

Gunnar Á. Harðarson, Christian Etheridge, Guðrún Nordal, and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, eds. A World in Fragments: Studies on the Encyclopedic Manuscript GKS 1812 4to

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Gunnar Á. Harðarson, Christian Etheridge, Guðrún Nordal, and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, eds. 2021. *A World in Fragments: Studies on the Encyclopedic Manuscript GKS 1812 4to*. The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies Publications 107. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum. 384 pages. ISBN: 978-9979-654-61-2.

A World in Fragments: Studies on the Encyclopedic Manuscript GKS 1812 4to presents a comprehensive investigation into the intricacies of a remarkable artifact. The anthology is compiled by Gunnar Harðarson, Christian Etheridge, Guðrún Nordal, and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and more than adequately tackles a textual artifact that includes a tremendously diverse set of topics. Published in 2021 by the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, it encapsulates the scholarly discourse stemming from an international conference convened in 2016 on Viðey Island, exploring the enigmatic manuscript GKS 1812 4to.

At its core, the book serves as a meticulous examination of the manuscript, treating it not merely as a collection of texts but as a cultural artifact imbued with historical, linguistic, and intellectual significance. From Gunnar Harðarson's insightful analysis of medieval encyclopedic literature to Christian Etheridge's exploration of the dissemination of astronomical treatises, each chapter delves deep into the complexities of the manuscript's contents and its broader implications.

The anthology commences with Harðarson's comprehensive overview, contextualizing GKS 1812 4to within the realm of medieval encyclopedic literature. He scrupulously traces the lineage of such works, shedding light on the manuscript's unique position as a composite of various texts. Harðarson's examination not only elucidates the manuscript's content but also uncovers its connection to Viðey, adding a layer of historical depth to its narrative.

Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Vasarè Rastonis further dissect the manuscript through the lens of codicology, unraveling its physical characteristics and production history. Their rigorous analysis offers invaluable insights into the materiality of the artifact, enhancing our understanding of its origins and evolution over time.

The exploration of scribal practices by Haraldur Bernharðsson provides a fascinating glimpse into the individuals behind the manuscript's creation. In Bernharðsson's thorough examination, the principal scribes come to life, each leaving behind distinctive traces of their craft and influence.

Guðrún Nordal's survey of *Íslendingabók* within the manuscript expands our perception of this text beyond its traditional categorization, revealing its

encyclopedic elements. She reviews the version of *Íslendingabók* preserved by the manuscript and its context to the wider literary world of Iceland. Nordal invites readers to imagine the Icelandic encyclopedic tradition living within the historical sagas as silent references.

Áslaug Ommundsen's chapter on Latin memory aids provides a fascinating glimpse into the intersection between Old Norse vernacular and Latin textual production. By focusing on specific sections like the *Cisioianus* (fol. 1r) and the *Rex furit* (fol. 22r), Ommundsen unveils the rich set of Latin exemplars embedded within an Old Norse context. Her meticulous analysis not only elucidates the mnemonic techniques employed but also sheds light on the broader intellectual milieu in which these texts circulated. Moreover, Ommundsen's examination of one of the oldest parts of the manuscript, a Latin glossary (fols. 24r, 34v), offers valuable insights into the manuscript's pedagogical function and its connection to broader scholastic traditions. With a careful eye, she uncovers the organizational principles behind the glossary and traces its potential sources, providing a nuanced understanding of the scribe's intellectual world.

The interdisciplinary nature of the anthology is further exemplified by contributions such as Abdelmalek Bouzari's analysis of Arabic mathematics and Kristín Bjarnadóttir and Bjarni V. Halldórsson's exploration of Old Norse translations of Latin arithmetic treatises. These chapters not only enrich our understanding of the manuscript but also highlight the intricate web of knowledge exchange that characterized medieval scholasticism.

Alfred Hiatt and Dale Kedwards delve into the conceptual landscape of maps and diagrams within the manuscript, shedding light on the medieval understanding of space and time. While Hiatt's analysis provides nuanced insights into the manuscript's portrayal of historical time, the examination by Kedwards, albeit thorough, suffers slightly from a lack of integration with the broader discourse. This chapter fails to reference preceding chapters, instead choosing to relay similar information about the dating of fragments, and overlooks discussion provided elsewhere in the volume regarding the manuscript's Viðey connections.

It should be noted that these kinds of oversights are atypical for the work. It must be a common difficulty for those who produce such anthologies based on the work of a variety of scholars, and even more so with such a broad scope of knowledge to detail. Though seldom detected in this work, the tight connections the chapters have to one another show some unrealized potential. For example, in Nordal's chapter, where she makes references to distinct points in other chapters, there is no quick reference method provided. These are, however, some of the very few hints of detraction from the book's overall cohesion, an otherwise tightly integrated anthology. It is commendable that these few examples should be some of the rarely visible signs of such issues

within the volume. It would be difficult to satisfy every demanding reader in these ways, but easy reference between chapter content is something for editorial teams and writers to consider with publications of anthologies.

Christian Etheridge and Kathrin Chlench-Priber offer examinations of the astronomical content within the manuscript, tracing its origins and elucidating its significance within the broader context of medieval scholarship. Etheridge and Chlench-Priber's chapters complement each other quite well. Where Etheridge traces the origins of Arabic star names to al-Khwārizmī in broad strokes, Chlench-Priber's exacting scholarship puts forth further information related to the dissemination of astronomical knowledge from Arabic to Latin, and further to the Icelandic source under inspection. Their contributions highlight the manuscript's role as a nexus of intellectual exchange, bridging disparate traditions and disciplines. Chapters from Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson and Ragnheiður Mósesdóttir conclude the anthology by examining the manuscript's inclusion in *Alfræði íslenzk*, providing valuable insights into its reception and interpretation within the scholarly community.

A World in Fragments presents a comprehensive exploration of the encyclopedic manuscript GKS 1812 4to. It is essential to acknowledge that all the authors featured in the anthology are excellent scholars in their respective fields, each contributing valuable insights to our understanding of the manuscript as an artifact. Overall, the volume maintains a cohesive theme of treating the manuscript with reverence, shedding light on its historical, linguistic, and intellectual significance.

Furthermore, the anthology is commendably organized and carefully indexed, facilitating easy navigation and enhancing its utility as a scholarly resource. By bringing together diverse perspectives and disciplines, *A World in Fragments* offers a rich tapestry of scholarship that enriches our understanding of medieval knowledge production and transmission. It stands as an indispensable resource for scholars in a variety of fields interested in the history of knowledge exchange on the fringes of medieval Western Europe. It invites enthusiasts on a captivating journey into the intricacies of medieval scholasticism and intellectual exchange.

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