

Translation in Medieval and Reformation Norway: A History of Stories or the Story of History

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Article abstract

Three major events marked medieval Norwegian literary production, style, and language: the introduction of Christianity, the Black Death, and the Reformation. Foreign material in translation was pivotal to the transition between the pagan Viking Era and the Christian Middle Ages and to the passage from Catholicism to Lutheranism in the 16th century. Lack of translation and literary production following the Black Death also had an impact.

Translation in a medieval and Renaissance context must be understood as transfer of knowledge, the crossing of linguistic and cultural borders. The translated texts helped introduce and consolidate the social conventions promoted by the new religion. The distinction between *story* and *history* faded. Religious and devotional material preceded the secular court literature from the French-speaking territories. Hagiographic material ran parallel to heroic tales: all genres helped illustrate the virtues of Christian life and social organization and needed only minor adaptation for a Norse audience. The pagan literary conventions blended with those of the imported material and resulted in a distinct Norse literary style.

The systematic encounter with *other* gave rise to a new perception of *self*. The largely anonymous translators contributed to the inclusion of *other* in *self*, to the assimilation of foreign cultural values and concepts.

Translation in Medieval and Reformation Norway: A History of Stories or the Story of History

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RÉSUMÉ

La production, le style, et les conventions littéraires de la Norvège médiévale ont été formés par trois événements majeurs : l'introduction du christianisme, la Peste noire, et la Réforme. Les textes importés ont été essentiels à la transition entre le temps des Vikings et le Moyen Âge chrétien ainsi qu'au passage vers la fois protestante du XVI^e siècle. L'absence de production littéraire et de traduction à la suite de la Peste noire a aussi eu un effet non négligeable.

Le terme traduction comprend, dans un contexte médiéval, le transfert des connaissances et le passage des frontières linguistiques et culturelles. Les textes importés ont facilité l'introduction, la dissémination, et le maintien de la foi chrétienne. La distinction entre *conte* et *histoire* s'est en quelque sorte effacée. Le matériel religieux et didactique a précédé les textes séculaires en provenance des cours des territoires francophones. Les hagiographies ont vécu en parallèle avec les récits chevaleresques et héroïques. Tous les genres ont illustré les vertus de la foi et de la société chrétienne et n'ont eu besoin que de modifications mineures pour plaire à l'audience norvégienne. Les conventions littéraires traditionnelles ont rejoint les conventions importées pour engendrer un style courtois norrois typique.

Le rencontre systématique avec *l'autre* a rendu la perception de *soi* plus aiguë. Les traducteurs, restés pour la plupart anonymes, ont largement contribué à l'assimilation des valeurs nouvelles venant de l'étranger.

ABSTRACT

Three major events marked medieval Norwegian literary production, style, and language: the introduction of Christianity, the Black Death, and the Reformation. Foreign material in translation was pivotal to the transition between the pagan Viking Era and the Christian Middle Ages and to the passage from Catholicism to Lutheranism in the 16th century. Lack of translation and literary production following the Black Death also had an impact.

Translation in a medieval and Renaissance context must be understood as transfer of knowledge, the crossing of linguistic and cultural borders. The translated texts helped introduce and consolidate the social conventions promoted by the new religion. The distinction between *story* and *history* faded. Religious and devotional material preceded the secular court literature from the French-speaking territories. Hagiographic material ran parallel to heroic tales: all genres helped illustrate the virtues of Christian life and social organization and needed only minor adaptation for a Norse audience. The pagan literary conventions blended with those of the imported material and resulted in a distinct Norse literary style.

The systematic encounter with *other* gave rise to a new perception of *self*. The largely anonymous translators contributed to the inclusion of *other* in *self*, to the assimilation of foreign cultural values and concepts.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

Middle Ages, reformation, 16th century, literary translation, Norway

Introduction

The Old Norse culture changed radically as a result of the encounter with the ideas and conventions conveyed by the Christian texts in the Middle Ages. Their selection was not random, but served a rather ambitious didactical scheme undertaken primarily by members of the Church, who saw a need for exemplification and instruction in appropriate Christian behavior. Translation in medieval Norway was not only a matter of knowledge transfer; it signified cultural colonialization and assimilation, it was an indispensable tool in the effort to reshape the native mentality.

In medieval Christian Norway, the vernacular remained the language of communication and civil administration. The old and new laws were recorded in the Old Norse language as a matter of course. The ancestral laws were not suppressed by the new Christian principles, the latter were incorporated into the existing codex. To all probability, the Norse tongue was taught alongside Latin in the Christian schools that were established. Translators into Old Norse never apologized for using the vernacular as did so profusely their European colleagues. Rather, prefaces to Old Norse translations introduced and explained what was about to be read, and were often accompanied by an enumeration of the benefits that the text would bestow upon the reader. The vernacular remained the *lingua franca* in most social and administrative contexts. All of this was rather unique from a European contemporaneous perspective.

A comprehensive history and analysis of the imported texts and their combined influence on the Old Norse mentality and social organization has yet to be written. The old texts have been studied separately by a number of scholars from various disciplines such as theology, philology and linguistics. Translation as an agent of change has been neglected by both historians and linguists. In my recent thesis (Concordia University, September 2002), I have however made an attempt at establishing a “repertoire” of translations undertaken in Norway from which detailed analyses can be made possible, showing both the scope and extent of the enterprise. Far from being a simple matter of importing foreign stories, translation in medieval Norway was an enterprise rooted in a sincere wish to introduce, promote and indoctrinate the basic notions of Christianity: yet we see an all too clear will to manipulate and control, reflecting the ongoing struggle between the Church and a succession of kings. History is not a simple succession of events. It is a maze of interlocking and multilayered factual and discursive events, of actions and reactions. The history of translation conveys a distinct perception of the past. The translators and their texts shaped history. Discursive and factual events had a reciprocal effect on each other that we cannot continue to ignore.

The Coming of Christianity: Reshaping the Mentality

Three major events marked Norwegian literary production throughout the Middle Ages: the introduction of Christianity, the Black Death, and the Reformation. They all meant a radical change of direction, they all implied major social and mental reorganization.

Long before the introduction of Christianity, the people of the North had been in regular contact with foreign cultures. The Norse people had been great travelers and merchants from before the Viking Age. Notwithstanding their somewhat dubious

reputation as warriors and robbers, the Norsemen had developed commercial ties with a number of nations and regions, and had interacted with Christian communities for centuries before Christianity was introduced.

In the Old Norse society, religion was associated with the inherited *wisdom* and experience of the forefathers. The clan and its families were at the center of social as well as religious organization. The gods were the clan's closest companions and friends, physically present at the farm, in tools and weapons, in a spring, a tree, a mound, or in an entire mountain. Religion focused on life as it unfolded on earth. The *purpose* of religious devotion was to *maintain human life*. People therefore needed the *immediate* support of the gods. And the gods were *place-bound*. Foreign religions were not a concern for the Norsemen, who accepted the fact that different places needed the protection of different gods. Christianity was not unknown to the people of the North, rather it was *out of place*, belonging elsewhere. The Norse religion was in many ways a tolerant one. Based on tradition, not on a written codex, it was practiced collectively. The seasonal rites created bonds between people, within the clan and across clan-lines. Conversion to Christianity by just one family member was considered an act of disloyalty, not only to the gods but to the ancestors and the entire clan. To break the bonds of community and convert without the consent of the clan was considered an outrage and a shame (*frendeskam*). This explains why so many were unwilling to accept Christianity in the early days, and why some families and clans converted as a group. In Iceland, for instance, Christianity was adopted by a *regular vote* at the Althing like any other communal decision.

This *collective* form of devotion stands in sharp contrast to the increasingly *individualized* Christian religion. Common sense and experience stood against philosophy and reflection. There was a world of difference between the Old Norse emphasis on honor, personal courage, skillfulness, performance and pride and the Christian ideals of submission, humbleness, and penitence in preparation for life after death. A number of adjustments were warranted.

The material translated in medieval Norway helped the Church achieve a much needed religious and social conformity with the rest of Christianity. Translation, as practiced in Norway, meant knowledge transfer on an unprecedented scale, including adaptation, paraphrase, imitation, re-writing, summary, and compilation. The imported texts opened up for an encounter between *self* and *other* in a unique way, and allowed for the appropriation and adaptation of a foreign culture and its literary expression. As manuscripts and ideas flowed in, the focus of Norwegian leaders turned outwards, away from the *local* towards the *foreign*.

Iceland and Norway: Separate Entities?

There was a constant movement of scholars and manuscripts between Iceland and Norway. Texts were translated, written, compiled, and disseminated in the two communities almost simultaneously. The ecclesiastic administrations of the two communities were officially coordinated in the 12th century, when the Archdiocese in Nidaros gained ecclesiastical control over the Arctic regions and the Atlantic Islands. The close ties between Norway and Iceland has made the question of textual origin all the more complicated, and continues to preoccupy scholars. The Icelanders were indeed champions of the historical genre. It is, however, generally conceded that the

translation of most of the didactical material and court literature was a mainly Norwegian enterprise.

Religious Texts

The religious material preceded the secular texts. Soon, however, almost every genre was imported: religious and devotional texts; legends; heroic tales; and chivalric and romance material. The early missionaries depended on vernacular manuals to explain the main articles of the faith, to be able to celebrate Holy Mass, and to combat pagan rites and beliefs. The first clergy from the British Isles may have used homilies and liturgical material in Old English as this language was relatively close to Old Norse.

A fairly considerable body of religious literature in the vernacular existed in both Iceland and in Norway by the middle of the 12th century. The texts in *Humiliúbók* for instance may possibly have existed as a fixed collection from the end of the 11th century on. However, the majority of translations – regardless of genre – were undertaken during the rule of Håkon Håkonsson in the 13th century. The Old Norse version of *Vitae Patrum*, for example, survived as part of a large Icelandic codex known as *Stærri Stjórn*, along with *Romverja saga*, *Alexanders saga*, and *Gyngja saga*. This collection apparently functioned as a comprehensive world history.

The historical texts of Scripture seem to have captured the Norsemen's imagination early on. Nevertheless, an attempt at a comprehensive translation of the historical material of the Old Testament was not initiated until the beginning of the 14th century, when *Stjórn* – one of the last Norwegian translations – was produced at the request of Håkon Magnusson. *Vulgata* was its main source, but *Stjórn* also contains material from Comestor's *Historia scholastica* and Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, as well as proverbial material from various authoritative sources (i.e., *Disticha Catonis*). Proverbs were ideal because of their short and concise form and found their equivalence in old native proverbial literature, such as for instance *Hávamál*.

The Old Norse translators of religious and devotional material carefully edited their work, rearranging and adapting the selected texts according to the needs of the native audience. Many texts were augmented with quotations, commentaries, and personal reflections, and almost *all* included general advice in matters pertaining to good Christian conduct.

Court Literature from the French Territories

By 1220, Norway experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity after years of civil war. The elite now had time for recreation and entertainment and wanted to emulate European courtiers. New models for appropriate political and social behavior were needed. These models were found in the court literature from the French-speaking territories, in stories narrating the exploits of legendary heroes in chivalric tales of Arthurian, Carolingian, and Breton origin.

The French court literature derived from mainly three traditions: the *matière de Bretagne* (represented by the works of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France), the *matière de France* (adventure novels such as *Flores oc Blantzeflor* and *Elis saga ok Rósamunde*), and the *matière de Rome* (*Alexanders saga*, *Romverja*, and *Trojumanna saga*). Medieval tales of other origins, such as *Tristan and Isolde* (translated into Old

Norse in 1226) and various legends associated with Charlemagne (especially the *Chanson de Roland*) were recorded in Old Norse before or around 1250.

Chronicles and Historical Texts

The *matière de Rome*, of mainly Latin provenance, was persistently presented as chivalric romance, even though it included a number of foreign Latin chronicles on various topics, such as Einhard's *Karlamagnús saga* and Monmouth's *Breta sögur*. The very first *Vita Caroli Magni* had been written not long after Charlemagne's death in Spain in 840. This text soon gave birth to a tradition of *chansons de geste*, which in the beginning shared some of the same features as the Breton *lais*: they were **musical** poems belonging to the repertory of the countless jesters and troubadours who performed along the many pilgrim routes. The genres intermixed: the *gesta* with the *historia*: the *legenda* with the *chronica*. Both heroic epic and chivalric romance literature enjoyed great popularity in Norway, as it combined physical action and chivalry with good Christian values.

How Was the Material Presented and How Was It Received?

How was the foreign material presented and how was it received? The incentive behind the translation of historical, legendary, and heroic court literature cannot have been merely entertainment as some of the prefaces so ardently claim, especially that of *Strengleikar*. Entertainment was but one aspect. Almost all the texts contain didactical digressions and *interlinear* commentary. The *Lai of Equitan* is a good example. This basically funny slapstick-humor story had no didactical intention in its original French form. The Norse translator, however, expanded the epilogue lavishly with his own material, referring to biblical figures (Abraham, Job and Lazarus), quoting Saint Augustine, and introducing proverbial sayings in Latin.

The translated material captured the imagination of the Norwegian audience. What is peculiar is the insistence upon giving these texts of very different linguistic and geographical origin the status of *sögur* (even *riddarasögur*) regardless of their textual provenance or style. The translators consciously or unconsciously combined the different imported texts with existing literary conventions, creating a specific Old Norse courteous (*kurteiz*) style. The foreign was made familiar through compliance with and adaptation of the traditional.

Histories and Stories

When considering the relationship between history and story, between history and legend, between legend and *exemplum*, we must not forget the essentially *oral aspect* of medieval literature. Knowledge dissemination in medieval Norway reflected contemporaneous reading habits. Texts were written for *oral performance*. A medieval reader would read aloud, even when he (or she) was alone. *Legenda* literally means "to be read" – implicitly "to be read aloud."

In Norway, the orally performed story signified the continuation of existing literary conventions. The old form helped introduce the new content. Foreign hagiographic material, Christian chivalric and heroic ideals mixed with the traditions of the

former pagan society. Action was preferred to psychology. By conforming to existing literary conventions, the unfamiliar *story of other* became the plausible *story of self*: and the foreign was domesticated.

To a medieval readership and audience, *any story* could convey fundamental **universal truth**. Some of the imported stories may have been used by the clergy as *exempla*, thereby crossing the border between *fact* and *fiction*. The secular court literature in Old Norse translation must therefore be considered a *supplement* to the devotional material that preceded it, as it, too, aimed at instilling in the native population new role models and at consolidating religious beliefs. Indeed, the voice of the translators, heard in the *interlinear* commentaries, reveals to what extent translators looked upon themselves as social and religious educators.

Looking at the history of translation in medieval Norway, the impression is that of a nation of neophytes struggling to keep up with European intellectual currents and relentlessly working to fully introduce, nourish and maintain the faith. However, this is only a half-truth. The texts also served a political agenda, namely the defense and institution of the Christian king. The translation of Honorius of Autun's *Elucidarium* – composed in response to the embarrassing controversy over lay investiture in the 11th and 12th centuries – and Hugh of Saint Victor's *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, in conjunction with the compilation of *Konungs skuggsjá*, must be understood as the native clergy's need for teaching material in matters pertaining to theology in general and power sharing between Crown and Church in particular. A Christian King was *subordinate* to Christ, i.e., the Church and its institutions. According to the Church, kings owed allegiance to God first and men next. This was quite contrary to the Old Norse tradition in which religion and politics had been considered distinct but separate aspects of social life and where kings had been chosen amongst peers.

The Black Death: The Disintegration of Social and Political Structures

Due to a series of political, demographic, and climatic circumstances in the 14th century, literary activity all but ceased in Norway; however, some of the court literature entered the popular tradition and lived on in the form of ballads and folksongs. The remnants of *sögur* in some cases became adventure stories – or *eventyr*, taking on native dress and starting a new life independent of scholarly learning.

The devastation of the Black Plague weakened an already fragile political system and opened up for an increased presence of Danish administrators. The Norwegian court moved to Sweden in 1319 when Magnus VII Eriksson, still a child, was acclaimed King of both countries. This union was the first in a series of partnerships and agreements that would weaken the authority of the Norwegian National Council.

The Old Norse language, which had become standardized in the 12th century, continued to be used by the administration until the end of the 14th century when Danish was adopted. The Kalmar Treaty of 1397 marked the *de facto* beginning of the end of national sovereignty.

In the centuries following the Black Death, the Church was unable to provide adequate schooling for lack of people and revenues. Consequently, the prescriptive and normative influence of schools in matters of grammar and orthography was

significantly diminished, causing a rapid mutation of the national tongue. By the 16th century, the Norwegian vernacular had roughly developed into the modern dialects we know today. The old language had been forgotten.

The Resurrection of National Pride: The Humanists of the Reformation Century

Both the Reformation and the inclusion of the country into the Danish kingdom were imposed upon the people and its leaders. The National Council was dissolved in 1536, and Norway was formally annexed to the kingdom of Denmark. Yet again, Norwegian mentality had to be remolded. Once more, the course must change. For a second time, translation played a part in the process, both in Denmark and in Norway. There was however a significant difference in intellectual focus. In Denmark, Lutheran pamphlets were imported, translated, and debated on a large scale. In Norway, the old sagas came to the fore.

Denmark became Norway's main link to European humanism. There was direct contact between Danish intellectuals and leading humanists (i.e., Erasmus, José Badé, and Thomas More), and through personal friendships with Danish colleagues (Christiern Pedersen and Peder Palladius in particular) the reformed clergy in Bergen were indirectly connected to European humanism.

The Reformation demanded radical changes of both Norwegian society and mentality, and many essential issues had to be addressed. The dioceses were all in dire straits. Revenues were insufficient because the Crown had confiscated most of the church's properties, reducing tithes and taxes. In Bergen, the abusive presence of the Hanseatic merchants, who controlled trade and commerce along the coast, was a sore point. It was widely believed that the Germans were responsible for the general moral decay. The city administrators therefore looked for ways to increase revenues, strengthen religious and moral education, and limit the humiliating privileges of the Hanseatics. In a context of growing frustration with the *status quo*, a handful of people started reexamining the past in search of solutions to the most urgent problems.

The ancient laws were translated and examined by legal experts – the only people able to read and interpret the Old Norse texts. Their study led to a heightened awareness of the sovereign past and the inherited rights and privileges of both church and people. The recovery of the past fostered an interest in the nation's history and a yearning for a new national identity. Absalon Beyer read the material that was translated at the Chapter and used it as source material for *Om Norgis Rige*, his very touching personal comments on contemporary political and economical issues.

Beyer was indeed the first author of a Norwegian history since the saga writers, and Bergen may have emerged as a new cultural center had the civil and church administrations not been moved to Oslo in order to be closer to the King's administration in Copenhagen. The intellectual circle in Oslo had both more people and money, and was resolutely more productive than the one in Bergen. This is where the governor resided, and where the reformed humanism grew to maturity in all its Latin apparel. The expression was mainly Latin, but the focus was purely national. Jens Nilssøn wrote *Historia regum Norvegiae* based on his private Old Norse manuscript collection. Halvard Gunnarssøn translated the kings' sagas into Latin verse (*Chronicon regum Norvegiae*).

Towards the end of the century, when Lutheran doctrine had been effectively implemented and the counter-reformation had failed, the time was ripe for new input from abroad. Danish-born Hans Mogensen, Bishop of Trondheim, translated Philippe de Commines' *Mémoires*, his personal recollection of Louis XI and Charles VIII. This account was the only foreign vernacular history translated into Danish in the Reformation century. Mogensen's successor, Anders Christensen Aarebo, turned to contemporary reformed French literature, translating the epic *La septmaine* by Guillaume du Bartas. In his days, Bartas was considered as great as Ronsard. This translation marked the beginning of a new era for literature in the vernacular in Norway. It was the first timid return to French literature before Ludvig Holberg started composing satirical comedies in the spirit of Molière.

Conclusion

Translators in medieval Norway had needed imagination and inventiveness. New words had to be created and explained. However, the encounter with the foreign did not suppress the national; rather, it influenced and guided its evolution. The largely anonymous Old Norse translators sought and contributed to the *inclusion* of *other* in *self*, to the *assimilation* of new cultural values and concepts. The attitude had been *extraverted* and *inclusive*, dynamic and open.

European humanism had been a predominantly Latin enterprise, rooted in a long-felt need to re-establish the authoritative texts of Christianity which had been corrupted by generations of commentaries, glossing and compilation. The concern was for *auctoritas*, the quest was still universal *truth*. 16th-century Norwegian humanism was an *introverted* and *exclusive* activity, almost *narcissic* in nature, as scholars concentrated on the *former self* in an attempt to reestablish a sense of pride and nationhood and find workable solutions to fundamental societal problems. Almost the entire Reformation century was dedicated to exploring the nation's not so distant, yet glorious and sovereign past. The movement that had started out as a vernacular phenomenon, ended as a Latin exercise at a time when the vernacular gained ground in other countries. The national identity was strengthened in this retrospective process. In Norway, the Renaissance term of *ad fontes* had found its own national expression.

APPENDIX 1

Short Survey of Latin and French Court and Romance Literature in Old Norse Translation

A) Translations of various Latin source texts, including *Matière de Rome*:

Alexanders saga – About Alexander the Great. Translated after the death of Håkon from a Latin text by Gautier de Chatillon (12th), the style is "Latinized." Translated under Magnus the Law Mender (1263-1280). The text was included in the Norse version of *Vitae Patrum* (Halvorsen 1959, Tveitane 1968, Tøgeby 1975).

Amicus saga ok *Amilius*. Translated from a Latin text after the reign of Håkon (Tøgeby 1975).

Breta sögur – A translation of Monmouth's *Historia regum britanniae* (Venås 1962, Gravier 1972, Barnes 1987).

Clarú saga – Translated into Old Norse by the Icelandic bishop Jon Halldorsson (d.1339) in Bergen around 1300 (Venås 1962, Kalinke 1985, Tveitane 1968).

Pamphilius ok Galathea – 2nd half of the 13th century. A translation of the Latin *Pamphilius de amore*, narrating the seduction of Galathea by Pamphilius. The story is written as a dialogue and was included in the Norse manuscript containing *Strengleikar* along with *Elis saga*. Marks a return to Latin sources after almost 30 years of translating French texts (Togebly 1975, Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Samsons saga fagra (The Story of “Fair” Samson).

Trójumanna saga (The History of Troy). Translated from a Latin manuscript (Togebly 1975).

B) Arthurian material:

Erex Saga (*Erec et Eneide*). Written by Chrétien de Troyes around 1170. One of four romances by Chrétien that were translated into Old Norse. The emphasis is on the *mirror* aspects of Chrétien’s poem, and the translation conveys a concern with regal and chivalric propriety. In Old Norse it became almost a *prince’s mirror*. A rather voluminous poem (Zinc 1975, Barnes 1987, Kalinke 1981 & 1991).

Geitarlauf (*Chèvrefeuille*). Part of *Strengleikar*. One of the only two *lais* that are, strictly speaking, of Arthurian origin, the other being *Januals saga* (*Lanval*) (Kalinke 1981).

Ívens saga (*Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion*). The original French text was composed by Chrétien de Troyes between 1170 and 1180 and translated into Old Norse at the request of Hákon Hákonson sometime around 1250-57 (Halvorsen 1959, Togebly 1975, Zinc 1975, Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Janual (*Lanval*). Part of *Strengleikar*. Quite a risqué tale about a queen who attempts to seduce one of Arthur’s knights (Kalinke 1981).

Möttuls saga (*Le mantel mautailé*). The tale of the disconcerting consequences of a chastity test at the not so “courteous” court of King Arthur. This anonymous story, by some attributed to Marie de France, belongs in part to the tradition commonly referred to as the *matière de Bretagne*. The text was translated for amusement and laughter and was the only Old French *fabliau* to be translated into Old Norse (Halvorsen 1959, Zinc 1975, Kalinke 1981 & 1991).

Parcevals saga. Translated from Chrétien de Troyes’ romance.

Tristrams saga ok Ísönder – Translated by Brother Robert in 1226 (Kalinke 1985a, Marchello-Nizia 1995).

Valvens _attr (The Story of Gawain). This saga derives from Chrétien de Troyes’ romance, and was probably translated during the reign of Hákon Hákonsson (*_attr* means part of book”).

C) Matière de Bretagne:

Möttuls saga (*Le mantel mautailé*). A *fabliau* of Breton origin. See above.

Strengleikar (The *Lais* usually attributed to Marie de France) composed sometime between 1160 and 1170 (Laurion 1997). The sequence of the Old Norse *lais* differs somewhat from that of Marie’s collection in the Harley manuscript. *Strengleikar* contains 21 stories with a Prologue:

Forræ a (Prologue). The translator’s intention to use the collection of *lais* as a *mirror* is quite explicit (Barnes 1987).

Guimars. In 1979, a new manuscript of the *Guimars saga* came to light, older than the manuscript preserved in the De La Gardie collection (Uppsala). This new text reveals a more faithful translation of the original French *lai* and helps clarify hitherto problematic passages in the extant Norwegian text (Kalinke 1991).

Eskea (*Fresne*). The text has survived in two French manuscripts.

Equitan. This *lai* has an explicit exemplary function. The rather lengthy epilogue condemns the vices of cupidity and injustice. Latin quotes and reference to biblical stories echo the style of the *King’s Mirror*, promoting the virtues of fidelity and humility (Barnes 1987). This *Lai* presents many features of the *fabliau* (Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Bisclaret. The story known as *Tiodels saga* is believed to be a variation on the same theme (Kalinke 1991). The word “Bisclaret” is a loanword, one of the few Celtic words in *Strengleikar*, and means “werewolf” (Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Laüstik. “Laüstic” is a Celtic loanword meaning “nightingale.”

Desire

Tíoddel. An Icelandic adaptation of *Bisclaret* (Kalinke 1991).

Chevotel (*Chaitivel*).

Doun (*Doon*). Preserved in French only in the Paris manuscript (Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Tveggia elskande lio (*Deus amanz*).

Gurun

Milun (*Melion*).

Geitarlauf (*Chèvrefeuille*). One of the only two *lais* that are, strictly speaking, of the Arthurian tradition, the other being the *Januals saga* (Kalinke 1981). See above.

*Strandar strengleikar**

Leikara lio (*Le lai du Lecheor*). Old French sources tell of Norwegian jongleurs (*leikarar*) who performed *lais* to musical accompaniment. The French manuscript of Marie’s *lais* depicts on the first page a jongleur with a *vielle* – or a “fele = violin” called *gigja* in Old Norse – playing before a king (Cook & Tveitane 1979). The Old French word *jugleur* is translated *Leikarar*, showing that the jongleur or jester was a known figure in the North. Saint Pantelion was the jongleurs’ patron saint (Venås 1962, Cook & Tveitane 1979).

Janual (*Lanval*). Quite a risqué tale about a queen who attempts to seduce one of Arthur’s knights (Kalinke 1981).

Jonet (*Yonec*).

Naboreis

*Ricar hinn gamli** (King Richard the Old = Richard II)

*Tveggia elskande strengleikar**–

Grelent (*Graelent*).

D) The Cycle of Charlemagne and *Chansons de Geste*

Karlamagnús saga. Translated around 1250. In this Old Norse *saga* the *Chanson de Roland* and *Le pèlerinage de Charlemagne* were combined in one story. The story of Charlemagne was translated in several stages. The first stages are prior to Håkon Håkonsson, i.e., early in the 13th century. There are several parallels between the earliest Norse Charlemagne tradition and the first *Konungesögur*. The book contains 10 *chansons de geste*, of which the *Chanson de Roland* became the more popular (Venås 1962, Tøgeby 1975, Lönnroth 1975, Kalinke 1981).

Runzivals _attr –Translated just before 1100, this *saga* is the earliest Old Norse *Chanson de geste*. A prose translation of the verse original, it recounts the most famous story of the adventures of Charlemagne (Halvorsen 1959, Lönnroth 1975).

Elis saga ok Rósamunde (The story of Elie de Saint-Gille). *Chanson de geste* of non-Arthurian origin. A good example of the true Old Norse “court style” (Halvorsen 1959). The preserved manuscript dates from c.1270. Translated from Old French (Tøgeby 1975, Cook & Tveitane 1979, Kalinke 1981 & 1991).

Flóvent saga – Translated around 1250 – *Chanson de Geste* from the Anglo-Norman English court literature (Tøgeby 1975).

E) Others:

Bevis saga – *Beuve de Hantone*. A later style (Tøgeby 1975).

Dínus saga drambláta (Dinus the overly confident).

_i r eks saga. Translated c.1259. A compilation of the legendary tales about Dietrich von Bern. One of the few inputs from German literature (Tøgeby 1975, Kalinke 1981).

Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr (*Flores et Blanchefleur*). Of the later romances, from a Mediterranean tradition, and not of Celtic origin. This romance became extremely popular. The Old Norse text dates from the end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th century. Its popularity persisted throughout Europe, and Gottfried of Ghemen published it in 1509. One of the two last Old French texts (the other is *Partalopa*) to be translated at the Norwegian court in Bergen (Bruun 1877, Halvorsen 1959, Tøgeby 1975, Kalinke 1981, Barnes 1987).

Jóns saga leikara (John the *jongleur's* saga).

Olíf ok Landres. Translated after Håkon (d. 1263) from an Anglo-Norman text (Togebý 1975).

Partalopa saga – Translated c.1250 (Togebý 1975).

Valdimars saga – Epic poem about the Danish King Valdemar Sejer (1131-1182).

Information extracted from:

Barnes 1987, Bruun 1877, Cook & Tveitane 1979, Halvorsen 1959, Kalinke 1981, 1985a & 1985b, 1991, Laurion 1997, Lönnroth 1975, Marchello-Nizia 1995, Togebý 1975, Tveitane 1968, Venås 1962, Zinc 1975, and Koldsrud 1913.

APPENDIX 2

Short Survey of Biblical, Religious and Devotional Texts in Old Norse Translation

The selection presented is not exhaustive, but includes the main texts in Old Norse translation, and aims at illustrating the scope of translation of religious and devotional texts in medieval Norway.

Barlaams saga ok Josaphats (first half of 13th century). Preserved in Manuscript No. 6 Fol. in the Royal Library, Stockholm (Rindal 1980, Halvorsen 1959, Astås 1990a).

Book of Psalms. Quotations in Old Norse from the *Book of Psalms* are found in the Vienna Psalter, Cod. Viund. 2713, AM 241a fol. (Uecker 1980).

Elucidarius (c.1200). This text has survived in four more or less complete manuscripts: AM 674a 4° is the oldest; AM 675 4°, originally part of *Hauksbók* (AM 675, 4°) by Haukr Erlendsson (d.1334); AM 544; and AM 238 fol. xviii. Honorius' work was popular medieval reading along with the Vincent of Beauvais *Speculum maior* (Firchow 1992).

Gynging a saga (c.1257-63) by Brandr Jónsson (c.1200-1263). Preserved in five more or less complete manuscripts: AM 226 fol., the more complete manuscript from the middle of the 14th century; AM 225 fol.; AM 655, 4°, xxv; AM 238 fol. xvii, and AM 229 fol. iv (Wolf 1995). The original titles used were *Historia Judaica* in AM 435a, 4°, and *Historia Machabeorum* in AM 654, 4°. As these titles outline, the Old Norse story of the Jews was based on the Books of Machabees (Kirby 1986, Wolf 1995).

Heilagra manna sögur (c. 1250-1300) based on *Vitae patrum*: AM 225 fol. (Unger 1877, Tveitane 1968).

Humiliúbók (c.1200) AM 619, 4°. This manuscript is a copy of an earlier collection (maybe even a copy of a copy), and some of the mistakes and omissions are the result of the copyists' oversight or misunderstandings. It is interesting to note that the translator has kept the original Latin titles for most of the entries, and that only two chapters have Old Norse titles (27 og 31) (See Indrebø 1931, Seip 1952b, Salvesen 1971).

- Cve i u-sending Alcuni diaconi (Greetings from Alcuin (735-804))
- De nativitate domini sermo (Sermon on the Birth of the Lord)
- Sermo ad populum (Sermon for the people)
- In nativitate domini nostri Jesu Christi sermo. Omelia Gregorij (Sermon on the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ)
- Sermo de sancto Stephano martire (Sermon on Saint Stephen, the first martyr)
- Sermo de euangelistis. In die sanct Johannis (Sermon on the evangelists. On Saint John the Baptist's Day)
- In die sanctorum innocentium secundum Matheum. Omilia (On the Innocent Children's Day According to Matthew) (28th december)
- In circumcissione domini nostri Jesu Christi sermo (Sermon on the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ)
- In epiphania domini sermo necessaria (Indispensable Sermon on the Epiphany of the Lord)
- Secundum Matheum. In epiphania. Omilia (According to Matthew. On the Epiphany. Homily)

- De ammonitione bona (On good advice)
- Purificatio sancte Mari(a)e sermo (Sermon on the Purification of Saint Mary)
- Euuangelium (About the Sow-Man)
- Sermo ad populum (Sermon for the people)
- In capite ieiunij sermo (Sermon on the Beginning of Lent, i.e., Ash Wednesday)
- Dominica palmarum sermo (Sermon on Palm Sunday)
- De die sancto pasce sermo ad populum (Sermon for the people on Holy Easter)
- Sermo necessaria (Indispensable Sermon)
- In ascensione domini nostri Jesu Christi. Sermo ualde necessaria (Very important Sermon on the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ)
- In die pentecostén sermo (Sermon on Pentecostal Day)
- In dedicatione tempeli sermo (Sermon on the Consecration of the Temple)
- In dedicatione ecclesie sermo ad populum (Sermon to the people on the Consecration of the Church)
- Admonitio ualde necessaria (Very important advice)
- In inuentione sancte crucis sermo (Sermon on the Discovery of the Holy Cross)
- In die sancti Johannis baptiste (On the Day of Saint John the Baptist)
- In die sancti Olavi Regis et martiris (On the Day of Saint Olaf the Martyr)
- Her segir fra Jartæinum hins hælga Olafs konungs (On the Miracles of the King and Saint Olaf)
- Sermo de sancta Maria (Sermon on Saint Mary)
- In exaltatione sancte crucis (On the Glorification of the Holy Cross (14th September))
- Admonitio ualde necessaria. Sanctorum Angelorum. In die sancti Michaelis (Very important advice. The Holy Angel. On the Day of Saint Michael, First Part)
- Inserted leaves: Messuskyringar (Explanations of the Mass). Setningr um prefatior (Sentences about the smallest assistance admitted to Mass). Sermo ad populum ualde necessaria. (Very important Sermon for the people)
- Admonitio ualde necessaria. Sanctorum Angelorum. In die Michaelis (Very important advice. On The Angel Saints. On the Day of Saint Michael, Second Part)
- In die omnium sanctorum sermo (Sermon on the All Saints' Day)
- Sermo de decimis (Sermon on the Tithes)
- Visio Sancto Pauli apostoli (The Vision of Saint Paul the Apostle)
- Oratio dominica (The Lord's Prayer)

Mariu saga (the Life of the Blessed Virgin) c. 1250 or earlier. There existed many different Mary legends, also in Old Norse, amongst others *Transitus Mariae* (Unger 1871, Widding & Bekker-Nielsen 1963).

Placitusdrápa. One of the more popular medieval legends. Old Norse translations are preserved in AM 655, 4^o and AM 644, 4^o as well as in the fragmentary AM 673b, 4^o from around 1200 (Tucker & Louis-Jensen 1998, Astås 1970).

Soliloquium de arrha animae (translated sometime in the second half of 13th century). The Old Norse text has been preserved in AM 544, 4^o, as part of *Hauksbók* (AM 675, 4^o), and in two fragmentary texts: the AM 696 xxxii, 4^o and AM 696 xxxiii, 4^o. The large composite *Hauksbók* has survived in two parts, the first containing *Landnamabók* (about the settling of Iceland) and *Kristnissaga* (about the Christianisation of Iceland). The second part, in which *Soliloquium de arrha animae* figures as *Vi ræ a líkams o k sálar* in ff. 60-68 also comprises *Trójumanna saga*, *Breta sögu*, *Merlinúsþá*, *Fóstbrærasaga*, *Eriks saga raua* and *Voluspá* as well as a mathematical treatise called *Algoritmus* (Hararson 1995).

Stjórn (c. 1300) contains historical passages of the Old Testament and the Proverbs used mainly as *exempla*. *Stjórn* was probably translated sometime in the beginning of the 14th century and have been handed down in the following manuscripts: AM 226 fol. and AM 227 fol. (Astås 1983, 1985a & 1985b, Kirby 1986, Wolf 1990). *Stjórn* contains translations from the following books of the Old Testament (heavily interspersed with interlinear commentaries):

Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), Book of Joshua, Book of Judgment, Book of Ruth, Book of Samuel (I), Book of Samuel (II), The Kings (I), The Kings (II) (until Nebuchodonosor in Chapter 24). C. R. Unger (1862) *Stjórn. Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie fra verden skabelse til det Babylonske fangenskab*. Christiania: Feilberg & Landmarks Forlag.

Vitae Patrum (*Heilage manna sögur* c.1250-1300), as well as many Latin liturgical songs (Kirby 1986, Tveitane 1968, Firchow 1992).

Elucidarium by Honorius Augustodunensis (Kirby 1986, Tveitane 1968, Firchow 1992).

Visio sancti Pauli.. Two distinct Old Norse versions have been preserved – one in the Old Norse *Humiliúbók*, AM 619, 4^o and the other in AM 624, 4^o. The first version deviates considerable from the Latin standardized text, and in fact resembles more Hugh of Saint Victor's *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, meaning that it is more a debate between the body and the soul, than a traditional *Visio*. However, both texts belong to the same medieval visionary tradition (Tveitane 1968, Seip 1952b).

Information extracted from:

Astås 1970, 1983, 1985a & 1985b, 1990a, Firchow 1992, Halvorsen 1959, Har ar son 1995, Hope 1972, Indrebø 1931, Kirby 1986, Rindal 1980, Seip 1952b, Tucker & Louis-Jensen 1998, Tveitane 1968, Uecker 1980, Unger 1862, 1864, 1871, 1877, Widding & Bekker-Nielsen 1963 and Wolf 1995.

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