

Þorgeir Sigurðsson. 2019. *The Unreadable Poem of Arinbjörn, Preservation, Meter and a Restored Text*. Doktorsritgerð, Íslensku- og menningardeild Háskóla Íslands. Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, Reykjavík.

Föstudaginn 21. júní 2019 varði Þorgeir Sigurðsson doktorsritgerð sína í íslenskri málfræði við Íslensku- og menningardeild Háskóla Íslands. Doktorsritgerðin var unnin undir leiðsögn Kristjáns Árnasonar, prófessors emerítus í íslenskri málfræði við Háskóla Íslands. Aðrir í doktorsnefnd voru Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, rannsóknarprófessor við Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Jón Axel Harðarson, prófessor í íslenskri málfræði við Háskóla Íslands, og Þórhallur Eypórsson, prófessor í málvísindum við Háskóla Íslands. Andmælendur voru Matthew Driscoll, prófessor við Árnastofnun í Kaupmannahöfn, og Klaus Johan Myrvoll, dósent við Háskólann í Stafangri. Hér birtast inngangsorð Þorgeirs, athugasemdir og spurningar andmælenda og andsvör Þorgeirs. Doktorsvörnin og umræður fóru fram á ensku.

* * *

ÞORGEIR SIGURÐSSON

Presentation of the main topics of the doctoral thesis

The poem *Arinbjarnarkviða* is not easy to describe because of the many uncertainties associated with it. It is ascribed to Egill Skallagrímsson, who is either a fictional or a real person in the tenth century. Editions of *Egils saga* include the poem, but it may not belong to the saga. Some of its text in current editions may not stem from its only medieval manuscript, and the meter and its level of regularity are not well understood.

Apart from some citations in *Snorra-Edda* and the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, the poem is only preserved in the fourteenth-century *Möðruvallabók* on a single leaf, number 99v, located after the Saga of Egill. The hand that wrote the main text in *Möðruvallabók* did not write the poem; it may be a late addition, even from a later century. The leaf is currently unreadable. It is not clear when this became the case. The last quarter was probably already unreadable when *Möðruvallabók* came to Copenhagen in 1684. Árni Magnússon called the poem *Drápan ólasilega* ‘The unreadable poem’ (see my dissertation, p. 14). The first editor of the poem in 1809, Guðmundur Magnússon, thought that most of it was missing. Some later editors assumed that a leaf was missing, or else, that a substantial part of it was never recorded. Without a glimpse of the last lines of the leaf, it is difficult to provide tangible arguments on the issue.

In my doctoral thesis, I wish to reduce the number of uncertainties. I have two new tools for the task. One is the technique of Multispectral Imaging (MSI). It involves analyzing pictures of different wavelengths of light. This technique enhances and brings forth faded letters, but their reading still requires conventional human interpretation of a barely discernible text. The other tool is my own re-analysis of the meter, which aims at referring to easily recognizable linguistic properties rather than abstract metrical concepts to produce more convincing and conclusive arguments.

One clear conclusion of the thesis is that the text in current editions of *Arinbjarnarkviða* corresponds indeed to the text written on leaf 99v. Another conclusion is that the poem adheres strictly to a very restrictive meter.

Part I. The text

The text on leaf 99v was read and published in the 19th century by Finnur Jónsson.¹ Editors of the poem have taken Finnur's reading to be the best available direct reading of the poem. Leaf 99v was in all likelihood in a more readable condition 150 years ago. Many attempts to read it have taken their toll and probably contributed to its present condition.²

Finnur Jónsson's transcription is sober and normal-looking, but Finnur did not reproduce some characteristic and odd features of the text that now are discernable on multispectral images. This includes a 'dot comma' for stanza separation and some acute marks on the letter ⟨i⟩. Guðbrandur Vigfússon published a reading of leaf 99v a few years before Finnur in 1883. He used ampersands as a general abbreviation mark, thus hiding one of the peculiarities of the text, which is an abnormal use of the tittle, which normally is an abbreviation for 'ir'. Finnur, on the other hand, replaced the 'ir' abbreviation, where he could see it, with a 'ur' abbreviation. Guðbrandur could read some words and letters in the last quarter of the poem. Until now, it has not been possible to verify any of these readings. He accidentally lost half of his diplomatic reading, but he published the remainder, which included these words and letters.

Jón Helgason attempted to use ultraviolet (UV) light to improve the reading of leaf 99v. He could correct some errors in Finnur Jónsson's diplomatic reading, and Michael Chesnutt published his results in the 2001 edition of *Egils saga*. Most of his corrections were also in Guðbrandur's reading, but Jón reproduced the tittle instead of using an ampersand.

The text on leaf 99v is in two columns. The lower half of the second column (the last quarter) does not seem to have any text (readable or not) in normal light or UV light. However, multispectral images of the leaf reveal text in both columns. Most of it is barely readable, however, and the text in the lower half of the right column is illegible, except for a few words, some of which were previously read by Guðbrandur Vigfússon. With these textual remains, it is nevertheless possible to build a case for the poem having been fully recorded on the leaf, or at least that this is possible. For details, I refer to the thesis.

The upper half of leaf 99v is easier to read than the lower part. The poem begins with a similar initial E as in headings of chapters in *Möðruvallabók* having a similar flourish in two colors. The presence of this initial letter indicates that the poem was an integral part of *Möðruvallabók*. The readable text on the processed images covers the same part of the poem as the text read by Finnur Jónsson. In the first instance, the text is a disappointment, because it mostly cor-

¹ The references I give here are found in the Bibliography of my dissertation, pp. 259ff.

² For a photo of M 99v in normal light, see my dissertation, fig. 11-7, p. 256, and (<https://handrit.is/is/manuscript/view/AM02-0132>).

responds to the normalized text already in published editions of the poem. The diplomatic text, on the other hand, differs substantially from Finnur's diplomatic reading. For that reason, it is clear that Finnur Jónsson must have relied on older readings for his normalized text. Some paper copies of leaf 99v exist, and with the help of the images, it is possible to trace all of them to a single source in the paper codex ÍB 169 4to. Another paper copy in AM 146 fol. was until recently assumed to be the oldest paper transcription, but it seems to derive from ÍB 169 4to. As discussed in the thesis, it is possible to present a stemma of all paper copies of 99v. Remains exist of all of them.

It is not known who wrote the paper manuscripts in ÍB 169 4to, but it must be written in the year 1688 or earlier. This dating can be deduced from when the two scribes were available who copied the codex or booklet that originally contained the poem. ÍB 169 4to includes some words read by Guðbrandur from the last unreadable part, which Guðbrandur did not know, and no-one else has noticed.

The multispectral images reveal most of the text written on leaf 99v. This allows a linguistic and paleographic study to be made of the unknown hand. Here I note two linguistic aspects in the writing of unstressed syllables.

Almost unique for leaf 99v is its use of the tittle for both the *-ir* ending and for the emerging *-ur* ending in the 14th century. Another rare feature is its use of either the letter ⟨i⟩ or ⟨e⟩ in unstressed syllables (in word endings) depending on whether they are in open or closed syllables as in ⟨hilmir⟩ and ⟨hilme⟩. Finnur Jónsson did not reproduce this feature. He seems to have assumed that unstressed syllables were always denoted by ⟨i⟩. The exceptional use of the tittle and the distinction between open and closed unstressed syllables were shared by Einar Hafliðason, the main official of the Hólar bishopric in the 14th century.

Additionally, an odd feature of the hand of 99v is that it switches between letter types for a cursive script and a book script (*textualis*). Einar Hafliðason did this also in his *Lögmannsannáll* (AM 420 b 4to). Einar was a respected cleric and a proficient scribe. I find it likely that he wrote 99v. It is at least certain that the odd features of the hand of 99v are not a sign of amateurism, and the hand does not need to be any younger than the hand of the main scribe of *Möðruvallabók*.

Part II. The meter

The meter of *Arinbjarnarkviða* is *kviðuháttur*, which is a regular syllable-counting meter. The poem *Ynglingatal* is the main witness to the meter before the year 1000, followed by *Arinbjarnarkviða*.

Metrical mapping is a guiding principle that I use in the thesis. It separates metrical and linguistic elements (rhythmic strength vs. syllable type and word-class type). I use labels for traditional rhythmic metrical types (Sievers types) that I map to the three following syllable types:

- 1) A restricted (unstressed) syllable using vowels /a, i, u/. I denote this by a middle dot ·
- 2) A heavy syllable is denoted by a bar – (as is traditional)
- 3) A light syllable is denoted by a half-circle ∪ (as is also traditional)

Out of several metrical results in this thesis, I highlight the following:

Before the year 1000 the following held: All trochaic even lines had the form: – · · ·

Prepositions are accordingly never found in trochaic dips, until after 1000. Their absence has not been noticed, even if it is easy to verify. The following are all trochaic even lines in *Arinbjarnarkviða*. Trochaic rhythm is the most common rhythmic type in *Arinbjarnarkviða*. First comes the stanza number, followed by an even line number (for example, 1.2). An asterisk marks words that are not fully readable or have been corrected.

1.2 hilmi at mæra	2.8 grepps um æði	3.4 reiði fengna
3.8 heim um sóttan	4.8 úrgum *hjørvi	5.2 tryggt at líta
5.6 ennimáni	5.8 ægigeislum	6.4 markar dróttni
6.8 hlusta munnum	7.2 hǫlðum þótti	8.4 síðra brúna
9.4 hlustum gofðuð	9.6 gulli betri	10.2 mǫrgum betri
10.8 hverju ráði	11.8 hilmis garði	12.4 minna dáða
12.8 áttar *skeiði	13.2 verða heitinn	13.8 gjǫld um innak
14.6 margra sjónir	14.8 hersa kundar	15.2 ómunlokri
15.4 mærdar efni	16.4 *eyrum sækir	16.6 mǫnnum þótti
16.8 birkisóttar	17.4 auði gnægir	18.8 víðum botni
19.4 heyrnar spanna	21.4 lǫngum knerri	21.8 auðar toptir
22.4 Draupnis niðja	22.6 Sónar *hvinnar	23.4 *firða spjǫllum
24.4 mǫrgu gagni	24.6 Rǫkkva stóði	29.6 blára geira

The filler word *um-of* is, in some cases, in the dips and also the infinitive marker *at*. It is linguistically plausible that they had restricted syllables like the inflectional endings.

Arguments for dating can benefit from the absence of prepositions. The following is from Snorri Sturluson's *Háttatal*, stanza number 102 (the last stanza).

Falli fyrir	
fold í ægi	← a preposition in a dip
steini studd	
en stillis lof	

Snorri places a preposition in a trochaic dip in his last stanza of *Háttatal*, which was normal in his time.

Moreover, for any even line in *kviðuhátttr*, either the last or the second-last syllable (penult syllable) is restricted (having an unstressed vowel /i,a,u/). Below I use four lines of the Sievers B1 type for demonstration. The penult has a dip that must be restricted. I note that a filler word may fill this position (as in line 16.2):

- 3.6 um dökkva skǫr
- 7.8 at hilmi þák
- 9.2 með tungu þák
- 16.2 er flestr um veit

There are no exceptions to the rule for unstressed/restricted syllable in the penult or antepenult in *Ynglingatal* and *Arinbjarnarkviða*, but unlike for the trochaic lines, this requirement did not end abruptly after the year 1000, and it is therefore not useable for dating.

Furthermore, either the penult or the antepenult syllable (third-last syllable) must be rhythmically strong and have a heavy syllable. *Kviðuhátttr* shares this requirement with some poems in *fornyrðislag*, including Egill's *Höfuðlausn*.

The following scheme captures most of the metrical requirements for even lines of *kviðuhátttr* discussed in the thesis.

All even lines must end like one of the following:

- 1) – · um vini mína
- 2a) – · v um dökkva skǫr
- 2b) – v · um þjóðlygi

An example of a forbidden ending in *kviðuhátttr* is: *fold í mar*.

The abbreviation v stands for a metrical concept (a weak syllable). It can denote any syllable except a heavy syllable in a nominal. William Craigie noted that lines of the type 2a) above end in such syllables (this is so-called Craigie's law).

A convenient consequence of the features that I have now described for *kviðuhátttr* is that they differentiate the same rhythmic types that are traditionally used to describe even lines in *kviðuhátttr*. It is, therefore, possible to use labels such as A1, B1, C2, and E when discussing the rhythm (as I just did for B1 lines).

Odd lines of *kviðuhátttr* have only three syllables. Trochaic dips in these lines were also without prepositions before the year 1000. Below are examples from *Arinbjarnarkviða*. Here *ok* 'and' appears in the trochaic dips.

Trochaic dips were without prepositions in odd lines:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1.5 opinspjallr | 2.3 skaupi gnœgðr |
| 8.7 höfuðlausn | 11.3 knía fremstr |
| 15.7 tvenn ok þrenn | 16.7 bjóða björn |
| 20.3 flesta menn | 21.5 háði leiddr |

The odd lines of *kviðuháttir* are peculiar in that the difference between light and heavy syllables is not respected, for example:

1.5 opinspjallr ← *op-* carries a lift

An exception involves resolutions, where the first syllable must be light, for example:

19.5 goðum ávarðr ← *goðum* fills 1 position

The difference between syllabic positions having light and heavy syllables seems not to be metrically relevant in odd lines of *kviðuháttir*.

The equivalence of light and heavy positions (with a heavy syllable or two syllables in a resolution) in *kviðuháttir* looks like a metrical license. It is hard not to connect this license to a discussion in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* where Óláfr Þórðarson describes *kviðuháttir* with an example from *Arinbjarnarkviða* where he essentially says: *tvenn ok þrenn* ‘two and threes’ are replaced by *tven ok þren*, in *kviðuháttir* via license. This does, however, require a thorough discussion, which is not in my thesis.

Because *Arinbjarnarkviða* obeys the strict rules of *kviðuháttir*, the text of the poem seems not to be corrupt.

Part III. Restorations

The thesis increases the confidence in the text of the poem in current editions. Some plausible improvements of that text are, however, also possible. I demonstrate this with a few examples from the restored poem in the third part of the thesis. These examples demonstrate various types of corrections that are possible for various reasons. The proposed text is always in order metrically.

In the first stanza, all copies of the poem have the word *þagmælskr*. What can be seen on the MSIs is, however, *þagn elskr*. Both words mean silent, and what differentiates them in writing is only one “minim” that could turn an ‘n’ into an ‘m’. *Mælskur* and *þagnmælskur* are common words in modern Icelandic, but they are not pan-Nordic, while *-elskr* is.

From stanza 1: ...
 opinspjallr
 um jöfurs dáðum
 en þagnelskr [replaces *þagmælskr*]
 um þjóðlygi

From stanza 4: ...
 styr-konungr [replaces *stýrir* or *stýrði*]
 við stirðan hug

í Jórvík
úrgum hjörvi.

The MSIs only have *styr konungr*, but ÍB 169 4to has *stýrir* which editors normally replace via conjecture to *stýrði*. The *-ir* ending in ÍB 169 4to is denoted by a tittle and could be read as *-r*. The text is in order using: *styr(r) konungr*, both metrically and semantically.

From stanza 7: ...
þá er ulfgrátt
við **Yggs** miði [replaces *Yggjar*]
...

The line “við Yggjar miði” is metrically faulty because it does not have either a heavy penult or antepenult. Moreover, the line is readable as “við Yggs miði” on the multispectral images.

From stanza 12: ...
á Játvarðs [replaces *at í væri*]
...

ÍB 169 4to has ⟨a i at v^re⟩, but on the multispectral image stands ⟨a iat u^rz⟩ which is a normal spelling of *á Játvarðs* (the genitive *Játvarðs* appears in *Egils saga*).

Egils saga says Egill met King Aðalsteinn in England, but the poem only seems to refer to Játvarðr's lineage, and it is more likely that one of Aðalsteinn's brothers reigned in England during Egill's visit.

From stanza 14: Nú er þat sét
hvar er setja skal
...

Hvar er means ‘everywhere’ but current editions state that *er* is superfluous, and the meaning is ‘where.’

From stanza 15: **Nú** erum auðskœf
ómunlokri

The *Third Grammatical Treatise* cites this line without *Nú*, and it is deleted in editions. There is, however, no metrical need for this, and the text on leaf 99v is in general not inferior to the few quotations in *Snorra-Edda* and accompanying treatises.

From stanza 16: ...
ok alþjóð
eyrum sækir [replaces *eyru*]
...

The text on leaf 99v has *eyrun*, which must be wrong because *kviðuháttir* never uses an attached definitive article; *eyrun* must be an error for *eyrum* due to incorrect expansion of a nasal stroke and *eyrum* has one of many instances of instrumental dative in the poem.

From stanza 17: *Þat allr herr* [replaces *Þat alls heri*]
 at undri gefsk
 ...

The replaced text has too many syllables. The replacement is readable from multispectral images, and it is also the text in ÍB 169 4to.

Some conclusions

The thesis provides a new reading of leaf 99v in *Möðruvallabók* supported by photographs. This reading adds or corrects details in the normalized text in current editions, and allows a study of the hand that wrote the text. Crucially, it has been shown that the poem adheres to a strict meter.

Finally, it can be stated with some confidence that the poem dates from the 10th century and is better preserved than previously assumed.

REFERENCES

See References, p. 337, and the reference list of the dissertation
 <<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/1199>>.

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MATTHEW DRISCOLL

Comments from the first opponent at the doctoral defence of Þorgeir Sigurðsson

As a “new” or “material” philologist, I believe, among other things, that the physical circumstances in which a text came into being can have an effect on its meaning. An extreme example of this would be texts written clandestinely by political prisoners and smuggled out and later published. It would be almost impossible to read such a text without the knowledge of the circumstances of its origin affecting one’s reading of it. So too, I believe, can the circumstances under which a text is received — read or heard — affect the receiver’s understanding and appreciation of it. For this reason I should probably explain that I read Þorgeir Sigurðsson’s thesis *The unreadable poem of Arinbjörn* over the Easter holiday, in glorious sunshine on Langeland in southern Denmark, wearing sunglasses. Whether this has unduly coloured my appreciation of the thesis I cannot say, but I think it not impossible that it can have had some effect.

In my comments I will deal primarily with the more literary and editorial aspects of the thesis, and leave to my learned colleague Klaus Johan Myrvoll the aspects relating to Old Norse prosody and language history.

I will start with what in Denmark is referred to as *Småtingsafdelingen* ‘the bagatelle department’.

Although the thesis is for the most part well written, with few typographical errors or other such problems, there are many strangely unidiomatic formulations, such as “the 169 scribe” instead of “the scribe of 169”, and some peculiar uses of terms, for example speaking of “page 99v”, rather than “folio 99v”, and referring throughout to “transcripts” of texts, rather than “transcriptions” — transcripts and transcriptions have somewhat different meanings. Also questionable is the repeated use of “lacuna/lacunae” for places in the manuscript now unreadable, rather than spaces left blank or missing through physical damage, which is that term’s usual meaning. All of these are easily remediable; all that is needed is a good copy-editor with a sound knowledge of English.

Somewhat less easily remedied is the punctuation, which is also odd and unhelpful in many places, particularly as regards the placement — or more usually the complete lack — of commas. I imagine this has something to do with the curious decision to eschew entirely the use of commas in Icelandic, a decision that was made at some point after I left Iceland and moved to Denmark, where despite several attempts at reform it is still seen as a positive virtue to cram as

many commas as possible into any sentence. Some middle ground must be possible, one feels. In any case, commas do have a function and are required in most languages, but once the rules for their proper placement have been relaxed to the point of torpidity in one's own language it can be hard to know how to place them in another one.

Another bagatelle I would like to mention is a stylistic feature which, like the absence of punctuation, seems to reflect a deliberate change in policy relating to academic writing (though with its origin I suspect in the world of marketing). The candidate has clearly been told that, in a piece of written academic work, the author should start by telling the reader what he is about to be told, then tell him that, and then tell him what he has just been told. Saying everything three times may be a sound practice pedagogically, but it does result in a great deal of repetition, which can quickly become irksome.

Having got these trivialities off my chest, I can now address more substantial matters. Þorgeir Sigurðsson has written a fine thesis, with many original and important contributions to Old Norse studies. The focus of the thesis is Egill Skallagrímsson's poem *Arinbjarnarkviða*, which is preserved only in the manuscript AM 132 fol., commonly known as *Möðruvallabók*. The poem has been added, in a younger hand, after the text of the saga, on f. 99v, which had been left blank. Owing to damage and wear, the text is now largely illegible, but a number of copies of it were made when more of it could be read (with the naked eye) than is now the case. Through the use of multi-spectral scanning, Þorgeir has been able to recover more of the poem than has previously been possible, and by meticulous comparison of what can now be seen with the older transcriptions, coupled with extremely detailed metrical and linguistic analysis, he offers a reconstruction of the text. All in all, this is a very impressive piece of work.

The question of prosimetrum

The thesis would, however, have benefitted from the inclusion of a discussion of the context of the poem, i.e. on its role and that of the other poems and single verses in *Egils saga*; in particular it would have been interesting to have some reflection on how verse and prose work together and why, for example, the poems attributed to skalds like Egill are almost never cited *in extenso* in the sagas about them. Surely this must be significant. Was it because the authors/compiler of the sagas assumed their audience would know the poems, so there was no need to cite them in full? There has of course been a fair bit of discussion on the question of prosimetrum in the scholarly literature, but Þorgeir makes no mention of this. A brief summary by the candidate would not have been out of place.

Do we have the complete text of the poem?

One of the most interesting — and important — parts of the thesis is the question of whether f. 99v contained the poem in its entirety, or whether parts of it are missing, either written on another leaf, now lost, or simply never added. Þorgeir is very clear on this point, and does a good job arguing that there is no reason to think that there was any more of the poem than what we have on f. 99v (p. 76):

I have shown that it is possible to do without a lost part, and for that reason alone its existence should not be assumed. The scientific reason for this is that one should always opt for the more restrictive option when two are available (this is implied in what is referred to as Occam’s razor).

It might, however, have been interesting had there been more discussion on what Þorgeir thinks the implications of this are.

Elsewhere, in Chapter 4, Þorgeir looks at quotations from *Arinbjarnarkviða* in *Snorra-Edda* and the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, arguing, again convincingly, that where there are discrepancies between the text which can be read in f. 99v and that cited by Snorri and Ólafur Þórðarson, there are no compelling reasons to choose the latter readings over the former. A stanza cited by Ólafur Þórðarson which is attributed to Egill but has no parallel in *Arinbjarnarkviða* is not from the poem, he argues. Both of these are important contributions to our understanding of the poem.

A reconstruction, not an edition

In Part III of the thesis, Þorgeir presents the text of the poem, introducing new readings he has been able to produce through multi-spectral scanning of the heavily damaged f. 99v. He chooses not to call this recovered text an edition, because, as he says, he has ‘in many instances left open issues that an editor would normally resolve’. This is an entirely defensible position, it seems to me, but it is not an uncontroversial one. He does not present any explanation for taking it, however, and in general there is little or no discussion of editorial theory or the like. But his whole approach, presenting the text, as much of it as can be read, of a single witness, without conjecture or emendation, is very much in line with the precepts of the so-called “new” or “material” philology. Þorgeir does not mention new or material philology anywhere, however — in fact, the word “philology” does not appear at all in the thesis — nor does he cite any of the many articles and books in which these issues are discussed. It would definitely have been good to have had more about the theoretical background for his decision to proceed in this way.

Normalisation

In his reconstruction Þorgeir reproduces the text on three different levels, according to the Medieval Nordic Text Archive (Menota) style:¹ a facsimile-level transcription, a diplomatic transcription and a normalised text. For the normalisation he uses “samræmd stafsetning forn”, the standardised orthography for Old Norse-Icelandic developed by the Danish philologist Ludvig Wimmer, which is found for example in the series *Íslenzk fornrit* (ÍF). In its editions, however, ÍF as a rule uses more archaic orthography for skaldic verse, based on the assumption that the poems are older than the prose texts in which they are embedded. Þorgeir explains both in the introduction and elsewhere why he has not used such archaic spelling — because the thesis focuses on the recovery of the text of f. 99v of *Möðruvallabók*, not the reconstruction of the original poem, which he believes on linguistic and other grounds to be from the 10th century. My question is, given that his aim was to recover the 14th-century text of *Möðruvallabók*, was the use of a standard based on the state of the language at the beginning of the 13th century not equally inappropriate? Should he not rather have normalised the orthography of the text to reflect the language in the middle of the 14th century, when *Möðruvallabók* was written, or, which would have been equally justifiable, used modern Icelandic?

Accompanying the normalised text is a literal translation of each verse into English, which this reader at least will confess he found very helpful.

Each stanza occupies a single page, at the bottom of which there are some general notes about the stanza, its meaning and, occasionally, literary qualities. Detailed notes on each stanza, sometime spanning several pages, are found in Chapter 10. It would have been extremely useful to have these together with the texts. I appreciate that this would have caused serious layout-problems, but I can only urge Þorgeir to try and find a way of doing this when he actually does produce an edition. An electronic edition, rather than a print-based one, would seem the obvious solution.

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¹ For information on Menota, see <https://www.menota.org/forside.xhtml>.

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Comments from the second opponent at the doctoral defence of Þorgeir Sigurðsson

Introduction

Þorgeir Sigurðsson has written a good thesis, with many original and important contributions to various aspects of Old Norse studies: to manuscript studies in general, and to the study of *Möðruvallabók* in particular, to skaldic poetry and Old Norse metrics, and not least to the reconstruction and understanding of one of Egill Skallagrímsson's great poems, *Arinbjarnarkviða*. The thesis is a fine piece of scholarship, which brings our knowledge in the field a solid step forward. It shows its author as a critical and methodologically cogent scholar, without fear of challenging previously held opinions or conceptions.

This opposition will concentrate on the metrical and linguistic parts of the dissertation, not implying that other of its varied aspects are any inferior. On the contrary, I hope to demonstrate through my comments that Þorgeir's thesis is a very rich one, and more importantly, that its hypotheses are mostly progressive, in the sense that they point forward to new ideas and insights.

Methodology

Among the merits of this thesis is its author's methodological awareness. This is most evident in the chapter on the assumption that a part of *Arinbjarnarkviða* (*Arbj*) is missing in *Möðruvallabók* (M; ch. 3, pp. 63–76).¹ Because the end of the poem on fol. 99v of the manuscript is mostly illegible, scholars have claimed that the poem could have included even more stanzas than those for which there is space on the page in M. Þorgeir Sigurðsson rejects such speculations by pointing out that “[a] good scientific method is, however, only to assume the existence of a missing part, if the more restrictive alternative has been excluded or at least shown to be unlikely for good reasons” (p. 63). He then goes on to demonstrate convincingly that the hypothesis of a missing part of the poem in M is unnecessary and, indeed, counterproductive. The greater confidence we attain in the poem as we have it in M is one of the positive results of this thesis. The conclusion in ch. 3 about the assumed missing part is as clear as it can be (p. 76):

¹ For a list of abbreviations used here, see Þorgeir Sigurðsson's thesis, pp. xviii–xix.

I have shown that it is possible to do without a lost part, and for that reason alone its existence should not be assumed. The scientific reason for this is that one should always opt for the more restrictive option when two are available (this is implied in what is referred to as Occam's razor).

The hypothesis that there is nothing of *Arbj* missing in M turns out to be a progressive one, in so far as it makes Þorgeir able to exclude the stanza *Var ek árvakr* (of the *Third Grammatical Treatise* = 3GT) from *Arbj*, since none of the erased stanzas on fol. 99v of M begins with the letter <v> (p. 84). In other words, if nothing of the poem is missing on fol. 99v, then the stanza beginning with *Var ek árvakr* in 3GT cannot stem from *Arbj*. This is backed up by an internal argument: Egill's initial statement in the stanza in question, that he "was up early" and "gathered words together", fits better with the circumstances of composition of *Höfuðlausn*, at least as this story is told in *Egils saga*, and for that reason it cannot function as the final stanza of *Arbj*, as commonly assumed.

The stanza reads in full (text and translation following the thesis, on pp. 83f.):

Var ek árvakr,	‘I was up early,
bar ek orð saman	I gathered words together
með málþjóns	with speech-servant's
morginverkum.	morning tasks.
Hlóð ek lofkost,	I raised a pile of prise
þann er lengi stendr,	that will long stand,
óbrotgjarn	unbreakable
í bragar túni.	in the field of poetry.’

This sounds as if the skald is recalling the situation of the composition of *Höfuðlausn* in retrospect, even though the stanza cannot be part of that poem, since *Höfuðlausn* is in a different metre and employs end-rhyme. I find Þorgeir's hypothesis about the genesis of this stanza persuasive (p. 84):

... the stanza does not need to belong to any poem. *Egils saga* has an example of a *lausavísa* by Egill in the *kviðuháttir* meter (*Erumka leitt ...*) in the York episode of *Egils saga* and this could be another *lausavísa* on the same subject.

A possible original context for this stanza in *Egils saga* is discussed by Þorgeir Sigurðsson in an article from 2018, to which I refer for further reading.

Another example of Þorgeir's attention to methodology is his statement on conjecture in skaldic textual criticism at the end of Part II (p. 168), before he turns to the reconstruction of the poem in Part III: on the one hand we should not be too eager to correct readings because of metrical faults, and on the other hand all corrections made should at least conform to the metrical rules. In Þorgeir's words: "A plausible rule of conduct seems to be that another independent

justification must be present before an unmetrical line is corrected to make it metrical. I state as a principle that any proposed correction must conform to the metrical rules” (p. 168).

In the reconstructed text, this conservative principle is for the most part carried out, and combined with a better understanding of the orthography and language of the text in M, as well as the metre of *Arbj*, Þorgeir thus provides readings that are (a) metrically superior to the previous ones, and (b) more in line with M or, in cases where the manuscript is today mostly illegible, the best earliest transcripts of *Arbj* from M (ÍB 169 4to in particular). Good examples of both practices are *styr-* in st. 4 (not *stýrir* as most editors have taken it; pp. 34, 180, 216), *Þat allr herr* in st. 17 (not *heri* as previously held; pp. 193, 233f.), and the obviously correct verse order “*bragar fótum, / [i]b˘a[u,t]’ stiginn” in st. 14 (pp. 190, 229f.), which has been altered — against the metre — by most editors. To Þorgeir’s completely new reading of the second part of st. 12, i.e. “syni [...]gð / sonar Hálfðanar / á Játvarðs / áttar *skeiði” (pp. 188, 225f.), I will return at the end of this opposition. His suggestion that the duplication of *hilmi at* in the first stanza of *Arbj* is intended as a kind of stammering (p. 211), revealing Egill’s anxiety, is also persuasive.

Metrics

In Part II, “The Poetic Form”, Þorgeir Sigurðsson gives a thorough presentation of the metre of *Arbj*, *kviðuháttir* (ch. 5), and an examination of how the metre is carried out in both even verses (ch. 6) and odd verses (ch. 7), which have a different number of metrical positions and also slightly different rhythmic patterns. In this part of the thesis, Þorgeir brings many insights into the metre, particularly on certain restrictions on the unstressed positions within both odd and even verses. He demonstrates that in the oldest *kviðuháttir* poems up to c. 1000 the dips of trochaic verses are never filled with other kinds of syllables than inflectional endings, the particle *of/um* or, in rare instances, the conjunction *ok* and the infinitive marker *at*. In later poems such as *Nóregs konungatal* (late twelfth c.), the practice is quite different, as it allows for both prepositions and other function words in this position (see particularly pp. 124–29, 151–55). This finding is important both because it improves our understanding of how the metre functions, and because it introduces a new dating criterion for *kviðuháttir* poetry, which may be used, along with other formal criteria, to weaken the claim for inauthenticity in the case of *Ynglingatal* (Krag 1991). As Þorgeir says, “[t]he discovery of this interesting phenomenon seems long overdue” (p. 144), and it is to his credit that he was the one to discover it. Another important observation is the fact that the odd verses in *kviðuháttir*, which consist of only three metrical positions, have a metrical mapping different from even verses (and most other Old Norse metres as well), in that a strong position (lift) can have a light structure (short syllable). It

is still a question, however, if this justifies Þorgeir's solution of "removing the weight distinction" (p. 147); this would make the existence of *Verschleifung* (resolution) in odd verses (pp. 155–57) a puzzle.

To substantiate his new finding, Þorgeir is in need of an analytical tool to distinguish between those syllables that may fill the dips in trochaic verses of *kviðuhátt*, and those that may not. For this purpose he invents the terms "restricted vowels" (Old Norse unstressed *i*, *a* and *u*, on p. 42) and "restricted syllables", which contain these vowels only, besides "full syllables", which can be both light and heavy (p. 96, cf. the table on p. 106).² His choice of terminology could, however, be questioned. For instance, it could be regarded as unfortunate that "light" and "restricted" syllables, which share the same property of filling dips or unstressed positions in the metre, are at the highest level assigned to different groups of syllables. In Þorgeir's system, verses such as *Arbj* 3.8 *heim um sóttan* and *Nóregs konungatal* (*Nkt*) 32.2 *land með bringum* are scanned differently, as **sx**sx vs. **sv**sx (pp. 125, 130), where **s** = "strong", **v** = "weak" and **x** = "restricted".³ The only reason for this difference is the restriction against function words (such as the preposition *með*) in dips in the oldest *kviðuhátt* poems from the tenth century. Þorgeir even changes his notation as he proceeds: whereas *Arbj* 5.2 *tryggt at líta* is scanned **sx**sx (p. 130), with a "restricted" infinitive marker, Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonarkviða* (c. 1264; *Hkv*) 41.2 *öll at líta* is scanned **sv**sx (p. 126), with a "weak" infinitive marker, apparently because the metre at the time of *Hkv* had blurred the distinction between "restricted" and "weak" syllables.

In section 5.2, on syllable weight and Craigie's law, Þorgeir discusses the different frameworks for metrical scansion applied by Kari Ellen Gade (1995) and Kristján Árnason (1991), and takes side with Kristján's "simplification" of the Sievers system from five to three rhythmic types, which essentially represent the Sievers types A, C and D (example verses on p. 105). For all its simplicity, Kristján's classification fails to explain some crucial features of Old Norse poetry, most importantly the fact that a compound may fill the three last metrical positions of a *dróttkvætt* verse, e.g., *raddkleif at Þórleifi* (*Þjóð Haustl* 1.4), or *lōgsóta verfótum* (*Eyv Lv* 13.2). These (and other examples) have to be scanned according to Sievers' type E, with a stressed fourth position, since otherwise the compound would be assigned a stress pattern that is highly anomalous from a Germanic perspective (unstressed–stressed–unstressed). That this metrical pattern (Sievers' type E) exists is confirmed by *dróttkvætt* verses like *raud frýsti ben blóði* (*Hornkl Gldr* 2.5) and *gerum þar fyr sjot sólar* (*Eg Lv* 6.7), with alliteration on both fourth and fifth positions, following the principle "no alliteration without stress" (see the discussion of this principle below).

² The term "restricted syllables" is used already on p. 58, without any explanation or definition.

³ One may ask why "weak" is not abbreviated **w** rather than **v**, but this is immaterial.

That Sievers' type B is equally necessary may be deduced from verses like *Arbj* 4.6 *við stirðan hug*, where the last, bimoraic noun (*hug*) has to be stressed to meet the requirement of a *kviðubáttr* verse to have two lifts. The discussion of this verse on p. 117 is rather confusing:

According to Finnur (1886–1888: 435), this line is of type B with the rhythm $x \acute{ } | x \acute{ } .$ The last position should, therefore, be metrically strong and have a heavy syllable, whereas *hug* is light according to his criteria. Thus Finnur accounts for this type of example with a metrical license called shortening, while Fulk (2016) resorts to linguistic means, seeing a word like a [*sic*] *hug* as a heavy monosyllable when it is at the end of the line. According to Craigie, however, this position is not strong in the first place.

The problem here is the presumption that a metrically strong position has to be filled by a heavy (i.e. long or trimoraic) syllable. There is no reason to believe that there was ever such a requirement in Old Norse metrics, and there is much evidence against it. The restriction known as Craigie's law, which forbids a trimoraic noun to fill the fourth position of the verse, must be a restriction on a *stressed* syllable. Þorgeir claims that the Sievers types and Craigie's law "directly conflict with each other" (p. 104), but this is only the case as long as one does not separate metrical structure from syllabic quantity: a short syllable may very well fill a metrical strong (or stressed) position, for instance in the well-known Sievers type A2k ($\acute{ } \acute{ } | \acute{ } x$). In his discussion on these topics, Þorgeir might have made use of Myrvoll 2016 (this article is in the bibliography, but it is not cited anywhere in the text).

In the classification of the verses of *Arbj*, Þorgeir still employs Sievers' metrical terminology ("A1", "B1", "C2" etc.), but as he uses these terms they become empty labels. They are systematically followed by his own scansion, which in many cases are highly improbable. Thus *Arbj* 2.4 *skrökberðndum*, even though assigned to the metrical type D3 (in Sievers' notation $\acute{ } | \acute{ } \acute{ } x$), "should be analysed as *svsx*" (p. 131), that is strong–weak–strong–restricted. This violates the natural accentuation of compounds in Germanic, which implies strong–strong–weak–restricted. Verses of the type in *Arbj* 3.6 *um dökkva skor*, which Þorgeir correctly assigns to type B1 (in Sievers' notation $x \acute{ } | x \acute{ } .$), are in similar manner analysed as sequences of "vsxv" (p. 134), that is with only one strong position. The same applies to the metrical type C1 ($x \acute{ } | \acute{ } x$), in verses such as *Arbj* 10.4 *á hlið aðra*, which is analysed as "vvsx" (p. 132), also with only one strong position, and C3 ($x \acute{ } | \acute{ } x$), in verses such as *Arbj* 1.8 *um þjóðlygi*, which are supposed to be analysed as "vsvx" (p. 136), also with only one strong position. It is evident from these examples (among others) that Þorgeir is mixing up metrical strength (lifts and dips) with syllabic structure (long/heavy and short/light syllables). Although they are not unrelated, these two levels should be kept strictly apart. Moreover, the concept of *secondary stress* that is so crucial for Germanic prosody, is missing in Þorgeir's analysis; this "in-between" category could either be accentuated in lifts, or suppressed in dips. An

example of both strategies may be found in the aforementioned verse *skrokkberǫndum* (*Arbj* 2.4), with natural secondary stress on both the second and the third syllable, of which only the first carries a lift (*-ber-*), whereas the other is placed in a dip (*-ǫnd-*). That in ordinary language the third syllable was not completely unstressed may be seen from its full vowel *ǫ*, cf. the opposite in an inflectional form like *kǫst-uðu* ‘(they) threw’ for older or expected **kǫstǫðu* < **kastaðu*, where the second *ǫ* caused by *u*-mutation cannot be maintained in an unstressed syllable and thus enters into the unstressed vowel system as *u*.

Porgeir’s assignment of metrically strong positions to naturally long syllables comes into conflict with the alliterative patterns of Old Norse poetry as well. Traditionally, alliteration has been seen as a device for emphasising positions already stressed within a verse. From this it follows that only stressed positions — and indeed the most prominent of those (cf. Rieger’s (1876) proposed hierarchy) — may carry alliteration. Since there are many examples of short-stemmed nouns carrying alliteration in Old Norse poetry, Porgeir is forced to deny the connection between strong positions and alliteration. For instance, the verses *á hlið aðra* and *þótt fé eigi* (*Arbj* 10.4 and 20.4), are scanned “**vvsx**” with a “weak” second position (p. 132), even though this position in both instances carries the alliteration (here marked in bold). These verses are exceptional in having a short stressed syllable before a word beginning with a vowel (*fé* counts as short in Old Norse), and as Porgeir points out, they seem to be peculiarly Egill’s, but one is still puzzled by the treatment of the first lift as “weak”, not least in light of Porgeir’s later treatment of short-stemmed alliterating nouns in odd verses, such as *hǫfuðlausn* or *vinar míns* (*Arbj* 8.7 and 15.5), which are analysed as having a “strong” first position (in, e.g., the scansion on p. 159). This does not seem very consistent. He rarely comments on the interplay between stress and alliteration, but on pp. 132f., we find this statement: “Usually, alliteration is assumed to be only on syllables in lifts, but I claim that the poetic evidence supports rather that it is always in a heavy syllable, or syllables that can be made heavy by cohesion, or on the first of two syllables in a *Verschleifung*.” Since almost any short syllable can be made heavy by cohesion, by placing it before a word or word-element beginning in a consonant — as in the verse cited by Porgeir, *á gjafstóli* (*Hkv* 34.4; p. 132) — this does not solve the problem.

Linguistics

Porgeir Sigurðsson has generally a good grip on skaldic language and linguistics. I have noted only some minor problems:

- (1) In the reconstructed text of st. 15 (p. 191), Porgeir deletes the opening word *Nú*, despite acknowledging in the notes that this is not necessary if

one reads *Nú erumk auðskæf* as *Nu'rumk auðskæf* with elision, shortening and resolution in the first position (p. 231). There are parallels to this in *dróttkvætt* poetry, e.g., *Sigv Ber* 3.3 *Nú eru þegnar frið fegnir* (> *Nu'ru*).

- (2) In st. 18, where the first couplet is partly illegible, Þorgeir reconstructs it as *En Hróalds / *á hofuðbaðmi*, where *á* is supposed to be the verb meaning ‘owns, has’ (pp. 194, 235). The verb cannot be seen on the page in *M* (ÍB 169 4to reads *i*, alternatively *a*), and its existence is highly unlikely for syntactic reasons: the placement in-between the two constituents of the subject (*Hróalds hofuðbaðmi*, i.e. Arinbjörn) in a dip at the beginning of the even verse seems to be without parallels in the corpus of *kviðuháttur* poetry.
- (3) Another unlikely analysis from the point of view of skaldic syntax is given for the first two verses of st. 11, which Þorgeir proposes should be divided *Arinbjörn er / oss einn um hóf* (pp. 187, 225). This would put the relative particle in a marked position (at the end of the odd verse) that would normally require stress, which is not possible for a particle. This is moreover unnecessary, since *Arinbjörn* would fill the verse alone (with a short first position), and *er oss einn um hóf* could be analysed as a type-B verse with resolved first position (pace Sigurður Nordal (ed.) 1933, p. 262). Leaving *Arinbjörn* to fill the first verse alone adds rhetorical emphasis to his name, which is mentioned for the first time at this place in the poem. (A similar, rather creative proposal involving the placement of the relative particle is made in the notes to st. 22 on pp. 242f.)
- (4) Within Part I, the discussion of Óláfr Þórðarson’s use of *Arbj* st. 15 in *3GT* (pp. 81ff.) is not entirely satisfactory, in that Þorgeir does not pay enough attention to Óláfr’s notion of *hljóðsgreinir* (accents). In the context of *3GT*, Óláfr states that the words *tvinn* and *þrenn*, which are the normal forms of these words in the contemporary Icelandic that Óláfr generally takes as his point of departure, undergo an “aftekning stafs” <-nn> > <-n> “fyrir feigrðar sakir, þvíat þá þykkir betr hljóða þessar samstofur í kviðuhætti, at þær hafi umbeygilega hljóðs-grein heldr en hvassa”. The key to understanding the actual form in which the words are used in the *Arbj* stanza is the supposed change of *hljóðsgrein*, since *umbeygileg hljóðsgrein* in *3GT* is attached to long vowels only (cf. Myrvoll and Skomedal 2010, pp. 80, 84). The *aftekning stafs* must thus result in the forms *tvén* and *þrén*, which, additionally, may be given a plausible etymology (see Myrvoll and Skomedal 2010, p. 85). Hence, this example of Óláfr cannot be drawn into a discussion of the rhythmic peculiarities of the odd verses of *kviðuháttur*, as Þorgeir does (p. 83); *tvinn* (or *þrenn*) and *tvén* (or *þrén*) are metrically equal. In his reconstructed text, Þorgeir prints *tvinn ok þrenn* (p. 191), ignoring the evidence of *3GT* altogether.

On several occasions in Part I, Þorgeir turns to certain Norwegian linguistic developments (due to some recurring features of the *Arbj* scribe in M). In these parts, he is not always as accurate as is to be desired. I will give some examples:

- (1) In the presentation of the Old Norwegian vowel harmony on pp. 42f., Þorgeir misses the point that unstressed ⟨i⟩ and ⟨u⟩ also followed stressed /o/ and /æ/ (cf. Myrvoll 2014a).
- (2) Not very convincing is the hypothesis that the use of the abbreviation mark, the tittle, for the ending *-ar* both in a document from 1339 in Skagafjörður (in the pl. *prestar* and in the dat. *Einari*) and in the word *magar* (gen. sg. ‘son’) in *Arbj* in M was a conscious adaptation to reductions in Norwegian word-endings, as it is argued on p. 41 and again on p. 61. At this early stage, the ending *-ar* was still thriving in Norwegian, and moreover, it is unlikely that an Icelander would accommodate such details as inflectional endings.
- (3) Another example of misinterpretation appears in the analysis of the obscure verse “*vekinga ‘tøs*” in *Arbj* st. 19, where Þorgeir identifies the first word as an equivalent to Modern Swedish and Norwegian *veking* ‘weakling’ (p. 238). This is, however, not possible, since the modern *veking* must be derived from the adjective corresponding to Old Norse *veikr* ‘weak’, with monophthongization *ei* > *e* (see *Norsk Ordbok* 12, s.vv. *vekla*, *veking* etc.); the Old Norse form (if indeed it existed) would have been **veiklingr*.

The historical placing of the poem

An important aspect of this thesis is the greater confidence it gives us in the poem itself, Egill Skallagrímsson’s *Arinbjarnarkviða*. Recent formal — metrical and linguistic — analyses of the *kviðuháttr* poems (Sapp 2000, Myrvoll 2014b) have concluded that both Egill’s poems in this metre, *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek*, should be regarded as genuine productions of the tenth century. Even though the dating of *Arbj* is not treated as a separate topic in any chapter of Þorgeir Sigurðsson’s thesis, dating and chronology inevitably play a central role in many of the discussions throughout the dissertation, not at least in the metrical Part II. Already in the introduction to the thesis, the author states that he will provide “strong arguments in favor of the poem’s authenticity, by showing that the poem fits well into the timeline of linguistic changes and changes in the *kviðuháttr* meter” (p. 3). This promise is fulfilled, and the thesis is thus also an important contribution to the discussion of chronological developments within Old Norse poetry. One example of this is Þorgeir’s original discovery of the strict employment of “restricted syllables” in the dips of the oldest *kviðuháttr* poems, a rule that eventually was relaxed in later poetry.

The greater confidence we now may have in the authenticity of the poem, makes it more attractive to look into its historical background and content. Among the questions it raises, are: Under what circumstances was the poem composed, and to what purpose? What does the poem tell us about the persons involved — Egill himself, king Eiríkr of York and his friend Arinbjörn? It is not my task here to answer all these questions, but I would like to call attention to the rather comprehensive information we actually get in this poem. This is not always so with skaldic poetry; the degree of information varies greatly. It seems, however, to be a tendency that the density of information is somewhat higher in poems in eddic (or eddic-based) metres, i.e. *fornyrðislag*, *ljóðaháttur* and *kviðuháttur*, compared to the strictly skaldic *dróttkvætt* poetry. Whereas the latter shows an overwhelming interest in linguistic experiment, with its extensive use of poetic synonyms (*heiti*) and circumlocutions (*kenningar*), which tends to obscure the factual content of the stanzas, the *kviðuháttur* poems, with their more straight-forward language and style, give the historian more to work with.

The person who is mentioned most often in *Arinbjarnarkviða* is, naturally, Arinbjörn. About him we get a lot of information, even though he is not introduced before st. 10, where he stands forth as Egill's guardian friend and helper in the critical incident with king Eiríkr; Arinbjörn is "tryggr vinr minn" 'my loyal friend' (st. 10.5). He is mentioned by name several times, as "Arinbjörn" (st. 11.1), "at Arinbjarnar" ('at A.'s home'; st. 21.2) and within kennings with the use of wordplay (*ofljóst*) as "bjóða björn / birki-sóttá" 'the bear of tables of fevers of birch' (> *arinn* 'hearthstone' > *Arinbjörn*; st. 16.7–8) and the simpler "Grjót-björn" 'stone-bear' = *Arinbjörn* (st. 17.5). We get to know that he is the king's friend as well; he is "vinr þjóðans" (st. 11.5) and "vinr véþorms" 'friend of the protector of sacred places', that is the king (st. 19.7), and it is of course in this capacity he is able to rescue Egill. About Arinbjörn's background we learn that he is "hersa *kundar" 'the offspring of *hersar*' (st. 14.8), "magar Þóris" 'son of Þórir' (st. 15.3) and finally "Hróalds hǫfuðbaðmi" 'Hroaldr's main descendant' (st. 18.1–2). In the saga, this is explained by Arinbjörn's being the son of a certain Þórir, the son of Hróaldr. This interest in genealogical descent is characteristic of *Arbj*, and it may have something to do with the tradition of composing genealogical poems in *kviðuháttur* (cf. *Ynglingatal*, *Háleygjatal*).

This is borne out when we now turn to Egill's antagonist, king Eiríkr Haraldsson. In both *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*, we are told that Haraldr Hárfagri's eldest son and heir, Eiríkr, with the unfavourable nickname (probably a later addition based on a skaldic stanza) *blóðøx* 'Bloodaxe', had to flee from his kingdom in Norway because of his wrongdoings, but later settled down in York and became king of Northumbria. A king Eric is actually attested in York around the middle of the tenth century in both the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and in coinage, and this has traditionally been seen as a confirmation of the Old Norse sources. In recent times, however, doubt has been cast on this identification, most vig-

orously by Clare Downham (2004), who rejects it altogether (cf. the title of her article, “Eric Bloodaxe – axed?”). The problem with Downham’s approach is that she takes the Old Norse narrative sources (the sagas) *at face value*, not distinguishing between different chronological levels and developments. No serious Old Norse scholar today would claim that everything Snorri Sturluson wrote should be taken literally as historical fact. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to single out some information in the sagas that can be trusted, that is, information that can be confirmed by contemporary skaldic poetry or other early sources. The presence of Eiríkr Haraldsson as king in York is a case in question, and *Arinbjarnarkviða* turns out to be its most important primary source. The poem places an Eiríkr firmly in York as a king, of royal descent, and if Þorgeir Sigurðsson is correct in one of his readings (as I believe he is), then Eiríkr’s genealogy is traced back to his grandfather Halfdan in the poem.

Eiríkr is first introduced in the third stanza of *Arbj*, not yet by his name, only as a certain (in the genitive case) “ynglings burar” ‘son of an *ynglingr*’, that is, a prince. This is a typical skaldic circumlocution for a king, where he is mentioned as a king’s son (the king is naturally also son of a king). Þorgeir, commenting on the word *ynglingr*, admits that it could be a simple *heiti* for ‘king’, but then states that the stanza “makes it clear that the reference is to the Swedish-Norse royal family line of YNGLINGATAL” (p. 179). I think this is an overinterpretation, for two reasons: First, the word *ynglingr* is used by the skalds about kings that in any event cannot belong to the alleged “*yngling* family”, and secondly, there is nothing in the skaldic record to suggest a link between Eiríkr Haraldsson (or anyone else in his family) and the Vestfold kings of *Ynglingatal*. This link in the sagas is most likely a twelfth-c. construction, as Claus Krag has argued persuasively (Krag 1989), although he went too far when he later questioned the authenticity of *Ynglingatal* (Krag 1991). This means that the kenning “ynglings burar” in *Arbj* 3.2 should be translated as simply ‘king’ (and *ynglings* should be printed accordingly with lowercase *y*).

The next stanza describes Eiríkr as a “styr-konungr / við stirðan hug / í Jór-vík” ‘a battle king / by a firm mind / in York’ (st. 4.5–7), which places him unequivocally in York. Then, in the next stanza, we finally learn his name, in the kenning “tunglskin Eiríks bráa” ‘the moon-shine of Eiríkr’s eyelashes’, that is his staring eye, which Egill fears. Later on, Eiríkr is called both *allvaldr* (5.7), *dróttinn* (6.4), *hilmir* (7.8, 8.8) and *konungr* (9.7), all different words for ‘king’. Most interesting, however, is the way Eiríkr is mentioned in st. 12, where Egill presumably is elaborating on Arinbjörn’s removal of the king’s anger, for which he began to praise him in the previous stanza. The stanza is, however, only partly legible. Þorgeir’s reconstruction reads, with translation (the number of dots gives the estimated number of characters missing; p. 188):

Ok [.....]	‘And ...
st[.....]lét[...]	‘st[.....]lét[...]
margfrømuðr	multiple promoter
minna dáða,	of my deeds,
syni [...]gð	son.DAT [...]gð’
sonar Hálfðanar	of Hálfðan’s son,
á Játvarðs	on Edward’s
áttar *skeiði.	family’s riding path (land).’

The crucial part here is the paraphrase for Eiríkr, ‘son of Hálfðan’s son’, which confirms the story in *Egils saga* that Eiríkr in York is the son of Haraldr Hálfðanarson in Norway. (That Haraldr’s father’s name was *Hálfðan* is attested in Þorbjörn Hornklofi’s *Haraldskvæði* as well, about the battle of Háfrsfjord, c. 900.) There are some obvious problems with the reconstruction of the stanza as a whole, but the words forming the phrase ‘son of Hálfðan’s son’ seem reasonably certain and are found also in the earliest transcript of M (ÍB 169 4to). In sum, *Arinbjarnarkviða* bears witness to the identification of king Eric of Northumbria with king Eiríkr Haraldsson of Norway, and the story of Egill’s head-ransom in *Egils saga*, one of the central themes of *Arbj*, must have some historical kernel too.⁴

Conclusions

As stated at the outset, Þorgeir Sigurðsson has written a good thesis, which contributes to Old Norse studies in various ways. It is a fine piece of scholarship, with original and important observations that increase our understanding of Old Norse metrics and improve the reconstruction and interpretation of *Arinbjarnarkviða*. I have, however, criticised Þorgeir for having abandoned Sievers’ well-established metrical system. By doing this, he has created a lot of problems for himself that could have been avoided. At the same time, this “rebellious” nature of his has made it possible for Þorgeir to see some things more clearly than others, and probably more so than if he had worked within an already established

⁴ Þorgeir Sigurðsson claims to have found both the son of Eiríkr, king Haraldr *gráfeldr* (r. c. 961–70), in *Arbj* 27.4 (“Eiríks syni”, p. 203), and his brother, king Hákon *góði* (r. c. 935–61), in *Arbj* 29.7–8 in a battle-context (“*Hákon / í Háars veðri” ‘Hákon, in Óðinn’s storm (= battle), p. 205), but these readings are more uncertain, and given the highly fragmentary status of these stanzas, they give little or no historical information. It should be mentioned, though, that Haraldr Eiríksson was the foster-son of Arinbjörn according to *Egils saga*, and as Þorgeir points out (pp. 70f.), it would seem reasonable if *Arbj* included some mention of Haraldr and his victory over Hákon in the battle of Fitjar (c. 961).

theory. We have seen examples of this earlier in his research, for instance in the formulation of the so-called “milliregla”, that is a rule for the placement of alliteration and rhyme in *dróttkvætt* verses (see Þorgeir Sigurðsson 2001, 2016), and we have seen it now in his detection of the extremely weak dips of *kviðuhátt*. These observations could perhaps not have been made by a thoroughbred “Sieversian”, for whom the intellect is bound by the complex structures of the system. I do not doubt that Sievers was mainly correct, but I appreciate that others challenge his system and thereby help us to improve it. I would therefore strongly recommend that Þorgeir Sigurðsson revise the thesis for publication, after having taken into consideration both opponents’ comments and suggestions.

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See References, p. 337.

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Replies to the opponents

I am pleased by the constructive opposition of my thesis by Matthew Driscoll and Klaus Johan Myrvoll. In the following I give my response to their comments.

Driscoll commented on the literary and editorial aspects of the thesis. He said he missed a discussion on why poems are almost never cited *in extenso* in sagas. He asked: Was it because the authors/compiler of the sagas assumed their audience would know the poems, so there was no need to cite them in full? My answer is yes, because on many occasions the saga writers appear to expect their audience to know the poems that are mentioned. Another reason that applies to *Arinbjarnarkviða* is that the poems were not always easy to incorporate into the sagas. In his preface to *Egils saga*, Sigurður Nordal (1933:XVI) said that *Arinbjarnarkviða* did not serve the plot of the saga. He included it anyway, and said it would not deceive anyone to do so (“ætti það ekki að villa neinn”). This is disputable. *Egils saga* has a very different character without the two poems *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek*, because they expose a much gentler Egill than *Egils saga*.

Also, Driscoll misses a discussion on what would be the implications of assuming *Arinbjarnarkviða* was written in full on leaf 99v and no part of it was initially missing. There are many implications, and Myrvoll discusses some of them. I only note that it removes an excuse for not discussing the genre of the poem, and how it rewarded Arinbjörn.

Driscoll is right in noting that a discussion on new or material philology would have been appropriate in the thesis. I did not opt for a traditional edition of the poem for several reasons, one of them being that I wanted to avoid the many decisions that this would bring, which were mostly unrelated to the task at hand, to recover as much as possible of the poem. Some level of normalization is, however, desirable. I find the option attractive to use modern Icelandic spelling, adjusted for distinctions that are made in the poem. I agree with Driscoll that including all the notes together with each stanza would be desirable. Reading the notes without the stanzas can be confusing. I tried to make it easier by including with the notes a normalized long-line version of each stanza. An electronic edition would facilitate a better solution.

Klaus Johan Myrvoll divided his opposition into four parts: methodology, metrics, linguistics, and the historical placing of the poem. His two parts on met-

rics and linguistics call for response from me. I see his other two parts as good additions to my thesis, in addition to issues mentioned by Driscoll.

In the metrical part Myrvoll finds many faults with the notation that I use and prefers the traditional notational system of Sievers. He begins by noting a change in my notations, before and after AD 1000. To address his objections, I must introduce my notation. It is traditional to group lines (verses) of an Old Norse poem into rhythmic groups and to produce tables of lines of the same rhythmic type. I used a simple method for doing so, based only on observable features; syllable types and the location of nominals. For Egill's poetry I find it remarkable and fortunate that it is possible to use the same labels as Sievers did and to distinguish between all his rhythmic types, by taking note of these observable features. This was not my primary goal, but I imagined that it would please those used to the Sievers types that I grouped together the same lines as they would, even if I did not refer to all the features of the Sievers types, such as a secondary stress and the location of alliteration. This works well for all *kviðuháttir* poetry before AD 1000. After that, changes take place that require more factors (such as word divisions) to be included if the same distinctions are to be kept (this is not addressed in the thesis). As an example, I can label the trochaic type in *Arinbjarnarkviða* as A1, like Sievers did, although I denote it by **sxx**. Here **s** stands for a strong syllable that must have a heavy syllable type, and **x** can only stand for an unstressed syllable (having a vowel in the a-i-u system described by Hreinn Benediktsson (1972) in his edition on the *First Grammatical Treatise*). This holds true until AD 1000 when the second position in a trochaic line became capable of holding any type of syllable, but it continued not to be strong. To denote such a position I use the symbol **v**. For that reason I denote trochaic lines in the young poems *Nkt* and *Hkv* by **svsx** to allow for all possibilities. My change in notation is thus due to a change in the meter and should not be objectionable.

In my opinion, the above illustrates a flaw with the Sievers system. It is too admissible. It describes *kviðuháttir* before and after AD 1000 in the same way.

Myrvoll wishes to defend the Sievers system against the simplified system that Kristján Árnason (1991) introduced for *dróttkvætt* and against the notation that I introduced for *kviðuháttir*. In both instances, his arguments can be turned against the older system. His first argument regards an interesting feature of *dróttkvætt*, namely that a compound may fill the three last metrical positions of a *dróttkvætt* verse. Myrvoll asserts that the Sievers system explains this, but it only allows it. It is better to allow such oddities to stand out; there may be an interesting linguistic explanation for them, as I hope to be able to demonstrate for this particular phenomenon at a future date. The same goes for the alliteration on the antepenult, on which I included some discussion in my thesis. Myrvoll claims I am wrong when I say that the Sievers types and Craigie's law directly conflict with each other. The Sievers type in question prescribes a heavy syllable for nouns where Craigie's law prescribes a light syllable. This cannot be reconciled.

Myrvoll objects to my scansion of *Arinbjarnarkviða* (*Arbj* 2.4 *skrökberǫndum* as being **svsx** (of type D3). He advocates Sievers' notation $\acute{\text{v}} | \acute{\text{v}} \acute{\text{x}}$ for this line. This line stands out in my analysis. There is no other line like it in *Arinbjarnarkviða*, *Sonatorrek* or *Ynglingatal* (the main poems in *kviðuháttir* before AD 1000). This makes the line dubious. *Arbj* 2.4 alone does not justify adding more features to distinguish rhythmic types (like a secondary stress or word separations).

Myrvoll also objects to my scansion of *Arbj* 1.8 *um þjóðlygi* as **svsx** and of other lines of the C3 type. The problem that he sees is that the C3 lines do not have two lifts. The two lifts are a feature of all Sievers types. The second lift is produced from light syllables if heavy syllables are not available. I could also proclaim that **sv** has two lifts, side by side, but I do not see a need for it.

Alliteration in *kviðuháttir* and *dróttkvætt* is only on heavy syllables or their equivalents (by cohesion or *Verschleifung*). This is undisputed, yet exceptions exist. Two of them appear in *Arinbjarnarkviða* in: *á hlið aðra* and *þótt fé eigi* (*Arbj* 10.4 and 20.4), alliteration is bolded. My scansion for these lines can only be **vvsx**, which is not to Myrvoll's liking because it lacks lifts.

Odd lines of *kviðuháttir* poems have three positions instead of four and differ in other ways as well from the even lines. It is common for them to have alliteration on light syllables, but this is clearly a specific feature of these lines as discussed in the thesis. It is not fair of Myrvoll to compare the previous even lines to the odd lines: *hofuðlausn* or *vinar míns* (*Arbj* 8.7 and 15.5); the alliteration is bolded.

I believe my analysis of *kviðuháttir* and of *Arinbjarnarkviða* is restrictive, accurate and consistent. This is contrary to what might be deduced from Myrvoll's comments. In my opinion he puts too much effort into defending the traditional notational system. This takes the focus away from the results that were produced, such as on the location of restricted syllables and that either the penult or antepenult are always strong, but not both.

Myrvoll's first objection in the linguistic part of his discussion regards the line *Nú erumk auðskæf* (stanza 15) where editors traditionally delete the word *Nú*. I absolutely agree with Myrvoll that *Nú* should not be deleted and my notes explain why. I should have made my preference clearer. However, I wished my text to reveal the options open to an editor. It is a defensible position to trust *Snorra-Edda's* derived texts when they are available (the line is without *Nú* in such a text), and this seems to be what previous editors have done. It is one of my more interesting results that there are no occasions where the *Snorra-Edda* texts are clearly superior.

Myrvoll's second objection is on stanza 18 where I managed to provide a good interpretation for the second half of the stanza but not the first. The entire stanza appears to be without a finite verb and I did not see any candidate for a verb except *á* 'owns' (reading of 169 as *i* or *a*). The stanza has a noun phrase, *Hrólaldrs* [?] *hofuðbaðmi*. The question mark stands for something in the NP.

Editors have used *á* 'on' as a preposition or inserted the preposition *at* 'at' in its place. This is forbidden in Old Norse poetry as discussed by Hans Kuhn 1929 in his doctoral thesis (pages 10 and 11). Prepositions are never in-between an attribute and a noun. It is less of a breach to insert a finite verb because they are not glued to the following word as are prepositions. Therefore, I believe my proposal is better than the traditional one.

Myrvoll's third objection regards the first two lines of stanza 11. It involves my notes to the stanza where I proposed an alternative line-division for *Arinbjörn er / oss einn um hóf*. Myrvoll claims that the final syllable needs a stress in this position, but I argue in the thesis that similar lines did not need stress (for instance *magar Þóris* in stanza 15). In my thesis, I did not discuss stanza divisions and I did not discuss current editions of *kviðuháttr* poems that have stanzas of variable length. In the *kviðuháttr* meter, the first line of a stanza contains almost invariably a finite verb or a conjunction, which marks a new stanza beginning. I believe it is of importance that this stanza does not need to be an exception.

Myrvoll's fourth objection regards the discussion of Óláfr Þórðarson on *Arbj* st. 15 in *3GT*. He and others have interpreted this discussion, but I do not think their conclusions are the final ones. It would be remarkable if the rhythmic peculiarity of the odd numbered lines in *kviðuháttr* was not related to the transformation of syllables that Óláfr describes. I only pointed this out in the thesis for further study.

In addition, Myrvoll is critical of some statements I made on certain Norwegian linguistic developments, mentioning three items in particular.

- 1) He corrects a statement of mine on Norwegian vowel harmony. I trust Myrvoll and other Norwegian scholars on this matter. I only mentioned the Norwegian vowel harmony because no similar systematic difference in the use of *i* and *e* in endings has been demonstrated in Iceland. In the thesis I showed that *i* and *e* are used differently in open and closed syllables in the manuscript containing *Arinbjarnarkviða*.
- 2) Myrvoll finds it unlikely that an Icelander would have consciously accommodated Norwegians by using an abbreviation mark, the tittle, for disappearing *-ar* endings in Norway, as I suggested. I will look for other explanations in a possible up-date of my thesis.
- 3) Myrvoll remarks on the Swedish/Norwegian word *veklínga* that I should have rendered as *veiklínga* in an Old Norse form, which I shall also consider in a possible up-date.

Finally, I am grateful for having had this opportunity to clarify some points in my thesis. This discussion highlights the large number of subjects that I dealt with and the many interesting subjects that await further attention by myself and other scholars.

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