inappropriateness opened him to mockery for unmanly behaviour, despite his attempts to remain stoic.

Let us now return to Egill and his own explosive response, in which his chest swells and clothes burst from his body. As we observed earlier, there was no direct indicators as to how Egill’s behaviour was perceived nor to what emotions Egill actually felt. Þórhallr’s episode, however, sheds much-needed light on emotional expression in *feðgar* relationships and indicates that Egill likely felt the same as Þórhallr did. Egill may not have expelled liquid, as Þórhallr did, showing his capacity to keep emotions in check, but his efforts were plain to see; his clothes burst from his body. As a result of this medically-dubious scene, the audience would get a strong impression of Egill’s pain and concurrent emotions; they could understand that the swelling was symbolic for visible displays of emotion. Nevertheless, there is yet more to be explored with regard to Egill’s grief, and grief in other *feðgar* relationships.

We now come to what I have termed the ‘bed of grief’, the bed upon which men go out of their inability to process their grief, usually resulting in their death. Soon after the passage I quoted, we garner more details regarding Egill’s retreat from everyone. In response to Egill’s self-isolation, his wife summons his daughter, Þorgerðr, to help; she subsequently joins his self-imposed starvation and he soon asks her “Hver ván er, at ek muna lifa vilja við

harm þenna?” (“What hope is [there], that I would want to live with this sorrow?”).⁴⁷⁷ Here we are granted an insight into Egill’s thoughts, through a vocalisation of his emotional state, that is, sorrow, and how it is terrible enough for him to seek death. This is not the first time the saga has such an episode of sorrow, though. Indeed, it also happened to Egill’s grandfather, Kveld-Úlfr, after he lost his son, Þórólfr; we are told “Kveld-Úlfr spurði fall Þórólfs sonar síns; varð hann hryggr við þessi tíðendi, svá at hann lagðisk í rekkju af harmi ok elli” (Kveld-Úlfr heard of the death of his son, Þórólfr; he was so grieved by these tidings, that he took to his bed from sorrow and old age).⁴⁷⁸ Like Egill, Kveld-Úlfr struggled with the death of his son and retreated to his bed, out of *harmr*, or ‘grief’. Sif Ríkhardsdóttir notices this, too, and remarks how this intertwining of episodes and their emotional content “acts as a map which guides the reader in the interpretation of events and the characters’ responses”.⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, if Kveld-Úlfr grieved for his deceased son, it is highly likely that Egill is grieving for his beloved Bǫðvarr, too.

Rather than love, Itnyre would argue that we should also consider the economic loss of Bǫðvarr’s death as a factor of Egill’s grief. She argues that “the diminished economic support represented by the loss of grown sons must be considered an important factor in the sagas’ portrayal of paternal grief”.⁴⁸⁰ While there probably was a loss in economic terms for the household, current as well as future, the saga provides little evidence for such a conclusion. It is true that Bǫðvarr dies while transporting wood back to Egill’s home, and that his death would result in a lack of support and reciprocation.⁴⁸¹ However, those factors are wholly inadequate in explaining why Egill spent approximately 20 hours burying his son before self-imposed starvation, and so shall not be included.

Nevertheless, with Kveld-Úlfr’s grieving, we also have a comment from his other son that indicates a cultural viewpoint, while Egill’s does not, so we can perhaps map this to Egill’s scene too. His son says “at allt var annat athœfiligra en þat, at auvirðask ok leggjask í kǫr” (that all other things were [more] fitting than to become worthless and bedridden).⁴⁸² This

⁴⁷⁷ Eg, 245.

⁴⁷⁸ Eg, 60.

⁴⁷⁹ Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 72.

⁴⁸⁰ Itnyre, “The Emotional Universe,” 182.

⁴⁸¹ Eg, 242-243.

⁴⁸² Eg, 60.

suggests that it was unacceptable for a man to take to bed after the loss of his sons, yet there are two examples of it within a single saga.

Scholars have argued that this ritual of going to bed is specifically due to old age. Indeed, Miller observes that “the sagas suggest that old men take to bed out of grief for the loss of a loved one and despair for their inability to avenge them properly”.⁴⁸³ In so doing, the old man “announced he was no longer a player in the game” of honour, reputation, and vengeance.⁴⁸⁴ It is unsurprising, then, that Kveld-Úlfr’s son was frustrated; his father was accepting his old age and giving up on revenge. However, I think Miller’s scope is too limited here. He believes that it is Egill and Kveld-Úlfr’s age and inability to avenge which is causing them to retreat to the bed of grief but I posit that it is primarily their inability to avenge a loved one which results in them going to bed. Nevertheless, their age may play a part in this inability. It is true that Kveld-Úlfr may be quite old, but the reason that he cannot claim justice is that it was King Haraldr who had slain his son.⁴⁸⁵ Like Egill, Kveld-Úlfr had no chance of claiming vengeance or compensation; how is Egill supposed to seek compensation or retribution against the ocean?

Looking at this inability to claim vengeance, we shall investigate the other instances of the ‘bed of grief’, where men lost their sons and struggled, so as to further prove that this was a known cultural ritual as well as to further understand this cultural phenomenon in which grief, love, and *feðgar* relationships intertwine. The other sagas I will explore include *Heiðarvíga saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfs*, *Gull-Þóris saga*, and, with the father’s death instead of the son’s, *Brennu-Njáls saga*.

In *Heiðarvíga saga*, we come across the same Norse word for grief we have seen already, *harmr*, in Guðmundr, another father who loses his son and withdraws to his bed. We also know that he is old, because his character introduction tells us explicitly that he had been the bravest of men but had come into old age by the time of this saga’s setting. We are not told of his love for his son, or vice versa, but his actions follow that of Egill and Kveld-Úlfr, suggesting that there was indeed love there. Upon hearing of his son’s death, “[b]essi fregn

⁴⁸³ Miller, “Emotions and the Sagas,” 103.

⁴⁸⁴ William Ian Miller, *Losing It: In which an aging Professor laments his shrinking Brain, which he flatters himself formerly did him Noble Service* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 130. Also see Ármann Jakobsson, “The Specter of Old Age: Nasty Old Men in the Sagas of Icelanders,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104, no. 3 (2005).

⁴⁸⁵ *Eg*, 54.

fær Guðmundi svá mikils harms, at hann gengr þegar til búðar sinnar ok leggsk” (this news affects Guðmundr with such great grief, that he goes immediately to his booth and lies down).⁴⁸⁶ Soon after his withdrawal to his bed, we are told that “[l]eggsk þessi harmr svá mjök á Guðmund, at hann lifir eigi lengr en mánuð” (this grief lies so greatly on Guðmundr that he lives no longer than a month).⁴⁸⁷ The wording of his death makes it clear that the grief resulted in Guðmundr’s death. Incapable of claiming vengeance for his son, Guðmundr retreats to bed and subsequently dies because of his grief.

Þorgrímr, of *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*, does not have love explicitly attributed to him, regarding his sons, but he acts similarly to the fathers we have seen so far. Upon finding his sons’ corpses, Þorgrímr had no idea as to who had perpetrated the slaughter and, thus, “[b]ar Þorgrímr mikinn harm eptir sonu sína” (Þorgrímr bore great sorrow [for] his sons).⁴⁸⁸ Once again, we see the use of *harmr* for the grief over dead sons. Furthermore, this saga implicitly suggests that Þorgrímr had the capabilities to attain vengeance for his sons as the main cause for his inability to do so is that he does not know who killed his sons, resulting in his grief. And so, unable to find the killers, we are told how the eponymous “Gunnar frétti það, að Þorgrímr var dauðr; hafði hann sprungið af harmi eptir sonu sína” (Gunnar heard that Þorgrímr was dead; he had died from sorrow for his sons).⁴⁸⁹ Like the other fathers, Þorgrímr was unable to claim vengeance. Furthermore, while this case study does not mention a bed, it is not difficult to consider that there was one, just unmentioned, for him to waste away in, considering the similarity of these examples.

Drawing from a fantastical scene, we can find a father who bucks the trend in expressing his grief for a son but can, tentatively, still be understood through the lens of love and grief, in *Gull-Þóris saga*. Here, there is another lack of love, and grief, terminology for their relationship but there are contextual clues to suggest love’s presence. Indeed, the saga states:

Þóri brá svá við þessi tíðindi, er hann frétti, at hann hvarf á brott frá búi sínu, ok vissi engi maðr, hvat af honum væri orðit eðr hann kom niðr, en þat hafa menn fyrir satt, at hann hafi at dreka orðit ok hafi lagizt á gullkistur sínar.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ *Heið*, 254.

⁴⁸⁷ *Heið*, 254.

⁴⁸⁸ *GunnK*, 356.

⁴⁸⁹ *GunnK*, 374.

⁴⁹⁰ *GullÞ*, 226.

Pórir was so startled when he heard these tidings that he left his farm and no one knew what happened to him nor where he went, but people thought he had turned into a dragon and had lain down on his gold chests.

Along with the lack of love terms, Pórir neither dies nor goes to bed, as we have explored so far; he instead becomes a dragon and finds a lair. How then could this be said to follow the bed of grief? The elements needed to answer that question are Pórir's transformation and his gold chests. Indeed, transforming into a dragon seems a bit extraordinary for our goals, that is, until we contemplate it in a different light. In one vein, it may be useful to compare this to Egill and Þórhallr's physical swelling and consider it as a supernatural manifestation of physical alteration in response to heightened emotion; in other words, Pórir's body may have changed shape out of the grief he feels. Alternatively, it may be better to conceive of this transformation as a death of some kind for Pórir, as he has shed his human form. If we follow the idea of death by grief, this can still follow it, as Pórir has been affected by the news of his son's death and subsequently 'dies' from it, leaving behind something that is no longer human. And the gold? While not immediately obvious, the chests of gold here can be construed as the bed of grief. Kennings have called gold the 'serpent's lair' and, so, the chests here can be viewed as the bed of a dragon. Following that line of thought, dragon-Pórir lays upon his chests, as if they were a resting place, a bed.

Before moving to *Brennu-Njáls saga*, we must take a short detour to discuss the deaths so far, and why Egill escaped that fate. Some of the scholars who have explored Egill's retreat to his bed out of grief have claimed that he was not seriously seeking death for he did not actively kill himself. They believe that his self-imposed starvation in a locked room was a melodramatic and attention-seeking performance, and that he expected to receive intervention from the onlookers.⁴⁹¹ I, however, would like to consider Egill's predicament alongside the examples we have explored so far in order to reach a more holistic understanding. In other words, I believe Egill, like the other fathers, would have died if it were not for his daughter, Þorgerðr, who convinces him to compose a poem for his dead sons.⁴⁹² As a result, Egill is able to shift his mindset. Instead of being confronted with the task of seeking compensation from the ocean, "Egill complains against Odin, his patron" and receives

⁴⁹¹ Miller, *Losing It*, 151; Ármann Jakobsson, "The Specter of Old Age," 318-321.

⁴⁹² *Eg*, 245.

compensation in the form of poetry.⁴⁹³ Indeed, for Egill “[t]he poem itself comes to stand in the place of the son, much as purses of silver paid over to compensate for a dead kinsmen were understood to be a substitute for the victim”.⁴⁹⁴ Able to claim a form of compensation from his sons’ deaths, Egill escapes the bed of grief and survives.

Moving now to *Brennu-Njáls saga*, we have the inverse relationship, in which the son figure is reacting to the father figure’s death. Unsurprisingly, this relationship is between Þórhallr and his foster-father, Njáll, which was previously discussed in relation to emotional expression in general. We hear about Þórhallr’s love for Njáll early on in the saga; “[h]ann unni meira Njáli en föður sínum” ([Þórhallr] loved Njáll more than his father).⁴⁹⁵ And as we have already discussed, Þórhallr swells out of grief for his slain foster-father, much like Egill swells for his dead sons. Unlike the fathers who died, however, Þórhallr is part of the group trying to prosecute the burners and so does not go to the bed of grief and die; he is able to seek vengeance and justice for his dead foster-father. The next relevant episode emerges during the talks and preparation for the legal action against the burners of Njáll and his family, in which the saga states that “Þórhallr Ásgrímsson tók fótarmein svá mikit” (Þórhallr Ásgrímsson had so great a foot-sore).⁴⁹⁶ As a result, he was eventually forced to rest in the booth, likely on a bed, because of the pain, despite being called Iceland’s third greatest lawyer. Initially, the fact that Þórhallr is in bed may not warrant much attention, other than that he is incapacitated by the boil, until we consider how the boil is symptomatic of Þórhallr’s continued grief. Indeed, Lönnroth suggests that the boil could be indicative of a localised version of the body’s swelling up from heightened emotions.⁴⁹⁷ The reason I specify that this boil is symptomatic of grief, is how this boil manifests in the time leading up to the prosecution. Instead of slaying the perpetrators outright, there has been the protracted preparation for a legal battle, meaning Þórhallr has not been able to resolve the emotions he feels, and so the emotions have begun to build up once again. He has been unable to claim his justice and so has found himself in the bed of grief. Perhaps the most revealing element for how this scenario follows the bed of grief motif is Þórhallr’s response to the legal case being invalidated. Upon hearing of this, “[h]ann

⁴⁹³ Miller, *Losing It*, 149.

⁴⁹⁴ Miller, *Losing It*, 150.

⁴⁹⁵ *Nj*, 74.

⁴⁹⁶ *Nj*, 359.

⁴⁹⁷ Lönnroth, *Njáls Saga*, 112-113. He also remarks that while boils were common in medieval eras, their presence in sagas was uncommon.

spratt upp ór rúminu ok greip spjótit Skarpheðinsnaut tveim hǫndum ok rak í gegnum fótinn á sér. Var þar á holdit ok kveisunaglinn á spjótinu” (he sprang up from the bed and grasped the spear, known as Skarpheðin’s gift, with two hands and thrust it into his foot. There was flesh and the boil’s core on the spear).⁴⁹⁸ No longer willing to wait on the legal system’s form of justice, he seeks redress in the alternative manner of violence, and goes on to start a melee at the Alþing, in an attempt to claim vengeance. His inability vanishes with his acceptance of an alternative form of redress, just as we saw with Egill’s poetry.

Throughout all of these cases, the bed of grief motif has occurred, revealing to the audience the grief involved in losing a member of the *feðgar* pair. This motif has been found in multiple sagas, all resembling one another in how an inability to claim redress for the son’s (or father’s) death results in grief, and probable death, for the one remaining. This inability can manifest in multiple ways, from the assailant being unknown to the assailant being impossible to slay. Alongside the bed of grief was also the emotional expression of a swollen body (part). While both the bed of grief and physical swelling seem to have some negative connotations, the sagas are generally silent on how the audience should understand these responses to grief, leaving further questions to be answered in future studies.

For example, Þórhallr’s swelling is both manly and unmanly, so is it up to the audience members to decide for themselves which they think it is? Is it masculine or unmasculine to go to bed from grief? How did medieval Icelandic men feel about these portrayals of men dying from grief? Was it abhorrent to them? Or was it perhaps an escape from the masculine system?⁴⁹⁹ Also, scholars have noted how the author of *Brennu-Njáls saga* may have been discussing “the inadequacy of law to resolve deep human conflicts”.⁵⁰⁰ Could the saga author thus be trying to show the slow build-up of emotional stifling and powerlessness in the delay between death and trial?

Through an exploration of various saga episodes, we have been able to locate *feðgar* love via the bed of grief. While this concept had been previously touched upon by scholars, they had passingly connected it to emotions, instead focussing elsewhere. Thus, by concentrating on the emotional aspects, I have been able to showcase some new dimensions

⁴⁹⁸ *Nj*, 402.

⁴⁹⁹ For how men may have embraced doom and failure as an escape from the masculine economy, see Basil Arnould Price, “Sufficient Tragedy: Masculinity as Cruel Optimism in *Beowulf*,” (forthcoming).

⁵⁰⁰ “*Njal’s Saga*,” trans. Robert Cook, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 3, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 1.

of the topic as well as highlight some areas for further study. While, on the surface, these case studies and expressions of emotion speak of grief rather than love, it is important to remember that grief typically emerges from loss. Indeed, losing a loved one produces great grief, hence this analysis of grief to show one manner in which *feðgar* love could be found in Old Norse culture.

Reciprocal Relations

Having explored how *feðgar* relationships possessed such levels of love that men were likely to die, or kill, over the death of the other member of the relationship, we will now follow the bond between a *feðgar* pair over time. This section will primarily explore one saga and one relationship, unlike much of this project, for it is uncommon to be able to follow a relationship so readily over the course of a saga. Indeed, we will chart the relationship over the course of the saga, that is, *Bandamanna saga*, in order to observe how their rapport shifts as they reciprocate actions and gifts with one another. Such reciprocal acts, however, were not limited to *feðgar* pairs, nor were they restricted to kinsmen; they were an integral component of medieval Icelandic culture. Thus, before we fully discuss *Bandamanna saga's* father and son, we must first have a foundational knowledge of what the giving of gifts entailed.

Indeed, the giving of gifts and services in medieval Iceland was never a simple transaction; it was the creation, or maintenance, of a relationship complicated by what was socially deemed as appropriate. As Miller notes, regarding the complexity of giving gifts, “every situation presents its own set of particular circumstances that might alter what counts as a violation of proper behavior or what can be excused or understood as an imaginative and justifiable response to a special situation”.⁵⁰¹ Despite the variability and nuances of the giving of gifts in medieval Iceland, scholars have succeeded in drawing some conclusions about gift-giving in medieval Iceland.

Overall, these conclusions point to the establishment of relationships and the “determination of status” as being the paramount element of gift exchange.⁵⁰² In one way, “[g]ift-giving was a tool to arrange friendships, and then later to strengthen and renew

⁵⁰¹ William Ian Miller, “Is a Gift Forever?,” *Representations* 100, no. 1 (2007): 15.

⁵⁰² William Ian Miller, “Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid: Case Studies in the Negotiation and Classification of Exchange in Medieval Iceland,” *Speculum* 61, no. 1 (1986): 24.

them”.⁵⁰³ By giving a gift to another, a relationship was established between the two parties via the expectation of a reciprocal gift, which could occur as object or as service. Consequently, refusing a gift was also a refusal of developing a relationship.⁵⁰⁴ One reason for which a gift may be refused is how the acceptance of a gift “adjusted the status of the parties in relation to each other. The giver gained prestige and power from the exchange. He exacted deference from the receiver and obliged him to reciprocate”.⁵⁰⁵ In other words, the receivers “were under a debt of honor to the giver until they had repaid the gift” through either gifts or service.⁵⁰⁶ It was not only about one’s reputation, though, for the exchange of gifts was also established in the law codes. *Grágás* states that any promised gifts can be claimed “by a verdict of neighbours on the contents of [the promiser’s] promises”.⁵⁰⁷

Nevertheless, it was not only the recipient who was at risk through the exchange of gifts; “[a]t the moment of handing over the gift the giver took a very big risk, the insult of having his gift refused”.⁵⁰⁸ The giver was not safe, even if the gift was accepted, though. If the gift was finally reciprocated, the reciprocator “could choose the insult of the too hasty return, the sullenness of excessive delay, or no return at all, which, depending on the circumstances, could signal utter contempt for the giver or permanent subordination to him”.⁵⁰⁹ Returning a gift too hastily likely indicated that one did not wish to have a relationship with the original giver, by almost transforming the gift exchange into a mercantile transaction in which no relationship is established; “delayed reciprocation is one of the crucial differences between the norms of gift exchange and the norms of the market system”.⁵¹⁰

Despite the possible dangers of gift exchange, it was necessary for the establishment and maintenance of relationships between the various farmsteads of medieval Iceland, allowing people to function and survive.⁵¹¹ It could even be mutually beneficial. As Landro

⁵⁰³ Viktória Gyönki, “Conflicts Regarding Hospitality in Old Norse Sources,” in *Food Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Viktória Gyönki and Andrea Maraschi (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 208.

⁵⁰⁴ Gyönki, “Conflicts Regarding Hospitality,” 218.

⁵⁰⁵ Miller, “Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid,” 23.

⁵⁰⁶ Jón Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 19.

⁵⁰⁷ *Laws II*, 26. For how in medieval Norway anyone could recall a gift if it was not reciprocated in equal value, see *ENL*, 118. Cf. *Laws II*, 26, for how in medieval Iceland a gift could be reclaimed if it was not reciprocated to half the original gift’s value and after the receiver had died.

⁵⁰⁸ Miller, *Humiliation*, 18.

⁵⁰⁹ Miller, “Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid,” 24.

⁵¹⁰ Torgeir Landro, “Gift Exchange, Reciprocity and Alliances in Medieval and Modern Norway,” in *Living Alliances, Leaving Alliances: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Frank Orban and Elin Strand Larsen (Münster: Waxmann, 2022), 21.

⁵¹¹ Also see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Expanded Edition*, trans. Jane I. Guyer (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016), 57,

concludes, “Old Norse poetry and saga literature witness that gift exchange and generosity were crucial in establishing and maintaining friendship, attracting followers, and forming alliances”.⁵¹² Jón Sigurðsson observes this also, remarking how “[t]hese friendships included strong reciprocal demands. The chieftains were to protect the householders and their households... and give them gifts. In return, the chieftains received the householders’ support in their conflicts”.⁵¹³

Exchanging gifts, then, was a complex action for one to take; a single action could be understood in a variety of ways, each of which could result in additional actions being taken. Such variety can be readily found in the sagas. For example, in *Egils saga Skall-Grímssonar*, Egill is angered to learn, upon returning to his home, that his friend, Einarr, had come over and gifted him a shield, and so says “Gefi hann allra manna armastr! Ætlar hann, at ek skyla þar vaka yfir ok yrkja um skjöld hans? Nú taki hest minn; skal ek ríða eptir honum ok drepa hann” (“Most wretched of men he is, giving it to me! Does he intend that I should remain awake and make verses about his shield? Now bring my horse; I shall ride after him and slay him”).⁵¹⁴ Einarr remained unharmed, however, for he had left early in the morning while Egill had returned later in the day. The saga then reports how Egill composed a poem about the shield and that “Egill ok Einarr heldu vináttu sinni meðan þeir lifðu báðir” (Egill and Einarr held their friendship as long as they both lived).⁵¹⁵ Miller provides three reasons as to why Egill may have been offended by Einarr’s gift. He clarifies that, first, the gift was very costly and so “also transferred a considerable risk of inadequate repayment”.⁵¹⁶ Secondly, the gift was made in an irregular manner. Usually, “one got a gift when one went to another’s farm, a gift of hospitality and oftentimes a parting gift as well”; one did not generally go to another’s home to give a gift.⁵¹⁷ Third, and perhaps most importantly, the shield was originally given to Einarr to honour his poetic abilities, so, no matter Einarr’s intent, such a gift “might well have been construed by Egil as a challenge to match Einarr’s poetic skills”.⁵¹⁸ Thus, depending on the context of the gift, it could be deemed an insult just as much as an act of goodwill, despite

for the obligatory nature of gift exchange in medieval Iceland.

⁵¹² Landro, “Gift Exchange,” 31.

⁵¹³ Jón Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 11-12.

⁵¹⁴ *Eg*, 272.

⁵¹⁵ *Eg*, 272-273.

⁵¹⁶ Miller, *Humiliation*, 17.

⁵¹⁷ Miller, *Humiliation*, 17-18.

⁵¹⁸ Miller, *Humiliation*, 18.

one's best intentions. This is a relatively extreme scenario, however, for illuminating the sagas' depictions of gift exchange, considering Egill's violent reaction.

To illustrate a more regular scene of gift-giving, I will move to *Bandamanna saga*, which is the main saga I shall explore in this section; this scene is for describing gift-giving culture, rather than investigating *feðgar* relationships.⁵¹⁹ Towards the saga's end, a wedding is held for Oddr, one of the protagonists, and Ragnheiðr Gellisdóttir. This was only able to occur through the aid of Oddr's father, Ófeigr – who will be part of the upcoming main discussion – Gellir Þorkelsson, and Egill Skúlason. At the event's conclusion, with people beginning to make their ways home, the saga records how “[o]k er veizluna þraut, þá eru menn út leiddir með stórgjöfum, ok var mest fé fram lagit, er Gellir átti í hlut” (and when the banquet concluded, people were then conducted out with great gifts, and it was that most of the wealth was surpassingly placed into Gellir's share).⁵²⁰ Despite his father having negotiated Gellir and Egill's aid, and having given them their reciprocal rewards for their aid, Oddr was advised to give generously to Egill; Oddr had likely given generously to Gellir since Gellir was now his father-in-law. There are two ways to perceive this. First, while Ófeigr had been the one to deal with Egill, it was largely for Oddr's benefit, and so Oddr was expected to also give gifts to Egill. Alternatively, Oddr was being advised to develop his own relationship with Egill, rather than allow a good, and strong, relationship to escape him. Heeding the advice, Oddr gives generously to Egill, speaking of his eternal gratitude for Egill's aid, and so “[n]ú skiljask þeir, ok líkar Agli stórvel, ok binda sitt vinfengi” (they now separate, and Egill likes this well, and they bind their friendship).⁵²¹ The *Konungsbók* version of this scene, however, suggests that Egill may have been expecting some reciprocation; it says “Egill var ekki kátr” (Egill was not cheerful) immediately before the gifts were given to the attendees.⁵²² There is no mention of favouritism towards Gellir but Oddr is still advised to give generously to Egill, which Oddr eventually does. Even this generally positive exchanging of gifts has some areas that are

⁵¹⁹ The *Íslensk Fornrit* edition of this text includes two manuscripts' versions of the saga, *Konungsbók* and *Möðruvallabók*, side by side. *Konungsbók* is supposedly written in the fifteenth century, while *Möðruvallabók* is said to have been written in the fourteenth century. For a discussion on the saga in these two vellum books, and why *Möðruvallabók* should be preferred, see Hallvard Magerøy, Introduction to *Bandamanna saga* (University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1981).

⁵²⁰ *Band*, 359.

⁵²¹ *Band*, 359.

⁵²² *Band*, 359.

unclear as to the expectations of who is expected to receive gifts, and the ease of snubbing possible friends and allies.

Now, this preliminary discussion has looked at the existence of the gift-giving culture and reciprocity among medieval Icelanders, as well as the expectations and duties inherent within it, but there are some areas that have gone unmentioned. The ones of interest to me are kinship and emotions. How do these exactly fit into the reciprocal gift-giving culture of medieval Iceland? Overall, scholars have not placed kinship into the framework of gift-giving. Jón Sigurðsson, however, does discuss these points briefly, concluding that while “reciprocity is equally important in the relationships between kin as it was in friendships”, this is due to how kinship was not a guarantee of support; relationships with kin had to be fostered like friendships.⁵²³ Nevertheless, he does not query how kinship intersects with friendship and gift-giving. For instance, how does a *feðgar* relationship resemble or differ from the typical gift-giving model? Are there any differences?

Furthermore, emotion has not really been brought into the arena of gift-giving either. While Miller mentions how “people enjoyed giving and receiving, and they gave to those they wished to honor and to those they liked and loved”, this is not developed further and he quickly returns to the realm of insult, honour, and challenges.⁵²⁴ The power dynamics and duties of reciprocal gifts are certainly important, yet we should not excise emotions from these exchanges. What emotions are involved in the reciprocal gift-giving culture of medieval Iceland? *Bandamanna saga* has already revealed that Egill was not cheerful because of a gift-giving context, so how much more remains to be uncovered?

These areas I have highlighted as being understudied (how kinship and emotions affect the reciprocal gift-giving culture) are where I would like to focus within this section. Indeed, this next section intends to show how we can observe love in a *feðgar* relationship via their reciprocal actions, and lack thereof. This will also highlight how duty and emotion can occur simultaneously; being duty-bound to someone or something does not mean that one does not have an emotional reaction to it. Therefore, as I will demonstrate, in medieval Iceland reciprocity and emotions were not mutually exclusive; they were interconnected. To do this, we will chart the growth of love in the *feðgar* relationship of Ófeigr and Oddr, in *Bandamanna saga*.

⁵²³ Jón Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 106-107.

⁵²⁴ Miller, *Humiliation*, 17.

Upon the saga's beginning, we are immediately introduced to the two main characters, Ófeigr and Oddr, and are given their general characteristics. The saga says:

Ófeigr var spekingr mikill ok inn mesti ráðagørðmaðr. Hann var í ǫllu mikilmenni, en eigi var honum fjárhagrinn hægr, átti lundur miklar, en minna lausafé. Hann sparði við engan mann mat, en þó var mjök á fǫngum, þat er til búsinns þurfti at hafa... Ófeigr átti son við konu sinni, er Oddr hét; hann var vænn maðr ok brátt vel mennt. Ekki hafði hann mikla ást af feðr sínum; engi var hann verklundarmaðr.⁵²⁵

Ófeigr was very wise and a man of great counsel. He was a great man in all affairs, but financial affairs did not come easy to him; he had great amounts of land, but smaller amounts of movable property. He withheld no food from anyone, even though much of such provisions were what the household needed to have... Ófeigr and his wife had a son, who was called Oddr; [Oddr] was a promising man and he quickly became accomplished as a man. He had no great love from his father; [Oddr] was not a *verklundarmaðr*.

Neither of the two men are given scathing descriptors by the saga author, and they are both given positive images of being accomplished. The only possible negative description emerges from Oddr being described as 'not a *verklundarmaðr*', which others have translated as "disinclined to work".⁵²⁶ However, the placement of that clause suggests that it is being used more as a reason for why Oddr does not receive much love from Ófeigr, than as a negative commentary on him as a man.

If we first focus on the word *verklundarmaðr*, we can begin to see some of the relationship components of this *feðgar* pair. While Ellison's above translation of the term as 'disinclined to work' is viable and reads well, it also takes away some of the nuance encapsulated by the word. If we take the word's components and study them individually, it gives a slightly different picture of what Oddr is and is not. We have *verk*, *lund*, and *maðr* as component words, translating to 'work', 'mind', and 'man' respectively, which would approximately translate to a 'man minded to work' if put back together, as others have translated. However, if we put *verk* and *maðr* together to get the noun *verkmaðr*, the Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson dictionary provides us with the translation of 'a workman, labourer,

⁵²⁵ *Band*, 293-294.

⁵²⁶ "The Saga of the Confederates," trans. Ruth C. Ellison, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 283.

servant'.⁵²⁷ This word, then, gives us elements of physical labour and servitude to consider. If we include that sentiment into *verklundarmaðr*, we now have a man inclined to physical/servile work. Thus, the saga tells us that Oddr is not a man inclined to physical/servile work. However, we know from a little later in the saga that Oddr is willing to do physical labour; he works for three years as a fisherman before moving up to a wealthy merchant. Therefore, what we must take into consideration is that he does not want to do servile work; is this because he does not want to serve another or is it because he wants to get away from the domestic setting, which servile work demands? How the saga talks about his fishing work does not clarify between these two possibilities, as it says that he works in the same group as the fishermen rather than under the fishermen. However, we do see Oddr, later on, purchase and establish his own household; this suggests that he was not entirely averse to the domestic setting. With that in mind, I shall focus more on Oddr's aversion to servile positions.

Before that, however, it is prudent to note that *verklundarmaðr* is also used in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, to describe Grettir. This descriptor emerges when Grettir is seeking shelter while an outlaw; he is sheltered by a kinsman who was a smith. Unlike this busy kinsman, "Grettir var lítill verklundarmaðr" (Grettir was little *verklundarmaðr*).⁵²⁸ While Scudder translates this as how "Grettir did not care much for physical labour", I feel it would be better to, once again, consider the word more carefully.⁵²⁹ This is compounded by the fact that *verklundarmaðr* is being used to describe Grettir. I remark as such because this scene will also be discussed in Chapter 4, in which I mention how Grettir is given tasks unsuitable to his station. As Poole notes, the saga indicates that Grettir belongs to the warrior class, "not the farmer class" and so such tasks are unsuitable.⁵³⁰ Therefore, perhaps it would be better to consider the saga's use of *verklundarmaðr* more in the vein of unsuitable work than physical or servile work.

Nevertheless, Oddr was being provided work unsuitable to him and the text suggests that this was the reason why he did not receive a great amount of love from his father, Ófeigr. But why would the saga author have Ófeigr not love his son for refusing to do such work? Moss's work on fathers and sons in fourteenth-century England can be of service here, as her

⁵²⁷ *CVD*, 698.

⁵²⁸ *Gr*, 173.

⁵²⁹ "The Saga of Grettir the Strong," trans. Bernard Scudder, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 2, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 133.

⁵³⁰ Russell Poole, "Myth, Psychology, and Society in *Grettis saga*," *Alvíssmál* 11 (2004): 11.

work illustrates how fathers, sons, and the family can be interconnected in a loving father-son relationship. While her work is not about medieval Iceland, it remains a worthwhile point of comparison. Moss's analysis of her Middle English sources reveals how "[i]t is clear that fathers are supposed to be treated with appropriate dignity, be deferred to and consulted, and that their sons are meant to serve them and their family. Failures could incur a father's wrath, as well as his punishment".⁵³¹ Taking this into consideration, perhaps the audience is supposed to understand that Ófeigr did not provide Oddr with much love simply because Oddr was reluctant to serve Ófeigr as part of the household, regardless of the suitability of the work required of Oddr.

Furthermore, despite the quasi-negative connotations of *verklundarmaðr*, we can continue to see that the saga does not condemn Oddr's behaviour. A young man disinclined to work could easily be described as a *kolbíttr*, a young man who idles away his youth, often beside the firepit, and yet the saga does not describe Oddr as such. Indeed, the saga says the opposite; it states how by the time he was twelve, "[s]á orðrómr lagðisk á, at engi maðr þar í sveitum væri betr mennt en Oddr" (people said that no man in the area was better accomplished than Oddr).⁵³² Despite being the most accomplished young man in the area, however, "Ófeigr var fálátr lǫngum við Odd ok unni honum lítit" (Ófeigr was mostly cold with Oddr and loved him little).⁵³³ So, being an accomplished man was not enough for Ófeigr to love Oddr. It seems, then, that Ófeigr simply wanted his son to obediently work for the household but not in a way which could benefit from Oddr being accomplished as a man.

Apart from the filial duty of serving his household, perhaps Oddr was also given less love because he did not help his father accrue more economic profit; we are told that Ófeigr did not have much in terms of movable property (in which crops and cattle are included), and so Oddr's reluctance results in less work being done on the lands, consequently providing the household with fewer provisions. Nevertheless, Moss's model along with the saga's account gives us information suggesting that Oddr has not fulfilled his role of serving his father, and the household, and Ófeigr has not shown love to his son. If the saga is portraying love as a commodity that can be given, like a gift, then we can already see the reciprocation, or its lack.

⁵³¹ Rachel Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations in Middle English Texts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 91.

⁵³² *Band*, 294-295.

⁵³³ *Band*, 295.

If a son does not do what his father expects, or demands, of him, then this lack of action is repaid with a lack of love. If love is not being portrayed as a giftable commodity, then the reciprocation for Oddr's lack of work emerges soon after we are told of the coldness in the relationship.

Having grown up in Ófeigr's home, Oddr soon seeks his way out. He goes to Ófeigr for some financial aid,

“ok vil ek fara á brott heðan. Er á þá leið,” sagði hann, “at þú leggur til mín litla sœmð; em ek ok ekki nytsamliga yðru ráði.” Ófeigr svarar: “Ekki mun ek minnka tillög við þik ór því, sem þú hefir til unnit; mun ek ok því næst gera, ok muntu þá vita, hvert fullting þér er at því.” Oddr sagði, at lítt mátti hann við þat styðjask mega, ok skilja við þat talit.⁵³⁴

“and I want to travel abroad from this place. It is thus,” he said, “that you give me little honour; and I am not useful for your endeavours.” Ófeigr answers: “I will not make your contribution less than that which you have earned; and I will prepare it immediately, and you shall then know, what assistance it is for you.” Oddr said that he would not be supported much by that, and with that the conversation breaks up.

This passage reveals to us that a lack of love was not the only thing Ófeigr neglected to give to Oddr; Oddr believes that Ófeigr has given little honour towards Oddr too. This lack of honour towards Oddr would match well with the unsuitable work that Ófeigr wants from him; it is work beneath Oddr's status and so his father's compulsion to do such work would likely chafe at Oddr's honour. We, again, see this same idea in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, in which Ásmundr demands Grettir do tasks that Grettir deems unworthy and, likely, dishonourable for him. Also, Ásmundr connects the success of these tasks and their *feðgar* relationship, stating “leys þú þetta vel af hendi, ok mun þá batna með okkr” (“perform well in this task, and it shall then improve things between us”).⁵³⁵ Oddr's reluctance to do the jobs Ófeigr gives him match Grettir's distaste for lowly work.

Ófeigr immediately accepts Oddr's request but reveals his feelings on Oddr's behaviour and disobedience by telling Oddr exactly what he would be given, that is, Oddr

⁵³⁴ *Band*, 295.

⁵³⁵ *Gr*, 37. For further discussion on this, see Chapter 6: Love in *Mæðgin* Relationships.

would receive money corresponding to the amount of work he did for Ófeigr. Since Oddr did little to no work, Ófeigr would provide little to no funds for Oddr's travels; thus, it was not enough for Oddr to go abroad with. It is at this point some interesting questions emerge, which the saga does not explicitly answer nor can this project properly study. Considering that a *feðgar* relationship has this reciprocal element, which of the two men are expected to first provide for the other? Is Ófeigr at fault for not giving Oddr work appropriate to his status or is Oddr at fault for not working towards the benefit of the household? Did Ófeigr's lack of love for his son prompt his son to become disobedient or did Oddr's disobedience result in lower levels of love from his father? These questions will have to wait for a comprehensive study on the gift-giving culture between fathers and sons in medieval Iceland.

Receiving little help from his father, Oddr leaves for the coast and becomes a fisherman. Over the next three years, Oddr goes from fishing with borrowed gear to becoming a renowned and wealthy merchant, who, soon after, buys land and set up his own household.⁵³⁶ We are then told how “[h]ann var betri af fé en flestir men aðrir, góðr órlausna við þá, er hans þurftu ok í nánd honum váru, en fǫður sínum gerði hann aldri hagræði” ([Oddr] was better with money than most other men; he gave good help thereupon to those who needed him and were near him; but to his father he never gave comfort).⁵³⁷ Here we see a reciprocation of nothing; Oddr received nothing from his father and so he does nothing for his father in return. While the saga directly tells us that Oddr did not provide aid to Ófeigr, there is information in the local geography, which a fourteenth-century audience would likely have known, which shows how cold this *feðgar* pair relationship was. When Ófeigr was introduced, we were told that he dwelled at Reykir in Miðfjörðr. When Oddr builds his household estate of Melr, we are told that it also was in Miðfjörðr. So, the two of them lived in the same region and Oddr helped those who were near him, yet Ófeigr was excluded from those needy people, even though we were already told that Ófeigr was constantly on the edge of financial ruin. This exclusion becomes even more apparent when we look at the distance between their households; they are approximately two kilometres apart, as the crow flies.⁵³⁸ There is a river between them, which would make the journey a bit more arduous, but this does not mean it

⁵³⁶ In her translation's introduction, Ellison aptly describes Oddr as a “self-made man”. See Ellison, “The Saga of the Confederates,” 283. For how paternal generosity was often essential for sons to be successful, see Itnyre, “The Emotional Universe,” 185.

⁵³⁷ *Band*, 298.

⁵³⁸ See *ISM*; “Kort,” in *Íslensk fornrit VII*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936).

could not be forded. Therefore, despite such close proximity, the author shows how Oddr refused to include his father among the number of people that he helped, and so how their relationship continued to possess no positive reciprocity, love, or friendship.

This kind-heartedness eventually finds Oddr taking on the unpopular Óspakr, a descendant of Grettir. Óspakr behaves wonderfully for Oddr, working hard at all times. Witnessing Óspakr's hard work, Oddr enlists Óspakr's aid, asking Óspakr to be the overseer of the household, to which Óspakr agrees. Soon after, we are told how Oddr reinforced his honour by obtaining a *goðorð*. Eventually, Oddr seeks to go on another mercantile venture. Thus, he once again speaks with Óspakr, asking him to take control of the *goðorð*, too, while Oddr was away. To this, Óspakr states that Oddr's father would be a much better fit for such a task. Despite his father's qualifications to maintain the *goðorð*, "Oddr kvezk eigi mundu honum í hendr fá" (Oddr says he would not put it into his father's hands) and so Oddr has Óspakr take control of the *goðorð* as well as his household.⁵³⁹ Oddr's decision here continues the reciprocation of nothing; this may have been a good opportunity for Oddr and Ófeigr to develop their relationship, through Oddr trusting his father with his *goðorð*, but Oddr quashes the notion as soon as it emerges. Having received little to no affection, honour, or wealth from his father, Oddr does the same to Ófeigr, giving him no opportunities to gain honour, wealth, or love.

There could be other reasons as to why Oddr rejects the idea of Ófeigr taking over the *goðorð*, and does not even consider Ófeigr overseeing the household estates. Indeed, we are told that Oddr's wealth surpassed many and was equivalent to the top three richest of Iceland, and we already know that Ófeigr was not financially astute. Perhaps Oddr does not trust his father to not squander, or give away, such a fortune. However, this can only be a hypothesis, as we are not expressly told why Oddr rejects the thought of Ófeigr overseeing the estate, whereas we can observe the continuing trend of reciprocation in their relationship.

It is during the following sequence of events that the author illustrates how this cycle of reciprocating nothing is able to finally break. To explore this, however, I first need to state that there has been a man beside Oddr throughout his ventures; this man is called Váli. Oddr did initially offer his estates to Váli for their security and operation, but Váli refused on the basis of being better suited to mercantile endeavours than household. Váli was more trusted

⁵³⁹ *Band*, 303.

than Óspakr, then, but this does not affect our exploration of *feðgar* relationships. The reason we need to be aware of Váli is his role in breaking the cycle. Indeed, once Oddr and Váli return from their mercantile journey, Oddr attempts to reclaim the *goðorð*. Óspakr, however, is reluctant to return such a prestigious possession; Oddr, unsurprisingly, takes this poorly and so coerces Óspakr to return the *goðorð*. Upset with this, Óspakr steals Oddr's sheep. With a retinue of men behind them, Oddr and Váli go to where Óspakr lives, in an attempt to either settle the case of theft or summons Óspakr to the þing. This ends with Váli's death, Óspakr's escape, and Oddr's consequent loss of honour. Despite this setback, Oddr goes to the courts, seeking justice for Váli's death. However, Óspakr is not prosecuted because of a flaw in Oddr's case. On his way back to his booth, Oddr comes across an old man who asks about Oddr's case – unbeknownst to Oddr, this old man is his father, Ófeigr. Before offering anonymous aid, Ófeigr criticises Oddr, saying “en vera kann, at þér sé meir lagiðr fésnúðr ok ferðír en allgott tilstilli um málaferli” (“but perhaps you are more interested in making money and travelling than managing legal affairs”).⁵⁴⁰ Receiving some money from Oddr, Ófeigr goes up to the court's circle and, through guile and bribery, persuades the court to find Óspakr guilty. At some point after this court case, Ófeigr reveals his identity to Oddr, for we are told “Oddr unír nú vel við sína þingreið, ok er nú fleira í frændsemi með þeim feðgum en verit hafði” (Oddr was now well-pleased with his journey to the þing, and there is now more kinship between them, father and son, than there had been before).⁵⁴¹ What is it about this sequence of events that improves this *feðgar* relationship and increases their love? How and why did the cycle of reciprocating nothing break?

Could it be that Ófeigr did not want his son to lose honour in this failed prosecution of Váli? Within medieval Iceland, honour was a finite resource that was involved in every transaction, always shifting. Honour has even been referred to as a zero-sum game for these Icelanders; if someone gained honour, then someone had to have lost their honour.⁵⁴² In Oddr's attempted prosecution of Óspakr, he is shown to fail because of a technicality on how he should have summoned his witnesses, giving others the impression that he struggled with understanding how a legal case should be handled. Furthermore, we have already been told

⁵⁴⁰ *Band*, 319-320.

⁵⁴¹ *Band*, 327.

⁵⁴² Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 30. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. See *pStang*, especially 76-79.

how Oddr was well-known, accomplished, and generous; he was a beacon that people looked towards. On top of all this, Oddr had become a major chieftain and thus could be seen as a rival to the other chieftains, through his displays of wealth, generosity, and power; such renown could even cause Oddr to poach some of the other chieftains' þingmen. I highlight these points because we see such grievances being aired by two chieftains moments before they disrupt Oddr's case against Óspakr. One chieftain says how "treður hann oss alla under fótum ok þingmen vára, svá at hans eins er getit; sakar eigi, at hann reyni, hversu lögkænn hann er" ("[Oddr] tramples all of us and our þingmen under his feet, so that he alone is spoken of; there is no harm, that he learns how well-versed in law he is").⁵⁴³ This statement makes it clear to the audience that these two chieftains want to teach Oddr a lesson. Being a new chieftain, perhaps Oddr is an irritation to them, one that needs to be broken and brought back to a place beneath them, through his failure in legal affairs. By being a threat to the chieftains, this means Oddr was in a position to lose honour via his failed prosecution, and the consequent damage to his reputation. The problem with this explanation for Ófeigr's help is that it is unsubstantiated by the text. While the loss of honour can be inferred by the knowledge of how honour was conceived of in medieval Iceland, we do not possess any saga evidence for how Oddr's loss of honour would concern Ófeigr. In fact, we know that Oddr has previously commented that Ófeigr gave him little honour, so why would Ófeigr suddenly be interested in maintaining Oddr's honour? Has something changed between them, unbeknownst to us? If so, the text does not provide answers.

A more productive point to depart from is the comments that Ófeigr and the two chieftains make in regard to Oddr's handling of the case. Indeed, as we have just seen, both groups have commented on how Oddr has acted in this case alone. The chieftains remark how Oddr should soon know that more heads are better than one, alongside their general thoughts that Oddr is vainglorious. The author shows that Ófeigr shares this sentiment, believing his son to think himself above others and in no need of others. Miller observes how mutual consultation was a major activity for kith and kin in preparing for any actions; "[t]aking counsel gave the moving person the chance to get broad-based support among his kin for his proposed course of action, thereby increasing its chances of success; it also gave his kin the opportunity to dissuade, modify, or ratify his proposal".⁵⁴⁴ As a result, those who did not seek advice "were

⁵⁴³ *Band*, 317-318.

⁵⁴⁴ Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 164.

judged harshly by the sagas”.⁵⁴⁵ That is what is happening here; Oddr is being condemned by both his enemies and prospective ally, ensuring that it is clear to the audience that such courses of action are foolish. Indeed, in other sagas we see both sides of a case seek and amass support for the Þing and Alþing. For example, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, we can see how the two sides of the case on the burning of Njáll both seek out allies to figure out how to approach the growing tensions between them.⁵⁴⁶ Considering everything that has arisen about this scenario, the author makes it clear that Oddr was expected to seek advice and support from his friends and allies. Who did he have available to him, though?

His ally Váli may have been such a man, for he is described as *frændi hans* or ‘his kinsman’.⁵⁴⁷ As Jón Sigurðsson says, “a *frændi* could well be a *vinr*”, or ‘friend’, so perhaps Váli was a friend as well as a kinsman.⁵⁴⁸ With his death, however, who remained for Oddr to call upon? The saga does report that Oddr had friends, for he is often described as *vinsæll*, or ‘well-liked’ and when he returned from his mercantile ventures, “þá var hann beðinn af vinum sínum at staðfestask hér” (then he was asked by his friends to establish himself with a household here).⁵⁴⁹ These friends, however, are neither named nor show up in Oddr’s time of need; they are simply gone from the saga. Should Oddr have sought out his father’s aid, then? Considering Ófeigr’s introduction, he was a strong candidate for being able to help; there was just no positive relationship between them. Indeed, we are told at the beginning of the saga that Ófeigr was wise and of good counsel, alongside his general greatness in everything except money matters. Given this reputation and repertoire, the audience would recognise that Ófeigr would be a great ally in legal affairs, and yet Oddr did not seek his advice. It is likely that Oddr remains unwilling to begin a relationship with his father, who loved him little, and so does not start the cycles of reciprocation. But why does Ófeigr intervene? Why does he provide his skills to Oddr and, thus, begin the cycle of reciprocation?

It cannot simply be because Ófeigr had the requisite skills; there are undoubtedly other skilled men who could have tried to help Oddr in this case, if they desired to build a relationship with him. If it is not the skills, then it must be a personal reason. But Ófeigr had no real relationship with Oddr; Ófeigr and Oddr have not interacted with one another for over

⁵⁴⁵ Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 164.

⁵⁴⁶ *Nj*, 339-374.

⁵⁴⁷ *Band*, 310.

⁵⁴⁸ Jón Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship*, 107.

⁵⁴⁹ *Band*, 297.

three years, according to the saga, due to their lack of love and their emotional distance. Would such a kinship pair still be expected to help one another in a legal situation, in spite of their deficient relationship? Unfortunately, the saga does not provide us with a simple and direct answer to this question. To help illuminate the situation, we can again look to Moss's work on the letters of the fifteenth-century English family, the Pastons, and what it reveals about fatherly relationships. In her discussion on John I and his son, John II, she notes how "John I was frustrated because his son was wasting opportunities... His decision was to tell John II he could not return to the family home until he made better use of his time"; this was the result of John II covertly leaving the home and neglecting to stay in contact.⁵⁵⁰ Regarding this decision, Moss comments that "John Paston senior is often read as a stern disciplinarian, but what comes across here is a father exasperated" who wants to push his son into action.⁵⁵¹ John I may not have liked his son's decisions, but it seems that he still cared for his son and his son's future; concern remains but it exists amongst the duties and regulations of this father and son.

While not an exact comparison, this may possibly be what is occurring between Ófeigr and Oddr. Despite over three years of no contact, Ófeigr came to his son's aid, when Oddr needed it, because of his concern for Oddr's welfare. Yet the saga has, before this point, only told us of Ófeigr's little love for Oddr. Are we expected to imagine that over these years Ófeigr has developed a love for his son, despite the lack of contact and initial lack of love, which has only now resulted in a care for Oddr's wellbeing? Maybe we are, but the saga does not tell us, nor does it provide much evidence towards that point. Alternatively, it is also possible that Ófeigr is simply worried about his own honour; if the case goes poorly, perhaps he would also lose honour for not aiding his son. Nevertheless, these ideas raise the question of how divorced kinship and providing support actually were, compared to Jón Sigurðsson's suggestion that friendship was paramount.

One area we can look to, though, is the figure of Váli. During the introduction of Ófeigr and Oddr, we are briefly introduced to Váli; the saga says "Váli hét maðr er þar óx upp heima hjá Ófeigi. Hann var vænn maðr og vinsæll" (there was a man called Váli who grew up in Ófeigr's home. He was a promising and well-liked man).⁵⁵² Considering that Váli grows up in

⁵⁵⁰ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 90-91.

⁵⁵¹ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 91.

⁵⁵² *Band*, 294.

Ófeigr's household, alongside Oddr, it is probable that Váli is being fostered by Ófeigr. It is not explicitly stated that Váli is a foster-son but his description as promising does not fit the status of a servant or slave.⁵⁵³ As we have already seen, and will continue to see throughout this thesis, fosterage relationships are not inherently inferior to biological relationships. Indeed, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Njáll laments his foster-son's death, saying that he would have rather lost all of his biological children than lose his foster-son.⁵⁵⁴ Interestingly, Váli is described as *vænn*, or 'promising', just as Oddr is. Also, Váli's description comes immediately after Oddr's. It seems the saga wants the audience to compare, consciously or not, the two boys. Indeed, both of the boys' short introductions begin with *vænn*; we are told how promising they both are but that is where the descriptions diverge. Whereas Oddr is then said to become well-accomplished yet receives no paternal love for his refusal to work, Váli is described as well-liked, or popular. However, we should not thus think that Oddr is unliked. To the contrary, we see Oddr be described as *vinsæll*, or 'well-liked', elsewhere in the saga. So, why is he not described as such in his introduction, specifically? Considering the placement of the little paternal love and then Váli being liked, it is likely that the saga is indirectly telling the audience that Váli is liked, or even loved, by Ófeigr specifically – not just the general populace.

How does this serve us in answering why Ófeigr came to Oddr's aid, breaking the cycle of non-reciprocation? As a foster-father, Ófeigr had a right, and compulsion, to seek justice for Váli's death.⁵⁵⁵ He may not have seen Váli for over three years, for Váli had stayed with Oddr throughout that time, but that does not prevent Ófeigr from going to the Þing to obtain justice. So, if we pair Ófeigr's little love for Oddr and his love for Váli, perhaps the result is that Ófeigr did not go to the Þing for Oddr's sake at all; Ófeigr did not intend to break the cycle. Instead, Ófeigr went to the Þing in order to ensure that Váli's killer was punished; he went on behalf

⁵⁵³ Váli could possibly even be a biological son and brother. We regularly see in the sagas a son be named after his grandfather. For how Ófeigr's father-in-law was called Váli, see *Band*, 293. For how the grandparents' names were the preferred name for a newborn to pass along their positive attributes, see Kaland, "Children and Society," 58.

⁵⁵⁴ *Nj*, 309. For a runic inscription, dated to the eleventh century, remarking how it was better to have a good foster-son than a bad son, see *IM MM130*, (Uppsala: Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, 2020). Runor, accessed December 22, 2023. <http://kulturarvsdata.se/uu/srdb/1f63965e-5b72-4340-8707-420ae3d08aee>.

⁵⁵⁵ For how a father was the second choice to be the principal in a killing case, after sons, with brothers coming after fathers, see *Laws I*, 156.

of the foster-son whom he loved rather than the son he did not.⁵⁵⁶ Therefore, the only reason that the *feðgar* relationship is shown to have blossomed after Óspakr was successfully prosecuted is that, in doing so, Ófeigr helped Oddr through a difficult situation. He had begun the cycle of reciprocation. It is telling that after we hear of the case's success, the next thing we hear is "Oddr unír nú vel við sína þingreið, ok er nú fleira í frændsemi með þeim feðgum en verit hafði" (Oddr was now well-pleased with his journey to the Þing, and there is now more kinship between them, father and son, than there had been before).⁵⁵⁷ Their relationship had improved as a result of Ófeigr's actions and so Oddr stopped keeping a distance from Ófeigr; we soon hear of how the *feðgar* pair meet up at a bath to chat about recent happenings.

However, if Ófeigr did not care about Oddr and their relationship, the audience may question why he disguised himself when questioning Oddr about the case? To answer this, we must simply recall how Oddr refused to be in contact with Ófeigr for over three years. If Oddr had already refused to have anything to do with Ófeigr, that would not change now, meaning that Ófeigr would need to be incognito if he wanted to be given the requisite funds to bribe the troublesome chieftains; we already know Ófeigr is constantly low on cash. It could also be to gather information about the current situation from Oddr, but there is no indication as to why Ófeigr could not have witnessed this himself. Nevertheless, this incognito persona of Ófeigr's was needed if he wanted this case to have a positive resolution, but this does not compel us as to why exactly Ófeigr aided Oddr and broke the cycle. It instead explains the need for concealment.

Is there a single answer to this question then? What exactly caused this *feðgar* pair to improve their relationship and grow in *feðgar* love? From what we have discussed, it could be: the father's concern for his son's honour, the father's expectation of being called for help, or the father seeking justice for his favourite son, Váli. All of the options are viable, but the most compelling one is the last one since the saga directly supports that claim. However, this also does not necessitate that they could not all occur at once within Ófeigr; humans are more than capable of having conflicted feelings and reasons behind their actions, and so Ófeigr's

⁵⁵⁶ Along with the general focus of Old Norse studies being focused upon the major sagas, of which this is not one, there has been little said on Váli, let alone Váli and Ófeigr's relationship. For his brief mention of Váli in his summary of the saga, see Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, 170-172.

⁵⁵⁷ *Band*, 327.

character could reflect as such. And yet there is one more statement that needs to be mentioned. The element that unites all of these arguments is Váli's death. Because of Váli's death, Ófeigr and Oddr were united in their cause of seeking redress, albeit separate in approach. Perhaps that common cause is reason enough for the *feðgar* pair to improve their relationship.

Despite this legal case's conclusion, Ófeigr's actions to end it give rise to another case, in which Oddr is to be punished for having money brought into the Þing's court, for bribery. This time, though, he has a good relationship with his father, and the events are a lot smoother as a result. We are quickly shown the change in their relationship and how events unfold. After some discussion, Oddr follows his father's counsel, unlike his earlier rejection of Ófeigr being in charge of his property, and sails away with all his possessions. We are then treated to some clever planning and convincing achieved by Ófeigr, resulting in a paltry reward of money for those prosecuting Oddr and two new allies to both Oddr and Ófeigr. To inform Oddr of his success, Ófeigr gives the simplified explanation, saying that he gave the prosecutors self-judgement while omitting his cunning arrangements which resulted in two of the eight prosecutors awarding the eight of them a small amount of poor-quality silver. Not yet knowing of Ófeigr's behind-the-scenes machinations, "Oddr svarar: "Skilsktu manna armastr við mál"" (Oddr answers: "You forfeited the case, you most wretched of men").⁵⁵⁸ Here, we get to see the *feðgar* reciprocity fluctuate. Oddr has, to his understanding, just heard that Ófeigr has allowed the worst possible situation to occur. It is likely that Oddr was expecting the result to be Ófeigr's self-judgement or that a neutral party would arbitrate between the two sides, since a contemporary audience would understand that these are, generally, the most amenable results to have. It is true that self-judgement can be expected to be done in a civil manner. By this, I mean that the party given self-judgement is civil in that they take a reasonable sum of goods for the crime committed rather than exploiting their right and taking everything. These prosecutors, however, were planning to carve the entirety of Oddr's wealth up between them. Thus, Oddr likely believed that his father had done nothing and allowed the prosecutors to take all of Oddr's property. Suffice to say, this would have appeared to be a major failure in reciprocity; Oddr had trusted his father and it was for nought. It is unsurprising to the

⁵⁵⁸ *Band*, 357.

audience, then, for Oddr to be upset and call Ófeigr the most wretched of men; Ófeigr had appeared to have failed to do what he promised.

Fortunately for Oddr, this was not what had actually happened. Upon hearing Ófeigr's fuller explanation, "[þ]á þakkar hann honum liðveizluna, ok þykkir hann langt hafa fylgt um fram þat, er honum kom í hug, at vera mætti, ok segir nú, at hann skal aldri skorta fé" (then [Oddr] thanks [Ófeigr] for the support, and it seems to [Oddr] that [Ófeigr] has pursued the case beyond that which Oddr thought possible, and now [Oddr] says that [Ófeigr] shall never be short of money again).⁵⁵⁹ Here, we see their relationship and reciprocation reach a new level. Indeed, Ófeigr not only saved Oddr's wealth but also gained two allies for Oddr and himself, and managed to get a wife for Oddr. It is no wonder that Oddr comments on how Ófeigr has gone beyond reasonable expectations. In recompense for Ófeigr surpassing expectation, Oddr also goes beyond expectation. In direct contrast to their earlier relationship, Oddr promises to always ensure Ófeigr remains afloat financially, a grand gesture considering Ófeigr's substantial generosity to others.

In charting the relationship of Ófeigr and Oddr in *Bandamanna saga*, I have illuminated some new aspects of the well-established topics of reciprocity and gift-giving. By bringing emotions to the forefront, we have seen how enmeshed emotions can be within these acts of giving. Furthermore, by looking at *feðgar* relationships specifically, this discussion has been fruitful in uncovering some of the aspects of reciprocity between men in the same family, and what forms this could take. Through this approach of exploring emotions and familial dyads, we have seen varying levels of reciprocation and what actions could be deemed a reciprocal act. Indeed, refusing to work beneath one's station could result in a lack of love from one's parent, or vice versa. Saving a son from being financially ruined, and finding him a wife, could result in increased love and, thus, being cared for financially. The more love that exists in the relationship fosters a greater level of reciprocal acts but the lesser the amount of love fosters a complete lack of reciprocation. Nothing creates only more nothing. Such an expression of love, however, creates questions that exist outside the purview of this work. For example, who is supposed to begin the cycle of reciprocation: the older member of the pair, or the younger? Is there a life stage at which one begins, or is expected to begin, this reciprocation cycle?

⁵⁵⁹ *Band*, 357.

Indeed, by following this *feðgar* pairing, we have diverted from the typical discussions focussed upon power and obligation. We, instead, began with the love that existed between this father and son, in order to see how the typical aspects of reciprocal gift-giving intersected with this emotion. Drawing upon other saga material and previous scholarship in this endeavour, I have been able to reach the conclusion that there was a definitive connection between *feðgar* love and the reciprocation of gifts between fathers and sons. In other words, the degree of love an Old Norse *feðgar* relationship possessed correlated with the reciprocation that the pair engaged in.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored *feðgar* relationships from a starting point that typically goes unused. Instead of studying these relationships from the perspective of honour and shame and violence, I began from emotions, specifically love. As a result, I have been able to explore medieval Icelandic culture with a new light, finding new conceptualisations of how these people expressed, and understood, themselves. In approaching the material in this way, further questions have been generated. The first set I mention are questions that emerge from my discussion on the forms in which love could be expressed within *feðgar* pairs. The second set look at the physiological depictions of emotional expression.

In exploring the ‘bed of grief’, we came across one occasion in which another man perceived, and judged, the other man. The man lying in bed was Kveld-Úlfr and the other was his son. The son’s comments to the grieving father suggest that such lying in bed, from grief, was abhorrent behaviour; it should not be done. However, how far was that perspective on grieving fathers a universal one? Was this viewpoint shared by all men and, thus, a cultural perspective on fathers grieving in bed? Or could such behaviour gather sympathy from the Old Norse audience? Can we find examples of Old Norse men approving of such emotional displays? Indeed, the cases we have seen either deplore the man for his behaviour or regard it neutrally. Does this extend into emotional behaviour more generally? Furthermore, what about the sons who lost their beloved fathers? Are there additional examples of such relationships? And, if so, how did those sons grieve?

The exploration of reciprocal relations between *feðgar* pairs also gave rise to questions that merit further study. Indeed, what exactly are the duties expected of those in a *feðgar* relationship? We can see some general ideas of service from the sons and funding from the

fathers, but what else was expected? In the previous chapter, there was some discussion on fathers providing an education in those manly skills needed for adult life. Is it possible to locate more information about these elements of *feðgar* life? Looking at reciprocity, specifically, how was the cycle of reciprocation expected to begin? Does the father start it, by giving the son a chore? Did filial obedience thus allow paternal love to manifest?

Looking more widely than *feðgar* bonds, there are questions to be asked about masculinity and the expression of emotions. We have seen how Þórhallr Ásgrímsson could be ridiculed for what he understood to be little-manly behaviour, that is, swelling up and falling unconscious. However, Egill Skallagrímsson, in his saga, had no such ideas attached to his bodily swelling; it was devoid of any opinions on the matter. How should we understand these scenes, then? Is it, as I posited earlier, that emotions are only permissible to be expressed through, and after, the effort to restrain their expression? Is this only for those emotions judged as inappropriate for men, such as grief, or is it emotions in general? Moreover, what were the acceptable expressions, or outlets, for masculine emotion? The sources explicitly suggest violence and poetry as emotional outlets, but are there more to be discovered? Moving even broader, in medieval Iceland, what emotions were deemed appropriate, and for whom were they appropriate? Indeed, in the previous chapter, we explored how Hrefna died from grief in a manner strikingly similar to these men; the phrasing of the scene evoked a sense of her body swelling, or shattering, whilst explicitly linking her physical distension to her grief. Was it, therefore, more acceptable for a woman to physiologically express her emotions than it was for a man?

By starting with emotions as the point of departure, this chapter has been able to uncover new elements as to how fathers and sons could express their love for one another in medieval Iceland. The expressions of *feðgar* love that this project highlights are the ‘bed of grief’ and the reciprocation of gifts.

Through an exploration of how a number of fathers retreated to their beds after the deaths of their beloved sons, and subsequently died, I observed that this behaviour did not necessarily occur because the fathers were old, as other scholars have suggested. I instead noted that this behaviour occurred due to the broader reason of being unable to claim justice for one’s deceased son(s), of which being too old was one. Such expressions of love and grief were not restricted to fathers, either; it appears to be available to both fathers and sons, in their grief for a loved one.

In exploring a single *feðgar* pair, their love for one another, and how reciprocation occurred within their relationship, I have been able to reveal some new elements of the gift-giving culture of medieval Iceland. Indeed, with this relationship's development, I have charted a correlation between the love they had for one another and the degree in which they reciprocated gifts and actions. As their relationship possessed more love, the pair would give gifts and reciprocate more often; the reciprocity was appropriate to the level of love. As a result, we can start to consider how love and emotion affects the giving of gifts more generally throughout medieval Iceland's culture. Nevertheless, due to this discussion's fortune in being able to follow the development of love and reciprocity within a single relationship over the span of a saga, it should come as little surprise that there was no opportunity for additional examples. As such, the conclusions about *feðgar* reciprocity should be taken as tentative.

This chapter on *feðgar* relationships has now concluded. Therefore, we will now move to the third chapter of this project. In the upcoming chapter, I will explore *feðgin* pairs, that is, fathers and daughters, and similar relationships. Due to the lack of research on emotions within the topic, the entire chapter will be dedicated to how love manifested between fathers and daughters in the bridal negotiations. Before the main body of analysis, however, I will survey the laws and social expectations of the marital process.

Chapter 3: Love in *Feðgin* Relationships

As Chapter 1 mentioned, there has been an exciting increase in scholarship dedicated to women in medieval Iceland, covering a vast range of topics, which shall not be repeated here. However, when we come to the subject of fathers and daughters (*feðgin*), we find a much-reduced range of topics upon which scholars have studied.⁵⁶⁰ Indeed, when we consider Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's books, *Valkyrie* and *Women in Old Norse Literature*, and Bandlien's *Strategies of Passion*, we are predominantly confronted with discussions on power, honour, shame, sexual purity, and marriage. This is unsurprising, as the relationship embodies the patriarchal model, which medieval Iceland followed, and so those discussion topics are all enveloped by the bridal negotiation; thus, "[m]arriage was primarily a business transaction between men".⁵⁶¹ However, no thorough discussion is given to the *feðgin* relationship, other than these responsibilities and duties to each other. Focus has been given to the strategy and transactional nature of bridal negotiations and so other topics have been neglected. Indeed, where is the discussion on the thoughts and emotions of the parties involved? We can see such an absence of emotions in Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's *Valkyrie* when she discusses a scene from *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*.

The scene in question opens with a man, named Þorsteinn, having a dream about his homestead, "ok sá ek upp á húsin ok á mœninum álpt eina væna ok fagra, ok þóttumk ek eiga, ok þótti mér allgóð" ("and I saw, up on the house and on the ridge, a promising and beautiful swan, and I thought it was mine, and it seemed very good").⁵⁶² Soon after, two eagles arrive from different directions and attempt to woo the swan, resulting in the eagles fighting and their consequent deaths, "en álptin sat eptir hnipin mjök ok daprlig" ("but the swan sat, left behind, sad and greatly downcast").⁵⁶³ The audience is then told how Þorsteinn subsequently watched a falcon come to the swan and they left together from whence the falcon came.⁵⁶⁴ Asking an *Austmaðr*, or 'Eastman', to interpret this dream, Þorsteinn is told "en húsfreyja þín er eigi heil, ok mun hon fœða meybarn frítt ok fagrt, ok munt þú unna því mikit" ("but your

⁵⁶⁰ As asserted in the Introduction, I am using *feðgin* as an umbrella term to mean 'father and daughter', and similar relationships.

⁵⁶¹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 40. Also, in her chapter on 'The Female Ruler', Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir notes some of the ways in which images of powerful women embodied male fears and that the 'ideal' woman was subservient. See Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 107-134.

⁵⁶² *Gunnl*, 53-54.

⁵⁶³ *Gunnl*, 54.

⁵⁶⁴ *Gunnl*, 54.

wife is not well, and she will give birth to a baby girl, beautiful and fair, and you will love her greatly”).⁵⁶⁵ The *Austmaðr* continues to say that the eagles and falcon represent the men who will come to woo his daughter, before the falcon finally takes her away. Þorsteinn rejects the *Austmaðr*’s skill at dream interpretation, before remarking that “Illa er draumr ráðinn ok óvingjarnliga” (“In an evil and unfriendly way is the dream interpreted”).⁵⁶⁶ Despite his assertions, the audience would know that Þorsteinn believed in the interpretation, for he told his wife as he prepared for the Þing “þú ert með barni, ok skal þat barn út bera, ef þú fœðir meybarn, en upp fœda, ef sveinn er” (“you are with child, and [the child] shall be exposed, if you give birth to a girl, but raise it, if it is a boy”).⁵⁶⁷ Through the efforts of his wife and sister, though, the daughter survives and is, eventually, raised by Þorsteinn and his wife “með mikilli virðing ok ást” (“with great honour and love”).⁵⁶⁸

There is a lot happening in this scene, and a range of emotions being touched upon. Þorsteinn gazes happily upon the swan that belongs to him, before the eagles kill each other, leaving the swan downcast. He is told that he will love his daughter but also that she will suffer as the swan has. He subsequently tells the *Austmaðr* that he is unfit to interpret dreams, as he works evil in such pursuits. Before leaving for the Þing, Þorsteinn then tells his wife to expose the child to the elements, if it is a girl, thus sentencing the daughter to death. What is Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s reading of this sequence of events? She states that “[t]he father naturally becomes worried about future violence and his solution is to nip the problem in the bud”.⁵⁶⁹ Is this the natural response? I cannot deny that this is a possible reason behind Þorsteinn’s choices, for O’Donoghue has noted how, in the sagas, “men are shown to be struggling to replace [violence and conflict] with settlements and agreements” (90).⁵⁷⁰ Furthermore, the saga does tell us how Þorsteinn reacts when two men start contending for his daughter’s hand; he says “Ek á fár døetr fyrir at sjá, ok vilda ek gjarna, at engum manni yrði þær at rógi” (“I have few daughters to provide for, and I eagerly wished that they would

⁵⁶⁵ *Gunnl*, 55.

⁵⁶⁶ *Gunnl*, 55.

⁵⁶⁷ *Gunnl*, 55-56.

⁵⁶⁸ *Gunnl*, 58. For a discussion on how prophetic dreams in sagas could be derived from multiple diverse sources, see Paul Schach, “Symbolic Dreams of Future Renown in Old Icelandic Literature,” *Mosaic* 4, no. 4 (1971).

⁵⁶⁹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 24.

⁵⁷⁰ Heather O’Donoghue, “Women in *Njáls saga*,” in *Introductory Essays on Egils saga and Njáls saga*, ed. John Hines and Desmond Slay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1992), 90.

become the cause of contention for no man”).⁵⁷¹ He has not forgotten the *Austmaðr’s* prophetic words, then, and so the possible strife and bloodshed has been on his mind. So, perhaps Þorsteinn truly is following this trend.

Nevertheless, I do not believe this to be the natural and immediate response; it is, rather, one possibility or one among many that a contemporary audience could understand to be happening in this scene. As such, Jacobs, who is not focusing on why Þorsteinn does this, comments that Þorsteinn’s decision was simply “an attempt to avoid this fate”; Jacobs, however, does not remark on what “this fate” actually is.⁵⁷² Rather than focusing on the power and the tearing of social fabric, that Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir suggests, Þorsteinn’s choice to have his future daughter killed could be due to a number of reasons, which we should consider as well. For instance, Þorsteinn may not want a subpar man for a daughter he dearly loves. The first two men (eagles) “are strong men and gifted poets”, while the third man “is a comparatively less illustrious man, indicated not only by the falcon, but also by his perfunctory appearance in the saga and absence from other Old Norse sources”.⁵⁷³ If Þorsteinn was going to love his daughter dearly in the future, he could not accept her having anything less than the best; a falcon of a man could not contend with an eagle. Indeed, the saga continues the daughter’s story after she is fatefully married to the third man and it ends on a tragic note; she and the household falling ill, she could not sleep and so fiddled with the kingly cloak that the first eagle had given her, before dying in her husband’s embrace. Rather than that she should have such a meagre ending with a meagre husband, Þorsteinn would prefer her to have a quicker and less painful end. While this possible explanation for Þorsteinn’s decision draws upon the status of these men, and so appears to hinder my efforts to prioritise emotions, it is worth noting that there is a difference between loving a daughter and wanting a good husband for her, and only wanting a good husband for one’s daughter. Both may involve a dutiful father but only the first one had affection within the mix of motivations.

Moreover, perhaps Þorsteinn does not want to watch a daughter, who he will love greatly, suffer extreme grief, and subsequently become downcast from the deaths of the eagles. Witnessing such grief, he may seek to spare her from that future pain by having her

⁵⁷¹ *Gunnl*, 82.

⁵⁷² M. A. Jacobs, “Hon stóð ok starði: Vision, Love, and Gender in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 2 (2014): 151.

⁵⁷³ Kathryn Ania Haley-Halinski, “Birds and Humans in the Old Norse World, c. 600-1500 AD,” (Doctoral Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2021), 166.

never reach that future in the first place. Alternatively, Þorsteinn himself could not want to suffer the heartache of his daughter's grief, being unable to do anything to ease her pain, and so prevents his own pain in wanting her dead. Also, if Þorsteinn will love her greatly, he may love her to the point of not wanting to witness her leave the home with a husband, leaving him and his wife without her presence; thus, killing her early will prevent that from coming true. Alternatively, Þorsteinn may simply be attempting to fight fate. Having been told that this is his and his daughter's future, Þorsteinn could be seeking to control his life, rather than have fate dictate it to him. Finally, it could be all of the above simultaneously. As an individual, it is possible that Þorsteinn is conflicted on the matter, as he embodies multiple roles. As a father, Þorsteinn may want to lavish love and affection upon his daughter. Also, as a father, Þorsteinn may hate the idea of his daughter having a life of anguish, thus conceiving an early death as a mercy. As a man possibly seeking an end to disruptive conflict, the non-disruptive violence of killing a daughter may be deemed best. Alas, his attempt to disrupt fate's plans do nothing to alter his and her fated paths.

Therefore, we can see that there are multiple possibilities surrounding this one interaction within a *feðgin* relationship and what they can reveal about Þorsteinn, and thus can reveal about medieval Icelandic fathers of daughters. Yet there is little scholarship on the *feðgin* relationship, let alone the emotional elements of a *feðgin* relationship. The closest research that we can currently find discusses either Middle English texts or late-medieval Sweden.

In her discussion on fathers and daughters, Moss too observes that "scholarship has been remarkably silent on the relationship between fathers and their adult daughters".⁵⁷⁴ Exploring the Middle English romances of the thirteenth century, Moss examines the interactions between fathers and daughters, seeing how they can be "loving, supportive, abusive, destructive", and how the literature inevitably communicates "that the most significant aspect of the father-daughter relationship – good or bad – is the father's power over his daughter".⁵⁷⁵ With medieval Sweden, we find a discussion on the intersection of fatherhood, masculinity, and religion; while not concentrating on a specific relationship between a father and his child, Katajala-Peltomaa examines the role of a father in a country comparable to medieval Iceland. Moreover, Katajala-Peltomaa observes the emotional side of

⁵⁷⁴ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 112.

⁵⁷⁵ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 113, 151.

fathers, through clerical documents; she thus infers how “[t]here were several different types of masculinities as social practices”.⁵⁷⁶ Katajala-Peltomaa also notes that “for an adult man, a father, it was important to construct and perform his masculinity in a positive way... to be reliable, take responsibility and take care”.⁵⁷⁷

I agree with these conclusions, seeing these concepts in the sagas, too. Indeed, we will see these conclusions appear throughout my discussion, as we saw in the short exploration of *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* above; Þorsteinn was shown to always be in the position of power, so much so that he had the authority to take his daughter’s life, yet we know that his love for his daughter did appear as foretold. And as we will continue to see, there are multiple interpretations of the reasoning behind a father’s actions, which can help construct the various elements of fatherhood and masculinity. Taking these considerations forwards, I will move in a slightly different direction to the current scholarship, prioritising the emotional side of *feðgin* relationships, rather than solely *feðgar* relationships. With a starting point in emotions, we will undoubtedly see general elements of *feðgin* relationships and fatherhood, as we move through the exploration of those relationships. My work, here, will therefore fill some of the gaps in understanding familial emotions and what it means to be a father, or daughter, in medieval Iceland.

Compared to *mæðgur* relationships, *feðgin* pairings are numerous. Both of these relationships, however, are few in number and sparse in detail when compared to *feðgar* relationships. Despite *feðgin* relationships being more numerous than *mæðgur* pairings, we do not see much of the relationship between a father and daughter. We sometimes learn of a daughter’s name only to be told, by the saga’s narration, that she was then married off to someone and she is never mentioned again. Such depictions of daughters, though, are characteristic of the sagas’ overall treatment of women; women are generally described and characterised only when it relates to a man in some fashion. Indeed, as we work through the case studies, there is a noticeable absence of how a daughter feels about her father marrying her off. The closest we get from the sources is how a daughter perceives her father’s love for her to have been thrown into doubt; it does not explicitly tell us what she is feeling.

⁵⁷⁶ Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, “Fatherhood, Masculinity and Lived Religion in Late-Medieval Sweden,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38, no. 2 (2013): 231.

⁵⁷⁷ Katajala-Peltomaa, “Fatherhood, Masculinity,” 232.

Furthermore, there are exceedingly few scenes in the sagas in which we have a *feðgin* scene which does not focus on bridal negotiations or marriage, leaving us with few occasions to observe this relationship outside of the context of marriages. With so few *feðgin* relationships not being about the marriage negotiation, it is unsurprising that marriage has dominated that scholarship. However, the scholarship does not talk about love and emotions, and how they intersect with the marital negotiations. Therefore, I too will be talking about *feðgin* relationships, with regard to the fathers betrothing their daughters to suitors. I will do this in order to illuminate the emotional side of the negotiations; it has been undiscussed for too long and so I will illustrate how love was understood to have existed within *feðgin* relationships at this major juncture in a daughter's life.

As usual, I will start my analyses from the usage of love terms, so as to discern the context around that use of love before exploring what this shows us about medieval Icelandic understandings of familial love. There will also be some dual views of the love in a scene; this usually arises when bridal negotiations are being completed, and the daughter remarks that her father cannot love her, since she was not consulted. In these situations, I will attempt to show the two views on the situation and what we are supposed to do with that information.

To help set this discussion, we will survey the laws and practices of marriage before entering into the case studies in which our analysis can proceed.

As stated earlier, the theme I have decided to examine is that of the bridal negotiation so as to discern some aspects of *feðgin* love, as shown through the sagas' depictions of such events. This is to provide a balance to the scholarship already available which does not discuss the relationship in terms of emotions. Additionally, this decision follows the trends of my database entries. With regard to possessing love terminology, bridal negotiations were not especially numerous. Indeed, my entries for *feðgin* love terms did not show any regular themes or motifs. Yet when the entries with no love terms were included, the bridal negotiation was the predominant situation in which *feðgin* pairings interacted, hence the scholarly focus on a daughter's marriage. Nevertheless, the other episodes in which I found love terms, as well as the *feðgin* relationship more generally, merit further study in the future.

All of the case studies for *feðgin* relationships that I use for this exploration are that between a biological father and daughter. This makes sense, as it was typically a biological father who negotiated his daughter's betrothal with the suitor. This is not to say, however, that other types of men in *feðgin* pairings could not give the daughter away in marriage. In *Egils*

saga Skalla-Grímssonar, for example, we are told that Egill marries off Þórdís, his niece and step-daughter.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, while there are many instances of the men in *feðgin* dyads betrothing the women, I have selected those episodes which most illuminate how the love in the *feðgin* relationships is connected to the bridal negotiations, rather than attempting to include every iteration of this scenario.

In summary, the current scholarship on the intersection between the *feðgin* relationship and a woman's marriage has largely neglected the emotional aspect, and this chapter demonstrates what cultural elements of medieval Iceland can be uncovered when we return emotions to the situation. Furthermore, tracking the sagas' usage of love terms proffered no clear motifs with which to explore the *feðgin* relationship; incorporating the contextually-similar scenes, however, showed the relationship's strong connection to the woman's marriage.

Church, Laws, and Sagas: Understanding Old Norse Marriage

As I said previously, we will need an overview of the marriage laws in medieval Iceland before we can undertake our discussion on *feðgin* love, as revealed through the father's negotiations to marry his daughter off. The reason I cannot discuss *feðgin* love without a foundation in the legal context is that there is a tension between Iceland's laws, the Church's laws, and the sagas on the topic of who should provide consent in a marriage; should it be the woman or her father who consents?

We can see this tension in the late *Víglundar saga*, in which the saga shows the existence of two different threads of thought. The saga reports:

Þorgrímr mælti: "Hefir þú, Ketill, keypt Ólofu?" Ketill kvað þat satt vera. "Var þat nökkut með hennar ráði gert?" segir Þorgrímr. "Ek ætlaða, at Þórir jarl mundi sjálfir eiga at ráða dóttur sinni," segir Ketill, "ok mundi þat kaup lögligt vera, sem hann gerði."⁵⁷⁹

Þorgrímr said: "Have you, Ketill, bought Ólof?" Ketill said it to be true. "Was [the betrothal] done with [Ólof's] consent?" says Þorgrímr. "I thought that Jarl Þórir himself would be entitled to consent for his daughter," says Ketill, "and it would be a lawful agreement, as he had made it."

⁵⁷⁸ *Eg*, 241.

⁵⁷⁹ *Vígl*, 73.

In the same saga scenario, two men have opposing ideas as to what is required for a marriage; one man believes the woman's consent is paramount while the other prioritises the father's consent. This difference in thought reflects the conflict that had been happening in Iceland since the twelfth century on the topic of consent. This was not an isolated instance, however, for the sagas, especially the *Íslendingasögur*, repeatedly depict a story different to the law codes, in that the laws authorise less female agency.⁵⁸⁰

In order to reach the tensions as they exist in the sagas, we must quickly survey a key element of their origins, that is, the emergence of the Church's doctrine of consent. This idea of consent originated from two differing positions on the subject, in the mid-1100s, with regards to what exactly constituted consent.⁵⁸¹ From these two theories, Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) created a hybrid doctrine "combining the best of both theories".⁵⁸² From the mid-1100s onwards, then, "the Church taught that the woman's consent was necessary for a marriage to be valid".⁵⁸³ This line was drawn because "[i]n the Church's official thinking marriage was a strong, free, individual choice... Because the commitment was for life, responsibility must be undiminished by family or other pressure".⁵⁸⁴ Thus, "[f]orce and fear exerted by parents or others in order to secure consent to a marriage nullified that consent".⁵⁸⁵

Would this have affected Iceland before it was subsumed into the Kingdom of Norway in 1262-64? While it is difficult to know the details, we do know that in 1152/1153, a Norwegian archbishopric was installed at Niðaróss; this archbishopric presided over the two

⁵⁸⁰ For a thorough discussion on the marriage laws and their history, see Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, *Property and Virginity: The Christianization of Marriage in Medieval Iceland 1200-1600* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010). Also see Philadelphia Ricketts, *High-Ranking Widows in Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire: Property, Power, Marriage and Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). For a discussion on the difference between the marriage laws and the saga corpuses, see Jenny M. Jochens, "The Medieval Icelandic Heroine: Fact or Fiction?," *Viator* 17 (1986).

⁵⁸¹ Philip L. Reynolds, "The Regional Origins of Theories about Marital Consent and Consummation During the Twelfth Century," in *Regional Variations in Matrimonial Law and Custom in Europe, 1150-1600*, ed. Mia Korpiola (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43.

⁵⁸² Reynolds, "The Regional Origins," 44. Also see Charles Donahue, Jr., *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.

⁵⁸³ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 151. Also see Jenny Jochens, "Consent in Marriage: Old Norse Law, Life, and Literature," *Scandinavian Studies* 58, no. 2 (1986): 170.

⁵⁸⁴ David L. d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 124-125.

⁵⁸⁵ James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 335.

Icelandic bishoprics. It is, therefore, possible that twelfth-century medieval Icelanders would have been confronted with the Church's teachings on consent. Nevertheless, this teaching would definitely have become more widespread in Iceland after being enveloped into the Kingdom of Norway, for according to the *Frostaping* (the Norwegian law codes) a woman could only be betrothed if she explicitly agreed to it or if she remained silent.⁵⁸⁶ Indeed, under the episcopacy of Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1269-1298), "it was consent and publicity that made a marriage valid".⁵⁸⁷

While the Icelandic episcopacy may have been attempting to spread the doctrine of consent, does this necessitate that the medieval Icelanders adopted such a doctrine? "Committed to writing in 1117-18", but extant beforehand as well as into the later centuries, the *Grágás* laws do not corroborate what the *Íslendingasögur* report as happening in terms of betrothal nor do they adhere to the Church laws.⁵⁸⁸ Rather than any talk of women's consent, the betrothals section of the law begins with who has the right to give a woman in betrothal, an individual that can be referred to as a *giptingarmaðr*.⁵⁸⁹ The only mention of female consent being required for marriage is when she is widowed; this, however, is redundant if her father gives her in marriage for "then he shall decide".⁵⁹⁰ Otherwise, there were only two ways for a woman's opinion to be heard. One is when more than one man can arrange the marriage but disagree on which suitor to choose; in this case, her opinion could break the stalemate as long as that suitor was deemed an equal match.⁵⁹¹ The second option emerges when two suitors, thought to be equal matches for her, are rejected by the men arranging her marriage; then, she can "make a marriage with the third, if that too is thought an equal match".⁵⁹² Alternatively, a woman could choose to become a nun, in which case "a father is not to force his daughter into marriage" in that circumstance.⁵⁹³ Overall, the *Grágás* laws indicate that a woman's marriage was dictated by the men in her life, with little opportunity for her to make her own choices, despite the Church's efforts to the contrary.

⁵⁸⁶ *ENL*, 254.

⁵⁸⁷ Agnes Arnórsdóttir, *Property and Virginity*, 92. Cf. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 335-336, for how clandestine marriages remained a concern for the Church. Also see d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage*, 116-120.

⁵⁸⁸ *Laws I*, vi.

⁵⁸⁹ *Laws II*, 53. For a thorough explanation of the *giptingarmaðr* and the elements involved, see *LMNL*, 124.

⁵⁹⁰ *Laws II*, 53.

⁵⁹¹ *Laws II*, 53.

⁵⁹² *Laws II*, 53.

⁵⁹³ *Laws II*, 267. There were two nunneries in medieval Iceland; one in the north, established at the end of the thirteenth century, and one in the south, established in 1186; see Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, "Cultural Memory and Gender in Iceland from Medieval to Early Modern Times," *Scandinavian Studies* 85, no. 3 (2013): 386-387.

After Iceland swore fealty to the Kingdom of Norway and during Bishop Árni's episcopacy, however, the Icelanders could no longer ignore the Church's doctrine of consent for it now held a legal precedent. Nevertheless, while the Icelandic elite begrudgingly accepted "the Church's jurisdiction over marriage", this did not prevent them from adjusting their civil laws to accommodate this change to marriage law whilst maintaining paternal authority.⁵⁹⁴ The need for this suggests that the Church's "law had teeth" and the Icelanders were concerned about it.⁵⁹⁵ This compromise with Church law appears in 1281 with the Icelandic *Jónsbók*, a new compilation of law codes. Within, we find a paragraph on marriage; it states "[e]n ef kona giptiz vtan ráð f[ö]ður líns. bróður eða móður. Eða þess er gí/ptíngar maðr er fyrir ráði hennar. hafi fyrir gert ollum [ö]ðrum þeim er hon ftoð til eftir giptíngar mann sua fem fu kona væri æigi getín til þess arfs" (if a woman marries without the consent of her father, brother, mother, or the marriage-man who is to arrange her marriage, then she has forfeited all the inheritance that she had a right to from the marriage-man, just as if she had not been born).⁵⁹⁶ Less compromise and more resistance, this law code does not explicitly refute the Church's laws but severely undermines them, to the point of obsolescence. With *Jónsbók*, any woman who marries against the will of the one with the authority to betroth her – often a man – could be punished for doing so, by her family.⁵⁹⁷ Coerced marriages remained a strong possibility, then. Therefore, despite the decrees of the Church, women did not have a real freedom, as the Church desired, to consent to their marriages, for the medieval Icelandic civil laws had effectively hamstrung the doctrine of consent, in terms of legal effectiveness.

I say "in terms of legal effectiveness" for there may still have been a separation between the legal and social realities of consenting to marriage. Indeed, the sagas would suggest as much, as they display a tension as to who had the authority to consent to a woman's betrothal, thus reflecting the conflict between Iceland's civil laws and its Church laws on the matter. We have already witnessed this tension in the prior passage from *Víglundar saga*, and it is worth noting who holds each of the two opinions on who has betrothal

⁵⁹⁴ Agnes Arnórsdóttir, *Property and Virginity*, 96. For further discussion on how the Icelandic elite adjusted to the Church's ruling and expectation for monogamous relationships, married or not, see Auður Magnúsdóttir, "Friends, Foes, and Followers: Power, Networks, and Intimacy in Medieval Iceland," in *Nordic Elites in Transformation, c. 1050-1250, Volume II*, ed. Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, and Hans Jacob Orning (New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁵⁹⁵ d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage*, 129.

⁵⁹⁶ *Jb*, 84-5. Jana Schulman's translation is adopted for this English translation.

⁵⁹⁷ A mother could give her daughter in marriage, but only if that daughter had no: son of (at least) sixteen years, son-in-law, father, or brother to betroth her. See *Laws II*, 53.

authority. It is Ketill, the older man, who believes consent lies with the father, and it is Þorgrímr, the younger man, who believes consent comes from the woman. In the end, it is Þorgrímr who gets the girl and has a happy life with her. Nevertheless, the saga displays a tension about consent.

More generally, we see this duality of consent in some of the *Íslendingasögur*, where we are told the woman – often a daughter – needs to consent to the marriage, or it would not work, after the *giptingarmaðr* has already consented to her betrothal to a suitor. Jochens notes, here, that “we are led to believe that fathers normally conferred with their daughters, because of the anger and frustration of some girls when not asked”, as we will later see as we analyse the saga scenes.⁵⁹⁸ In other sagas, the daughters are simply betrothed, unaware of their father’s machinations. And yet there are others in which the daughter is asked but seems to have no real opinion on the matter; it seems almost customary to both ask and affirm.

However, when we move to the *Sturlunga sögur*, we are shown a different story. As Jochens recounts, “[t]he dense and action-filled *Sturlunga saga* which brings to life the turbulent society of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, reports countless marriages, but not a single case where the woman’s wishes are considered. Rather, men arrange the marriages of their available womenfolk... according to their own economic and political advantages”.⁵⁹⁹ For Jochens, then, the *Sturlunga sögur* suggests that a woman’s marital consent is non-existent; she is merely a tool for a man to gain power and/or wealth.

We do see this in the considerably shorter *Haukdæla þáttur* in which two sisters, both named Þóra, discuss their future, married lives. The older Þóra asks her sister what she thinks married life will bring, to which the younger Þóra answers that she had never given it much thought “því at ek uni allvel við, meðan svá búit er” (“because I am very happy with things as they currently are”).⁶⁰⁰ While agreeing with the younger Þóra, the elder Þóra continues the line of thought, commenting on how life is not as great as it could be, and the younger sister remarks ““svá er víst,” segir in yngri Þóra, “en eigi er víst, at þú unir þá betr, er þessu bregðr”” (“that is certain,” says the younger Þóra, “but it is not certain, that you would be happier if this way of life changes”).⁶⁰¹ So, the sisters cannot be sure that married life is better than

⁵⁹⁸ Jochens, “The Medieval Icelandic Heroine,” 37.

⁵⁹⁹ Jochens, “The Medieval Icelandic Heroine,” 43.

⁶⁰⁰ *Hauk*, 97.

⁶⁰¹ *Hauk*, 97.

unmarried; there seems to be little incentive for these women to marry. Despite their misgivings on whether married life will possess more joy, they still discuss who they would prefer to marry out of the two male visitors to their home. The *þáttr* continues that they are married to the man they had said they preferred.⁶⁰² However, the *þáttr* does not say anything about the women's consent, despite the women sharing their romantic interests with the audience. Instead, it simply states "at Þóra in ellri var gift Jóni, en in yngri Þorvaldi" (that Þóra the elder was given in marriage to Jón, and Þóra the younger was given in marriage to Þorvaldr).⁶⁰³ We are neither told that their father consulted them about the betrothals nor that the sisters consented. This seems to follow Jochens's observations of the *Sturlunga sögur*.

Yet, the sagas have expected the audience to be aware of ideas not explicitly stated before, so can we be certain that this is not the expectation here? We already know that the sisters are interested in the men, so would it not thus be obvious to the audience that the daughters would consent to these marital arrangements? Furthermore, the *Sturlunga sögur* depict the turbulent period of medieval Iceland as it was brought under the Norwegian crown's rule; was it likely for the saga compiler to deem a woman's consent to marriage important enough for mention, when so many women were being bartered for power and allegiance networks? First, the *Sturlunga sögur* were a near-contemporary corpus of work. Once again, it may have been obvious to the audience whether the women consented as the women involved would have been recent ancestors if not living relatives; the audience may have first- or second-hand knowledge of what the women thought about their situations. Second, a saga's material often originated from "striking events that merited recording" and remembering.⁶⁰⁴ A woman's consent, then, would need to be striking or a component of another striking event for it to be recorded.⁶⁰⁵ We do, however, see that in the *Sturlunga sögur*. Indeed, we already have an insight into the repercussions of non-consensual marriage, in *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*, in which a daughter, Úlfheiðr, "var gift nauðig" (was given in marriage against her will).⁶⁰⁶ However, this arrangement did not last long because "en síðan

⁶⁰² It is unclear why but the older Þóra lies about who her romantic interest is – it is actually the same as the younger Þóra's. Perhaps it is because the man they both like is already married at the time of their talk, and only the younger is willing to confess as such aloud, despite that? See *Hauk*, 98-99.

⁶⁰³ *Hauk*, 99.

⁶⁰⁴ *Sturlunga Saga: Volume I: The Saga of Hvamm-Sturla and The Saga of Icelanders*, trans. Julia H. McGrew (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 25.

⁶⁰⁵ For *samtíðarsögur* scenes in which romantic relationships sparked conflict, see Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 78-82.

⁶⁰⁶ *PsG*, 191.

lagði þokka á hana Ari Þorgeirson ok átti við henni born fjögur” (soon after, Ari Þorgeirson took a liking to [Úlfheiðr] and had four children with her) and so the two of them lived together.⁶⁰⁷ We are not told how Úlfheiðr’s father, or husband, reacted to this turn of events, likely because they were unimportant to the story of this saga. Indeed, the reason we know about this failed marriage in the first place is because it reveals the origin of the eponymous bishop, Guðmundr Arason, who was born to Úlfheiðr and Ari in the 1160s – the time in which the Church made known its need for women’s marital consent. Perhaps this is why we are told of how unwilling Úlfheiðr was about her parents’ betrothal decision. Nevertheless, it is because of his remarkable life and story that we gain an insight into women’s consent, and some of the consequences of its dismissal.

Also, Bandlien notes how “[d]aughters wanting divorces could be a more dangerous threat... a divorce could threaten an alliance or a financially good contract for their fathers”.⁶⁰⁸ We can see echoes of this in Snorri Sturluson’s marrying off of his daughters in *Íslendinga saga*. Snorri Sturluson “managed to enrich himself enormously through marriage” but “his efforts to create solid alliances through these relationships continuously failed” as his daughters’ marital relationships struggled and ended.⁶⁰⁹ Subsequently, his daughters’ “former husbands became some of Snorri’s worst enemies”.⁶¹⁰ Like with the birth of Guðmundr Arason, Snorri Sturluson’s politicking allows us to glimpse how a lack of a woman’s consent could be problematic for the *giftingarmaðr*, and so were worth recording.

Considering all of this, I cannot disagree with Jochens’s earlier assertion of how the *Sturlunga sögur* provide no direct evidence of female consent. However, I cannot agree with her conclusory remarks that “the contemporary historical sagas and the law codes furnish virtually no evidence that churchmen were able to modify the matrimonial regime” in medieval Iceland.⁶¹¹ While the law codes may have been undermined by Iceland’s civil laws, the sagas do show evidence that the repercussions of non-consensual marriage were being observed by medieval Icelanders; if the woman’s consent was not gained, turmoil was a real possibility.

⁶⁰⁷ *PsG*, 191-192.

⁶⁰⁸ Bjørn Bandlien, “The Church’s Teaching on Women’s Consent: A Threat to Parents and Society in Medieval Norway and Iceland?,” in *Family, Marriage and Property Devolution in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lars Ivar Hansen (Tromsø: Department of History, University of Tromsø, 2000), 65-66.

⁶⁰⁹ Auður Magnúsdóttir. “Friends, Foes, and Followers,” 216, 223-225.

⁶¹⁰ Bandlien, “The Church’s Teaching,” 66.

⁶¹¹ Jochens, “The Medieval Icelandic Heroine,” 44.

Furthermore, I also cannot entirely accept her conclusion that “[t]he repeated emphasis in Iceland on female consent was most likely the local church’s answer to the common problem of male control over women in these matters”.⁶¹² While churches certainly played their part, my concern is that she places all of the focus on those in power, suggesting that the women of medieval Iceland did not raise these concerns themselves and meekly accepted the marital decisions imposed upon them, each and every time. I believe this is far too broad a brush. Rather, I understand the emphasis on female consent to emerge from both the Church and the women.

The fact that laws came into being to push back against the Church’s consent model suggest that there was a strong case for women raising issues of consent and, thus, following the ecclesiastical guidelines, or that the Icelandic elite were anxious about that possibility. If the women would only ever accept the wishes of their *giptingarmaðr*, why would the elite be anxious in the first place?

Therefore, I believe that there were two didactic threads, in medieval Iceland, considering the necessary consent for a woman’s marriage – the woman’s consent and the kinship group’s consent – and these did not necessarily align. And these threads can be observed in the sagas. Unfortunately for us, I believe the compilers of the *Sturlunga sögur* were not much interested in marriage outside of its use as a transaction, probably because of that saga corpus’s contemporary nature. Therefore, the case studies of *feðgin* love we now go to explore will be from the *Íslendingasögur*.

Finding Love in Bridal Negotiations

As I mentioned earlier, the main area we find occasions of *feðgin* relationships is the bridal negotiation, in which the *giptingarmaðr* negotiates with the suitor about a possible betrothal between woman and suitor. These bridal discussions, as Jochens notes, typically show how “although the woman had the greatest interest in the arrangement, she was totally absent from the negotiations”.⁶¹³ One of the rare exceptions to this absence is Þorgerðr, in *Laxdæla saga*, in which her father, Egill Skallagrímsson, confers with her prior to the betrothal. The suitor for Þorgerðr was Óláfr Høskuldsson, son of Melkorka and grandson of King

⁶¹² Jochens, “The Medieval Icelandic Heroine,” 48.

⁶¹³ Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 27. Also see Bandlien, “The Church’s Teaching,” 67.

Mýrkjartan, whom we discussed in Chapter 1. Despite Egill's explanation of how Óláfr is an excellent suitor for her, Þorgerðr takes Egill's suggestion poorly. The saga tells us that:

Þorgerðr svarar: "þat hefi ek þik heyrð mæla, at þú ynnir mér mest barna þinna; en nú þykki mér þú þat ósanna, ef þú vill gipta mik ambáttarsyni, þótt hann sé vænn ok mikill áburðarmaðr."⁶¹⁴

Þorgerðr answers, "I have heard you say that you loved me most out of all your children; but it now seems to me that you disprove that, if you want to give me in marriage to the son of a slave-woman, even if he is an excellent and renowned man."

So as to resolve her concerns, Óláfr, viewing her refusal as disgraceful to him, dresses in finery and speaks with Þorgerðr personally and so proves him being *jafnræði*, or 'an equal match', to her; she thus accepts the proposal, resulting in their marriage.⁶¹⁵

While we will return to this scene later on, and in more depth, this scene presents a scenario in which both forms of consent were, by the end, given. However, it was not an entirely smooth process, for Þorgerðr was doubtful of her father's intentions; fortunately, his intentions were good for her, as well as himself, since Óláfr was an excellent man. Nevertheless, that doubt of which I spoke earlier – when a daughter doubts her father's love for her, due to the bridal negotiations – makes an appearance. While the saga indirectly tells us that Egill has previously stated that he loves her, the supposed mismatch in suitor causes Þorgerðr to doubt his words. This is understandable, considering the number of daughters who are married off without their consent. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, scholarship has predominantly understood the betrothal of a daughter to be transactional. Nevertheless, I will focus on that mention of paternal love, and its perceived lack, for this starting point of emotion allows for new avenues of discussion. Indeed, while Þorgerðr worried that Egill did not have her interests in mind, it appears that he had prioritised her. Therefore, I would like to explore how a father could express his love for his daughter, within the process of bridal negotiations, and how such actions were understood by the daughter. Unfortunately, the only daughterly

⁶¹⁴ *Laxd*, 63. Bandlien notes that this episode is interesting because Þorgerðr's dismay at Egill's suggestion is not mentioned in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. He believes it is likely due to the episode having no function in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* while being majorly relevant to *Laxdæla saga*. See Bandlien, "The Church's Teaching," 70-71. For the comparatively short bridal negotiation, see *Eg*, 242.

⁶¹⁵ *Laxd*, 63-65; Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 247-248.

views on, specifically, love we find are like Þorgerðr's, perceiving a comparable loss of love than the father has previously stated.

To open our discussion on this topic, we shall turn to *Víglundar saga* for contextualisation. Not only does its scene possess a love term from the father and a considerable amount of information for context, but the father's love is never thrown into doubt. It must be noted, however, that this saga has been overtly influenced by tales from the Continent. This is most clear in a later scene in which the saga rhapsodises the love between a man and woman, how the fire of their love will burn brighter through trials and opposition, "sem náttúra er amorsins" (as is the nature of love).⁶¹⁶ Such an explosion of emotion words and expressions in this saga "is fully indebted to the romantic tradition rather than the native one".⁶¹⁷ Furthermore, we also have a Franco-Latin word, *amorsins*, which is clearly a loanword introduced into this Old Norse text. These influences, however, are not an insurmountable obstacle to a historical study. As was discussed in the Introduction, Icelandic saga authors did not simply translate foreign tales, they translated the emotional expressions as well, generally resulting in a reduction of emotional vocabulary and more suppressed forms of emotional expression.⁶¹⁸ What this means, then, is that even if a saga was influenced, or translated, from the Continental romances, the saga remains palatable and understandable for an Old Norse audience. It can thus be used as a cultural product which reflects medieval Icelanders' ideas of emotions and emotional expressions. As such, I am not using this scene to reach the social or material realities of medieval Iceland; I am, instead, seeing it as representative of attitudes and assumptions that existed in medieval Iceland, on *feðgin* relationships in the marital negotiations.

Within *Víglundar saga*, we are introduced, in the early pages, to the *feðgin* characters of Jarl Þórir and Ólof, father and daughter respectively, and the dynamics of their relationship in the setting of Norway. These dynamics to which I refer consist of three parts - a difference in opinion between father and daughter, the jarl wanting a certain type of suitor for his daughter, and the possibility of family dishonour. The saga tells us:

⁶¹⁶ *Vígl*, 82.

⁶¹⁷ Colin Peter Mackenzie, "Vernacular Psychologies in Old Norse-Icelandic and Old English," (Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014), 109.

⁶¹⁸ Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, "Translating Emotion," 166-167.

Jarl unni mikit dóttur sinni ok var svá vandláttr um hana, at enginn karlmaðr mátti tala við hana. Jarl lét gera henni eina skemmu; þat hús lét hann vanda mjök at allri smíð. Skemman var víða grafin ok gagnskorin ok rennt gulli í skurðina. Þetta herbergi var þakit blýi ok steint allt innan. Skíðgarðr hár var um skemmuna ok læst grindhlið með sterkum járnhurðum. Ekki var þetta hús miðr vandat utan en innan. Þessa skemmu byggði jarlsdóttir ok hennar þjónustukonur. Jarl sendir ok eptir þeim konum, sem hann vissi kurteisastar, ok lætr kenna dóttur sinni allar þær kvenligar listir, er burðugum konum byrjaði at kunna. Ok þat hugsaði jarl, sem honum gafst, at svá skyldi hans dóttir bera af öllum konum hannyrðir sem hon var hverri þeira fríðari. En þegar hon hafði aldr til, þá völdust til margir ágætir men at biðja hennar, en jarl var mjök kostvandr fyrir hennar hönd, ok kom sá engi, at hann vildi hana gipta; vísaði hann þeim frá með hæverskligum orðum.⁶¹⁹

The jarl loved his daughter greatly and was so exacting regarding her, that no man was allowed to speak with her. The jarl had a private dwelling made for her; he had that house made elaborately, through every artistry. The dwelling was engraved all over, and these engravings were inlaid with gold. This building was thatched with lead and all of the inside was painted. A high fence surrounded the dwelling and the fence's lattice gate was locked with strong iron doors. This dwelling was no less elaborately made on the outside than the inside. The jarl's daughter and her serving women lived inside this dwelling. The jarl sends after those women, who he knew were the most courteous, and he had them teach his daughter all those womanly skills, which women of high birth were expected to know. And the jarl thought, as was his wont, that his daughter should surpass all other women in handicrafts, in the same way she was more beautiful than other women. And as soon as she had come of age, many excellent men then came forward to request her hand in marriage, but the jarl was very fastidious about her hand in marriage. And it did not happen, that he wished to give her in marriage to them; he sent [all the suitors] away with polite words.

We do not have to go far into the scene before we are told directly how much Þórir loved his daughter, before we then learn how the jarl isolates her from all men, other than himself. Indeed, the saga goes into great detail regarding the space that Ólof is placed within; the building was beautiful and well-adorned, while also being fortified with high fences and secure gates – a gilded cage. We can already see some of the Continental romances' influences, here, through the beautiful maiden being secreted away from the world.

⁶¹⁹ *Vígl*, 64-65.

Indeed, the dwelling-place Þórir has built is quite remarkable, so much so that it raises the question of it being a historical possibility or a fictive creation. For this project, a historical basis is not necessary, as the key element for us is the purpose behind the building, not the building itself. The key element is that the daughter lived in isolation and extravagance, somewhat plausible as a possibility for life in medieval Iceland. So why did Þórir construct a life of isolation and extravagance for his daughter, in the first place? Is it a result of his love for her, or something else? The construction of the building follows directly after the audience learns of: how Þórir loved Ólof; how he was fastidious about her life; and how men were forbidden from speaking with her – such placing suggests that these elements are all connected.⁶²⁰ Let us work backwards through these elements to better understand how Þórir's, and thus a father's, love could manifest.

So, why did Þórir prevent men from speaking to his daughter? The high fences and locked gates indicate that either something was supposed to stay inside or to stay outside. The end result is the same, no matter which of the two is true, as Þórir is likely seeking to prevent an unacceptable man approaching his Ólof. However, there are nuances depending on whether he is doing this for Ólof's sake or his family's, although these are not mutually exclusive motives.

Many scholars have already discussed the reasoning behind an Old Norse father's desire to prevent unacceptable men approaching his daughter, and it comes back to the familial honour. Indeed, Bandlien has explored the reasoning behind why Old Norse men court women with no marital intent – the reasons behind this seduction include: not believing the prospective father-in-law to be worthy; not wanting to protect, and so consider, a weaker/lower family; and to display one's power over the father's household.⁶²¹ Thus, the reasons behind why a man may refuse to seek marriage, and instead seek to seduce, may be less about the daughter and more about the father and broader kinship group. Therefore, Þórir's construction of an inaccessible space, in which resides Ólof, cannot be said to originate from his love for her, if we use this explanation to understand the scene, as it instead indicates his concern about power being displaced from him to another man. Indeed, we can see as

⁶²⁰ In the saga corpus, conversations between a man and woman can have a variety of meanings, ranging from a simple chat to sexual intercourse. See Lucy Anne Keens, "Scenes of a Sexual Nature: Theorising Representations of Sex and the Sexual Body in the Sagas of the Icelanders," (Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2016), 10.

⁶²¹ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 67-72.

much in another saga, *Ljósvetninga saga*, in which a father is displeased with his daughter ‘talking’ with a man, “til þess at í því aukisk vár ósæmd” (“because it increases our dishonour”).⁶²² Unable to curb the man’s pursuit of his daughter, the father relents and sends his daughter away to prevent further seduction and consequent dishonour.⁶²³ Considering these points, it is difficult to see how the construction of Ólof’s isolation could be an indicator of Þórir’s love for her. It, instead, appears that by preventing any illicit relationships between Ólof and an unacceptable man, Þórir attempts to prevent dishonour falling upon himself and his family. We could try to argue that he made such a space so as to prevent himself being in a situation where he would have to consider sending Ólof away, that is, he loves her too much to send her away and would not want to. However, this line of thinking has no real foundations to work from. It, instead, appears to be what scholars have noted; a father fears that his daughter will be seduced and so keeps her away from all men. Thus, we must look elsewhere to discern how his love emerges.

If we cannot see Þórir’s love in the isolation of his daughter from men, can we observe it in his exacting expectations of her life? Yes and no. We can locate love not in the fastidious expectations regarding her but in their probable consequence – Ólof’s marriage, but specifically her marriage to an excellent man, which we can see in the first example of Egill and Þorgerðr. This desire for a perfect suitor can be seen through Þórir’s fastidiousness and that can be seen in the above passage regarding Ólof’s entire lifestyle. In essence, since Ólof is inaccessible, lives in opulence, and is well-versed in the womanly skills, the contemporary audience could understand Þórir to be trying to attract the best possible suitor for his beloved daughter. Yet how exactly are these aspects of Ólof’s life, orchestrated by her father, supposed to attract exceptional suitors?

We have already explored how Ólof is inaccessible, through it preventing her meeting with men and thus maintaining her family’s honour. This, however, is one side of the coin. The other is that it improves her marital prospects, which could result in a great marriage; something a loving father may want for his daughter. We can see this in three defined ways: sexual purity, a strong father-in-law, and a desire for the unknown and forbidden.

⁶²² *Ljósv*, 64.

⁶²³ A similar arrangement occurs in *Kormáks saga*, after Kormákr woos and fails to marry the daughter; she is then married to another man. See *Korm*, 223-228. Bandlien views this as the father retaining “much of the honour he was in danger of losing”. See Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 68. For a father who chases after his daughter and the man she was speaking with, when he saw them walking away hand-in-hand, see *Ísl*, 7.

The first manner in which her inaccessibility helps her marital prospects is how she is not known by men; men have only heard about her. By having Ólof isolated from the community's view, Þórir can guarantee to any suitor that she has not been touched by any man; she lives in isolation with female-only staff, so she cannot possibly have had relations with a man. Indeed, this concern for sexual purity can be seen in *Kjalnesinga saga*, in which Búi rescues his lover, also called Ólof, from his romantic rival after she has been with him for a year.⁶²⁴ The saga is not explicit about what happens in that year but the following reaction gives a strong indication. Upon slaying the rival and returning to her father's household, Búi says: "en nú skal Ólof, dóttir yður, vera með þér, þar til henni býðst forlag, því at ek vil nú þó ekki elska hana, síðan Kolfiðr hefir spillt henni" ("and now must your daughter, Ólof, dwell here until marriage is offered for her, because I now want to not love her since Kolfinnr has spoiled her").⁶²⁵ Despite the saga not outright stating that Búi would have married Ólof had she not been abducted, it is probable that he would have, as the audience was earlier told how his foster-mother, Esja, was scolding him for not courting her, "sem ek hefi þér þessa konu ætlat" ("as I have intended this woman for you").⁶²⁶ Nevertheless, any desire Búi had for Ólof was quashed after her abduction, leaving this Ólof's father with one less suitor. This possible loss of suitors, then, may have been what drove laws to be enacted with a purpose "to protect the sexual integrity of the woman in order to reserve it exclusively for the husband, or, before marriage, to keep the young girl intact to maintain her value on the marriage market".⁶²⁷ The *Grágás* laws of medieval Iceland reveal as much with an entire section dedicated to "[w]hat behaviour towards a woman is liable at law", ranging from kissing a woman – consensually and non-consensually – to rape to fathering children.⁶²⁸ Many of these actions resulted in some degree of outlawry for the men involved, which involved banishment and a loss of civil rights. Thus, the unsanctioned touching of a man's daughter was a potentially dangerous and fraught action to take. Nevertheless, Þórir's construction of an isolated space for his daughter prevents these scenarios taking place; thus, she will not be deemed impure for having been abducted or 'spoken to', as there is no opportunity for these events to occur. As a result, her

⁶²⁴ *Kjaln*, 39-40.

⁶²⁵ *Kjaln*, 40.

⁶²⁶ *Kjaln*, 17.

⁶²⁷ Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 32. Also see Jenny Jochens, "The Illicit Love Visit: An Archaeology of Old Norse Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 3 (1991).

⁶²⁸ *Laws II*, 69-81.

marital prospects are not damaged and so she could still obtain a husband of stellar character; something that could be indicative of Þórir's love for Ólof.

This concept of sexual impurity, however, may only exist for pre-marital relations, which fall under the father's purview, specifically. I raise this possibility because of the contemporary *Sturlu saga* in which an abducted woman, Hallgerðr Rúnólfsdóttir, must be persuaded by Jón Loptsson to return to her husband.⁶²⁹ Bandlien rightly notes "how natural it is for the saga writer and Jón Loptsson that Hallgerðr chooses to stay with the man that took her away" and how this sequence of events "proves that she is desired", provides her with "a strong negotiating position at the Thing" and gained her "the friendship and support of the powerful Jón in her interests".⁶³⁰ Rather than be reduced in the eyes of her male kin, through her abduction, she instead gains more than she had before. Bandlien goes on to say that "women who pursued extramarital affairs did not lose prestige in the eyes of others".⁶³¹ Is this because she was married and no longer her father's responsibility? If we recall how Ólof was treated by Búi in *Kjalnesinga saga*, would he have still sought to stop loving her if they had already been married prior to her abduction? We cannot know for certain. However, Hallgerðr and Jón's discussions indicate that unmarried and married women may be treated differently in being approached by unsanctioned men, as the unmarried remain on the marriage market while the married are not.

This idea of sexual purity leads us to the second way in which an inaccessible daughter allows for greater prospects in husbands. Indeed, as Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir states: "[a] man's honour was dependent on preventing outsiders from getting near the young women in his family".⁶³² Perhaps the author wants us to view Þórir's isolation of his daughter in these terms, that is, Þórir is portraying himself as having a great amount of honour because he is able to prevent men reaching her. Indeed, "[t]he daughter's virginity is a marker that the father has done his duty... he has kept intact her most valuable attribute".⁶³³ In doing this, Þórir is able to attract suitors not only because she remains untouched by other men but because he, as her guardian, has been able to prevent other men reaching her, showing

⁶²⁹ *St*, 165-167.

⁶³⁰ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 88.

⁶³¹ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 89.

⁶³² Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 46.

⁶³³ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 124.

himself to be a strong and wealthy enough man to achieve as such.⁶³⁴ And by being such a man, Þórir does not have to worry about young men viewing him as an unsuitable father-in-law; he has the resources to protect his daughter from unscrupulous men and so would likely have the resources to help any son-in-law, meaning potential suitors could have a strong ally if they were to marry his daughter. Also because of such power, Þórir can prevent any suitor's anxieties about other male visitors to their future bride.⁶³⁵ This means there are no hindrances to potential suitors other than Þórir himself, who, as far as we have been shown, rejects all who approach. Þórir is, thus, also in a position to be exacting in his choice of son-in-law.

One other way in which Þórir's isolation of Ólof could potentially bait excellent suitors is the isolation itself. Scholars have already noted how female trolls and giants could evoke a sense of the forbidden desire, in that they represent the "hidden desires and anxieties" of the medieval Icelanders.⁶³⁶ Indeed, Gourlay notes how the Saracen princess Floripas, from the *chanson de geste* of *Fierabras*, is a beautiful and smart, yet violent and volatile, woman who went against the cultural norms of the audience without correction or punishment for such social deviancy.⁶³⁷ Similar to the Old Norse trolls and giants, Gourlay suggests that Floripas's combination of traits (including beauty, passion, violence, and otherness) may have had an exotic and erotic appeal for men who may have found such traits attractive.⁶³⁸ This concept of forbidden desire, then, is nothing new. However, what about a more mundane forbidden fruit; one that is neither socially prohibited nor socially deviant but is simply forbidden. I posit that Ólof's isolation could excite potential suitors simply because she was unknown and unseen. These men would hear tales about her beauty and skill but would be left without confirmation, creating a desire to know more. We can see something similar in *Kormáks saga*, in which Steingerðr moves to stealthily survey the guests of her foster-father's hall. Despite her covert efforts, in the doorway "þar kómu fram fœtr hennar" (there arrived her feet) and this inspires Kormákr to speak in verse about his sudden great love.⁶³⁹ This prompts her to shift position,

⁶³⁴ For how a suitor may love a woman but not desire marriage, because of her unworthy father, see *Hallfr*, 144; Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 68-69.

⁶³⁵ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 70.

⁶³⁶ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 76.

⁶³⁷ Kristi Gourlay, "A Pugnacious Pagan Princess: Aggressive Female Anger and Violence in *Fierabras*," in *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Renée Perfetti (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 133-134.

⁶³⁸ Gourlay, "A Pugnacious Pagan Princess," 154.

⁶³⁹ *Korm*, 207. For how Kormákr did not marry Steingerðr because of her father, see Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 67-68; Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 192.

which, again, leaves her partially visible around her eyes; this also inspires Kormákr's poetry within which he reveals "yet while I live that longing will never leave me".⁶⁴⁰ If Kormákr's burning love can be ignited from simply seeing Steingerðr's feet and eyes, it is credible that unnamed suitors may be interested in Ólof, despite no man having lain eyes on her. Sparking such passions may have been (a part of) Þórir's plan in isolating Ólof, building a desire for her.

Depending on the perspective the audience takes, this isolated life Þórir has constructed for Ólof could be indicative of his love for her, through the obtaining of a good marriage, as much as his desire for strong kinship connections, via the same route of a good marriage. Despite the various ways in which he makes her attractive to potential suitors, the saga leaves it unclear as to what Þórir's motives exactly are.

Nevertheless, Ólof is made even more desirable a wife by Þórir having her trained in handicrafts, those skills we discussed in Chapter 1 that were a fundamental element of a highborn woman's education. If Ólof did not possess the skills expected of a noblewoman, Þórir would have a tougher time in attracting a suitor equal to his expectations. So, unsatisfied with the thought of his daughter being simply skilled, Þórir has her trained to be the best for the sake of her future marriage.

Having presented his daughter as inaccessible and skilled, and thus desirable, the saga depicts how Þórir is able to further entice potential suitors by showcasing his wealth and status through her living situation. We should not take the description the saga paints of her living quarters as genuine. Instead, we should focus solely on Þórir's display of extravagant wealth, for that is an idea that could legitimately fit with medieval Icelandic lifestyles. Such depths of luxury suggest that Þórir could provide a generous dowry for any suitor who is betrothed to her. Again, the audience is shown that she is rendered an appealing catch by her father.

What we see throughout this is the idea of *jafnræði*, or 'an equal match', in which the man and woman needed to be roughly equal in terms of wealth and status; any deficiency in status, however, could be offset by a large wealth.⁶⁴¹ It is through this concept of *jafnræði* that we can perhaps discern facets of paternal love in Þórir's actions. By doing all these things –

⁶⁴⁰ "Kormak's Saga," trans. Rory McTurk, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 1, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 181.

⁶⁴¹ See Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 21-22; Jana Schulman, "Make Me a Match: Motifs of Betrothal in the Sagas of the Icelanders," *Scandinavian Studies* 69, no. 3 (1997); Miller, "Why is your Axe Bloody?," 40, 51.

making Ólof inaccessible, having her taught womanly skills, and displaying his wealth – which the saga describes as being fastidious, Þórir is able to winnow out suitors he deems unfit for his daughter, through making her too quality a bride. By this, I mean that Ólof is a bride that exceedingly few men could possibly hope to match; only the best of men could attempt to ask for her hand. Indeed, this is not the usual affair for Old Norse families. As Jochens has noted, “the girl most often married down [in terms of status], her family unable to resist the attraction of a wealthy suitor”.⁶⁴² On the poorer side and unable to find a suitor equal to them in status, such girls were married off to wealthy men who could not match their status or character. For example, in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, a woman named Spes is married to a man and “hann var auðigr ok ættsmæri en hon; hafði hon verit gefin honum til fjár” (he was wealthy and of lower status than her; she had been wedded to him for his money).⁶⁴³ We later learn of how Spes has an affair and eventually divorces her lowly husband.⁶⁴⁴ So, as Jochens goes on to observe, “[t]he fact that in the texts such marriages invariably developed problems later suggests that social class originally may have meant more than wealth”.⁶⁴⁵ Perhaps the author sought to showcase that Þórir was aware of such difficult marriages and so sought superior matches for Ólof out of concern for her wellbeing, indicating his love for her. With Moss’s observations on fatherhood, Þórir would likely be deemed a ‘good’ father, for “a good father would be expected to test his daughter’s suitors to ensure they were suitable; he had a responsibility to ensure that she married well”.⁶⁴⁶ Unable to be blinded by the allure of money, Þórir could be as particular as he so wished in choosing Ólof’s husband; he could wait for a man of equal status to show up. Conceivably, Þórir’s negotiating position could be an idealised representation of how a father should be in bridal negotiations; a father should not be swayed by money. Nevertheless, while Þórir may have had a certain type of man in mind for Ólof, he could not take the first step. Instead, he had to wait to be approached, as a *giptingarmaðr* was supposed to.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 21.

⁶⁴³ *Gr*, 274.

⁶⁴⁴ *Gr*, 274-285.

⁶⁴⁵ Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 22.

⁶⁴⁶ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 129.

⁶⁴⁷ We see something similar occur in *Bandamanna saga*, in which a father does not marry his daughter off, despite his own financial struggles, for a suitor suitable enough for her has not yet approached him. See *Band*, 339-340. Bandlien thus describes the father as “an ideal *giptingarmaðr*” for prioritising his daughter. See Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 262.

This would explain the repeated rejections that Þórir gives to the suitors that do approach. They are not good enough for his daughter, in his view. What type of man is Þórir waiting for, then? The suitor that is ultimately accepted is a widower by the name of Ketill, who has a daughter similar to Ólof in age. Our introduction to Ketill reveals him to be a stellar man; “[h]ann var mikilhæfr maðr, ríkr at auðæfum, vitr ok vinsæll” (he was a distinguished man, rich in wealth, wise and popular).⁶⁴⁸ We further learn of Ketill’s excellence when the king bade great men come to him for a feast, of which “fyrstum bauð hann Þóri jarli ok Katli bónda” (he first bade Jarl Þórir and bóndi Ketill).⁶⁴⁹ As both men were summoned as the first of the exceptional men, the saga indicates that the men were equal in status; neither were higher in the king’s esteem, and so Ketill would naturally be *jafnræði* with Þórir’s daughter, Ólof. Another facet of Ketill that may have specifically piqued Þórir’s interest is that before becoming a widower, “Ketill unni svá mikit konu sinni, at hann mátti hennar ekki mein vita” (Ketill loved his wife so much, that he could not bear to have her know pain).⁶⁵⁰ Ketill, then, is an outstanding man who was devoted to his wife; what more could Þórir be looking for in a potential suitor? We cannot know how much of an impact this had on Þórir’s decision but Ólof was eventually betrothed to Ketill “með fulltingi konungs” (with the support of the king).⁶⁵¹ Þórir was thus willing to marry his daughter off to an exceptional man, known to be deeply concerned about his wife’s wellbeing, who had the support of the king in asking for her hand; that is an extremely high calibre of man. Once again, however, this would not have been a reality for the medieval Icelanders; it is certainly a fabrication created for their entertainment. Rather than being preoccupied with Ketill’s superb calibre, we should simply focus on the fact that he was deemed as *jafnræði*; he was thus a good match for Ólof, and that was understood as necessary for a successful marriage.

While this extended discussion has been done with the aim of considering Þórir’s behaviour as that of a father who loves his daughter, this does not mean that there are no other elements behind his actions in marrying Ólof to an exceptional man. Indeed, Karras neatly summarises how “[m]en in the sagas are able to choose... the in-laws they acquire” through bridal negotiation, and “they could expect support” from these networks.⁶⁵² By

⁶⁴⁸ *Vígl*, 65.

⁶⁴⁹ *Vígl*, 70.

⁶⁵⁰ *Vígl*, 66.

⁶⁵¹ *Vígl*, 71.

⁶⁵² Karras, “Marriage and the Creation,” 477.

drawing Ketill into kinship with himself, Þórir could now enlist the aid of a powerful supporter, one who has the ear of the king, if he ever found himself in difficult situations. Alongside this, Ólof was not in a strong position to go against her father's wishes, for she ran the risk of losing her inheritance if she disobeyed his decisions, as we discussed with regard to the law codes. We have also discussed how Ólof was removed from the power dynamics between men, in which men would seduce other men's daughters so as to display power over the fathers. Such a preoccupation with factors other than her wellbeing is likely what Þorgerðr was afraid of when Egill spoke with her about marrying Óláfr; she was afraid that Egill intended to marry her off for his own benefit. However, while Þórir's actions can be seen through the lens of power dynamics, it would be only one part of the whole, for, as we have explored, Þórir's actions also suggest that he acted as a good father with love for his daughter as a motivator. Both ideas are possible and could occur simultaneously, and the contemporary audience could know this.

By having such a fastidious regiment for his daughter, Þórir is able to marry Ólof off to the best man possible, in his view. Ketill is an exceptional man and reputed to be a loving husband with the support of the king. This is the end result of Þórir's love for her. But what of Ólof's thoughts and feelings on the matter? If Þórir's love for his daughter manifests as securing an especially good husband for her, what are Ólof's opinions on the marriage and her father, if we can access them?

Immediately after we are told of Þórir's agreement with Ketill, regarding Ólof's betrothal, the saga informs us how "[I]agði Ólof þar ekki jáyrði til né samþykki" (Ólof gave neither assent nor consent to this).⁶⁵³ This statement is both revealing as it is ambiguous, for this could mean that Ólof explicitly told her father that she did not want to marry Ketill or it could mean that Ólof did not want to marry but did not outright refuse the betrothal. If she performed the latter, then, according to the *Frostabing* and *Eiðsivabing* laws, "her silence is interpreted as an affirmative answer".⁶⁵⁴ While this episode is set in medieval Norway and the law codes are Norwegian, these understandings of what constitutes an affirmative response to a betrothal may have arguably existed in medieval Iceland, and the sagas, too. Yet if the sagas and audience also understood silence as affirmation, then they both would view Ólof's lack of affirmation and consent as a declared refusal rather than a silent one, considering the

⁶⁵³ *Vígl*, 71.

⁶⁵⁴ *ENL*, 254; Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 179-181.

saga's statement of Ólof giving neither assent nor consent. Considering that the saga's declaration of Ólof's refusal to marry cannot be misconstrued, it is safe to accept that Ólof did not agree to this marriage, and thus her father's wishes. And what, according to the saga, were Ólof's reasons for this?

While Ketill was a great man, Ólof had already fallen in love with another prior to Ketill's betrothal request. This occurred when the king bade great men come to him for a feast, revealing Ketill and Þórir's high statuses. Indeed, after learning of this, the saga states "[f]ór Ólof geisli til veizlunnar með föður sínum" (Ólof the Radiant travelled to the feast with her father).⁶⁵⁵ It was here that she met and fell in love with Þorgrímr, an honoured vassal of the king. Þorgrímr, however, was not deemed acceptable by Þórir; we are not given any reasoning, only "en jarl sagðist eigi mundu gipta honum dóttur sína" (but the jarl said that he would not give his daughter in marriage to [Þorgrímr]).⁶⁵⁶ Perhaps Þórir wanted Ketill, specifically, to be Ólof's husband. Perhaps Þórir simply found Þorgrímr to be lacking in some capacity. Perhaps it is both, in that Ketill is an older man who has succeeded in many a trial whereas Þorgrímr is younger, untested, and an unknown.⁶⁵⁷ Despite Þórir's rejection of Þorgrímr's proposal, Þorgrímr stayed with Þórir's household, regularly seeing Ólof, "ok segja þat nökkurir menn, at þá hafi þau bundit sitt eiginorð" (and some people say that [Ólof and Þorgrímr] had bound themselves through betrothal).⁶⁵⁸ So, Ólof likely consented to marry Þorgrímr. The saga confirms this when her father betroths her to Ketill, because immediately after we are told she did not consent to the betrothals, Ólof speaks a verse of poetry saying how Ketill would never receive love from her because of her prior vow to Þorgrímr. As a result of her verse, "[f]lestir höfðu þat fyrir satt, at Ólof mundi heldr viljat átt hafa Þorgím, en þó varð svá at vera" (most people held it to be true that Ólof would rather have wanted to have Þorgím, yet the betrothal to Ketill came to be).⁶⁵⁹ Here is the tension between the forms of consent. She consented to one, but her father consented to the other, despite Ólof's wishes and public

⁶⁵⁵ *Vígl*, 70.

⁶⁵⁶ *Vígl*, 71.

⁶⁵⁷ For how a woman chooses an older and experienced man over a younger but promising man, see Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 284-285. Cf. Moss, *Fatherhood*, 143-144, in which she discusses how a younger and virile man was preferable to an older man.

⁶⁵⁸ *Vígl*, 71.

⁶⁵⁹ *Vígl*, 72.

poem revealing her prior vow to marry.⁶⁶⁰ So what does Ólof do? How does she feel about her father's disregard for her feelings?

Other than Ólof's refusal to consent and her poetry detailing how Ketill will never be loved by her, the saga tells us nothing about any resistance on her side. Instead, she is betrothed to Ketill, as her father desires. This follows Jochens's observation that "most often the girls yielded to their fathers' wishes".⁶⁶¹ Fortunately for Ólof, Þorgrímr confronts Ketill at the wedding feast three nights before the wedding ceremony and steals her away to Iceland, where they marry and have children.⁶⁶² We do not hear anything of Þórir's thoughts on his daughter being abducted, for he disappears from the saga after this. Nevertheless, in this process we return to the first passage of this chapter to see the tension between who has the right to consent to a daughter's marriage: the daughter or the *giftingarmaðr*. Indeed, Þorgrímr asks Ketill "var þat nökkut með hennar ráði gert?" ("was [the betrothal] done with [Ólof's] consent") to which Ketill responds "ek ætlaða, at Þórir jarl mundi sjálfr eiga at ráða dóttur sinni" ("I thought that Jarl Þórir himself would be entitled to consent for his daughter").⁶⁶³ Nevertheless, we are given no insight into how she feels about her father, as yielding to one's parent is not a good indicator for love or lack thereof but is instead indicative of a power dynamic. We cannot even say whether she loves him or not, for certain, as no love words are attributed to her; this, however, is not surprising for the sagas rarely give voice to women who are not primary characters. Furthermore, we cannot explore whether their relationship shifts after this non-consensual betrothal, for Þórir is out of the saga soon after. Where can we go from here, then? If the daughter's views of love cannot be found here, we must look elsewhere for any scraps of information.

To that end, we find a daughter's voice in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, in the form of Hallgerðr Hǫskuldsdóttir. Akin to Ólof's situation, Hallgerðr is married off without her consent. Unlike Ólof, however, the scenario involving Hallgerðr's *feðgin* dyad provides more information to investigate, showing Hallgerðr to be similar to Þorgerðr in her feelings. Indeed, upon learning of her father's dealings with her future fiancé, Hallgerðr exclaims to him:

⁶⁶⁰ As stated earlier, we see this tension again when Þorgrímr confronts Ketill about Ólof. See *Vígl*, 73.

⁶⁶¹ Jochens, "The Medieval Icelandic Heroine," 37.

⁶⁶² *Vígl*, 72-74.

⁶⁶³ *Vígl*, 73.

“Nú em ek at raun komin um þat, er mik hefir lengi grunat, at þú mundir eigi unna mér svá mikit sem þú sagðir jafnan, er þér þótti eigi þess vert, at við mik væri um talat þetta mál; enda þykki mér ráð þetta ekki svá mikils háttar sem þér hétuð mér.”⁶⁶⁴

“Now I am afflicted by that which I have long suspected, that you must not love me as much as you always said, when you had not thought to talk with me about this conversation; in the end, I think this agreement is not so great a thing as you have promised me.”

Hallgerðr is very transparent about how she feels regarding this betrothal. We do not know how much her father, Hǫskuldr, claims to have loved her but we can know that she feels it is much more scarce a thing than he has declared. Thus, the audience can comprehend that, in her view, his comparative lack of love results from his failure to discuss the matter with her and from it not being that great a marriage. Once again, consent emerges as a point of contention between father and daughter.

However, what we also learn is that consent seems to play a part in *feðgin* love. The saga indicates that Hallgerðr understands her father’s choice to not include her in the bridal negotiations demonstrates that he loves her less than he has always said. Perhaps the audience is to understand that she feels like Hǫskuldr is using her for his own gains, rather than thinking about what she wants. Hǫskuldr certainly does not mollify her suspicions. Instead, he makes no concessions, retorting with: “Ekki legg ek svá mikit við ofmetnað þinn, at þat standi fyrir kaupum mínum, ok skal ek ráða, en eigi þú, ef okkr skilr á” (“I do not value your excessive pride so much, that it may stand in the way of my *kaupum*, and I shall decide, not you, if we disagree”; 31).⁶⁶⁵ There are two ways in which we can translate *kaup* (*kaupum* is the dative plural of *kaup*): ‘a bargain’ or ‘an agreement’.⁶⁶⁶ An agreement would be the optimistic translation, suggesting that Hǫskuldr simply agreed to betroth Hallgerðr. I say optimistic, since ‘a bargain’ seems a more fitting translation. First, we have the *brúðkaup*, or ‘bridal bargain’, that a suitor had to pay to the *giptingarmaðr* in exchange for the bride and her dowry. This, as scholars have recounted, strongly indicates the concept as transactional.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁴ *Nj*, 31.

⁶⁶⁵ *Nj*, 31.

⁶⁶⁶ *CVD*, 333.

⁶⁶⁷ See Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 27; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 40-41.

Second, this series of events follows a schema that Miller calls a ‘plundering marriage’.⁶⁶⁸ By this, Miller means a marriage “not designed to last but entered into by the girl’s father to pay for the girl’s future marriages” via divorce or the husband’s death.⁶⁶⁹ So, Hǫskuldr has got himself a bargain by putting in a little dowry, and his daughter, to get a large financial payout. In other words, Hallgerðr is being traded to a lower-status yet wealthy man so that her family can take the suitor’s money and make Hallgerðr an even bigger prize to be had.

To reach this ‘plundering marriage’ concept, Miller compares this scene to that of Guðrún and her father, Ósvífr, from *Laxdæla saga*, in which there is a similar scene.⁶⁷⁰ Unlike Hallgerðr, Guðrún does not speak with her father about this, in the saga. Instead, *Laxdæla saga* tells us that “[e]kki var Guðrún at þessu spurð, ok heldr gerði hon sér at þessu ógetit, ok var þó kyrrt” (Guðrún was not asked about this, and she conducted herself rather displeased about it, yet all was quiet) upon Guðrún learning of her betrothal.⁶⁷¹ Like Hallgerðr, Guðrún did not consent to the marriage and so is unhappy with her father’s decision but remains unable to escape his intentions for her. It is likely that Guðrún did not feel loved by her father’s actions here, for she is married to a man she has no desire to marry.

We will now return to Þorgerðr and Egill, in *Laxdæla saga* as well, so as to discuss their scene in more detail. While Þorgerðr was not initially happy with the suitor that Egill was suggesting to her, resulting in her also seeing her father as less loving than he had previously said, it is important to recognise that she was asked before the negotiations were complete. Egill even remarks to the father of the suitor that Þorgerðr must be consulted as well, otherwise the marriage would go poorly.⁶⁷² Nevertheless, Þorgerðr sees Egill’s actions as suggesting a lower love than expected of her father. Indeed, Þorgerðr’s problem with this potential arrangement is that Óláfr was born to a slave-woman, for Melkorka was enslaved and eventually purchased by Óláfr’s father. It does not matter to her that Óláfr is well-renowned and widely deemed an excellent man; his mother being a slave is enough to make such a match problematic for her, and thus indicative of her father’s lesser love for her. Perhaps she feared her father was, essentially, lowering her social status in marrying her to a

⁶⁶⁸ For further discussion, see Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 33-43.

⁶⁶⁹ Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 39.

⁶⁷⁰ Miller, ‘*Why is your Axe Bloody?*’, 36-39; *Laxd*, 93-94. We will later return to this scene for further discussion.

⁶⁷¹ *Laxd*, 93.

⁶⁷² *Laxd*, 63.

slave's son. Bandlien has already observed how women lost prestige through having intercourse with slaves; "[i]f a free woman slept with a slave, she herself chose to define herself as equal to the unfree".⁶⁷³ Choosing to make yourself unfree is very different to a supposedly loving parent deciding you should be unfree, via marriage to a slave's son. Considering such an idea, it would be little surprise that she felt Egill did not love her as much as he had said. Or perhaps we are to understand that Þorgerðr is afraid that her father will act like Hǫskuldr and Ósvífr, marrying their daughters to rich but unsuitable men, men who wanted the wife for her prestige.⁶⁷⁴ However, Þorgerðr's concern is soon resolved by Óláfr and they are married.

Considering their marriage, does Þorgerðr still feel as though her father acted with less love in acknowledging Óláfr as a potential suitor? We cannot know for certain, as the saga tells us nothing explicitly. However, Þorgerðr's blessing for the marriage would suggest that she no longer believes Egill to have acted with less love than had been said. While she had been hesitant to accept her father's decision, for the aforementioned reasons, Óláfr convinces her that he was worthy. This episode serves as one of the examples Bandlien utilises to conclude that "[g]ood marriages in *Laxdæla saga* are closely bound up with the woman's consent. The saga is pervaded by the idea that a man and woman who marry should be *jafnræði*, equals, an evaluation that should be left to the woman from the beginning of negotiations".⁶⁷⁵ While I agree with Bandlien's overall idea here, in that *Laxdæla saga* is focusing upon women's marital consent, I believe that there is a little bit more to say. Indeed, I see *Laxdæla saga* as still straddling the lines between the woman's consent and that of the *giftingarmaðr*, pointing to both as worthwhile elements in bridal negotiations. My point here arises from what Egill says immediately after Þorgerðr feels that he has acted with less love. He says "Eigi ertu um þetta jafnfréttin sem um annat; hefir þú eigi þat spurt, at hann er dóttursonr Mýrkjartans Írakonungs? Er hann miklu betr borinn í móðurkyn en föðurætt, ok væri oss þat þó fullboðit" ("You are not as eager for this news as with other things; have you not heard that he is the son of the daughter of the Irish king, Mýrkjartan? He is of much greater birth on his mother's side than his father's kinfolk, and even [his paternal kinship] would be

⁶⁷³ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 89.

⁶⁷⁴ For a discussion on why a man may marry a woman he does not love or who does not love him, see Miller, 'Why is your Axe Bloody?', 38. One such reason he lists is the prestige "for having bedded such a catch". Also see Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 252.

⁶⁷⁵ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 250.

enough of a match for us”).⁶⁷⁶ The audience could understand that Egill, here, does not want to let a good husband escape his daughter’s reach without her being fully aware of the situation. To Egill’s mind, Þorgerðr is refusing to listen to reason, ignoring the amazing qualities Óláfr possesses; to Þorgerðr’s mind, Egill is dishonouring her and lowering her status. And so, Egill somewhat chastises her for this unwillingness to listen, while restating Óláfr’s qualities. Since Þorgerðr is eventually convinced by Óláfr, the saga consequently vindicates Egill’s endeavours to betroth Þorgerðr to Óláfr. Egill understood that they were a good, *jafnræði* match and so sought to bring them together, as a good father should. However, he, importantly, did not ignore Þorgerðr’s input. The author thus presents the case that it was the consent of both *giptingarmaðr* and daughter that allowed for a good marriage.

Reinforcing the point that *Laxdæla saga* straddles this binary of consent between the *giptingarmaðr* and the woman is a later episode in which a woman is reprimanded for not consenting to her father’s decision, resulting in an unhappy marriage; an episode which can be contrasted with Egill and Þorgerðr. Ósvífr, the father, is approached by an excellent suitor, Bolli, who wishes to marry his daughter, Guðrún. Ósvífr is very receptive to the suitor but remarks that Guðrún is a widow and so can answer for herself, before going to confer with Guðrún. Upon hearing of the situation, Guðrún refuses to consent to the betrothal. Unhappy with Guðrún’s reply, Ósvífr says:

“Þá munu margir menn mæla, at þetta sé meir af ofsa mælt en mikilli fyrirhyggju, ef þú neitar slíkum manni, sem Bolli er; en meðan ek em uppi, þá skal ek hafa forsjá fyrir yðr börnum mínum um þá hluti, er ek kann gørr at sjá en þér.”⁶⁷⁷

“Thereupon many people will talk, that this [answer] is more from arrogance than great forethought, if you refuse such a man as Bolli; but as long as I am alive, then I shall provide for you children of mine, accordingly, in matters where I can see more clearly than you.”

Despite Guðrún’s reluctance to marry Bolli, and her widow status, Ósvífr outright ignores her and pushes her to yield to his will. Thus, Bolli and Guðrún are married. However, the saga soon informs us of the state of their marriage; “ekki var mart í samfögrum þeira Bolla

⁶⁷⁶ *Laxd*, 63-64.

⁶⁷⁷ *Laxd*, 129.

af Guðrúnar hendi” (there was not much intimacy between her and Bolli, as far as she was concerned).⁶⁷⁸ Indeed, this relationship ends extremely poorly, resulting in Bolli killing his blood-brother, Kjartan, and Bolli’s own death, all of which can be connected to Guðrún convincing Bolli to slay Kjartan.⁶⁷⁹ What we see in this scene is how the lack of consent from Guðrún was a major problem in maintaining the marriage. Like Egill, Ósvífr is happy to have the suitor be his son-in-law but, unlike Egill, Ósvífr does not wait for his daughter’s approval. By comparison, then, Ósvífr is less likely to be seen as loving in this decision. Indeed, any case for this being loving in motive is hindered by the saga informing us how “[s]ynir Ósvífrs fýsa þessa mjök; þykkir sér mikil slægja til mægða við Bolla” (the sons of Ósvífr greatly desired this [marriage]; they thought it to be a great benefit to have kinship with Bolli).⁶⁸⁰ Guðrún’s brothers, and likely her father too, wanted Bolli as an ally and kinsman and were not hesitant to use Guðrún to gain such an ally.

And yet there is something to consider before we deem Ósvífr an unloving father, that is, his looking to the future. Moss’s studies on Middle English fatherhood indicate that a good father “is constantly aware of time beyond the moment, of his place within history and of his responsibility to secure the future”.⁶⁸¹ We can see Ósvífr as doing this in the above passage. At this point, Ósvífr has likely learned that Kjartan, who is in Norway and is Guðrún’s real love interest, is flirting with the sister of King Óláfr of Norway; the king is also happy to marry his sister to Kjartan.⁶⁸² Perhaps the audience is supposed to infer that Ósvífr wants to stop his daughter from waiting for a man who may never come home and so have her marry another exceptional man; he may not be Kjartan but he is very close. To Ósvífr’s mind, maybe she could thus find love with Bolli and forget about Kjartan. This would align somewhat with how Egill talked to Þorgerðr; he wanted to ensure that Þorgerðr fully understood what exactly she was rejecting. Ósvífr, however, was forceful and unbending, rather than willing to listen to Guðrún. Thus, we could again see Ósvífr as unloving and hungry for powerful allies. If Guðrún awaits a man who may never return, she will never be on the marriage market, thus providing him and his family with no marital kinship networks to draw upon.

⁶⁷⁸ *Laxd*, 130.

⁶⁷⁹ *Laxd*, 151-156.

⁶⁸⁰ *Laxd*, 129.

⁶⁸¹ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 141.

⁶⁸² *Laxd*, 127. For how this love triangle (Bolli, Guðrún, and Kjartan) resembles the legendary stories, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 143.

By navigating the laws and sagas on the topic of bridal negotiations, I have been able to reintroduce emotions back into this discussion of *feðgin* relationships. In doing so, I have consequently pointed towards the various areas in which a father may express his love for his daughter. Such *feðgin* love could manifest through the father's search for an outstanding suitor for his daughter, which we saw manifest in various ways. Additionally, a father could show his love through his willingness to consider, and listen to, his daughter's opinions. Alternatively, we can see the differing ways in which we have seen a father show his love as all falling under the umbrella concept of a father being loving through his concern for his daughter's future prospects. Nevertheless, these bridal negotiations always had the possibility of being aimed towards serving the father and family, rather than the daughter.

Conclusion

This chapter has been dedicated to the exploration of love in *feðgin* relationships by studying the process of bridal negotiation in medieval Iceland, via a navigation of the laws and sagas of the time. This bridal process is a well-trodden topic area in Old Norse studies yet, in this study, I have taken a new perspective, that of the relationship and the emotions within it rather than focussing on the power dynamics and networking transactions. I have not ignored those other two topics, however, for they are deeply relevant to the subject; I have, rather, made them secondary to my focus on emotions. As a result of this novel approach, I have been able to point towards the various areas in which a father could express his love for his daughter through this process of bridal negotiation. Moreover, following this chapter's discussion, questions arose from the material and from my analysis. The first number of questions emerge from our discussion on *mæðgur* relationships in Chapter 1. The second set of questions are situated on the lack of women's descriptions and opinions in the sagas.

In this discussion on fathers betrothing their daughters off, it became evident that there was no mention of the mother's input on the matter. This should not be a surprise considering how the rules of the *giptingarmaðr* prioritise men in the betrothal process. However, in Chapter 1 we explored how mothers could affect a daughter's marital prospects through her level of maternal love. Does the mother, then, affect the father's bridal negotiations at all? What would happen if a mother did not love her daughter, and so did not educate her, but the father wanted a good marriage for her? Should we use *Víglundar saga's* Hólmkell as the guide for this? His wife did not want to educate their daughter and so he had

her fostered by another woman. Could this be another element of the culture of fosterage? Or are there other scenes to which we can look for further clarification?

Before the discussion on bridal negotiations truly started, it was clear that there was very little description of women in this male-dominated process. Despite this lack, I have collected a few occasions in which a woman's perspective was, somewhat, visible. And yet all of these examples remain centred upon the father. We are either given the saga's depiction of paternal love for a man's daughter or the daughter's perception of a lesser love from her father; it is all about the love which a father has for his daughter. What about the reverse? Where is the love directed to the father from the daughter? Do the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur* even possess a love term directed from a daughter to her father, or similar *feðgin* relationship? I can find but one such example in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, and even that is not totally suitable for our purposes, as it is the father's perception of daughterly love; he remarks to her what "mikla ást hefir þú sýnt við mik" ("great love you have shown me").⁶⁸³ The reason behind his understanding that his daughter loves him is that he believes she has decided to join him in starving to death as a result of his sons' (her brothers') deaths. She is following dutifully, to his mind. Really, though, she is helping him escape his grief and find a healthy outlet for it, rather than allowing him to commit suicide. With such little material on a daughter's love in the sources I used, would my investigation be helped by drawing more from the *fornaldarsögur*? Would they serve as a better starting point in exploring daughterly love for a father? Along with the general lack of description of daughters, as well as women more generally, it is possible that my methodology hindered my investigation into daughterly love for a father. This could have emerged from my focus on love terms as a foundation for contextualisation and analysis. The likeliest option, however, remains the simplest, that the sagas had little interest in women who were not major characters in the narrative. As such, they were relegated to the background with a few sentences or were outright excluded.

Nevertheless, through an exploration of love in *feðgin* pairs, as opposed to the usual starting points, I found glimpses of how *feðgin* love intersected with the topic of consent that must have been prevalent across medieval Iceland. Indeed, if a father was loving and caring, he would seek his daughter's thoughts on a particular suitor before accepting a betrothal while also judging the suitor himself; the suitor had to satisfy both the father and the daughter.

⁶⁸³ Eg, 244-245.

A less-than-loving father, on the other hand, would prioritise his own interests over his daughter's; she was but another tool available to him in increasing his status. This way of thinking was not without its perils, however. If a daughter were to divorce her husband, backlash from the husband's kin was a real possibility, meaning that the smartest move was to always consider the daughter's opinions. Considering how the civil law codes fought back against the Church's laws on consent, I believe the sagas' depictions of *feðgin* relationships were prescriptive. The sagas sought to illustrate to those self-serving fathers the dangers of not considering a daughter's opinion. Consequently, these sagas would not need to illustrate this message to daughters; they were surely well aware of their own plight. And so, as Bandliens remarks, "women's consent was a reality *giftingarmenn* had to learn to live with".⁶⁸⁴

Having explored one of the ways in which love manifested between fathers and daughters, I will now turn to the final chapter, in which we will study the last dyadic relationship. Indeed, I will investigate *mæðgin* relationships, that bond between mothers and sons. The topics of the chapter will be researching into how mothers could express their love through protecting their sons, and how sons showed love by trusting their mothers.

⁶⁸⁴ Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, 262.

Chapter 4: Love in *Mæðgin* Relationships

In the prior chapters, we have seen love involving mothers and sons, separately, in manifold ways but now we can move to their relationship, how mothers and sons love each other. This relationship is far more common to see for extended periods of time within the sagas than the *feðgin* and *mæðgur* relationships of the prior two chapters. The reason for this is that the *mæðgin* relationship – that between a mother and son, or similar intergenerational familial pairing – involves a son rather than a daughter. Indeed, as we have already seen, “[i]n the patriarchal tenor of the sagas, boys were more valued than girls.”⁶⁸⁵ Also, mothers of sons in the sagas are able to utilise their sons for their own, as well as their son’s, gains; such acts that cause or continue strife are interesting to read, and so are also cause for these relationships to be recorded. As Grundy succinctly states: “[t]he combination of a woman’s implicit social and personal power and explicit legal and physical powerlessness intensifies the mother-son relationship”.⁶⁸⁶

Nevertheless, scholarship on this relationship focuses on the pair’s roles in the relationship, very rarely mentioning the emotional side of life. Discussions often revolve around the theme of callous or even monstrous mothers, how Old Norse mothers can be “so vicious that they are prepared to throw their children and stepchildren to the dogs if it serves their purpose”.⁶⁸⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir goes on to note how the sagas raise the possibility that mothers may use their sons, as puppets, in their personal machinations.⁶⁸⁸ The alternative focus of studying *mæðgin* relationships is the protective and legal elements of their bond. The mother may act as advisor or protector or supporter, while the son may do the same when he is of age.⁶⁸⁹ This reciprocity can even be found in the laws. Indeed, by law a man had to maintain his mother over all other dependents, including his children; he is even to go into debt-bondage to maintain her.⁶⁹⁰ The mother, supposedly, raised him and so he must return the favour when she is struggling.

⁶⁸⁵ Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” 213. See also Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 136.

⁶⁸⁶ Grundy, “The Viking’s Mother,” 234.

⁶⁸⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 142. See also Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood”. For a discussion on women’s incitement speeches, or whetting, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 15-46; Miller, *Bloodtaking*, 212-214.

⁶⁸⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 140.

⁶⁸⁹ Grundy, “The Viking’s Mother,” 230-232; Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” 213-215; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 120. For a supernatural reading of the maternal role, see Grundy, “The Viking’s Mother”.

⁶⁹⁰ *Laws II*, 29.

I say ‘supposedly’ for we know that children of higher-status families were often fostered, in the home or at another homestead, so it is not entirely clear how much of a role biological mothers had in their children’s upbringing. As a result, any conclusions drawn only from a single strand of *mæðgin* relationship, such as a fosterage pair, obscures as much as it reveals; how much of what we learn portrays that specific strand of *mæðgin* relationship, as opposed to the whole of *mæðgin* relationships?

To illustrate this, let us quickly look to Urðarköttr and Syrpa from *Finnboga saga*, whom we discussed previously in Chapter 1. Urðarköttr is being fostered by Syrpa, and her husband Gestr, and believes them to be his parents; in truth, however, Urðarköttr was intended to die from exposure but was found by Gestr.⁶⁹¹ Syrpa and Gestr raised him as their own until it was inferred, by his biological uncle, Þorgeirr, that Urðarköttr could not be their child and so this fosterage arrangement came to an end when Urðarköttr was twelve years old.⁶⁹² In those twelve years, we learn a fair amount about Urðarköttr’s relationship with his foster-parents. We are told how “[h]ann var þeim þarfr í öllu því, er hann mátti. Þau höfðu mikla ást á honum” ([h]e was useful to [his foster-parents] in everything, that he could be. They had great love for him).⁶⁹³ Being a helpful son, Urðarköttr would go and enjoy some time with the fishermen and “hafði hann jafnan góðar hjálpir heim til fóstru sinnar, Syrpu” (he always brought good and helpful things home to his foster-mother, Syrpa).⁶⁹⁴ And when Urðarköttr inferred that he was going to be taken from his foster-parents, he remarked that “enda veit ek eigi, at mér sé önnur móðir betri eða faðir en þessi, þótt þat væri meir til metnaðar” (“yet I do not know that another mother or father would be better for me, than [my foster-parents], even if they would be higher in status”).⁶⁹⁵ If Urðarköttr had been raised in the higher-status household of his biological parents, would he have had the same childhood? Would he have still worn the rags that he wore as the son of Gestr and Syrpa? Would he have helped his parents in everything that he could help with, as he did with Syrpa and Gestr? Do Syrpa’s troll-like characteristics change anything about this relationship?⁶⁹⁶ Was it possible for him to have had the same parent-child relationship?

⁶⁹¹ *Finnb*, 254-256.

⁶⁹² *Finnb*, 260-263.

⁶⁹³ *Finnb*, 258.

⁶⁹⁴ *Finnb*, 258.

⁶⁹⁵ *Finnb*, 261.

⁶⁹⁶ For further discussion, see Gallo, “The Giantess as Foster-Mother”.

All of these questions serve to highlight the complexity of *mæðgin* relationships and, thus, the abundance of opportunities for further scholarship. As it stands, this chapter will present some of the more prevalent patterns and motifs. In order to help offset the potential complications of specific strands of *mæðgin* relationship rather than the broader understanding I am using, I will be looking at general themes of how love manifests so as to mitigate any differences in love from a specific upbringing.

Nevertheless, despite all of this, there are but a few occasions, in scholarship, that love is mentioned as existing between mother and son; and these instances reveal the need for my work here. In her chapter titled “Old Norse Motherhood”, Jochens mentions love at multiple points, briefly, but does not delve deeper into the subject of what love meant in a *mæðgin* relationship. As mentioned before, Jochens’s work here was written before the emergence of the field of the history of emotions, so it is not too surprising that she does not go further into the subject. Regardless, she does examine love, concluding that what evidence of love we do see in the sagas may be “new and sponsored by the Christian clergy”.⁶⁹⁷ I believe the emotional culture of medieval Iceland to be more nuanced than that; I do not believe that the sagas’ depictions of love were completely of a love that was thrust upon the medieval Icelanders by the clergy. Instead, I understand the saga authors to be merely writing within the generally Christianised community that is medieval Iceland.⁶⁹⁸ While a message could be, and likely was, crafted into the narrative, saga authors, regardless of their beliefs could not record ideas that were too discordant with their audience’s context.⁶⁹⁹ Regarding the Norse translation of Chrétien’s *Yvain*, Sif Rikhardsdottir observes how the Norse translators “had to convey their material in a manner that would have been comprehensible to their Nordic audiences; audiences whose emotional perceptions and habits” would have likely differed from the original, intended audience.⁷⁰⁰ If the authors translated emotional displays to fit their audiences, then authors were likely already recording emotions in a manner that was

⁶⁹⁷ Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” 217.

⁶⁹⁸ In a similar vein, Bandlien does not believe that the Christian doctrine of consent is the sole reason behind saga depictions of women taking part in bridal negotiations. See Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion*, especially 151-156.

⁶⁹⁹ Also see Oren Falk, “A Dark Age Peter Principle: Beowulf’s Incompetence Threshold,” *Early Medieval Europe* 18, no. 1 (2010): 18.

⁷⁰⁰ Sif Rikhardsdottir, “Translating Emotion: Vocalisation and Embodiment in *Yvain* and *Ívens Saga*,” in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, ed. Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 163.

recognisable to the audience.⁷⁰¹ Thus, I believe we are able to use the sagas to discern the meaning of Old Norse love, as it was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, too, writes about love without further elaboration, mentioning how “[m]others bestowed love and care on their children” before moving on to what maintenance we can assume mothers provided their children.⁷⁰² She is likely correct in her statement but there is no substantiation of what constitutes love for medieval Icelanders. Was love simply maintaining one’s child? Was it the preparation of the child’s future? Was it both? Was there more to it? Indeed, while the gaping holes in Old Norse familial relationship scholarship are gradually being filled, there have been no sustained studies on emotions in those relationships, let alone love specifically. This is where this work comes in.

To that end, this chapter will be split into two main sections, both revealing aspects of love in *mæðgin* relationships, and providing new insights, by using love as the starting point. First, we will look at how *mæðgin* pairs protected and looked out for each other, due to their love for one another. After that, we will proceed through a deep excavation to discern the role that trust played in *mæðgin* love.

This chapter’s themes did not emerge from the database, as many of the other chapter themes did. While *mæðgin* dyads are more acutely visible in the sagas, when compared to those of *feðgin* and *mæðgur*, my database did not present me with clear patterns of how love manifested in that relationship. As a result, I instead selected two saga episodes that possessed love terminology but also boasted a rich subtext that required excavation, so as to uncover how the Old Norse culture comprehended these scenes of love.

The first of these themes arises from the primary *mæðgin* relationship in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, a saga and familial dyad that have been well-studied. Despite the volume of scholarship, the scene we will be looking at has not been studied with emotions at the centre of the discussion. Therefore, using that scholarship as a foundation, I will highlight the nuances of this scene, the *mæðgin* relationship, and the ramifications, by maintaining a focus on historical emotions. The second theme is to be found in *Heiðarvíga saga*, a less famous saga – than *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* – that has much to say about magic in Old Norse culture.

⁷⁰¹ For how the audience could be expected to be familiar with certain conventions and ideas, see Slavica Ranković, “The Temporality of the (Immanent) Saga: Tinkering with Formulas,” in *Dating the Sagas: Reviews and Revisions*, ed. Else Mundal (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013), especially 138.

⁷⁰² Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 124.

While this saga has been studied for its descriptions of the supernatural, the emotional elements have consistently been overlooked. I will thus explore a scene of emotional content by utilising the supernatural undercurrents present within it.

Through these two case studies, we will discuss two strands of *mæðgin* dyad. I say this because it is relevant to note that the respective case studies would not necessarily be viable to consider as behaviour that would fit the whole of what I have deemed to be *mæðgin* pairings. I have hence broadened my conclusions from the specific scenarios to that which could reasonably fit *mæðgin* relationships, more generally.

In summation, my database yielded no clear patterns with which to analyse Old Norse love when it came to *mæðgin* pairs. As a result, I selected two thematic examples by which I could uncover nuances that would have been comprehensible to the medieval Icelanders but are not readily available to modern readers.

Protection

Our first theme for how love was understood to manifest between a *mæðgin* pair is protection, in that one member of the pair would protect the other due to their love for that person. By this, I do not necessarily mean the defending of one with a shield; while it may play a part, I am using the term in a more general fashion, in that it involves actions taken to reduce or remove risks to the other party. We see this element of *mæðgin* love in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, in which Grettir's mother, Ásdís, protects him.

In order to understand this scene of protection, we must first understand Grettir's childhood and his relationship with his father, Ásmundr, before we can approach his relationship with his mother. The saga author presents Grettir's relationships with his parents early on in the saga; after Grettir is introduced, we are quickly told how "[e]kki hafði hann ástríki mikit af Ásmundi, fǫður sínum, en móðir hans unni honum mikit" ([Grettir] received no great wealth of love from Ásmundr, his father, but his mother loved him greatly).⁷⁰³ Unloved by his father but loved by his mother; how did such a situation come about? Ásdís's love is not explained by the saga but Ásmundr's comparable lack of love is likely explained through what we are told around the quoted passage. Before the above passage, we are told "hann var mjök ódæll í uppvexti sínum, fátalaðr ok óþýðr, bellinn bæði í orðum ok tiltekðum" ([Grettir] was

⁷⁰³ Gr, 36.

very difficult to deal with in his childhood; he spoke rarely and was unkind; he was unruly in both words and deeds).⁷⁰⁴ In their translated edition of the saga, Fox and Hermann Pálsson note that “[t]hese sentences are the preface to a series of anecdotes about Grettir’s childhood, when time and again he defies, violently, cruelly, and wittily, the authority of his father, and is shielded by his mother”.⁷⁰⁵ The anecdotes, which Fox and Hermann Pálsson are referring to, are what follow Grettir’s introduction, and they involve: the killing of goslings, the injuring of Ásmundr, and the maiming of Ásmundr’s best horse. Overall, it would be very easy to understand Grettir as a cruel and disobedient child and that being the reason why Ásmundr does not possess much love for Grettir.⁷⁰⁶

These scenes are more nuanced, however, than simply evoking a disobedient son. For example, the last of these three tasks is more acceptable to Grettir as it is *kalt* (cold) and, thus, *karlmannligt* (manly) work rather than the first two tasks which he deems *lqðrmanligt* (feeble-hearted) work and thus too lowly for him.⁷⁰⁷ Why would the author have Grettir bother describing a task’s suitability for himself if he would never consider doing it? True, the audience could judge Grettir to be a bratty and disobedient layabout who does not want to work, despite a job’s suitability – this follows the well-known *kolbítr* (literally, coal-biter) motif in which the male protagonist, in his youth, is described as lazy and constantly sitting around the fire.⁷⁰⁸ However, this would be a disservice to Grettir’s character. Indeed, Grettir did his task of maintaining Ásmundr’s horses, if disgruntled with the prize horse’s behaviour, with little issue. However, winter arrives and we are then told how “Grettir var lítt settr at klæðum, en maðr lítt harðnaðr; tók hann nú at kala” (Grettir was poorly clothed and still a tender boy.

⁷⁰⁴ *Gr*, 36.

⁷⁰⁵ *Grettir’s Saga*, trans. Denton Fox and Hermann Pálsson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), ix. Evans also notes that father-son difficulties may just be a family trait. See Evans, *Men and Masculinities*, 110-111.

⁷⁰⁶ For how Grettir’s anti-social nature may be connected to him being a monster slayer rather than an ordinary human, see Ármann Jakobsson, “The Fearless Vampire Killers: A Note about the Icelandic *Draugr* and Demonic Contamination in *Grettis Saga*,” *Folklore* 120, no. 3 (2009). For how this behaviour reflects ideals of Norse masculinity, see Oren Falk, “Boyhood, Saga-Style,” 28-29. For how this clash between father and son is indicative of Grettir being born in the wrong era, see Kathryn Hume, “The Thematic Design of *Grettis saga*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 73, no. 4 (1974), especially 471-472, 479; Carolyne Larrington, “Awkward Adolescents: Male Maturation in Norse Literature,” in *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*, ed. Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 160.

⁷⁰⁷ *Gr*, 37-38, 40.

⁷⁰⁸ For the contrasting of the two major hero types in the *fornaldarsögur*, one of which she calls the ‘Grettir’ type, see Ruth Richter-Gould, “The *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*: A Structural Analysis,” *Scandinavian Studies* 52, no. 4 (1980): 427-428.

He started to freeze).⁷⁰⁹ It is only from here that Grettir planned to maim the prize horse, who always grazed in the most unsheltered areas until nightfall.⁷¹⁰ Utilising this scene, Cook disputes the conclusion that Grettir is bratty and disobedient, with the result of a lack of paternal love; he instead focuses on Ásmundr's actions. Cook comments on how "[s]urely it is unjust and perverse for a father who craves warmth for himself... to allow his son to be so badly clothed for a task that involves extreme exposure to the cold".⁷¹¹ While Grettir may have deemed the third task from his father to be manly work, the working conditions do not appear to be right for him. Despite his size, he was still only ten years old and, what the saga calls, a tender boy.

Cold weather aside, there are other elements in this scene to suggest that Ásmundr had provided his son with tasks unsuitable for him. Ásdís is the one who brings it to our attention; in response to Ásmundr's anger with Grettir for maiming the horse, she says "[e]igi veit ek, hvárt mér þykkir meir frá móti, at þú skipar honum jafnan starfa, eða hitt, at hann leysir alla einn veg af hendi" ("I know not which seems to me more abnormal, either that you always order him to *starfa*, or that he settles it all in the same way").⁷¹² Despite her son's violence, Ásdís maintains a neutral stance between her husband and son. Why? What has Ásmundr done to match Grettir's violence, prompting Ásdís to be neutral? Alongside Grettir's comments about lowly work, there is also the untranslated verb *starfa* in the previous passage, a word that needs further clarification. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson translate this word as 'to work' or 'to labour', but neither of these translations explain why such work results in violent outbursts from Grettir nor why Ásdís comments on it.⁷¹³ However, Sturtevant looks at *starfa* and questions the general translation of it as 'to work'.⁷¹⁴ By considering the origins of the term, Sturtevant indicates that *starfa* may be better understood as being references to slave labour and similar work.⁷¹⁵ Sturtevant's discussion also links the word to starvation and death, by connecting it to the Old English *steorfan*, or 'to die', amongst others; he remarks that "[e]vidently then [Old Norse] *starfa* passed over from the basic general sense

⁷⁰⁹ *Gr*, 40.

⁷¹⁰ *Gr*, 40.

⁷¹¹ Cook, "The Reader in *Grettis saga*," 137.

⁷¹² *Gr*, 41-42.

⁷¹³ *CVD*, 589.

⁷¹⁴ Albert Morey Sturtevant, "Certain Semantic Changes in Old Norse," *Philological Quarterly* 30 (1951): 311-312.

⁷¹⁵ Sturtevant, "Certain Semantic Changes," 311-312.

of ‘to die’ to the particularized sense of ‘to die (from hard labor)’” which resulted in *starfa* as ‘to work’ or ‘to labour’.⁷¹⁶ With respect to Grettir’s case, I do not believe we should hone in on the elements of death within *starfa*, rather, we should focus on the idea that Ásmundr is giving Grettir work that is associated with slaves – those of low/no status. Indeed, if we accept Sturtevant’s observations, then what we may be seeing is Ásdís rebuking her husband for giving their son jobs which were unbecoming of his status; they were too lowly and menial. To reiterate Ásdís’s neutral statement, then, she is saying “I know not which is weirder: that you assign him tasks fit for a slave or him responding with violence each time”. Poole confirms the unsuitability of Ásmundr’s tasks for Grettir, reporting how the saga logic seeks “to propel [Grettir] into, or confirm his place in, the warrior, not the farmer class”.⁷¹⁷ If Grettir was so unfit for farming, as this episode shows, why did Ásmundr give him these tasks?

Indeed, when “Ásmundr bað hann starfa nokkut” (Ásmundr bade [Grettir] to *starfa* some), Grettir responds that he is not “vel hent”, or ‘well suited’, for such work.⁷¹⁸ And when Grettir complains about the lowly task of watching the geese, Ásmundr responds with: “Leys þú þetta vel af hendi, ok mun þá batna með okkr.” (“Perform well in this [task], and it shall then improve [things] between us”).⁷¹⁹ There are two perceptions we can take from this exchange between father and son. One understanding of this scene would suggest that Ásmundr is giving Grettir smaller tasks to see how he handles them, before moving to more fitting tasks. This makes sense if we consider Moss’s work on fatherhood, in which she identifies how “the father-son relationship is coded in terms of responsibility and obligation on both sides, for their mutual benefit”.⁷²⁰ Moss’s work here may focus upon Middle English texts, but this is a similar time period to the compilation of the *Íslendingasögur*, and so can viably serve as a comparative culture. If we consider Grettir and Ásmundr’s relationship in terms of mutual obligation, then, both parties feel aggrieved; Grettir feels wronged for being given tasks below his station while Ásmundr feels wronged by Grettir’s violent insolence. Thus, both parties are failing to uphold their roles and obligations as father and son, resulting in Ásdís’s exclamation against both of them. Ranković posits an alternative perception,

⁷¹⁶ Sturtevant, “Certain Semantic Changes,” 311. Also, the modern English ‘to starve’ is descended from *steorfan*.

⁷¹⁷ Russell Poole, “Myth, Psychology, and Society in *Grettis saga*,” *Alvíssmál* 11 (2004): 11.

⁷¹⁸ *Gr*, 37.

⁷¹⁹ *Gr*, 37.

⁷²⁰ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 89.

remarking that “[b]y giving his proud son the tasks he knows must be humiliating for him, Ásmundr deliberately sets out to break Grettir’s spirit”.⁷²¹ Perhaps the death elements in *starfa* could refer to a spiritual death, akin to such a breaking of spirit? Ranković goes further and questions Grettir’s generally-perceived sadism, instead seeing Grettir’s actions as part of a feud between father and son.⁷²² Ásmundr started the process with a lowly task and Grettir responded in kind, continuing until Ásdís stepped in and rebuked the both of them. Cook also critiques Ásmundr’s behaviour, seeing him as hypocritical since “it is inconsistent for a father who was indolent in his own youth to be unsympathetic toward a son who balks at lowly tasks”.⁷²³ Was Ásmundr mean-spirited towards his son or simply trialling Grettir with smaller tasks before a bigger one? Maybe it was one of them or maybe it was both. Regardless, Ásmundr provided lowly and unsuitable tasks and Grettir was not happy with them, nor his father for giving them out. This multifaceted relationship is summarised well by Cook who notes that “the reader is not certain whether he has met a tyrannous and unreasonable father, an incorrigible and sadistic ten-year-old, or a budding hero not content with menial tasks”.⁷²⁴ In summary, their relationship was difficult and rocky at this time.⁷²⁵

With that overview of the enmity and strains in Grettir and Ásmundr’s relationship, we can begin focusing on Ásdís and Grettir. Indeed, the analysis of the relationship begins when Grettir is punished with three years of banishment, for slaying another man. Upon this sentencing, the saga explains that Ásmundr gets a place for Grettir on a boat sailing from Iceland and so Grettir prepares for the journey. The saga then details the following:

Engi vildi Ásmundr fararefni fá honum, útan hafnest ok lítit af vaðmálum. Grettir bað hann fá sér vápn nökkut. Ásmundr svarar: “Eigi hefir þú mér hlýðinn verit; veit ek ok eigi, hvat þú munir þat með vápnum vinna, er þarft er; mun ek ok þau eigi til láta”... Síðan skilðu þeir feðgar með litlum kærleikum... Móðir hans fylgði honum á leið; ok áðr þau skilðu, mælti hon svá: “Eigi ertu svá af garði gorr, frændi, sem ek

⁷²¹ Slavica Ranković, “The Performative Non-Canonicity of the Canonical: *Íslendingasögur* and their Traditional Referentiality,” in *The Performance of Christian and Pagan Storyworlds: Non-Canonical Chapters of the History of Nordic Medieval Literature*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen and Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, with Alexandra Bergholm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 264.

⁷²² Ranković, “The Performative Non-Canonicity,” 264. Cf. Poole, “Myth, Psychology, and Society,” 11.

⁷²³ Cook, “The Reader,” 137.

⁷²⁴ Cook, “The Reader,” 137.

⁷²⁵ For further discussion on Ásmundr and Grettir’s relationship, see Rebecca Merkelbach, “Engi maðr skapar sik sjálf: Fathers, Abuse and Monstrosity in the Outlaw Sagas,” in *Bad Boys and Wicked Women: Antagonists and Troublemakers in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Daniela Hahn and Andreas Schmidt (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2016), 65-76.

vilda, svá vel borinn maðr sem þú ert; þykki mér þat mest á skorta, at þú hefir ekki vápn, þat er neytt sé, en mér segir svá hugr um, at þú munir þeira við þurfa." Hon tók þá undan skikkju sinni sverð búit; þat var allgóðr gripr. Hon mælti þá: "Sverð þetta átti Jökull, fõðurfaðir minn, ok inir fyrri Vatnsdælar, ok var þeim sigrsælt; vil ek nú gefa þér sverðit, ok njót vel." Grettir þakkaði henni vel gjöfina ok kvað sér þetta betra þykkja en aðrir fémunir, þótt meiri væri. Síðan fór hann veg sinn, en Ásdís bað honum margra virkða.⁷²⁶

Ásmundr would get no travel goods for [Grettir], except for the bare essentials and a little bit of coarse, woollen fabric. Grettir asked him for some kind of weapon. Ásmundr answers: "You have not been obedient to me; and I know not what deeds you may achieve with weapons, that one would consider useful; and I will not give one to you"... Father and son then parted with little love... [Grettir's] mother accompanied him to the road; and before they parted, she said thus: "You are not as prepared for departure, my son, as I wanted, so well-born a man as you are; it seems to me that what is most lacking is that you do not have any weapons, which can be used. And my *hugr* tells me, that you will have need of them."⁷²⁷ She then took from under her cloak an ornamented sword; it was a very good possession. She then said: "This was the sword of Jökull, my grandfather, and the ancient Vatnsdælir men, and it blessed them with victory; I now want to give you the sword. Use it well." Grettir thanked her well for the gift and said it seemed to him better than other valuables, although the valuables were greater [in economic value]. Afterwards, he went on his way, and Ásdís wished him all good wishes.

Once again, Ásmundr refuses to oblige Grettir. Despite Grettir's request, Ásmundr gives Grettir no weapons for his banishment period, leaving Grettir with no tools to defend himself. However, as Grettir goes to leave Iceland, Ásdís accompanies him partway; Ásmundr is not present for this interaction. She reveals that Grettir should have been prepared better, indicating that she is unhappy with Ásmundr's decision of Grettir departing with only the bare essentials for a journey across the seas, and no weapon. Believing that Grettir will need weapons, further indicating her displeasure with Ásmundr's ruling and perhaps also her deep knowledge of how Grettir behaves, Ásdís presents to him an ancient sword for his use. Ásdís loves her son so much, that she chooses to defy Ásmundr's decision and provide Grettir with

⁷²⁶ *Gr*, 49-50.

⁷²⁷ I have left *hugr* untranslated as to do so would be to ascribe the belief of mind-body dualism to the medieval Icelanders, despite *hugr* suggesting otherwise. Overall, *hugr* is a term that combines what anglophones would call 'mind' and 'heart'. For the Anglo-Saxon conceptualisation of mind and heart being synonymous, see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*. For a brief discussion on this topic, see the section 'What is an Emotion?', in the Introduction.

what his father refused to. In so doing, Ásdís provides Grettir with the necessary tools to protect himself, which he will sorely need throughout the saga. She cannot protect her son from any dangers, but she can indirectly protect him by rejecting Ásmundr's decision. Not only is she giving him a weapon with which to protect himself, she is giving him a weapon passed down through her patrilineal ancestry, a sword that she says blessed her ancestors with victory. The saga provides no name for the sword at this point and it is not clear whether the sword is literally victory-blessed, and so is magical, or if Ásdís is being figurative; nevertheless, this sword is a generational heirloom which has seen victory multiple times.⁷²⁸ This is important as it shows Ásdís's desire for Grettir to one day return; with a sword that always grants victory, how could he not come back home? Such love we continue to see throughout the saga in the form of protection, despite Grettir's inevitable death.⁷²⁹

This scene of a mother giving a sword to her son is unique in the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga sögur*, as the most similar occasions I have found do not come close to this scene.⁷³⁰ In *mæðgin*-specific relationships, for example, we have *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, in which Egill's mother declares, after he has killed a play-mate, that he will soon enough become a Viking and be ready for his own longship.⁷³¹ Egill's mother, however, does not provide these for Egill nor does she gift him a sword; she only deems it fitting for him, possibly in a bid to convince her husband to provide them himself. We do have the giving of a sword in *Fóstbræðra saga* of the *Íslendingasögur* but this too is dissimilar. Within the saga, a witch, called Gríma, gives a sword to her slave, Kolbákr, in order to slay the man who is seducing her daughter.⁷³² Gríma and Kolbákr are not parent and child nor are they in a fosterage relationship nor any similar relationship, so it is not enough alike to Ásdís and Grettir for comparison. True, Gríma and Kolbákr are in a similar power dynamic, in that Gríma is the elder

⁷²⁸ The first mention of the sword's name in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* is when Grettir enters a gravemound and fights its inhabitant; see Gr, 56-58. For a summary of the history of Grettir's sword, see H. R. Ellis Davidson, "The Sword at the Wedding," *Folklore* 71, no. 1 (1960): 7-8. For a discussion on the superior status of swords, see Sue Brunning, *The Sword in Early Medieval Northern Europe* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 129. For how (magic) swords were constructed and possessed agency in the Old Norse saga prose, see Miriam Mayburd, "Objects and Agency in the Medieval North: The Case of Old Norse Magic Swords," *Średniowiecze Polskie i Powszechnie* 16 (2020). Also see, *Korm*, 234-6, for an elaborate ritual that Kormákr is supposed to perform in order to wield the sword, *Sköfnungr*.

⁷²⁹ For a summary of the conflicting reasons behind Grettir's inevitable downfall, see Slavica Ranković, "The Exquisite Tempers of Grettir the Strong," *Scandinavian Studies* 89, no. 3 (2017).

⁷³⁰ For how this *mæðgin* relationship is a rarity in the Old Norse corpus, see Jochens, "Old Norse Motherhood," 201-202.

⁷³¹ *Eg*, 100.

⁷³² *Fbr*, 162-164.

member of their relationship and Kolbakr is the younger, as well as his expected obedience to her. However, the relationship of master and slave is outside the purview of this project, so it shall not be further explored here.

If we move out of the saga corpuses that this project primarily studies, we do find more examples of swords being given by mothers to their sons. The *fornaldarsaga*, or legendary saga, of *Völsunga saga* has the mother, Hjördís, give her son, Sigurðr, the broken remains of a sword.⁷³³ However, the saga records that it was not solely her decision to give Sigurðr these sword pieces. Indeed, Sigurðr's father, in his last moments, bids Hjördís to collect the sword pieces for the express purpose of giving them to their son, Sigurðr.⁷³⁴ Can we accept such a sword gift for this comparison, though, if it was not solely the mother's decision? Davidson would say so, for she observed that "[t]he women who became the mothers of sons and on whom the continuance of the family depended were entrusted with the keeping of the family sword in the period when it lay at rest between one generation and another".⁷³⁵ For Davidson, Ásdís performs that same role, keeping the familial sword for Grettir.⁷³⁶ Perhaps this is true, that women were the guardians of swords that had no male heir to wield them. However, what were the circumstances around the mother giving the sword to her son? Sigurðr's father was dead, so only Hjördís could do the giving. Did the father have to be unable, or unwilling, to give a son a sword before the mother could step in? Was there a hierarchy of providing weapons?

Now, the saga most akin to *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* in its *mæðgin* relationship, as we have been so far exploring, is *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* – another *fornaldarsaga*. In this saga, a mother gives her son an ancestral sword in circumstances that reflect that of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. Upon receiving this sword, the audience receive Heiðrekr's comments on the difference between his parents' treatment of him; he says "faðir minn gerir mik útlægjan, enn móðir mín gaf mér Tyrfing, en mér þykkir betra enn mikit ríki" ("my father proclaims me an outlaw, yet my mother gave me Tyrfing, and that seems to me better than a great realm).⁷³⁷ Like Grettir, Heiðrekr has angered his father and is sent abroad with little provision; in steps his mother, Hervör, granting him a sword to use for his upcoming travels.

⁷³³ *Völs*, 116.

⁷³⁴ *Völs*, 109-110.

⁷³⁵ Davidson, "The Sword at the Wedding," 18.

⁷³⁶ Davidson, "The Sword at the Wedding," 7-8.

⁷³⁷ *Heiðr*, 320.

Additionally, Mayburd observes the mother taking on paternal characteristics; she notes how Hervör is “coming across in this act as more of a father figure to [Heiðrekr] than his actual one”.⁷³⁸ We will soon return to this idea. Nevertheless, should we see this as an indication that the post-classical *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* was influenced by the *fornaldarsaga* of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, or even the *fornaldarsögur* more generally, in its perception of *mæðgin* relationships? And if so, is that a cause for concern? I believe Grundy suitably answers these questions; “[t]he two accounts are similar enough that, if one did not exert direct influence on the other, it may well be suspected that both fit into the pattern of a literary motif. Yet motifs of this type are likely to some degree to reflect social ideals”.⁷³⁹ So, there is little to gain, for this project, in seeking to know whether one of these sagas was influenced by the other, for it cannot change the overall observation that a mother sought to provide protection for her child, and, in these sagas, that this could be achieved by giving the son a sword. Perhaps this was a method by which Old Norse mothers protected their sons, or maybe it was not. Regardless of saga genre and context, the idea that a mother wanted to protect, and provide for, her child was comprehensible to the medieval Icelandic audience, and authors, of these sagas, as an indicator of a mother’s love.

I would now like to return to *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, in order to discuss some of the possible implications riddled throughout this scene of sword-giving, in which the gift reveals Ásdís’s love and desire to protect her son. The first of these implications is the possible risk to Ásdís, the second is how the gifting of a sword could fit into the whetting schema, and the third is the potential for giving swords to be a part of a mother’s expected duties.

First of all, it is prudent to notice how Ásdís has kept the weapon hidden from her husband as she walks beside Grettir away from the household. After we are told of Grettir and Ásmundr’s parting, Ásdís accompanies Grettir yet we are not told of the sword until she reveals it from within her cloak. Why was the sword given then and why did she not give it to Grettir within the household? This question suggests that Ásdís intended to give the sword to Grettir without Ásmundr’s knowledge. However, we are left the question of why. Why does Ásdís not want Ásmundr to know about this? One possibility originates from the sagas offering “several examples of women who try to get a sword and even to use it” yet failing in their

⁷³⁸ Mayburd, “Objects and Agency,” 54.

⁷³⁹ Grundy, “The Viking’s Mother,” 232.

attempts, implying that “[w]eapons are not to be used by women”.⁷⁴⁰ Perhaps Ásdís is shaking off male expectation by carrying a weapon and does not want her husband to know she has handled a weapon. However, I believe there is a simpler and more compelling component for us to think upon, considering that Ásdís is initially hiding the weapon amidst her clothing rather than wielding it. Indeed, a more fruitful area for consideration is that Ásdís knowingly defies Ásmundr’s decision to have Grettir unarmed. The reason for the secrecy, therefore, is that she does not want Ásmundr to know that she has gone against his will. She may be concerned that Ásmundr would try to prevent her from doing this or, perhaps, she is worried about his possible wrath for her defiance. Not only are we presented with a mother expressing her love for her son through protection, we also see a mother defy her husband in order to protect her beloved son, possibly risking herself in the process.

The second implication is whether we can understand this process as a part of whetting, otherwise known as the incitement speech. This was a woman’s method by which to leverage the honour and shame system of medieval Iceland to achieve a goal. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir summarises the process of whetting and the key elements as follows: “someone offends a man by questioning his masculinity in some way... [t]he man whose duty it is to respond is, in his proud kinswoman’s view, slow to act” and so “[s]he emphatically insists on him taking up weapons” so as to retaliate.⁷⁴¹ Furthermore, the incitement was often “a public matter because it has a different effect from speaking to the husband in private; if the man is to keep his honour following the incitement, he must take action”.⁷⁴² While this process was “women’s primary device of involving themselves in men’s affairs”, it was not necessarily used for the man’s, or family’s, gain; it could be utilised for purposes deemed “more self-centered”.⁷⁴³ The scene that the saga gives us does not strictly follow the schema that Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has observed; Ásdís has not recommended either man to do anything. It is possible that the audience is to understand Ásdís has chosen to give Grettir the

⁷⁴⁰ Helga Kress, “Taming the Shrew: The Rise of Patriarchy and the Subordination of the Feminine in Old Norse Literature,” in *The Cold Counsel: The Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 90.

⁷⁴¹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 17. For a discussion on how the whetting woman chose, and compelled, the man to enact revenge, see Miller “Choosing the Avenger,” especially 179-185 for an exploration of how bloody tokens of the deceased were used to spur vengeful action.

⁷⁴² Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 18.

⁷⁴³ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 15, 24.

sword after discussions with Ásmundr but such a conversation is not observable in the text and so cannot be relied upon.

However, Hahn offers an alternative form of whetting. Looking at *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Laxdæla saga*, Hahn suggests that “[t]heft performed by female characters as a means of whetting functions according to the same principles as the verbal charge”.⁷⁴⁴ Theft may normally rely on, and occur in, secrecy, yet Hahn observes how the stolen goods become visible once again “in the right moment to achieve their effect as whetting instruments”.⁷⁴⁵ If we apply theft to Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s summary above, theft replaces the third element. Instead of insisting that he take up weapons, the woman steals from the aggressor and displays the goods in some way; this is what causes the man to react and deal with the situation, rather than letting it lie. Hahn also observes that theft is the last resort, occurring after the men have ignored the women’s calls to action.⁷⁴⁶ If a woman stealing can be seen as a form of whetting, perhaps Ásdís’s gifting of a sword can be seen to function in a similarly shameful manner, as another of the roundabout methods by which women were required to act so as to have their will executed.

The main problem, though, with this concept is that Ásdís is not making a public declaration. It is only between Grettir and herself. While it is true that the shipowner, who takes Grettir away from Iceland, “kvað þat sýnt, at henni var mest um hann hugat” (said it was evident that [Grettir] was the one most on [Ásdís’s] *hugr*), this cannot qualify as a public shaming of Ásmundr.⁷⁴⁷ Ásmundr is not on the boat to be shamed and, when the saga next mentions him, it gives no indication that Ásdís’s actions have affected Ásmundr or his reputation.⁷⁴⁸ Even with the addition of action being taken by the woman, such as thievery, and the understanding that Ásdís is securing her agenda of protecting Grettir, it seems that the current conceptualisation of whetting cannot incorporate Ásdís’s giving of a sword to him.

Moving to the third implication – how gifting a sword may fit into motherly behaviour – we can draw, once again, from a component of the incitement speech. Indeed, in her

⁷⁴⁴ Daniela Hahn, “Expanding the Repertoire. Theft as a Means of Whetting in the Sagas of Icelanders,” in *Bad Boys and Wicked Women: Antagonists and Troublemakers in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Daniela Hahn and Andreas Schmidt (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2016), 146.

⁷⁴⁵ Hahn, “Expanding the Repertoire,” 167.

⁷⁴⁶ Hahn, “Expanding the Repertoire,” 168.

⁷⁴⁷ *Gr*, 50.

⁷⁴⁸ See *Gr*, 87, for the next scene with Ásmundr, which makes no suggestion of humiliation. Also see *Gr*, 94-5, for when Grettir returns to Iceland and then to Ásmundr’s home; there is no hint of shame here either.

summary of what whetting is, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir provides examples of what an incitement speech may consist of; the one of interest for us is “threatening to take up weapons, and thus the male role, if [the man] does not act”.⁷⁴⁹ We saw a similar idea, earlier, in Mayburd’s statement about Hervör being more of a father than her husband, because she gave a sword to her son.⁷⁵⁰ Is Ásdís, thus, more of a father to Grettir than Ásmundr? Before we engage with that question, we must first establish how the provision of a sword was normally a paternal task.

To do this, we can start with Grettir and Ásmundr themselves. Indeed, the saga tells us that “Grettir bað hann fá sér vápn nǫkkut” (Grettir asked [Ásmundr] for some kind of weapon).⁷⁵¹ It is not Ásdís who Grettir asks, but his father, and it is his father who chooses to deny that request. Furthermore, there is no indication that Grettir should have asked his mother in the first place, despite the fact that she had an ancestral sword. Could this sword have been unknown in their household, meaning that Grettir did not know to ask Ásdís? Considering the sword’s renown, that is unlikely. It is more likely that it was specifically a paternal task to give a sword. We can also look at what scholarship is available on the subject.⁷⁵² Looking at the *Poetic Edda* and *Völsunga saga*, Hancock notes how fatherhood is centred around heroic masculinity and “fathers in particular provide identity as well as material goods”.⁷⁵³ Looking at the Middle English poem *Sir Degaré*, Moss studies the symbolism behind the son being left a broken sword by his father, a fairy knight. Moss observes that the “father holds the broken piece of the sword, and he also holds access to adult masculinity for his son” and so the son cannot be a complete man without knowledge of his own heritage, via the sword.⁷⁵⁴ Similarly, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir notes this idea of inheritance and status through the giving of swords. Using *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, she states that once Hervör proves herself to her father, “he yields and recognizes her right to inherit his sword and status”.⁷⁵⁵ The sword, then, serves not only as a tool but a symbol of the father’s ancestral line, something a father provides to a son. In his study of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, Poole states that “[i]n Grettir’s case the implication is that both sexual

⁷⁴⁹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 17.

⁷⁵⁰ Mayburd, “Objects and Agency,” 54.

⁷⁵¹ *Gr*, 49.

⁷⁵² See Hancock, “Male Kinship Obligations”; Evans, *Men and Masculinities*.

⁷⁵³ Hancock, “Male Kinship Obligations,” 229.

⁷⁵⁴ Moss, *Fatherhood*, 106.

⁷⁵⁵ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 65.

potency and patrilineal propertyship are compromised” through Ásmundr’s decision regarding the sword.⁷⁵⁶ These accounts consequently provide evidence to indicate that Grettir has been denied pieces of his identity through Ásmundr’s refusal, and we can therefore infer that Ásdís has chosen to lovingly try and provide those same pieces of identity through her bestowal of a sword.

Does Ásdís’s gift of a sword, though, necessitate that she become a proxy father, like how Mayburd perceives Hervör? I would, instead, posit that the provision of a sword was within the realms of motherly behaviour; a loving mother could give her son a sword and remain a mother. For, as Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir also notes, it is not the father’s line that is being passed on, rather, the scene conveys “the sense that Ásdís isn’t only outfitting her son with a sword but also trying to pass on the strength and success of her ancestors”.⁷⁵⁷ It is not Ásmundr’s family line but Ásdís’s matrilineal heritage that is being passed down via the sword. How, then, could Ásdís be taking on the role of the father? If a father provides a son’s identity through a patrilineal line and sword, then Ásdís cannot be doing this, for the audience is aware that she does not provide an identity through a patrilineal line. Instead, the sword is representative of Ásdís’s ancestry, one that is longer and, arguably, more renowned than Ásmundr’s.⁷⁵⁸

Despite being a longer ancestry line, the Vatnsdœlir men were said to have “had mixed Norwegian-giant ancestry”.⁷⁵⁹ The saga makes this clear through the name of Grettir’s ancestor, *Ketill raumr*; *raumr* is often translated as the cognomen ‘the large’ but can also translate to ‘a giant’.⁷⁶⁰ Poole also sees this trend, noting that “[t]he idea of Grettir as the scion of his maternal ancestors is further reinforced through the commonalities between him and the various non-human adversaries he encounters”.⁷⁶¹ Notably, Grettir is the heir of Ásdís and her ancestors. Poole goes on to present that there was a “contest of attitudes in society” regarding a female, and specifically maternal, dominance; the monstrous exists in Ásdís’s ancestry, through giants, as well as the pagan divine, via the Æsir’s intermarrying with

⁷⁵⁶ Poole, “Myth, Psychology, and Society,” 10.

⁷⁵⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 128-129.

⁷⁵⁸ For Grettir’s ancestry as it is stated in the saga, see *Gr*, 3, 7-8, 25, 33, 35-36. I agree with Poole that for the purposes of this saga, and thus this discussion, we should not draw further lineage elements from other sources. See Poole, “Myth, Psychology, and Society,” 7.

⁷⁵⁹ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 128.

⁷⁶⁰ *CVD*, 484. Also see the translation in “The Saga of Grettir the Strong,” 64.

⁷⁶¹ Poole, “Myth, Psychology, and Society,” 7.

giants.⁷⁶² The saga author's choice, in other words, of providing in-text genealogies to the audience allows for, and so suggests, multiple views as to how Ásdís was perceived.⁷⁶³ Indeed, there are negative, neutral, and positive interpretations of the Vatnsdælir heritage, each of which can correspond to Ásdís and her choice to give Grettir the ancestral sword.

Therefore, we cannot conceive of Ásdís as adopting a paternal role in giving a sword to Grettir, for she does not provide that which a father does – a patrilineal identity. She remains a mother, despite doing something most often associated with fathers. Hence, I believe what we are seeing is a mother filling the space that the father abandoned. Whether this was necessarily desirable is another question, for Ásdís's Norwegian-giant heritage suggests that a matrilineal focus may have been seen as problematic in Old Norse culture.

Furthermore, Ásdís did not give the sword publicly, but did so while alone with her son. Hervör too gives the sword in a more private manner; she follows Heiðrekr out of their household in order to give him the sword. These examples of Ásdís and Hervör do not fit with how the fathers were supposed to do it, in the household on full display to its inhabitants. Instead, these mothers went behind their husbands' backs and rejected their decisions, providing their sons with tools to protect themselves.

If we consider the privacy of the matter along with our discussion on the incitement speech, perhaps we should understand this clandestine sword-giving as a possibly transgressive act, similar to how women could threaten to take up weapons to do what the men refuse to. Such an act was not exactly sanctioned but perhaps, similarly, part of a mother's duties were to make up for where the father fails in his duties.

Through an eclectic approach to examining my source and digging deep into the oft-overlooked emotional elements, I have been able to reach some new conclusions with regards to *mæðgin* relationships. Indeed, the foremost one is that as a result of loving her son, Ásdís provides him with a sword. She does this to provide him with the tool necessary for his self-preservation; she indirectly protects him from harm by giving him the sword to protect himself with. Viewed more broadly, we can summarise the scenario as being a mother's love resulted in her attempts to protect her son. However, this loving action provides us with some further

⁷⁶² Poole, "Myth, Psychology, and Society," 7-8. Cf. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 129.

⁷⁶³ For a discussion on how the genealogy in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* serves storytelling purposes as well as a historical framing device, see Heather O'Donoghue, *Narrative in the Icelandic Family Saga: Meanings of Time in Old Norse Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 19-20; Janice Hawes, "The Monstrosity of Heroism: Grettir Ásmundarson as an Outsider," *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 1 (2008): 22-23.

insight into the culture of medieval Iceland. Rather than allow her husband to do as he wishes, risking her son's life in the process, Ásdís takes the place he abandoned and provides Grettir with a sword and a maternal ancestry. She rejects Ásmundr's decision and imposes her will.

Trust

Having looked at how mothers could protect their sons, we will now explore the theme of trust, and how sons who loved their mothers, or specifically foster-mothers in this case study, trusted them to have good intentions and the sons' interests at heart. So as to reach this conclusion, I will be drawing from *Heiðarvíga saga's* depiction of a fosterage *mæðgin* relationship, in which I explore how Barði's love for his foster-mother, Álqf kjannqk, is understood through his trust in her, despite her sorcerous capabilities. In order to explore this depiction of love, I will be studying the saga's use of a single love term to describe Barði's feelings towards Álqf and its context. This exploration, however, will require the study of other sagas and the use of scholarship on Old Norse magic so as to render the depiction of Barði's love more legible, for it is otherwise sparse with details. This is probably because the connotations were already comprehensible to the audience.

But first I will set out the saga scene. The context of our scenario is that Barði Guðmundarson and his brothers have been goaded by their mother to avenge the death of their brother. Having travelled to the home of his sister and brother-in-law, so as to bring the brother-in-law into his vengeance-seeking party, Barði momentarily delays his journey on the request of his sister; he then goes into the house to meet with his foster-mother, Álqf. The saga then reports that:

Kerlingin æmtir við innar í húsinu, en hon var í rekkju sinni. "Hverr ferr þar nú?" spyrr hon. Hann svarar: "Barði er hér nú. Hvat villtu mér, fóstura?" "Gakk þú hingat," segir hon... "ok vil ek þreifja um þik." Barði gerði svá, sem hon mælti, því at hann unni henni mikit.⁷⁶⁴

The old woman mutters farther within the room, and she was in her bed. "Who goes there now?" she asks. He answers: "Barði is now here. What do you want with me, foster-mother?" "Come here," she says... "and I will *þreifja* all over you." Barði did as she said, because he loved her greatly.

⁷⁶⁴ *Heið*, 281.

It is peculiar that the saga takes the time to explain how Barði allowed her to *preifa* him because he loved her. It may be helpful to realise the various connotations the verb *preifa* can allude to. Indeed, the word can translate as ‘to touch’, ‘to feel with the hand’, or ‘to grope’; the latter two of these possible translations offer more provocative imagery of the situation and what exactly Álǫf is doing to Barði.⁷⁶⁵ This is made all the clearer when the saga states how:

Hon tekr til í hvirflinum uppi ok þreifar um hann ǫllum megin, allt á tær niðr. Barði mælti: “Hvé kennisk þér til, ok hvé ætlar þú vera, þó þreifar þú nú svá vandliga?” Hon svarar: “Vel þykki mér,” sagði hon, “hvergi þykki mér við hníta, svá at ek finna stórum.”⁷⁶⁶

She grasps the crown of his head and touches him from all sides, all the way down to his toes. Barði said: “How does it feel to you, and what do you think about it, considering how you now *preifa* me so carefully?” She answers: “It seems good to me” she said, “nowhere do I find anything to have been wounded.”

Álǫf, then, is touching all over Barði’s body for a purpose.⁷⁶⁷ She is attempting to discern whether Barði will be injured in his upcoming battle and, if so, where and to what degree. In her translation of *Heiðarvíga saga*, Kunz makes a footnote on this passage detailing how Álǫf is searching for “unevenness or ridges which would be premonitions of wounds”.⁷⁶⁸ Indeed, Wolf notes that, within four *Íslendingasögur*, there are references to “a mother, foster mother, or a woman skilled in magic stroking or examining with her hands the body of a man before he went to battle, evidently to check for bumps, raised areas, or other irregularities that might portend wounds”.⁷⁶⁹

Having confirmed that Barði’s body holds no future wounds, via her hands-on examination, Álǫf provides Barði with a protective necklace. Having placed this alongside his

⁷⁶⁵ CVD, 744.

⁷⁶⁶ *Heið*, 281.

⁷⁶⁷ For how this touching is indicative of Barði’s manliness, physically and otherwise, despite being incited by his mother, see Robin Waugh, “The Foster Mother’s Language: Anti-Representation, Pseudo-Feminization, and Other Consequences of a Mistake of Gender Charm in “*Heiðarvíga saga*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 83, no. 3 (2011): 325.

⁷⁶⁸ “The Saga of the Slayings on the Heath,” trans. Keneva Kunz, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 4, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 106.

⁷⁶⁹ Kirsten Wolf, “Body Language in Medieval Iceland: A Study of Gesticulation in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders,” *Scripta Islandica* 64 (2013): 107-108.

other necklace, on which there is a small knife, she sends him on his way, but not before “[h]on kallar eptir honum: “Lát vera nú svá búit, sem ek hefi um búit, ok vættir mik, at þá mun hlýða”” ([s]he calls after him: “Let this now remain, as I have prepared it, and I expect it will suffice”).⁷⁷⁰ And with this, the saga tells us no more of Álqf and Barði’s relationship; he rides off to find vengeance and the next we hear of Álqf kjannqk is that she has died. What are we intended to understand in this scene, with regard to the emotional culture? What is it about Álqf’s request that demands Barði’s love? Why does he need to love her in order to allow this body-touching to occur?

Before we can satisfactorily answer these questions, we must first possess an understanding, at least in outline, of how magic existed and was understood in medieval Iceland, as depicted in the sagas.⁷⁷¹ However, I must be clear that “what is most important is not whether the magic has some near-forgotten historical basis or is entirely invented by imaginative narrators, but rather, it is what the authors do with it and how it functions in the narrative” that is of interest to us.⁷⁷² To understand how love and trust are connected within *mæðgin* relationships of medieval Iceland, we need only draw upon the ideas behind these depicted relationships, and do not need to make conclusions upon the historicity of the magic-laden scenes nor the magic users.⁷⁷³ To that end, I will summarily answer three broad questions so as to provide the requisite knowledge for this particular discussion on *mæðgin* relationships.

⁷⁷⁰ *Heið*, 282. For how this protective necklace alongside the necklace with a knife represents Álqf completing the maternal provision of Barði’s manhood, see Waugh, “The Foster Mother’s Language,” 330.

⁷⁷¹ While I have no problem with using terms such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic, and the like, in this project, I am aware that there is some resistance to such terminology within the study of Old Norse culture. See Catharina Raudvere, “*Trolldómur* in Early Medieval Scandinavia,” In *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), 80-82. Cf. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons: A Re-Evaluation of Magic in the *Íslendingasögur*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 81, no. 4 (2009): 411n4.

⁷⁷² Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 421-422.

⁷⁷³ For how saga depictions of magic reflect historical reality, see Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2019); François-Xavier Dillman, *Les magiciens dans l’Islande ancienne: études sur la représentation de la magie islandaise et de ses agents dans les sources littéraires norroises* [The Magicians in Ancient Iceland] (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2006). For a more composite historical study, see Stephen Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia; Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). For a more literary conceptualisation of magic, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, ch. 2. Also see Nicolas Meylan, *Magic and Kingship in Medieval Iceland: The Construction of a Discourse of Political Resistance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Lucie Korecká, *Wizards and Words: The Old Norse Vocabulary of Magic in a Cultural Context* (München: Utzverlag, 2019); Rebecca Merkelbach, *Monsters in Society: Alterity, Transgression, and the Use of the Past in Medieval Iceland* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019), ch. 5.

So, what is this magic of which I speak? On a fundamental level, “in the *Íslendingasögur*, magic is commonly employed in order to influence events and people”.⁷⁷⁴ The sagas portray this occurring in various ways, appearing in such guises as “divination, prophecy, bewitching, shape-shifting, manipulating the elements of nature, protecting... and cursing”.⁷⁷⁵ However, the sagas do not portray all of these forms of magic concurrently, rather, the depictions of magic change over time. Indeed, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has noted these changes over time, seeing that “[i]n sagas dated to first half of the thirteenth century, the female characters who perform magic in the *Íslendingasögur* are all prophetesses”.⁷⁷⁶ We have seen this divination at work in *Heiðarvíga saga*, already, through Álqf’s prophesying over Barði’s body. Later on, “[i]n sagas dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, representations of women using magic become more complex” and take on roles other than the prophetess.⁷⁷⁷ Finally, “in the fourteenth century the sagas become more fantastic and similar to the *fornaldarsögur*, a genre in which realism is completely abandoned”.⁷⁷⁸ In other words, magic comes in many forms and the more fantastic portrayals of magic seem to occur in later sagas. Nevertheless, these timeframes of saga accounts of magic will not prevent me from comparing saga episodes across the three periods that Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir identifies, for it is not the magic itself that is my focus; it is rather the cultural response to magic and its users, and how this can aid our understanding of *Heiðarvíga saga*’s scene, that is of interest.

Thus, if magic appears in multiple forms, who are its users? In the *Íslendingasögur*, there is not a major gender gap in the usage of magic; it is roughly equal between men and women, but there are more women, nonetheless.⁷⁷⁹ After noting this rough equalness, Jochens identifies a key difference in that “[d]espite a dominant emphasis on male affairs, many women outdid men, not only by staging more spectacular magical performance, but especially through mastery of several kinds of magic”.⁷⁸⁰ Mitchell sees another element that

⁷⁷⁴ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 414.

⁷⁷⁵ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 48.

⁷⁷⁶ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 422. For his division of magic users into four categories, see Dillman, *Les magiciens dans l’Islande ancienne*.

⁷⁷⁷ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 424.

⁷⁷⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 431.

⁷⁷⁹ Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, 123. See also Raudvere, “*Trolldómr*,” 81; Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 191.

⁷⁸⁰ Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, 123.

differentiates between men and women, which reinforces Jochens's point; how the different magic users relate to the protagonist. He sees that male magic users "tend to intersect with the heroes in more martial terms".⁷⁸¹ For women, he notes that while some magic users did stand "in life-threatening opposition to the hero... many female witches... are linked to the hero through such issues as sexuality and romance".⁷⁸² I do not know what Mitchell means by "such issues", whether he means ideas of intimacy or more general ideas of relationship, but we do also see magical women who are neither opposed to nor intimately involved with the protagonists. They can appear as related to the protagonist in some way or as a magical woman who travels around the locality; as we have already seen, *Heiðarvíga saga* possesses a prophetess as a foster-mother.⁷⁸³ While men seem to, overall, be relegated to magic that is linked to combat, women have a broader range to draw upon.

Finally, how were magic and its practitioners perceived? As the various forms of magic might suggest, magic could be depicted in a positive manner, as well as a negative one, for "[i]t is the context of the narrative that determines whether a deed was to be considered as malevolent or beneficial".⁷⁸⁴ Old Norse magic, then, cannot be placed in a single box with regards to morality; the sagas depict it as dependent on the situation within which we find it. Indeed, Raudvere notes that, generally, it is the number of people involved that dictates the magic's morals; performances of magic "for the purposes of creating destruction, sickness, or misfortunes were clandestine and solitary activities, while the positive applications of such knowledge used in acts of divination were collective events".⁷⁸⁵ Raudvere's conclusion indicates that the morals of magic would depend on who the magic serves; if it serves the community, it is positive, but if it serves the few, it is negative. Despite the potential for positively-depicted magic users, Raudvere does observe that magical "[c]haracters were given a marginal position"; they were marginalised members of society.⁷⁸⁶ Korecká summarises the reasoning behind this; "[i]n the texts, magic is not always perceived as malevolent, but always as a potential threat to the balance within the community; not always as anti-social, but

⁷⁸¹ Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 191.

⁷⁸² Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 191.

⁷⁸³ For a prophetess who journeys around, see *Eir*, 206-209.

⁷⁸⁴ Raudvere, "*Trolldómr*," 80. For how a family of magic users were depicted, and finally described as *heljarmenn*, or 'people of Hel(l)'; see *Laxd*, 95-111.

⁷⁸⁵ Raudvere, "*Trolldómr*," 87.

⁷⁸⁶ Raudvere, "*Trolldómr*," 120.

always as lying beyond the society's boundaries".⁷⁸⁷ While magic may be somewhat morally neutral, becoming morally charged through its context, it is not totally acceptable conduct, for it has the potential to upset the cultural norms. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, focusing on women, observes this possibility for upset, how depictions of women's magic "shows that magic is a weapon available to women in order to pursue their own ends. Their ostensible motives are diverse but can be analyzed in terms of power and social position".⁷⁸⁸ Women could use magic for their own purposes, as well as for others, and this could make them into a force capable of upsetting the established order. Magic was a powerful force, neither good nor evil, but something outside the regular which possesses great power.

Having quickly surveyed some of the important elements of magic necessary for this work, we can now move on to exploring how trust, love, and magic intersect with *mæðgin* relationships. Let us start by looking at a number of other sagas, in which Wolf has observed similar scenes of bodily touching, so as to find some details that will illuminate what is happening between Barði and Álqf. Wolf observed these scenes in: *Heiðarvíga saga*, which is our central text for this section; *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*; *Kormáks saga*; and *Kjalnesinga saga*.

In *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, we are told of how an unnamed foster-mother delayed Hrói before he went to fight Vémundr and "vildi fóstura hans nú þreifa um hann, ok þóttisk hon þá gǫrst vita, hvern veg honum mun farask. Hon finnr á fœti honum, en annars staðar þótti henni vel vera" (his foster-mother now wanted to touch him all over, as she thought that she would then know exactly how he shall fare. She finds something upon his foot, but everywhere else seemed well to her).⁷⁸⁹ This is it for this saga; the saga provides no thoughts or judgements on the matter of prophesying foster-mothers touching their foster-sons, nor are there any explicit emotional displays either. Instead, the saga is very matter-of-fact about the event, merely telling us that she finds something upon his foot, which is a successful prophecy; Hrói is later injured in that exact spot. What do we learn from this saga excerpt, then? Most obvious, perhaps, is that this physical touching is part of the prophesying process; by touching him, the foster-mother can predict injuries. Furthermore, the unembellished depiction of this magic falls in line with Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's

⁷⁸⁷ Korecká, *Wizards and Words*, 18.

⁷⁸⁸ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, "Women's Weapons," 425. See also Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 191.

⁷⁸⁹ *Reykð*, 167.

observations that, in many scenes with magic, “the audience is simply expected to deduce that magic is being used by hints in the narrative and the subsequent course of events”.⁷⁹⁰ This is what we are seeing in *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*; the saga expects the audience to understand that this foster-mother is using magic in divining the future of Hrói’s body, as her prediction of his future injury soon comes true. Otherwise, this use of magic, in *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, is depicted in an almost mundane manner with no authorial opinion as to this magic’s acceptability nor the men’s opinions on the matter.

I will now move to *Kormáks saga* and see what information it can add to that of our previous two scenes. While this upcoming scene does not occur between a foster-mother and her foster-son, it remains a *mæðgin* relationship, as this project understands it, for it is between a woman and her foster-daughter’s husband. Again, we are provided with no name of the foster-mother but what we are told is that “Helga, dóttir Fróða jarls, átti sér fóstru framsýna... Fóstra Helgu var því vön, at þreifna um menn, áðr en til vígs færi; hon gerir svá við Qgmund, áðr hann fór heiman; hon kvað hvergi stórum við hníta” (Helga, daughter of Jarl Fróði, had a prophetic foster-mother... Helga’s foster-mother was accustomed to touch men all over, before they went to battle; she does as such with Qgmundur, before he left home; she said no great wounds would come to him).⁷⁹¹ While the information we receive this time is still quite sparse, we again see a connection between the bodily touching and a woman’s magic. Indeed, the saga is more explicit about this use of magic, for it ascribes the adjective *framsýnn* to Helga’s foster-mother; this can translate as ‘foreseeing’, or ‘prophetic’.⁷⁹² Therefore, we cannot understand this foresight to be anything other than magical in nature, for it is impossible to foresee specific injuries without magical capabilities. Furthermore, we are also told how this divination, as performed by the foster-mother, occurred regularly; it appears to be a normal occurrence, with, again, no explicit judgement on the magic’s moral nature. Therefore, this saga, like *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, provides us with little explanation as to the context of *Heiðarvíga saga*, other than the element of an older woman magically prophesying over the other member of a *mæðgin* pair through physical touch.

Before we continue on to *Kjalnesinga saga*, perhaps Barði needed to love his foster-mother so as to let her touch him all over, because he knew she was going to perform magic.

⁷⁹⁰ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Women’s Weapons,” 421.

⁷⁹¹ *Korm*, 204.

⁷⁹² *CVD*, 171.

We have seen that this bodily touching has strong connections to divinatory magic, so perhaps what we are seeing is an anxiety about it. Magic has great power and can be used for many a purpose, positive as well as negative, meaning that we are seeing Barði's love for her manifesting as trust in her to perform positive magic. He loves her and so trusts her to treat him well. Perhaps this scene, then, is also indicative of a cultural anxiety about magic and its practitioners. Nevertheless, regardless of the historicity of magic in medieval Iceland, we can infer that a foster-son could express his love for his foster-mother through his trust in her.

Alternatively, we could also consider how love was necessary in this scene because of the possibly emasculating nature of magic. We have already heard how magic users were generally women and that such women performed greater feats of magic, but there are also other factors that point to magic being an unmasculine act. In his article about how Óðinn is depicted as performing deviant behaviour, Ármann Jakobsson explores how Óðinn straddles the lines of masculinity and femininity through his usage of *seiðr*, a form of magic, as depicted by medieval Icelander Snorri Sturluson.⁷⁹³ He notes how “[w]e are told that this sorcery is queer: it is not for men, and therefore seen as a female practice”.⁷⁹⁴ Indeed, such magic “was supposed to be shameful for men”.⁷⁹⁵ Ármann Jakobsson concludes, however, that Óðinn escapes being described as unmanly for performing female practices because he is a deity; “[d]eviant behaviour cannot make him deviant since human restrictions are beneath him”.⁷⁹⁶ Following that logic, human men who perform magic, like that of Óðinn, are liable to be labelled as transgressing masculine boundaries, and so criticized. Indeed, Laurin notes that “the magical saga-man... is credited within Old Norse literature as invoking social anxiety with regards to gender, sexuality, and overarching ideas of traditional masculinity and femininity”.⁷⁹⁷ We also see this idea propagated in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, one of the *fornaldarsögur*. Within, it tells us how the protagonist Bósi responds to his foster-mother, after she offers to tutor him in the magical arts. The scene goes as such: “[h]ún bauð Bósa at kenna honum galdra, enn Bósi kveðst ekki vilja, at þat væri skrifat í sögu sinni, at hann ynni nokkurn

⁷⁹³ For a discussion of how *seiðr* is connected to spinning and how it is feminine, see Eldar Heide, “Spinning *seiðr*,” in *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspective: Origins, Changes, and Interactions*, ed. Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006).

⁷⁹⁴ Ármann Jakobsson, “Óðinn as Mother: The Old Norse Deviant Patriarch,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 126 (2011): 8.

⁷⁹⁵ Raudvere, “*Trolldómr*,” 118. See also Ármann Jakobsson, “Two Wise Women and their Young Apprentice: A Miscarried Magic Class,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 122 (2007): 50.

⁷⁹⁶ Ármann Jakobsson, “Óðinn as Mother,” 15.

⁷⁹⁷ Dan Laurin, “But, What About the Men? Male Ritual Practices in the Icelandic Sagas,” *Kyngervi* 2 (2020): 72.

hlut sleitum, þat sem honum skyldi með karlmensku telja” (she made an offer to Bósi to teach him magic, but Bósi said that he did not want it to be written in his saga that he accomplished anything assisted by trickery when it should speak about him with manhood).⁷⁹⁸ Bósi’s perception of magic, then, is that it is not manly; in drawing upon it, he would lose his masculinity and incur shame.⁷⁹⁹ Therefore, it may be that, in *Heiðarvíga saga*, Barði is concerned with magic being placed upon him and how that may affect his masculine reputation. Nevertheless, he loves his foster-mother and trusts her enough to ignore that anxiety.

With that, we can now move on to *Kjalnesinga saga* in which we find a fuller account of a foster-mother touching her foster-son, but in an intimate manner. This scene arises the night before Búi and Kolfiðr were to duel and the saga reads “Esja mælti: “Þar er harðfengr maðr, er Kolfiðr er, ok fjörmikill; en hér verð ek nú at sofa í nótt hjá þér.” Hon gerði honum þá laug ok strauk hvert bein á honum. Síðan klæddi hon hann um morguninn sem henni líkaði ok bað hann vel fara” (Esja said: “That Kolfiðr is a hardy man, and full of vigour; and so I must now sleep in the same bed as you tonight.” She then made a bath for him and stroked every bone in his body. In the morning after, she clothed him as she liked and bade him to go well).⁸⁰⁰ This scene provides a lot more detail on the bodily touching, so much more that it begs the question of whether the other scenes prior intend the audience to understand those uses of *þreifja*, or ‘to touch’, as this specific sequence of bathing and stroking or whether this episode is particularly different to the others. It depends on how we understand what we are being told. This scene could simply describe another form of magic, one of protection, in that Esja must run her hands over Búi’s body as part of the ritual to protect him, as she already knows that he will be facing a tough opponent. Alternatively, we could view this scene as both prophecy and protection. The imagery we have seen already indicates that the touching of the man’s whole body would be the prophesying element and the other elements – the bath, sharing a bed, and being dressed by Esja – could be indicative of Esja’s protective magic. Nevertheless, whether it is solely protective magic or both divination and protection magics does not change my argument, for we are seeking an answer to why, in *Heiðarvíga saga*, Barði needs to love Álqf in order to allow her to use magic on him. After Esja’s ministrations, Búi

⁷⁹⁸ *Bós*, 245.

⁷⁹⁹ Mitchell concurs on this point; see Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 190.

⁸⁰⁰ *Kjaln*, 22-23.

succeeds in his duel, suggesting that Esja's magic worked in protecting him. However, we are again given no indication as to how the foster-son feels about this series of events; the men, it seems, are especially passive in these situations.

Considering the extra details that the saga provides us with, how should we interpret them? What can they tell us? The point of interest for us is how Esja declares that she must sleep in the same bed as Búi. Considering the age of Búi, such a sleeping arrangement is more in line with lovers or married couples than a *mæðgin* pair.

Indeed, we cannot misinterpret the fact that Esja intends for them to sleep beside one another in the same bed. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson's dictionary entry for *hjá* states that the sentence structure of *sofa hjá [einhverjum]* translates as 'to sleep in the same bed with someone', hence my translation as such for the previous passage.⁸⁰¹ As usual for the sagas, it is not explicitly clear how we should take this component; is it sexual, restful, or something else? However, Keens, in her thesis on sexual representations in the sagas, shows that there are many euphemisms in the Old Norse language that direct the audience to see that sex is occurring in the scene. Indeed, she points out that the use of *hjá* creates "a sense of intimacy" and that the sexual metaphors also indicate that 'sleeping' could mean 'to have sex'; Esja and Búi do both – they share a bed and are sleeping in a position of *hjá*.⁸⁰² Also, we do not come across scenes in which a biological mother and her adult son share a bed, further suggesting that Esja and Búi's sharing of a bed is not typical behaviour. Furthermore, we do come across these ideas of foster-mothers and eroticism elsewhere.

While not written in the vernacular, nor a saga, Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* describes the giantess Harthgrepa copulating with her foster-son, after having raised him. It goes that Harthgrepa repeatedly stated "that he must pay her the first gift of his nuptial bed by marrying her, since she had nurtured him in his infancy", and so continued until he agreed to her request.⁸⁰³ We see here that the foster-son was in the passive role, with Harthgrepa instigating the sexual encounter. Also, Gallo and Roby have explored supernatural foster-mothers, in the sagas, and have seen that such figures are connected to a dominating sexual desire; by this, I mean that these women, like Harthgrepa, were often the instigators of erotic,

⁸⁰¹ *CVD*, 266.

⁸⁰² Lucy Anne Keens, "Scenes of a Sexual Nature," 31-33.

⁸⁰³ Saxo Grammaticus, *Saxo Grammaticus: Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, vol. 1, trans. Peter Fisher, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 42-47.

if not sexual, encounters. Surveying Old Norse literature's depictions of fosterage, Gallo notes that "[a]n erotic undercurrent is present in most of the later sagas associated with *fóstr*".⁸⁰⁴ Gallo draws this conclusion primarily from eddic poetry and the *fornaldarsögur*, while discussing giantesses and trolls. In his discussion on human foster-mothers, who also use magic, erotic elements are noticeably absent.⁸⁰⁵ Similarly, Roby also draws primarily from the *fornaldarsögur*, although also includes *Kjalnesinga saga*, in his study on the 'Temporary Troll Lover' trope. In this, he explores how trolls were characters that provided the sexually immature male protagonists with the (premarital) sexual experience that would allow them to take on the dominant masculine role.⁸⁰⁶ However, he does suggest that "it also seems possible that these trolls were associated with a particular female figure with whom young Icelandic men might genuinely have enjoyed sexual contact: the *fóstra* (foster-mother)".⁸⁰⁷ While he does go on to say that he believes concubines and mistresses to be the "most likely 'real world' figure" that such saga depictions would be associated with, I believe there is merit to considering foster-mothers as being contemporaneously associated with eroticised depictions of foster-mothers.⁸⁰⁸

Considering the connotations surrounding Esja and Búi's sharing of a bed, Esja is straddling the roles of both mother and lover. She is called a foster-mother, like the other magical women we have mentioned, and so would seem to correspond to a maternal and nurturing role. Her interest in sharing a bed with Búi, along with his passive acceptance of her will, would put her more in line with the eroticised trolls and giants of the *fornaldarsögur*. Could it be this idea of the erotic foster-mother that has perturbed Barði in our original scene from *Heiðarvíga saga*? In other words, is it that he is keenly aware of the erotic potential of a supernatural foster-mother and it is his love for her that allows him to trust her in touching and prophesying over his body?

To help us answer these questions, we can look to *Eyrbyggja saga*, in which we have a man, called Gunnlaugr, going to a magical woman for training, who is named Geirríðr. The saga states that:

⁸⁰⁴ Gallo, "The Giantess as Foster-Mother," 8.

⁸⁰⁵ Gallo, "The Giantess as Foster-Mother," 12-17.

⁸⁰⁶ Matthew Roby, "The Licit Love Visit: Masculine Sexual Maturation and the 'Temporary Troll Lover' Trope," in *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020).

⁸⁰⁷ Roby, "The Licit Love Visit," 48.

⁸⁰⁸ Roby, "The Licit Love Visit," 48.

Gunnlaugr, sonr Þorbjarnar digra, var námgjarn; hann var opt í Mávahlíð ok nam kunnáttu at Geirríði Þórólfsdóttur, því at hon var margkunnig. Þat var einn dag, er Gunnlaugr fór í Mávahlíð, at hann kom í Holt ok talaði mart við Kǫtlu, en hon spurði, hvárt hann ætlar þá enn í Mávahlíð – "ok klappa um kerlingar nárann?" Gunnlaugr kvað eigi þat sitt ørendi, – "en svá at eins ertu ung, Katla, at eigi þarftu at bregða Geirríði elli." Katla svarar: "Eigi hugða ek, at þat mundi líkt vera, en engu skiptir þat," segir hon, "engi þykkir yðr nú kona nema Geirríður ein, en fleiri konur kunnu sér enn nǫkkut en hon ein." Oddr Kǫtluson fór opt með Gunnlaugi í Mávahlíð; en er þeim varð síð aptr farit, bauð Katla Gunnlaugi opt þar at vera, en hann fór jafnan heim.⁸⁰⁹

Gunnlaugr, the son of Þorbjörn the Stout, was eager to learn. He was often at Mávahlíð and he got knowledge from Geirríður Þórólfsdóttir because she was *margkunnigr*. It was one day when Gunnlaugr travelled to Mávahlíð that he came to Holt and spoke much with Katla, and she asked whether he still intends to go to Mávahlíð – "and stroke the old woman's groin?" Gunnlaugr said that was not his purpose – "and you are not so young yourself, Katla, that that you should criticise Geirríður's oldness." Katla answers: "I did not think that there were similarities, but it does not matter" she says, "You think of no woman other than Geirríður but more women yet know some things, than she alone." Oddr Kǫtlason often travelled with Gunnlaugr to Mávahlíð; and whenever they returned late, Katla frequently invited Gunnlaugr to stay the night, but he always travelled home instead.

There are multiple elements to note in this passage. First, we have the description of Geirríður as *margkunnigr*. Rather than provide a translation of the word, Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson direct us to two other words; one is *margfróðr*, or 'learned in many things', and the other is *fjölknungr*, or 'skilled in the black art'.⁸¹⁰ To adopt *margfróðr's* translation for our translation of *margkunnigr* would only work if we understood 'learned in many things' to be explicitly signalling that magic is what constitutes those 'many things'. To use *fjölknungr*, however, would only be permissible if we replaced 'black art' with magic, or something similarly neutral. Quinn's translation of the word as "very knowledgeable about magic" is therefore perfect in encapsulating the meaning behind *margkunnigr*.⁸¹¹ After learning of Geirríður's magical capabilities, the audience is then provided with the talks between Katla and

⁸⁰⁹ *Eb*, 28.

⁸¹⁰ *CVD*, 158, 412.

⁸¹¹ "The Saga of the People of Eyri," trans. Judy Quinn, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, ed. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), 142.

Gunnlaugr, which hint at erotic undercurrents between Gunnlaugr and these two older women. Indeed, Katla asserts that Gunnlaugr and Geirríðr are having sexual relations, and strongly hints at her own interest in such a relationship with Gunnlaugr, by suggesting he consider other women (herself) for his education in magic. Finally, Gunnlaugr is regularly invited to stay the night which, together with Katla's prior statements, confirms her sexual interest in him. One of these magical women is sexually interested in the younger man, while the other may or may not be, but how does this scene contribute to our understanding of the scene in *Heiðarvíga saga*, considering that these women are not referred to as foster-mothers?

First of all, cases can be made that these women are foster-mother figures. Indeed, in his article on the nature of magic and the relationships these two women share with Gunnlaugr, Ármann Jakobsson states that “[a]s an apprentice, [Gunnlaugr] is not just their conquest but also their heir... He is a surrogate son to both these women, whose common trait is that they are both mothers, that is how they are introduced” in this saga.⁸¹² Because these women's introductions announce that they are mothers, the audience knows them in a maternal role and yet these same mothers are suggested to be sexually interested in Gunnlaugr; the audience is forced to juxtapose, and combine, these two roles. In describing Katla, Ármann Jakobsson remarks that “[s]he is the mother as lover, as a forbidden figure of lust”.⁸¹³ Is such a juxtaposition enough to perceive these women as pseudo-foster-mother figures? Regardless of whether it is sufficient, the fact that these women are magical is enough for our purposes, for I am interested in why Barði needed to love his magical foster-mother, Álqf; these women being magical, therefore, still grants us insight into that topic.

That insight starts to emerge shortly after we are given that introduction about Gunnlaugr learning with Geirríðr; we are then given a sequence of events of increasing narrative tension. It says that one day:

Gunnlaugr Þorbjarnarson fór í Mávahlíð ok Oddr Kǫtluson með honum. Þau Gunnlaugr ok Geirríðr tǫluðu þá lǫngum um daginn; ok er mjǫk leið á kveldit, mælti Geirríðr við Gunnlaug: "Þat vilda ek, at þú færir eigi heim í kveld, því at

⁸¹² Ármann Jakobsson, “Two Wise Women,” 49-50.

⁸¹³ Ármann Jakobsson, “Two Wise Women,” 53.

margir eru marlíðendr; eru ok opt flögð í föggu skinni, en mér lízk nú eigi sem hamingjusamlegast á þik."⁸¹⁴

Gunnlaugr Þorbjarnarson travelled to Mávahlíð and Oddr Kǫtluson was with him. Gunnlaugr and Geirríðr then spoke for a long part of the day; and when much of the evening had passed, Geirríðr said to Gunnlaugr: “I wish you would not go home this evening as there are many *marlíðendr*; and there are often *flögð* under a fair skin, and it seems to me that you have a luckless appearance.”

The words that the saga uses, *marlíðendr* and *flögð*, help us understand why Geirríðr does not want Gunnlaugr to leave. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson translate *marlíðendr* as ‘sea sliders’ and adds that this is an expression referencing witches and spirits.⁸¹⁵ Ármann Jakobsson notes that *marlíðendr* is another word for ““riders” and other such beings in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. They have various names, such as ““fylgjur”, “hamhleypur”, “marlíðendr”, “troll”, “kvelдруður”, “myrkriður” and “túnriður””.⁸¹⁶ These beings, he says, are “not unlike the Central European *mora*, who may be described as a succuba or a vampire”, creatures that could drain their victim’s lifeforce.⁸¹⁷ We also have *flagð* (*flögð*, pl.) as a descriptor; it translates to ‘ogre’, ‘giantess’, and ‘witch’.⁸¹⁸ In other words, Geirríðr warns Gunnlaugr of supernatural beings that may seek to do him harm this night. Considering Katla’s magical nature, as well as her advances on Gunnlaugr, the audience is likely intended to understand that Geirríðr is warning Gunnlaugr about Katla. This is further referenced by Geirríðr’s comments that a *flagð* is often hiding under a fair skin, as Katla is described as being fair in her saga introduction.⁸¹⁹

Unfortunately, Gunnlaugr dismisses Geirríðr’s advice, remarking that Oddr Kǫtluson was walking with him, and so goes home. On his way, the audience is told how he stops off at Katla and Oddr’s home; “Katla var þá komin í rekkju sína; hon bað Odd bjóða Gunnlaugi þar at vera” (Katla had then gone to her bed; she asked Oddr to invite Gunnlaugr to stay there

⁸¹⁴ *Eb*, 28-29.

⁸¹⁵ *CVD*, 413.

⁸¹⁶ Ármann Jakobsson, “Two Wise Women,” 47-48.

⁸¹⁷ Ármann Jakobsson, “Two Wise Women,” 47. Also see Philip Lavender, introduction to *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra: The Saga of Illugi, Gríður’s Foster-Son*, trans. and ed. Philip Lavender (University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research. 2015), xvii.

⁸¹⁸ *CVD*, 159.

⁸¹⁹ Katla is described with *fríðr*, or ‘fair’; see *Eb*, 28. Geirríðr uses the word *fagr*, or ‘fair’, regarding the troll beneath the skin; despite the words being different, they are synonymous, and the audience could easily see what, or rather who, Geirríðr is warning Gunnlaugr about.

overnight).⁸²⁰ Here, Katla becomes even more direct in her advances towards Gunnlaugr. If we return to Keens's work, we can see that she observed how the noun *rekkja*, or 'bed', can be seen as an explicit metaphor for sex.⁸²¹ While it is true that Katla has already gone to bed by the time Gunnlaugr arrives, and so nothing sexual could have yet occurred between them, there are other elements for us to consider. Indeed, the saga gives us no indication that she moves from the bed upon Gunnlaugr's arrival. This indicates that she cannot be providing any hospitality to Gunnlaugr, despite the generally established division of work, in which women managed the homestead's affairs and men managed affairs external to the homestead.⁸²²

Perhaps that is the intent, though. Indeed, where exactly is Katla inviting Gunnlaugr to? The saga tells us that Gunnlaugr has come to her house so it could be that she is inviting him to stay in the house overnight. However, between Gunnlaugr's arrival to her house and her invitation is the statement that she has gone to her bed, making that component closer to her invitation. Is the audience to understand, therefore, that she is inviting him to her bed for the night? Is she altering the script of hosting guests to a sexual level? Considering all of the evidence for her sexual interest in him, that is likely the case; she is inviting him to her bed for the night.

Gunnlaugr, however, rebuffs Katla's advances once more. As a result, we are given the foreboding words that Katla tells her son: "[f]ari hann þá, sem hann hefir fyrir sér gørt," segir hon" ("he [may] then fare, as he has prepared for himself" she says).⁸²³ It does not take the saga long to inform us to what she, and Geirríðr, were referring to. It turns out that Gunnlaugr does not return home that night; it is only due to his father looking out for him, that he was found. We are told "[þ]á var hann borinn inn, ok dregin af honum klæði; hann var allr blóðrísá um herðarnar, en hlaupit holdit af beinunum" ([Gunnlaugr] was then brought in, and his clothes were pulled off; he was all bloody on the shoulders, and the flesh had been torn to the bone).⁸²⁴ Gunnlaugr is not immediately killed by these injuries, but they are shocking, nonetheless.⁸²⁵ As news of his wounds spread, "flutti þat Oddr Kǫtluson, at Geirríðr mun hafa

⁸²⁰ *Eb*, 29.

⁸²¹ Keens, "Scenes of a Sexual Nature," 27.

⁸²² Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 117. This is not saying that women managed the 'private' sphere, while men managed the 'public' sphere; the public/private divide is alluring in its simplicity but cannot stand against tests to its validity. For a discussion on the categories of 'public' and 'private', and their usefulness, see Janet L. Nelson "The Problematic in the Private," *Social History* 15, no. 3 (1990).

⁸²³ *Eb*, 29.

⁸²⁴ *Eb*, 29.

⁸²⁵ According to *Landnámabók*, Gunnlaugr died after visiting Geirríðr. See *Ldn*, 112.

riðit honum; segir, at þau hefði skilit í stuttleikum um kveldit, ok þat hugðu flestir menn, at svá væri.” (Oddr Kǫtluson proclaimed that it must have been Geirríðr who had ridden [Gunnlaugr], saying that they had separated abruptly in the evening, and most men thought that was what happened).⁸²⁶ How exactly did the author intend for us to understand Katla’s foreboding words and the subsequent events? And what light does this consequently shed on Barði’s reluctance to be touched by his foster-mother?

Let us start by considering the most explicit yet unclear section of this specific sequence. Gunnlaugr is found unconscious on his homestead’s doorstep with serious injuries on his shoulders. Considering Oddr’s accusations against Geirríðr, it seems that these injuries came about from someone having ‘ridden’ him. How exactly should we understand *riðā*, or ‘to ride’, though? According to Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson’s dictionary, *riðā* is translated as ‘to ride’, in terms of travelling by horse, but can also be connected to violence.⁸²⁷ Batten notes, however, that “[t]here is no suggestion that Katla uses Gunnlaugr to travel anywhere”.⁸²⁸ That leaves us with the idea of thrashing and violence for *riðā*, which we can see through Gunnlaugr’s severe injuries. However, both Batten and Roby propose that we should also consider sexual intercourse as an option for *riðā*.⁸²⁹ Which is more appropriate for the scene? Katla’s lust would suggest *riðā* is about sex but Gunnlaugr’s injuries would suggest it is about violence. Perhaps we should conceive of it as both at the same time; in other words, Katla raped Gunnlaugr. This matches up with what we know of the context. Indeed, Katla was very interested in Gunnlaugr and Geirríðr’s relationship, displaying her jealousy through her asking whether Gunnlaugr was going to stroke Geirríðr’s groin, and Katla’s subsequent invitations for Gunnlaugr to join her instead. However, she was rebuffed every time by Gunnlaugr, explaining her remark that Gunnlaugr had prepared his own fate; by choosing to rebuff her sexual advances, Gunnlaugr had frustrated her and so sealed his fate. Katla would take what she wanted from him. And the injuries Gunnlaugr suffers? In considering the indirect manner in which this rape is played out, Batten sees the violence as a substitute for the sexual assault. She states that “[t]he suggestion that Katla has raped him is unavoidable.

⁸²⁶ *Eb*, 29.

⁸²⁷ *CVD*, 498-499. There is also a second *riðā* verb, which declines in the same ways, that possesses stronger links to violence.

⁸²⁸ Caroline R. Batten, “Dark Riders: Disease, Sexual Violence, and Gender Performance in the Old English *Mære* and Old Norse *Mara*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, no. 3 (2021): 366.

⁸²⁹ Batten, “Dark Riders,” 365; Matthew Roby, “Troll Sex: Youth, Old Age, and the Erotic in Old Norse-Icelandic Narratives of the Supernatural,” (Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2019), 61.

Yet the saga refuses to name his sexual assault for what it is – perhaps because there is no need... Violence stands in for sex without significant manipulation or euphemism”.⁸³⁰ Because of the contextualisation, the audience does not need to be explicitly told that Katla rapes Gunnlaugr; it is clear enough already. Furthermore, “[t]he elision of flesh-tearing and erotic predation suggests that what is at stake is the young man’s masculine status, his ability to perform both martially (in a physical altercation) and sexually”.⁸³¹ In being raped, Gunnlaugr has doubly failed in performing masculinity.

After Gunnlaugr’s assault, we learn of Geirríðr’s troubles. It is noteworthy that Geirríðr was accused by the perpetrator’s son, and his portrayal of events was readily accepted. This is a good time to recall Korecká’s summary of how magic may not be seen as malevolent but remains a threat to societal balance.⁸³² We already know that its practitioners were marginalised, meaning that they were probably seen in a similar light; they were always a possible threat.⁸³³ A single accusation of malevolence is all it took to get people to condemn Geirríðr, because it was readily believable. It is only through the oaths of popular and powerful people that she was exonerated from the accusations.⁸³⁴

Let us now return to *Heiðarvíga saga* and the sentence from which this discussion emerged: “Barði gerði svá, sem hon mælti, því at hann unni henni mikit” (Barði did as she said, because he loved her greatly).⁸³⁵ Barði allowed his foster-mother, Álqf kjannqk, to touch him all over, in order to prophesy for future injuries, because he loved her greatly. Why was love needed in the first place? The simple answer is that it was this love that allows Barði to trust Álqf to cast magic upon him. And why was trust a requirement? The answer lies in Álqf’s use of magic. As we have discussed, magic was a powerful and destabilising force that could harm as much as it could do good. That alone could be sufficient for Barði’s unease; this powerful magic was going to be cast over him. His trust in Álqf, however, mitigates his unease, for he loves and knows her; she will not do him harm.

In a similar vein, we have seen the idea that magic is an unmanly thing. It is shameful and problematic, culturally acceptable only for the divine. Therefore, to engage with it raises

⁸³⁰ Batten, “Dark Riders,” 366. Cf. Ármann Jakobsson, “The Fearless Vampire Killers,” 310.

⁸³¹ Batten, “Dark Riders,” 366.

⁸³² Korecká, *Wizards and Words*, 18.

⁸³³ For how there is no clear demarcation between witches, trolls, night-riders, and mares, see Ármann Jakobsson, “The Fearless Vampire Killers,” 310.

⁸³⁴ *Eb*, 30.

⁸³⁵ *Heið*, 281.

questions as to Barði's masculinity. If he allows his foster-mother to protect him, can he still deem himself masculine? His trust in her, however, allows him to cede that point; he will trust her decisions, despite his misgivings.

The prevalent idea of this section, however, is that it is Álǫf's position as foster-mother that has been the cause for concern. Indeed, Waugh notes "a reversal of the usual sex-roles dominates Álǫf kjannǫk's scene in *Heiðarvíga saga*, where her ritualistic intervention strongly hints at a woman's sexual desire".⁸³⁶ There are two points, here, for us to consider. First, is how Álǫf, among the many magical women we have seen, is in a position of power while Barði, amongst the other men, is consigned to a state of passive acceptance. He does as he is told, for Álǫf is both foster-mother and magic user. Secondly, other magical women in similar positions – Esja, Katla, and Geirríður – have been connected to the young man through erotic ideas. Whilst being the passive figure in the relationship, the young men have been linked with erotically-charged actions, ranging from being touched across the body to sex to sexual assault. Thus, for Barði to allow his foster-mother, Álǫf, to touch him, he must trust her not to do any of the things we have just seen women in similar roles do. He trusts her not to undress him or take him to her bed or to outright rape him. Within his love for her, then, is a trust that she will do him no harm, despite his passive position in this relationship.

Now, much of this discussion has been about supernatural women – trolls, giantesses, and magic users – but this does not discount the historicity of trust being an expression of love between a foster-mother and her foster-son. As I stated earlier, the historicity of the magic is not the important factor for this study, rather, it is the emotion and its expression that I seek. Indeed, while the scenes we have explored show some of the anxieties about magical foster-mothers, and how this results in Barði trusting his beloved foster-mother, we can also understand this idea in a broader sense. In other words, medieval Icelanders understood that trust existed within a loving *mæðgin* relationship, a trust that the mother would look out for her son and help him in his times of need; a trust that she would not unman him nor do him harm.

So as to uncover how the audience could have understood the *mæðgin* relationship's scene of love in *Heiðarvíga saga*, we had to explore multiple contexts similar to that initial saga scene, due to the scene's rich sub-text. In doing this, I have been able to present a fuller

⁸³⁶ Waugh, "The Foster Mother's Language," 326.

contextualisation of that scene, revealing the concerns and anxieties that may have brought Barði to worry. This was achieved by building upon previous scholarly foundations but in a new direction, that of emotion. As a result, I illustrated how it is his love, and consequent trust, for his foster-mother that allowed his concerns to be mollified and let him trust her to do what was right for him. While the scenes we explored were all magical in nature, this does not prevent us from making a historical conclusion. By broadening my conclusion that Barði's love is indicative of his trust to not be exploited by his supernatural foster-mother, we arrive at the conclusion that trust was a component of *mæðgin* relationships in medieval Iceland.

Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have studied Old Norse *mæðgin* relationships and how love was understood to have manifested between this dyad of older woman and younger man. In order to do this, I explored two case studies and excavated the rich sub-text that had yet to be examined at length; this was achieved through my chosen starting point of emotions, specifically love. Indeed, through this investigation of how love existed within the *mæðgin* relationships of medieval Iceland, several stimulating questions have been generated, pointing towards an exciting future of studies in Old Norse emotions as well as future research of medieval Icelandic families. The sets of questions that arose come from the respective sections of this chapter; the first selection of questions revolve around the topic of gifting a sword as a method of protection, and the second set of questions emerge from the theme of trust as a part of the *mæðgin* relationship.

From the exploration of protection as an expression of love, two prominent questions have emerged on the duties and expectations of a man's parents. It is clear that receiving a sword from a father figure was understood to be important for a young man, as it provided him with an identity through the patrilineal line and as a symbol of his masculinity. However, which was more superior; to receive a sword from a father with a good patrilineal line or to receive a sword from a mother with an astounding patrilineal line? Both ancestries boast strong lines of masculine heritage, so, if one was culturally deemed to be superior, what was the reasoning? Furthermore, if we accept that Ásdís and Hervör are doing typically paternal acts, when the father fails to, can we start to see this maternal fulfilment of paternal tasks occurring in other areas of medieval Icelandic family life as well? Indeed, how far was an Old Norse mother expected, or even permitted, to go?

The discussion on how love manifested as trust has provoked multiple questions about the nature of foster-mothers, as well as the relationships they had with younger men. Indeed, this discussion observed the erotic potential of foster-mothers, and so what are the implications of such depictions? While Roby wonders whether depictions of erotic foster-mothers were representative of concubines and mistresses, I wonder whether foster-mothers could possess an additional role, a sexual one. Could this be evidence of a strand of fosterage different to the conventional conceptualisation of Old Norse fosterage? Moving toward the treatment that Gunnlaugr suffered at the hands of Katla, was there a cultural concern for young men, or boys, being fostered in other households and how the women would treat them? If there was such a concern, was it specifically aimed at those women who were marked as other by the Icelandic elite? Alongside my broader conclusion of trust within *mæðgin* pairs arises a similarly broad question. Can this concern regarding foster-mothers abusing their foster-sons be expanded to women and younger men, overall?

In this chapter, I have been able to illustrate how beginning a study through emotions has allowed me to unearth ideas and conclusions, both new and interesting. In exploring *mæðgin* relationships and how love is depicted between them, I have observed that two ways in which love was understood to exist between those within a *mæðgin* pairing are that of protection and trust.

By looking at one of the actions Ásdís took for her beloved son, in response to her husband's loveless behaviour, I have uncovered some new aspects of the relationship she shared with her son. Indeed, in order to protect her beloved son, Ásdís took on a role more associated with the father, providing her son with what he needed to survive, rather than see him journey abroad with no means by which to protect himself. While her protection is indirect, it is protection nonetheless for it protects Grettir from the dangers of the world he travels as well as from the consequences of Ásmundr's anger.

Through an eclectic exploration of how sagas depicted supernatural foster-mothers, it becomes clear as to why Barði needed to love his foster-mother in order for her to cast magic over him through touching his body. Women in such positions of authority were a threat to a young man's masculinity. Barði, however, trusted that his masculinity was not endangered by his foster-mother, for he loved and knew her; she was not a threat to him.

We have now covered the four dyadic relationships between intergenerational family members, as they can be observed in the Old Norse saga corpus. As a result, I will now move

to discuss the overarching ideas of familial love that existed in medieval Iceland, drawing from all four chapters so as to sketch a foundational and holistic image of love within the Old Norse family.

Conclusions

Annarr hét Þórðr ok var kallaðr melrakkir; hann var fóstri þeira Þuríðar ok Guðmundar; hǫfðu þau hann tekit lítit barn af válaði ok fœtt upp... ok unnu þau honum mikit ok virðu hann meira en hann var verður.⁸³⁷

The other was named Þórðr and was called [Þórðr] the Fox; he was the foster-son of Þuríðr and Guðmundr; they had taken him, as a child, from destitution and raised him up... and they loved him greatly and they valued him more than he was worth.

“Þorsteinn var óværr við alþýðu, mikill vexti; hann byggði eldahús ok fekk mikit ástleysi af fǫður ok móður ok ǫllum frændum sínum... ok eigi vildi Þorgnýr láta hann sinn son kalla.⁸³⁸

Þorsteinn was fierce with people, and great in size; he dwelled beside the fireplace in the hall and he received lovelessness from his father and mother and all of his kinsmen... and [his father] Þorgnýr did not want to let him refer to himself as a son.

In medieval Iceland, as we can see, the relationship between a parent and child involved love to varying degrees. A child could be loved whole-heartedly by their foster-parents despite their shortcomings, and a child could find no love from their biological parents because of their shortcomings. The immediate major difference between the two sons in the passages above is that one is in a fosterage relationship while the other is in a biological one. As this thesis has shown, however, it is often not so simple. Indeed, in medieval Iceland, there is a large degree of overlap between the various intergenerational relationships between members of the family. Instead of biology, the divergent levels of love are more likely to be explained by the social contexts in which these relationships are situated.

For example, *Heiðarvíga saga* provides some information about Þórðr’s character in his introduction which could be used in explaining why he was so beloved. It states that “hann var alroskinn ok vel at sér gǫrr, ok þat segja menn, at fyrir hann var einskis ǫrvænt, orðs né verks” (he was fully grown and well-accomplished, and people say that there was nothing beyond his capabilities, in word or deed).⁸³⁹ Other than this, however, the saga is largely silent about Þórðr, likely due to him being a secondary character in the narrative. With the information that *Heiðarvíga saga* provides, then, the parental love for Þórðr appears to be

⁸³⁷ *Heið*, 267-268.

⁸³⁸ *Svarfd*, 129.

⁸³⁹ *Heið*, 267-268.

connected to his accomplishments and capable character. It is not immediately clear, however, what the author intended by the foster-parents valuing Þórðr more than he was worth. Is this a disparaging comment about Þórðr's lowly origins, in that his new position and abilities can never erase the destitution he was found in, and thus his inherent worth? Or could it be that the parents' love is so great as to be greater than the social value he has accrued through his accomplishments? These are but two of the possible interpretations on this idea of value yet neither one inhibits the idea that these foster-parents loved Þórðr and that this love can be linked to the greatness he later accrues.

By comparing this saga episode to the one in *Svarfdæla saga*, we can see that this idea of love and greatness is not limited to *Heiðarvíga saga*. Indeed, through the saga's contextualisation of the unloved Þorsteinn, it becomes clear that he is unloved because he is, at that time, not a great man; he spends his days by the fire and does little else. His lack of accomplishment and greatness is further expressed by the saga's comparison of him and his older brother, Þórólfr. After remarking on how the brothers were unlike in character, the saga states that "Þórólfr var mjök við alþýðu skap, vitr maðr ok forsjáll, vinsæll ok gerðist kaupmaðr... hann var ekki mikill maðr ok vel á sik kominn, vænn at álitu." (Þórólfr was popular, a wise and prudent man, much-liked and [he] became a merchant... he was not a large man, but was accomplished and handsome).⁸⁴⁰ Essentially, the audience is informed that Þorsteinn was unlike his brother and had accomplished nothing in his life so far, and so he was unloved. Moreover, we do see a shift in the father's love for Þorsteinn. It occurs after Þorsteinn has been raiding for a few years, and so increased his reputation, prowess, and achievements. The saga records how "[s]vá er sagt, at it þriðja haust gekk Þorgnýr í móti Þorsteini ok heilsaði honum fyrri. Hann tók vel fǫður sínum" (it is said that in the third autumn Þorgnýr went towards Þorsteinn and welcomed him. [Þorsteinn] received his father well).⁸⁴¹ After becoming a great man, Þorsteinn's lack of love, and respect, from his father appears to have diminished, or vanished entirely; we see that he is now welcomed home rather than simply ignored upon his return.

Therefore, by starting with the emotion of love, we can consider the contexts and events around a relationship in a new light. Through a study of emotions, it becomes possible to highlight nuances and novel insights when exploring the actions taken by saga characters,

⁸⁴⁰ *Svarfd*, 129.

⁸⁴¹ *Svarfd*, 134.

which reflect the cultural attitudes of the Old Norse people from which the sagas came. And by way of such explorations, we can ask many more fascinating questions.

This study had three major goals it sought to accomplish. First, I wanted to explore and understand how medieval Icelanders conceived of love in the family, something that has hitherto lacked devoted scholarship. This led to my second goal of demonstrating a method capable of undertaking such a study. My method involved the cataloguing of love terminology within my selected saga corpuses, followed by my inclusion of saga episodes that strongly resembled those already in my database. I then drew my case studies from the database I had created and excavated them for meaning. As a result of this exploration, my third goal was to demonstrate that an examination of emotions within the sagas is an effective way by which to reach the historical emotional culture of medieval Iceland. Following on from these goals, I also wanted this research to provide a strong foundation on which others could proceed to build their own studies on Old Norse emotions and their expressions.

In order to achieve these goals, I needed to be eclectic in my approach, drawing upon various disciplines and fields of Old Norse scholarship so as to be effective in my investigation of how love was understood to exist within the Old Norse family. Furthermore, the method with which I have completed this study can also be broadly characterised as a study of the granular. Rather than approaching Old Norse emotions with preconceived ideas and themes, I scrutinised the sagas' depictions of love and used those to locate the bigger themes which my chapters have discussed.

This is not to say, however, that there is no place for preconceptions in the study of the history of emotions; it simply depends on how they are used. For example, having a personal preconception of what love is can be useful in highlighting those love-filled scenes that are dissonant with our personal preconception of what love is. However, on the other side of this example, those dissonant scenes should not be unduly focused upon, without good reason, for that may skew the historical inquiry. Furthermore, that personal preconception must not become the one 'true' idea of what constitutes love, because that is replacing the historical emotion with a modern, and personal, one.

Since my database portrayed the sagas' use of love terminology to be predominantly employed for either romantic or intergenerational familial relationships, I decided to focus upon the familial relationships. I chose this for two chief reasons. Firstly, there remains a comparable dearth in studies exploring Old Norse love as it manifested between family

members, when it is compared to the available scholarship on romantic love. Secondly, in looking at the relationships between members of different generations, I can highlight the emotional potential of choices made by either the child or parent, over the conventional explanations of power. Discussions of Old Norse familial relationships generally revolve around ideas of power dynamics, authority, and hierarchy; and these ideas consequently serve as explanations for most actions the Icelanders took. Thus, I sought to reorientate the conversation by instead starting with emotions, granting me opportunities to discover new insights into those relationships, while demonstrating that emotions could be justifiably used as explanations, too. The Old Norse people were not purely rational and calculated; they had emotions and could be driven by emotional motives.

Alongside this, by utilising the four dyads of *mæðgur*, *feðgar*, *feðgin*, and *mæðgin* relationships, I can, where possible, begin to emphasise any similarities and differences in the gendered expressions of love in medieval Iceland. By doing this, I can begin to locate any nuanced clusters of ideas and expressions that are interconnected with Old Norse love.

Discussion Summaries

Chapter 1, which focused on *mæðgur* relationships, questioned the conventional wisdom that the sagas had little to say about emotions between women, not to mention emotions between mothers and daughters. In re-examining that position, I explored three manners in which love could be seen to manifest within *mæðgur* relationships. One such manner was contact. By drawing together various saga episodes, I found that there was a connection between *mæðgur* love and how the women in these dyads desired and maintained contact with one another. This desire for contact did not manifest in a singular way but remained visible throughout the various case studies. Another selection of scenes from my database of love terms helped yield the second theme of protection, in that the love of one of the women, for the other, could manifest as a desire to ensure, and confirm, the wellbeing of the other woman. This protection was not only physical but could be mental and emotional, too. The final topic of this chapter was a study of the inverse of *mæðgur* love. Drawing upon saga occasions in which the audience is told of a lack, or low level, of love within the dyad, I observed a stratification of love and how varying levels of love resulted in differing treatments of the other dyad member. The examined case studies suggested that a mother's love could ultimately affect a daughter's marital prospects.

My chapter 2 investigated *feðgar* relationships, seeking to foreground emotions in the discussion of how fathers and sons, and similar intergenerational relationships, were understood to have interacted. In using my database, I uncovered two manners by which love was expressed within a *feðgar* dyad. The first theme was drawn from the recurring concept of men withdrawing to their beds after the death of the other dyad member, whom they loved, due to a lack of means by which to obtain revenge; I dubbed this sequence of events ‘the bed of grief’. While not a totally new topic of study, I was able to tease out some new connections from it by focusing on emotions. Indeed, the overall picture suggested that men were expected to suppress their emotions regarding the other man’s death, with vengeance being the acceptable outlet. Consequently, men who could not obtain vengeance, nor process their emotions, died from the grief. The second topic followed a single *feðgar* dyad throughout the saga, so as to chart how the love in their relationship correlates to the acts of reciprocation in which they engaged. Rather than viewing the reciprocal acts through reason and the expectations of honour, I looked to the emotions involved. This allowed me to conclude that, in a *feðgar* relationship, we can see love impacting the reciprocation of gifts; the more loving the relationship, the greater the acts of gift-giving and reciprocation.

Chapter 3 was occupied by a single theme as it explored *feðgin* relationships; this theme was the bridal negotiation, for it was prolific in my database of love terminology. Prefacing the case studies, however, was a summarisation of the bridal process, which revealed there to be a general sense that there was a deep social tension in medieval Iceland on whether consent should be derived from the father or the daughter. By centring my discussion of the saga episodes around emotions rather than the transactional aspects of the bridal negotiation, I uncovered new insights into how the Old Norse conceptualised *feðgin* love as part of this issue of consent and how *feðgin* love factored into the marital process. Indeed, I was able to explore the dyad from both perspectives, noting how each side understood there to be love present. From the older man’s side, I reached the conclusion that he could be construed as loving through his acceptance of excellent suitors. On the other side, he could be perceived as unloving, by both the female character and audience, for multiple reasons. This perceived lack of love could manifest through any act that appeared to maximise his benefits over the woman’s, or excluded her from the process. Considering how these examples show love within a *feðgin* dyad, the sagas appear to proffer the idea that that perhaps consent should be derived from both members of the *feðgin* pair.

In Chapter 4, I examined the saga portrayals of *mæðgin* relationships by studying the dyad in terms of its oft-overlooked emotional content, rather than the usual discussion of social power. As my database volunteered no immediate themes of *mæðgin* love, I instead selected two scenarios rich in sub-text to create my two topics of study. My first topic was how a mother's love could be expressed through her actions to protect her son. The way this protection manifested in the saga was through the gifting of a sword, from mother to son, so as to let the son protect himself. Through the consideration of additional texts, I concluded that, in this case, the mother adopted a role often associated with fathers in her presentation of a sword to her son. Moving outside of the saga, however, this example may have been an aggrandised depiction of what occurred within *mæðgin* dyads in medieval Iceland. The second theme of this chapter was trust. With an opaque description of love being necessary for the young man to allow the woman to touch him, the study proceeded to explore how *mæðgin* love could intersect with the older woman being supernatural. Throughout the various possibilities that could clarify the obscure passage, the recurring idea was that of trust, in that the woman would not take advantage of him. As a result, I concluded that within a son's love for his mother was trust, that is, a trust that she would do him no harm nor abuse him but would look out for his wellbeing.

Old Norse Studies, Parent-Child Relationships, and Love

The recent boom in exploring Old Norse emotions has been a welcome one, for it has allowed us to reconsider various aspects of the culture in which the people, and sagas, existed. Indeed, over the years, much discussion has emerged about the romantic love that the sagas depict, which has brought revelations as to how this love affected the various parties who had stakes in such romance, as well as how Continental stories were translated in both language and emotional content. Nevertheless, what this scholarship on Old Norse love focuses less upon is the emotional culture and, notably, how love existed within families.

As a result of this gap in scholarship, my database of love terminology in the sagas has been well-placed in aiding my exploration of the saga depictions of familial relationships, and how exactly love was understood by the saga contemporaries to manifest in such relationships. From this new orientation of approaching the sagas, I have also been able to highlight new and important dimensions to some of the passages, and whole sagas, that we Old Norse scholars enjoy.

Due to many of the themes of which I have discussed having emerged from the trends of my database, the chapters did not mirror one another in their topics. And yet we remain in a position to draw broad conclusions about Old Norse familial love and how contemporaries conceptualised it.

One such conclusion is how grief was found to be a component of familial love between the homosocial dyads – *feðgar* and *mæðgur*. This sorrow over a loved one was depicted as debilitating, causing individuals to struggle in their daily lives and remain in their beds. In the cases where this grief was successfully processed, the individuals were able to recover and continue with their lives; those that could not resolve the grief they felt soon died from it. While this was visible in both dyads, it was more common in *feðgar* relationships. Considering my discussion and the recurrence of this idea, I believe this to be representative of a concern, in medieval Iceland, over men’s emotional health as most of the case studies simply state that the man died from his grief, rather than giving any opinions on the matter. The notable exception is *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, in which such behaviour is expounded upon in poetry, and at another time ridiculed, but I believe this to be an illustrative example, in that it shows the audience how others may perceive it as well as how the grieving individual experiences it. Therefore, I wonder whether the medieval Icelanders were, overall, concerned that men could not express their grief over loved ones, and possibly other emotions, in a healthy capacity.

In addition to this, we have seen the sagas depict grief in another manner, through my investigation into familial relationships. This way in which grief manifested was through the bodily swelling of the characters who grieved over a loved one, and this was available to both men and women. However, the saga examples we have seen differentiate between the cause of the swelling; the men swell over the loss of the other man in their *feðgar* dyad, while the woman swelled over the death of her husband. Of the examples we saw, though, only one of the men’s swelling scenes garnered comments. The saga, once again, does not take a clear stance on the topic for it depicts the man in such a way that the audience could perceive him as being both manly and little-manly for his bodily swelling, suggesting various possible views. For the woman’s, and other man’s, scenes, however, the sagas neglect to comment on how their swelling was regarded; perhaps the other man’s swelling is not clarified in the saga, due to it being obvious to the contemporary audience. While this source pool is too small to draw conclusions from, I wonder whether, like the previous point on men’s emotional health, the

sagas are depicting different behavioural expectations. In other words, perhaps Old Norse men were expected to hold in their grief, and other socially unacceptable emotions, and not express them, while women were held to a different standard, perhaps with a dissimilar set of emotions that they were expected to restrict.

In a similar vein, we have seen that by exploring how love emerged within the family, there has been an overarching idea that the concept of death was a highly emotional point, as love becomes especially visible, indicating that it was a major component. This may appear to be an obvious statement, but it is something that must be said, for previous scholarship has typically neglected the possibility of emotions being a driving force of action. This work and the sagas, however, show members of the dyads taking action out of love, when it comes to death. Indeed, the sagas' maternal figures have frequently shown a willingness to risk, or go to, death in their attempts to protect the other women of their respective dyads, and we have witnessed such figures protect the younger men from harm by providing means of defence, such as weapons or magical charms. With regards to older men, our case studies only showed them taking action after the young man's death had occurred. Their love, thus, manifested in seeking redress for the deceased young man or, unable to achieve such aims, retreating to their bed and dying. What can we draw from this, though? One idea that emerges is how the evidence currently suggests that Old Norse women were generally protective of their beloved family members. It is unlikely that the saga authors were attempting to be prescriptive, for the case studies we explored were rarely direct in discussing the women involved; this would coincide with how women were often left in the background of the sagas. Such a conclusion prompts the consideration of men. In other words, can we also find men expressing their love through protection? How much male protection of others can we see, and how does it compare to women? One possibility, from our pool of evidence, is that the men protected in another way. What we have seen with the women's connection to love and death has been a desire to protect the individual she loves, even at the risk of herself dying. Considering how we have seen men attempt to seek redress for the other man of the *feðgar* dyad, and how loving fathers seek a worthy suitor who will care for their daughters, could this be suggesting that, for men, love and death intersected in a more abstract manner? Could Old Norse men, then, have been more preoccupied with a social death, over an actual death?

As this project has explored the interactions between these intergenerational dyads, some broader themes have emerged. Throughout the case studies that this work has

examined, a majority of them had the older member of the dyad be the one who was stated as being loving towards, or acting out of love for, the younger of the pair. While this could be indicative of how familial loving was predominantly enacted by older people to the younger, further exploration instead suggests that power dynamics were involved in the enacting of love. We have already seen this in Chapter 1's discussion of Þorgerðr and her poor foster-mother, Syrpa. Younger than Syrpa, Þorgerðr possessed a higher status and position, and was the one described as loving Syrpa. Furthermore, this is not an act of discrimination from the saga authors, in that they were indicating how lower-born people had less emotional depth than the elite families, for the same saga states Syrpa to be loving towards the young Urðarköttr. Now, Urðarköttr is Þorgerðr's son and of high birth, so how does this play into the idea of love and power being connected? In essence, it does not. At this point in the saga, Urðarköttr is a foundling who has been declared as Syrpa's biological son, and has not been publicly recognised by his actual biological parents. Thus, the saga describes their relationship as if Urðarköttr were of the same status as Syrpa, permitting Syrpa to be described as loving the boy. Therefore, a general theme that emerged from my project is that in the familial dyads, power and status and love were connected.

With this thesis, I have sought to add important, and much-needed, dimensions to the larger conversation of Old Norse studies. By bringing emotions to the fore, I have been able to approach well-known spaces with new ideas so as to uncover some elements of medieval Iceland's emotional culture. Nevertheless, this work has exposed how much more there remains to be explored.

Foremost amongst these is the study of women and women's relationships. There has been a recent surge in interest, and scholarship, on Old Norse women, and their various roles – there remains, however, more to find. For example, while I have stated that the teaching of handicrafts may have been a mother's duty to her daughter, what other such duties does an Old Norse mother have for her children? Therefore, by continuing to use novel approaches, we can seek to learn more about women's lives in medieval Iceland. It is true that the sagas, overall, prioritise men and masculine ideas but there is still material on women to work with; as a result of the groundwork and developments the field has seen, I have been able to create a whole chapter dedicated to homosocial female relationships. That is to say nothing of the relationships women had with men, outside of marriage and bridal negotiations; there remains much untapped material that needs to be looked at.

On a similar note, much of the scholarship on men, and men's interpersonal relationships, excludes emotional elements. Indeed, there is much discussion available on men and honour and violence, with good reason, for the sagas possess a great deal of content on the topic of men doing violence for the sake of honour. However, there is reason to prioritise topics other than these, for it can start to become reductive, creating a caricature of a violent man obsessed with honour rather than a historical man who lived in medieval Iceland and took part in its culture. While the Old Norse culture seems to have dictated that men should not display their grief but instead be active in getting justice, I found men trapped in scenarios where they cannot attain that justice demanded of them; generally, these men consequently died. To what extent did the men desire this expectation of claiming justice? How did they feel about it? Was it at all a burden to them? Various avenues emerge from thinking about men and emotions in medieval Iceland, and many remain unexplored.

Studies with a focus on the emotional side of the medieval Icelandic peoples, and families, are currently lacking, and more of them are needed. There can be no doubt about that now. In my research on the topic, however, questions about the family itself started to emerge. Scholars have spoken about specific roles men and women may take, such as the *giptingarmaðr* or the whetter, respectively, but I have not found any extensive scholarship on the topic of interpersonal roles. By this, I mean the roles which family members were expected to perform. I have inferred some of these roles from my research into the emotions in the relationships but there is surely more to be found. Indeed, what of emotional variation in the fosterage and biological relationships I have been studying? I have been generally focusing on the emotions that these groups shared but a crucial question that comes afterwards is how do fosterage relationships differ to biological ones, in terms of emotions rather than power and status? Throughout my discussions and case studies, I have made allusions and digressions towards some of these questions, where appropriate, but more extensive study is sorely needed.

The Staying Power of Emotions?

Throughout this study, I could not help but notice how the emotions that I explored seemed so understandable and yet so peculiar at the same time. They were both familiar and unfamiliar. Considering those emotions alongside my discussion on the linguistic relativism of

emotions, I wonder once again on the universality and, thus, timelessness of emotions. Is it possible to have and understand the experience of an emotion for which we no longer have a concept? Are emotions ever lost or are they merely dormant? I briefly mentioned the 'lost' emotion of *acedia* in the Introduction and how Zecher authored an article on how the 2020 pandemic has allowed *acedia* to be rediscovered. That emotion was heavily tied to a monastic lifestyle and yet it has become relevant today. My question, then, is 'how exact a match does the cultural context have to be for the emotion to be the same emotion'? Are the religious connotations required for *acedia*, or is it the isolation and lethargy, or both? It is something we must consider when thinking about where we stand on the spectrum between emotional universalism and social constructivism.

Parallel to this, we have seen, for example, parental concern over a daughter's marital match. Putting aside the potential for parental profit for now, the match was often expected to be *jafnræði*, or 'an equal match', between the possible young couple. This led to parental oversight, negotiating, and determining the suitors' suitability for their child. How far can we map this concept onto our modern world? Arranged marriages still remain in the world, and there are various matchmaking services that straddle the line between arranged marriage and self-selected marriage. One may imagine it is easier to apply this Old Norse concept of equality to those types of marriage rather than the purely self-selected ones. However, even in self-selected marriages one can find these questions of suitability and worthiness from the kinship group. They can just emerge in different ways: "Can they support you?"; "Do they make you happy?"; "Are they right for you?"; "Are you sure?". How far was the concept of *jafnræði* a result of parental concern and how far was it a result of the honour system? Can these elements even be separated?

Can we ever share the emotional experience of someone from the past? It sounds like a simple question. To say that we cannot do so would suggest that there is something intrinsically different between peoples of the past and ourselves, a gap that cannot be bridged. To say that we can share in it may suggest that we are underestimating the differences in culture and life experiences. Where should we strike the balance? Such questions may not be necessary to conduct a historical investigation into past emotions, but they certainly influence how we approach it.

Concluding Thoughts

The history of Old Norse emotions is a new field of study, teeming with valuable opportunities waiting to be explored. The growing amount of scholarship on the topic only illustrates the spread of excitement felt by scholars. As a result of this worthwhile cause, we are able to shine new light on passages, and sagas, that have been studied countless times as well as return to those passages and episodes that have been skipped with revitalised eyes. Furthermore, in crafting and developing our ideas and methodologies so as to grapple with Old Norse emotions, we can then benefit those disciplines from which we have drawn. Just as the history of emotions will benefit from Old Norse studies, Old Norse studies will be advanced by the history of emotions.

Bibliography

Primary

- Ásm* *Ásmundar saga Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*. Vol. 2, edited by Valdimar kappabana Ásmundarson, 337-356. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1886.
- Band* *Bandamanna Íslenzk Fornrit VII*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 291-364. saga Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936.
- Bós* *Bósa saga ok Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*. Vol. 3, edited by Valdimar Herraudís Ásmundarson, 241-272. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1889.
- Dpl* *Droplaugarsona Íslenzk Fornrit XI*, edited by Jón Jóhannesson, 135-180. saga Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1950.
- Eb* *Eyrbyggja saga Íslenzk Fornrit IV*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, 1-184. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935.
- Eg* *Egils saga Skalla- Íslenzk Fornrit II*, edited by Sigurður Nordal. Reykjavík: Hið Grímssonar íslenska fornritafélag, 1933.
- Eir* *Eiríks saga rauða Íslenzk Fornrit IV*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, 193-238. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935.
- Fbr* *Fóstbræðra saga Íslenzk Fornrit VI*, edited by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 119-276. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943.
- Finnb* *Finnboga saga Íslenzk Fornrit XIV*, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, 251-340. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.
- Flj* *Fljótsdæla saga Íslenzk Fornrit XI*, edited by Jón Jóhannesson, 213-296. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1950.
- Gr* *Grettis saga Íslenzk Fornrit VII*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 1-290. Reykjavík: Ásmundarsonar Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936.

<i>Gullþ</i>	<i>Gull-Þóris saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit XIII</i> , edited by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 173-228. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991.
<i>GunnK</i>	<i>Gunnars saga Keldugsnúpsfjfls</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit XIV</i> , edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, 341-380. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.
<i>GunnI</i>	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit III</i> , edited by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, 49-108. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1938.
<i>Hallfr</i>	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit VIII</i> , edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 133-200. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1939.
<i>Hauk</i>	<i>Haukdæla þáttr</i>	<i>Sturlunga saga</i> . Vol. 1, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 89-100. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1948.
<i>Háv</i>	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit VI</i> , edited by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 119-276. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943.
<i>Heið</i>	<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit III</i> , edited by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, 213-328. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1938.
<i>Heiðr</i>	<i>Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks</i>	<i>Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda</i> . Vol. 1, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, 307-360. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1891.
<i>Ísl</i>	<i>Íslendinga saga</i>	<i>Sturlunga saga</i> . Vol. 2, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 1-512. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1948.
<i>Kjaln</i>	<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit XIV</i> , edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, 1-44. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.
<i>Korm</i>	<i>Kormáks saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit VIII</i> , edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 201-302. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1939.
<i>Laxd</i>	<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit V</i> , edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1-248. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934.
<i>Ldn</i>	<i>Landnámabók</i>	<i>Íslenzk Fornrit I</i> , edited by Jakob Benediktsson, 29-398. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968.

- Ljósv* *Ljósvetninga saga* *Íslenzk Fornrit X*, edited by Björn Sigfússon, 1-106. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1940.
- Nj* *Brennu-Njáls saga* *Íslenzk Fornrit XII*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954.
- PsG* *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar* *Sturlunga saga*. Vol. 1, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 187-258. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1948.
- Ragn* *Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans* *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Vol. 1, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, 175-224. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1891.
- Reykd* *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* *Íslenzk Fornrit X*, edited by Björn Sigfússon, 149-244. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1940.
- St* *Sturlu saga* *Sturlunga saga*. Vol. 1, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 101-182. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1948.
- Svarfd* *Svarfdæla saga* *Íslenzk Fornrit IX*, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson, 127-212. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956.
- Þórð* *Þórðar saga hreðu* *Íslenzk Fornrit XIV*, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, 161-226. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.
- Þorg* *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* *Sturlunga saga*. Vol. 1, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 11-76. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1948.
- ÞStang* *Þorsteins þáttr Stangarhogg* *Íslenzk Fornrit XI*, edited by Jón Jóhannesson, 67-80. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1950.
- Vígl* *Víglundar saga* *Íslenzk Fornrit XIV*, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, 61-116. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.
- Völs* *Völsunga saga* *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Vol. 1, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, 85-174. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1891.

Íslenzk Fornrit XIV, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959.

Primary (Translated)

- “Kormak’s Saga.” Translated by Rory McTurk. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 1, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 179-224. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “Njal’s Saga.” Translated by Robert Cook. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 3, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 1-220. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty.” Translated by John Kennedy. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 3, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 221-270. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of Grettir the Strong.” Translated by Bernard Scudder. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 2, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 49-192. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of the Confederates.” Translated by Ruth C. Ellison. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 283-308. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of the Icelanders.” In *Sturlunga Saga: Volume I: The Saga of Hvamm-Sturla and The Saga of Icelanders*. Translated by Julia H. McGrew, 115-448. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970.
- “The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue.” Translated by Katrina C. Attwood. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 1, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 305-333. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of the People of Eyri.” Translated by Judy Quinn. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 131-218. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of the People of Laxardal.” Translated by Keneva Kunz. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 5, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 1-119. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- “The Saga of the Slayings on the Heath.” Translated by Keneva Kunz. In *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 4, edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder, 67-130. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.
- Grettir’s Saga*. Translated by Denton Fox and Hermann Pálsson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- Saxo Grammaticus. *Saxo Grammaticus: Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, vol. 1. Translated by Peter Fisher. Edited by Karsten Friis-Jensen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Sturlunga Saga: Volume I: The Saga of Hvamm-Sturla and The Saga of Icelanders*. Translated by Julia H. McGrew. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970.

The Complete Sagas of Icelanders. 5 vols., edited by Viðar Hreinsson, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, and Bernard Scudder. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997.

Reference Works and Databases

CVD Cleasby, Richard and Gudbrand Vigfusson. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874.

ENL *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law*. Translated by Laurence M. Larson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1935.

ISM Lethbridge, Emily. *Icelandic Saga Map*. Accessed December 22, 2023. <http://sagamap.hi.is/is/>

Jb *Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland: The Icelandic Text According to MS AM 351*. Translated and edited by Jana K. Schulman. Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2010.

Laws I *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*. Translated by Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins. Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1980.

Laws II *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II*. Translated by Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins. Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 2000.

LMNL *A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law*. Edited by Jeffrey S. Love, Inger Larsson, Ulrika Djärv, Christine Peel, and Erik Simensen. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020.

ONP *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*. Accessed December 22, 2023. <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php>

“Kort.” In *Íslenzk fornrit VII*, edited by Guðni Jónsson. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936.

“Kort.” In *Íslenzk fornrit XI*, edited by Jón Jóhannesson. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950.

“Landabréf.” In *Íslenzk fornrit XIV*, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959.

IM MM130. Uppsala: Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, 2020. Runor. Accessed December 22, 2023. <http://kulturarvsdata.se/uu/srdb/1f63965e-5b72-4340-8707-420ae3d08aee>.

Secondary

- Agar, Michael. *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994.
- Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir. "Cultural Memory and Gender in Iceland from Medieval to Early Modern Times." *Scandinavian Studies* 85, no. 3 (2013): 378-399.
- Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir. *Property and Virginity: The Christianization of Marriage in Medieval Iceland 1200-1600*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010.
- Ai, Low Soon. "The Mirthless Content of Skarphedinn's Grin." *Medium Ævum* 65, no. 1 (1996): 101-108.
- Andersson, Theodore M. "From Tradition to Literature in the Sagas." In *Oral Art Forms and their Passage into Writing*, edited by Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf, 7-18. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008.
- Andersson, Theodore M. "The Long Prose Form in Medieval Iceland." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101, no. 3 (2002): 380-411.
- Andersson, Theodore M. "The Native Romance of Gunnlaugr and Helga the Fair." In *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, edited by Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin, 33-64. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Andersson, Theodore M. *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, ed. *The Routledge Research Companion to The Medieval Icelandic Sagas*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Egils saga and Empathy: Emotions and Moral Issues in a Dysfunctional Saga Family." *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 1 (2008): 1-18.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Laxdæla Dreaming: A Saga Heroine Invents Her Own Life." *Leeds Studies in English, New Series* 39 (2008): 33-51.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls saga*." *Viator* 38, no. 1 (2007): 191-215.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Óðinn as Mother: The Old Norse Deviant Patriarch." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 126 (2011): 5-16.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "The Fearless Vampire Killers: A Note about the Icelandic *Draugr* and Demonic Contamination in *Grettis Saga*." *Folklore* 120, no. 3 (2009): 307-316.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "The Specter of Old Age: Nasty Old Men in the Sagas of Icelanders." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104, no. 3 (2005): 297-325.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Two Wise Women and their Young Apprentice: A Miscarried Magic Class." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 122 (2007): 43-57.
- Ármann Jakobsson. "Watch Out for the Skin Deep: Medieval Icelandic Transformations." *Arts* 12, no. 1 (2022): 5.
- Auður Magnúsdóttir. "Friends, Foes, and Followers: Power, Networks, and Intimacy in Medieval Iceland." In *Nordic Elites in Transformation, c. 1050-1250, Volume II*, edited by Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, and Hans Jacob Orning, 215-236. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- Auerbach, Loren. "Female Experience and Authorial Intention in *Laxdæla saga*." *Saga Book* 25 (1998-2001): 30-52.

- Bampi, Massimiliano. "Genre." In *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, edited by Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdottir, 15-30. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.
- Bampi, Massimiliano. "Genre." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, 4-14. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Bandlien, Bjørn. "The Church's Teaching on Women's Consent: A Threat to Parents and Society in Medieval Norway and Iceland?" In *Family, Marriage and Property Devolution in the Middle Ages*, edited by Lars Ivar Hansen, 55-80. Tromsø: Department of History, University of Tromsø, 2000.
- Bandlien, Bjørn. *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway*. Translated by Betsy van der Hoek. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005.
- Barclay, Katie. "Performing Emotion and Reading the Male Body in the Irish Court, c. 1800-1845." *Journal of Social History* 51, no. 2 (2017): 293-312.
- Batten, Caroline R. "Dark Riders: Disease, Sexual Violence, and Gender Performance in the Old English *Mære* and Old Norse *Mara*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, no. 3 (2021): 352-380.
- Bek-Pedersen, Karen. *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Press, 2011.
- Benton, John F. "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love." In *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, edited by F. X. Newman, 19-42. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968.
- Benton, John F. *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France*. Edited by Thomas N. Bisson. London: The Hambledon Press, 1991.
- Bibire, Paul. "On Reading the Icelandic Sagas: Approaches to Old Icelandic Texts." In *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement Before 1300*, edited by Beverley Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor, and Gareth Williams, 3-18. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Boddice, Rob. *A History of Feelings*. London: Reaktion Books, 2019.
- Bos, Jacques. "The Rise and Decline of Character: Humoral Psychology in Ancient and Early Modern Medical Theory." *History of the Human Sciences* 22, no. 3 (2009): 29-50.
- Brady, Lindy. "An Irish Sovereignty Motif in *Laxdæla saga*." *Scandinavian Studies* 88, no. 1 (2016): 60-76.
- Bredsdorff, Thomas. *Chaos and Love: The Philosophy of the Icelandic Family Sagas*. Translated by John Tucker. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001.
- Bremmer, Jan. "Avunculate and Fosterage." *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 4 (1976): 65-78.
- Brundage, James A. *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Brunning, Sue. *The Sword in Early Medieval Northern Europe: Experience, Identity, Representation*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir. "Emotions of a Vulnerable Viking: Negotiations of Masculinity in *Egils saga*." In *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, 147-164. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.

- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir. "Humoral Theory in the Medieval North: An Old Norse Translation of *Epistula Vindiciani* in Hauksbók." *Gripla* 29 (2018): 35-66.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir. "The Head, The Heart, and the Breast: Bodily Conceptions of Emotion and Cognition in Old Norse Skaldic Poetry." *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 15 (2019): 29-64.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir. "The Language of Feeling in *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga*: Construction of an Emotional Lexis." *Scripta Islandica* 71 (2020): 9-50.
- Byock, Jesse. *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Cabanac, Michel. "What is Emotion?" *Behavioural Processes* 60 (2002): 69-83.
- Callow, Chris. "Dating and Origins." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, 15-33. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Callow, Chris. *Landscape, Tradition and Power in Medieval Iceland: Dalir and the Eyjafjörður Region c. 870-c.1265*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Clover, Carol J. "Maiden Warriors and Other Sons." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85, no. 1 (1986): 35-49.
- Clover, Carol J. "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Speculum* 68, no. 2 (1993): 363-387.
- Clover, Carol J. "The Long Prose Form." *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 101 (1986): 10-39.
- Clover, Carol J. *The Medieval Saga*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Clunies Ross, Margaret. *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Coleman, Joyce. *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Cook, Robert. "Gunnarr and Hallgerðr: A Failed Romance." In *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, edited by Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin, 5-32. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008.
- Cook, Robert. "The Reader in *Grettis Saga*." *Saga Book* 21 (1982-1985): 133-154.
- Cook, Robert. "Women and Men in Laxdæla saga." *Skáldskaparmál* 2 (1992): 34-59.
- Crocker, Christopher. "Emotions." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, 240-252. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Croix, Sarah. "Identifying "Occasions" of the Self in Viking-Age Scandinavia: Textile Production as Gendered Performance in Its Social and Spatial Settings." In *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, edited by Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien, 235-254. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020.
- D'Avray, David L. *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

- Davidson, H. R. Ellis. "The Sword at the Wedding." *Folklore* 71, no. 1 (1960): 1-18.
- Deploige, Jeroen. "Studying Emotions: The Medievalist as Human Scientist?." In *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th-16th Century)*, edited by Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, 3-24. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005.
- Dillman, François-Xavier. *Les magiciens dans l'Islande ancienne: études sur la représentation de la magie islandaise et de ses agents dans les sources littéraires norroises* [The Magicians in Ancient Iceland]. Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2006.
- Dixon, Thomas. *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Donahue, Jr., Charles. *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Effros, Bonnie. Review of *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, by Barbara Rosenwein. *H-France Review* 8, no. 103 (2008): 408-410.
- Ekman, Paul. "An Argument for Basic Emotions." *Cognition and Emotion* 6, no. 3-4 (1992): 169-200.
- Elias, Norbert. *On Civilization, Power, and Knowledge: Selected Writings*, edited by Stephen Mennell and Johan Goudeblom. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Eriksen, Stefka G. "Medieval Page-turners: Interpreting Revenge in *Njáls saga* in Reykjabók (AM 468 4to) and Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.)." In *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, edited by Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien, 145-176. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020.
- Evans, Gareth Lloyd, and Jessica Clare Hancock. "Introduction." In *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, 1-18. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.
- Evans, Gareth Lloyd. *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Falk, Oren. "A Dark Age Peter Principle: Beowulf's Incompetence Threshold." *Early Medieval Europe* 18, no. 1 (2010): 2-25.
- Falk, Oren. "Beardless Wonders: 'Gaman vas Söxu' (The Sex Was Great)." In *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, edited by Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole, 223-246. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Falk, Oren. "Boyhood, Saga-Style: From *Mannsefni* to *Maðr*." In *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, 21-36. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.
- Falk, Oren. "Konutorrek, "Irreparable Loss of a Wife": *Egils saga's* Absent Husband's Lament." *Viator* 45, no. 3 (2014): 59-88.
- Falk, Oren. *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland: This Spattered Isle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Faulkes, Anthony. Introduction to *Edda*, by Snorri Sturluson, xi-xxiii. Translated and edited by Anthony Faulkes. London: Everyman, 1987.

- Finlay, Alison. "'Intolerable Love': *Tristrams saga* and the Carlisle *Tristan* Fragment." *Medium Ævum* 73, no. 2 (2004): 205-224.
- Freedman, Paul. "Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages." In *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, edited by Barbara Rosenwein, 171-188. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Frevert, Ute. "The History of Emotions." In *Handbook of Emotions*, 4th ed., edited by Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeanette M. Haviland-Jones, 49-65. New York: The Guildford Press, 2016.
- Frevert, Ute. *Emotions in History – Lost and Found*. Budapest: Central University Press, 2011.
- Gade, Kari Ellen. "The Dating and Attributions of Verses in the Skald Sagas." In *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, edited by Russell Gilbert Poole, 50-74. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001.
- Gallo, Lorenzo Lozzi. "The Giantess as Foster-Mother in Old Norse Literature." *Scandinavian Studies* 78, no. 1 (2006): 1-20.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gísli Sigurðsson. "Orality Harnessed: How to Read Written Sagas from an Oral Culture?" In *Oral Art Forms and their Passage into Writing*, edited by Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf, 19-28. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008.
- Gísli Sigurðsson. "Poet, Singer of Tales, Storyteller, and Author." In *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, edited by Slavica Ranković, Ingvil Brügger Budal, Aidan Conti, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, 227-235. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012.
- Gísli Sigurðsson. *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*. Translated by Nicholas Jones. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Gourlay, Kristi. "A Pugnacious Pagan Princess: Aggressive Female Anger and Violence in *Fierabras*." In *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, edited by Lisa Renée Perfetti, 133-163. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- Gropper, Stefanie. "The Human Condition." In *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, edited by Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, 177-192. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020.
- Grundy, Stephen. "The Viking's Mother: Relations Between Mothers and their Grown Sons in Icelandic Sagas." In *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, 223-238. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gyönki, Viktória. "Conflicts Regarding Hospitality in Old Norse Sources." In *Food Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, edited by Viktória Gyönki and Andrea Maraschi, 207-222. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022.
- Hahn, Daniela. "Expanding the Repertoire. Theft as a Means of Whetting in the Sagas of Icelanders." In *Bad Boys and Wicked Women: Antagonists and Troublemakers in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Daniela Hahn and Andreas Schmidt, 144-171. München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2016.

- Haki Antonsson. "Christian Themes." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, 279-291. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Hancock, Jessica Clare. "'That which a hand gives a hand or a foot gives a foot': Male Kinship Obligations in the Heroic *Poetic Edda* and *Völsunga saga*." In *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, 217-236. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.
- Hankinson, R. J. "Humours and Humoral Theory." In *The Routledge History of Disease*, edited by Mark Jackson, 21-37. Oxon: Routledge, 2017.
- Harris, Eric S. J. "Ethnobotany: Traditional Uses and Folk Classification of Bryophytes." *The Bryologist* 111, no. 2 (2008): 169-217.
- Harris, Joseph. "Sacrifice and Guilt in *Sonatorrek*." In *Studien zum Altgermanischen*, edited by Heiko Uecker, 173-196. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. *Island of Anthropology: Studies in Past and Present Iceland*. Odense: Odense University Press, 1990.
- Hawes, Janice. "The Monstrosity of Heroism: Grettir Ásmundarson as an Outsider." *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 1 (2008): 19-50.
- Heide, Eldar. "Spinning *seiðr*." In *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origin, Changes, and Interactions*, edited by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere, 164-170. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006.
- Hermann Pálsson. Introduction to *The Confederates and Hen-Thorir: Two Icelandic Sagas*, 7-38. Translated by Hermann Pálsson. Edinburgh: Southside, 1975.
- Hermann, Pernille. "Literacy." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, 34-47. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Hill, Thomas D. "Guðlaugr Snorrason: The Red Faced Saint and the Refusal of Violence." *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 2 (1995): 145-152.
- Hill, Thomas D. "The Red Faced Saint, Again." *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 4 (1995): 544-547.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Hume, Kathryn. "The Thematic Design of *Grettis saga*." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 73, no. 4 (1974): 469-486.
- Itynre, Cathy Jorgensen. "The Emotional Universe of Medieval Icelandic Fathers and Sons." In *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, edited by Cathy Jorgensen Itynre, 173-196. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996.
- Jacobs, M. A. "Hon stóð ok starði: Vision, Love, and Gender in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*." *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 2 (2014): 148-168.
- James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. 2 vols. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918.
- Jaski, Bart. "Cú Chulainn, *gormac* and *dalta* of the Ulstermen." *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 37 (1999): 1-31.

- Jesch, Judith. *Women in the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991.
- Jochens, Jenny. "Consent in Marriage: Old Norse Law, Life, and Literature." *Scandinavian Studies* 58, no. 2 (1986): 142-176.
- Jochens, Jenny. "Late and Peaceful: Iceland's Conversion through Arbitration in 1000." *Speculum* 74, no. 3 (1999): 621-635.
- Jochens, Jenny. "Old Norse Motherhood." In *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, 201-222. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Jochens, Jenny. "The Illicit Love Visit: An Archaeology of Old Norse Sexuality." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 3 (1991): 357-392.
- Jochens, Jenny. "The Medieval Icelandic Heroine: Fact or Fiction?." *Viator* 17 (1986): 35-50.
- Jochens, Jenny. *Old Norse Images of Women*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Jochens, Jenny. *Women in Old Norse Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. "Women's Weapons: A Re-Evaluation of Magic in the *Íslendingasögur*." *Scandinavian Studies* 81, no. 4 (2009): 409-436.
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. *Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words and Power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson. "Religious Ideas in *Sonatorrek*." *Saga-Book* 25 (1998-2001): 159-178.
- Jón Víðar Sigurðsson. *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900-1300*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.
- Kaland, Sigrid H. H. "Children and Society in the Viking Age." In *Children, Identity and the Past*, edited by Liv Helga Dommasnes and Melanie Wrigglesworth, 51-67. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.
- Kalinke, Marianne E. "Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters: "Hver er að ráða?"." In *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, edited by Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, 167-188. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Kalinke, Marianne E. *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Kalinke, Marianne E. *King Arthur: North-by-Northwest: The Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*. Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1981.
- Kalinke, Marianne E., ed. *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus' Realms*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011.
- Karl G. Johansson. "The Selfish Skald: The Problematic Case of the Self of the Poet of *Sonatorrek*." In *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, edited by Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, and Bjørn Bandlien, 123-144. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020.
- Karras, Ruth Mazo. "Marriage and the Creation of Kin in the Sagas." *Scandinavian Studies* 75, no. 4 (2003): 473-490.
- Katajala-Peltomaa, Sari. "Fatherhood, Masculinity and Lived Religion in Late-Medieval Sweden." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38, no. 2 (2013): 223-244.

- Kellogg, Robert. "Sex and the Vernacular in Medieval Iceland." In *Proceedings of The First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 21-29 August 1971*, edited by Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson, and Desmond Slay, 244-258. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1973.
- Kellogg, Robert. Introduction to *The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection*, xv-liv. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Keltner, Dacher J. "Towards a Consensual Taxonomy of Emotions." *Cognition and Emotion* 33, no. 1 (2019): 14-19.
- Kleinginna Jr., Paul R. and Anne M. Kleinginna. "A Categorized List of Emotion Definitions, with Suggestions for a Consensual Definition." *Motivation and Emotion* 5, no. 4 (1981): 345-379.
- Korecká, Lucie. *Wizards and Words: The Old Norse Vocabulary of Magic in a Cultural Context*. München: Utzverlag, 2019.
- Kress, Helga. "Taming the Shrew: The Rise of Patriarchy and the Subordination of the Feminine in Old Norse Literature." In *The Cold Counsel: The Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, edited by Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, 81-92. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Landro, Torgeir. "Gift Exchange, Reciprocity and Alliances in Medieval and Modern Norway." In *Living Alliances, Leaving Alliances: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Frank Orban and Elin Strand Larsen, 19-34. Münster: Waxmann, 2022.
- Langhamer, Claire. "Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain." *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 2 (2012): 277-297.
- Lanzoni, Susan. "Introduction to the Special Section on the History of Emotions." *History of Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2021): 101-106.
- Larrington, Carolyne. "Awkward Adolescents: Male Maturation in Norse Literature." In *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*, edited by Shannon Lewis-Simpson, 151-166. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Larrington, Carolyne. "Learning to Feel in the Old Norse Camelot?" *Scandinavian Studies* 87, no. 1 (2015): 74-94.
- Larrington, Carolyne. "Völsunga Saga, Ragnars Saga and Romance in Old Norse: Revisiting Relationships." In *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Developments*, edited by Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson, 251-270. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012.
- Larrington, Carolyne. Review of *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology*, by Karen Bek-Pedersen. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2 (2013): 248-250.
- Lassen, Annette. "Perseverance and Purity in *Flóamanna saga*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 118, no. 3 (2019): 313-328.
- Laurin, Dan. "But, What About the Men? Male Ritual Practices in the Icelandic Sagas." *Kyngervi* 2 (2020): 56-76.
- Lavender, Philip. "Introduction." In *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra: The Saga of Illugi, Gríður's Foster-Son*, translated and edited by Philip Lavender, v-xxxviii. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research. 2015.

- Lazarus, Richard S. *Emotion and Adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Le Goff, Jacques. "Laughter in *Brennu-Njáls saga*." Translated by Paul Andrews. In *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, edited by Gísli Pálsson, 161-166. Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992.
- Lockett, Leslie. "The Limited Role of the Brain in Mental and Emotional Activity According to Anglo-Saxon Medical Learning." In *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture*, edited by Alice Jorgenson, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox, 35-52. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015.
- Lockett, Leslie. *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Lönnroth, Lars. "Old Norse Text as Performance." *Scripta Islandica* 60 (2009): 49-60.
- Lönnroth, Lars. *Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Lynch, Andrew. "'What Cheer?' Emotion and Action in the Arthurian World." In *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, edited by Frank Brandsma, Carlyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, 47-64. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015.
- Magerøy, Hallvard. Introduction to *Bandamanna saga*, xv-lx. Edited by Hallvard Magerøy. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1981.
- Margrét Eggertsdóttir. "The Anomalous Pursuit of Love in *Kormaks saga*." Translated by Philip Roughton. In *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, edited by Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin, 81-110. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008.
- Markussen, Bjarne. "Poetic Justice: Law and Elegy in Egil Skallagrimsson's *Sonatorrek*." *Law and Literature* 28, no. 2 (2016): 153-186.
- Matto, Michael. "A War of Containment: The Heroic Image in The Battle of Maldon." *Studia Neophilologica* 74, no. 1 (2002): 60-75.
- Matto, Michael. "Vernacular Traditions: Exploring Anglo-Saxon Mentalities." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 1 (2016): 95-113.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Expanded Edition*. Translated by Jane I. Guyer. Chicago: Hau Books, 2016.
- Mayburd, Miriam. "Objects and Agency in the Medieval North: The Case of Old Norse Magic Swords." *Średniowiecze Polskie i Powszechnie* 16 (2020): 42-68.
- Merkelbach, Rebecca. "*Engi maðr skapar sik sjálf*: Fathers, Abuse and Monstrosity in the Outlaw Sagas." In *Bad Boys and Wicked Women: Antagonists and Troublemakers in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Daniela Hahn and Andreas Schmidt, 59-93. München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2016.
- Merkelbach, Rebecca. *Monsters in Society: Alterity, Transgression, and the Use of the Past in Medieval Iceland*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019.
- Miller, William Ian. *'Why is your Axe Bloody?': A Reading of Njáls Saga*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Miller, William Ian. "Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England." *Law and History Review* 1, no. 2 (1983): 159-204.

- Miller, William Ian. "Emotions and the Sagas" In *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, edited by Gísli Pálsson, 89-110. Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992.
- Miller, William Ian. "Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid: Case Studies in the Negotiation and Classification of Exchange in Medieval Iceland." *Speculum* 61, no. 1 (1986): 18-50.
- Miller, William Ian. "Is a Gift Forever?" *Representations* 100, no. 1 (2007): 13-22.
- Miller, William Ian. "Some Aspects of Householding in the Medieval Icelandic Commonwealth." *Continuity and Change* 3, no. 3 (1988): 321-355.
- Miller, William Ian. *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Miller, William Ian. *Humiliation: And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Miller, William Ian. *Losing It: In which an aging Professor laments his shrinking Brain, which he flatters himself formerly did him Noble Service*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Miller, William Ian. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Mills, Kristen. "Grief, Gender, and Genre: Male Weeping in Snorri's Account of Baldr's Death, Kings' Sagas, and *Gesta Danorum*." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113, no. 4 (2014): 472-496.
- Mitchell, Stephen A. *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- Mize, Britt. "The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old English Poetry." *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006): 57-90.
- Moss, Rachel. *Fatherhood and its Representations in Middle English Texts*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013.
- Mundal, Else. "Modes of Authorship and Types of Text in Old Norse Culture." In *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, edited by Slavica Ranković, Ingvil Brügger Budal, Aidan Conti, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, 211-226. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012.
- Mundal, Else. "Women and Old Norse Narrative." In *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative: The European Tradition*, edited by Roy Eriksen, 135-152. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994.
- Nelson, Janet L. "The Problematic in the Private." *Social History* 15, no. 3 (1990): 355-364.
- O'Connor, Ralph. "History or Fiction? Truth-claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-sagas." *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15 (2005): 101-169.
- O'Donoghue, Heather. "Women in *Njáls saga*." In *Introductory Essays on Egils saga and Njáls saga*, edited by John Hines and Desmond Slay, 83-92. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1992.
- O'Donoghue, Heather. *Narrative in the Icelandic Family Saga: Meanings of Time in Old Norse Literature*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- O'Donoghue, Heather. *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Short Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

- Olley, Katherine Marie. *Kinship in Old Norse Myth and Legend*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2022.
- Ottenheimer, Harriet Joseph, and Judith M. S. Pine. *The Anthropology of Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*. 4th ed. Wadsworth: Cengage, 2018.
- Parkes, Peter. "Celtic Fosterage: Adoptive Kinship and Clientage in Northwest Europe." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (2006): 359-395.
- Patzuk-Russell, Ryder. *The Development of Education in Medieval Iceland*. Berlin: Medieval Institute Publications, 2021.
- Phillipotts, Bertha Surtees. *Kindred and Clan in the Middle Ages and After: A Study in the Sociology of the Teutonic Races*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913.
- Plamper, Jan, William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns. "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns." *History and Theory* 49, no. 2 (2010): 237-265.
- Plamper, Jan. *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*. Translated by Keith Tribe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Pollock, Linda A. "Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England." *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 567-590.
- Poole, Russell. "Myth, Psychology, and Society in *Grettis saga*." *Alvíssmál* 11 (2004): 3-16.
- Posner, Jonathan, James A. Russell, and Bradley S. Peterson. "The Circumplex Model of Affect: An Integrative Approach to Affective Neuroscience, Cognitive Development, and Psychopathology." *Development and Psychopathology* 17 (2005): 715-734.
- Price, Basil Arnould. "Greenland as a Horizon: Approaching Queer Utopianism in *Flóamanna Saga*." In *Medieval Mobilities: Gendered Bodies, Spaces, and Movements*, edited by Basil Arnould Price, Jane Bonsall, and Meagan Khoury, 225-248. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2023.
- Price, Basil Arnould. "Sufficient Tragedy: Masculinity as Cruel Optimism in *Beowulf*," (Forthcoming).
- Price, Neil. *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. 2nd ed. Oxford; Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2019.
- Radenović, Ljiljana. "Beyond Universalism/Social Constructivism Debate in the History of Emotions: The Case of Acedia." *Theoria* 62, no. 4 (2019): 5-15.
- Ranković, Slavica. "The Exquisite Tempers of Grettir the Strong." *Scandinavian Studies* 89, no. 3 (2017): 375-412.
- Ranković, Slavica. "The Performative Non-Canonicity of the Canonical: *Íslendingasögur* and their Traditional Referentiality." In *The Performance of Christian and Pagan Storyworlds: Non-Canonical Chapters of the History of Nordic Medieval Literature*, edited by Lars Boje Mortensen and Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, with Alexandra Bergholm, 247-272. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Ranković, Slavica. "The Temporality of the (Immanent) Saga: Tinkering with Formulas." In *Dating the Sagas: Reviews and Revisions*, edited by Else Mundal, 149-194. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013.
- Ranković, Slavica, Ingvil Brügger Budal, Aidan Conti, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, ed. *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012.

- Raudvere, Catharina. "Trolldómr in Early Medieval Scandinavia." In *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages*, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, 73-172. London: The Athlone Press, 2002.
- Reddy, William. "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions." *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 3 (1997): 327-351.
- Reddy, William. "Sentimentalism and its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution." *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 109-152.
- Reddy, William. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Reynolds, Philip L. "The Regional Origins of Theories about Marital Consent and Consummation During the Twelfth Century." In *Regional Variations in Matrimonial Law and Custom in Europe, 1150-1600*, edited by Mia Korpiola, 43-76. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Ricketts, Philadelphia. *High-Ranking Widows in Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire: Property, Power, Marriage and Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Righter-Gould, Ruth. "The Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda: A Structural Analysis." *Scandinavian Studies* 52, no. 4 (1980): 423-441.
- Roby, Matthew. "The Licit Love Visit: Masculine Sexual Maturation and the 'Temporary Troll Lover' Trope." In *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, edited by Gareth Lloyd Evans and Jessica Clare Hancock, 37-59. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. "Emotions: Some Historical Observations." *History of Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2021): 107-111.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. "Thinking Historically about Medieval Emotions." *History Compass* 8, no. 8 (2010): 828-842.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. "Worrying about Emotions in History." *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821-845.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. *Anger: The Conflicted History of an Emotion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. *Love: A History in Five Fantasies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021.
- Sabini, John and Maury Silver. "Ekman's Basic Emotions: Why not Love and Jealousy?" *Cognition and Emotion* 19, no. 5 (2005): 693-712.
- Sahlins, Marshall. "What Kinship is (Part One)." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 1 (2011): 2-19.
- Sandberg, Pete. "Sonatorrek. Egill Skallagrímsson's Critique of Death." *Saga-Book* 43 (2019): 103-124.
- Sayers, William. "Guilt, Grief, Grievance, and the Encrypted Name in Egill Skallagrímsson's *Sonatorrek*." *Scandinavian Studies* 92, no. 2 (2020): 229-246.
- Sayers, William. "The Honor of Guðlaugr Snorrason and Einarr Þambarskelfir: A Reply." *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 4 (1995): 536-544.
- Schach, Paul. "Symbolic Dreams of Future Renown in Old Icelandic Literature." *Mosaic* 4, no. 4 (1971): 51-74.

- Schmidt, Anne. "Showing Emotions, Reading Emotions." Translated by Keith Tribe. In *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000*, edited by Ute Frevert, Christian Bailey, Pascal Eitler, Benno Gammerl, Bettina Hitzer, Margrit Pernau, Monique Scheer, Anne Schmidt, and Nina Verheyen, 62-90. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Schulman, Jana K. "Make Me a Match: Motifs of Betrothal in the Sagas of the Icelanders." *Scandinavian Studies* 69, no. 3 (1997): 296-321.
- Seigworth, Gregory J., and Melissa Gregg. "An Inventory of Shimmers." In *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 1-28. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Sheldon, Aaron. "The 'Bed of Grief': Fathers, Sons, and Love in Old Norse Sagas." In *Proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North (Reykjavík, April 15-17, 2021)*, edited by Katrín Lía L. Mikaelssdóttir, Felix Lummer, Eirik Westcoat, Ermenegilda Müller, Luca Panaro, Lea Pokorny, and Giulia Zorzan, 1-2. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Centre for Medieval Studies, 2021.
- Sif Ríkharðsdóttir. "Translating Emotion: Vocalisation and Embodiment in *Yvain and Ívens Saga*." In *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, edited by Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, 161-180. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015.
- Sif Ríkharðsdóttir. *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translation, Voices, Contexts*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017.
- Sif Ríkharðsdóttir. *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012.
- Simon-Thomas, Emiliana R., Dacher J. Keltner, Disa Sauter, Lara Sinicropi-Yao, and Anna Abramson. "The Voice Conveys Specific Emotions: Evidence from Vocal Burst Displays." *Emotion* 9, no. 6 (2009): 838-846.
- Solomon, Robert C. *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions are Really Telling Us*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Stearns, Carol Z., and Peter N. Stearns. *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Stearns, Peter N., and Carol Z. Stearns. "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813-836.
- Støa, Heidi. "The Lover and the Statue: Idolatrous Love in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*." *Scandinavian Studies* 87, no. 1 (2015): 129-146.
- Strand, Eva Andersson. "Tools and Textiles – Production and Organisation in Birka and Hedeby." In *Viking Settlements and Viking Society: Papers from the Proceedings of the Sixteenth Viking Congress, Reykjavík and Reykholt, 16-23 August 2009*, edited by Svavar Sigmundsson, Anton Holt, Gísli Sigurðsson, Guðmundur Ólafsson, and Orri Vésteinsson. 1-17. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornleifafélag, 2011.
- Sturtevant, Albert Morey. "Certain Semantic Changes in Old Norse." *Philological Quarterly* 30 (1951): 308-315.
- Toohey, Peter. "Acedia in Late Classical Antiquity." *Illinois Classical Studies* 15, no. 2 (1990): 339-352.

- Tulinius, Torfi H. *The Enigma of Egill: The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*, translated by Victoria Cribb. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2014.
- Tulinius, Torfi H. *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, translated by Randi C. Eldevik. Odense: Odense University Press, 2002.
- Turco, Jeffrey. "Gender, Violence, and the "Enigma" of *Gísla saga*." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 3 (2016): 277-298.
- Van Deusen, Natalie. "Sworn Sisterhood? On the (Near-) Absence of Female Friendship from the *Íslendingasögur*." *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 1 (2014): 52-71.
- Van Wees, Hans. "A Brief History of Tears: Gender Differentiation in Archaic Greece." In *When Men were Men: Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, edited by Lin Foxhall and John Salmon, 10-53. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Vésteinn Ólason. "The Icelandic Saga as a Kind of Literature with Special Reference to its Representation of Reality." In *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross*, edited by Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills, 27-48. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007.
- Waggoner, Ben. Introduction to *The Sagas of Ragnar Lodbrok*, viii-xxvii. Translated by Ben Waggoner. New Haven: Troth Publications, 2009.
- Waugh, Robin. "The Foster Mother's Language: Anti-Representation, Pseudo-Feminization, and Other Consequences of a Mistake of Gender Charm in "Heiðarvíga saga"." *Scandinavian Studies* 83, no. 3 (2011): 307-364.
- Wolf, Kirsten and Johanna Denzin, ed. *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008.
- Wolf, Kirsten. "Body Language in Medieval Iceland: A Study of Gesticulation in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders." *Scripta Islandica* 64 (2013): 99-122.
- Wolff, Phillip, and Kevin J. Holmes. "Linguistic Relativity." *WIREs Cognitive Science* 2, no. 3 (2011): 253-265.
- Zecher, Jonathan L. "Acedia: The Lost Name for the Emotion We're All Feeling Right Now." *The Conversation*. August 27, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/acedia-the-lost-name-for-the-emotion-were-all-feeling-right-now-144058>.

Theses

- Haley-Halinski, Kathryn Ania. "Birds and Humans in the Old Norse World, c. 600-1500 AD." Doctoral Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2021.
- Keens, Lucy Anne. "Scenes of a Sexual Nature: Theorising Representations of Sex and the Sexual Body in the Sagas of the Icelanders." Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2016.
- Mackenzie, Colin Peter. "Vernacular Psychologies in Old Norse-Icelandic and Old English." Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014.
- Roby, Matthew. "Troll Sex: Youth, Old Age, and the Erotic in Old Norse-Icelandic Narratives of the Supernatural." Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2019.