

‘Different from all other *Egils sagas*’

On the Connection between Individual Authorship and a Different Aesthetics in Late Premodern Iceland

Abstract

In the long-lasting Icelandic manuscript culture, the production and reception of sagas was situated in a narrative tradition characterised by the absence of notions of an author genius and a high degree of *mouvance* and *variance*: from the 13th to the 19th century, Icelandic saga literature was transmitted anonymously and in handwritten form in ever new retextualizations, accompanied by reiterating changes of medium (oral / written) and genre (prose / verse). It is therefore less the absence than the more or less sudden appearance of attributions of authorship for these kinds of texts in the course of the 18th century that is remarkable in the Icelandic case. In a first generation of Icelandic literary histories and philological treatises in this period, not only new saga narratives but also new versions of medieval texts were ascribed to individual authors. The identification of text (versions) with authors often came along with negative assessments of the literary quality of these texts. This conjunction indicates that particular texts that do not meet the aesthetic conventions of saga literature were singled out as works of individuals and that identifiable authorship thus reflects notions of aberration from the literary tradition in the Icelandic case. The humanistic treatises exhibit at the same time a high awareness of and nuanced terminology for the complex processes of rewriting and plural authorship of the handwritten Icelandic narrative tradition. This chapter will discuss prominent examples of this protophilological discourse as to their reflection of and relation to Icelandic textual and literary culture in the late premodern period.

Keywords

Iceland, Saga Literature, Literary History, Humanism, 18th Century, Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, Árni Magnússon

The nascent preoccupation with concepts of individual authorship in the late premodern period in Iceland is constitutively and inextricably tied to practices of multiple authorship. The following chapter shows that the attribution of authorship in the Ice-

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landic 18th century was indeed ambiguous and does not fit into the traditional positions of positively connoted, innovative individual authorship and negatively connoted, epigonal multiple authorship. Instead, attributions of authorship in literary-historical treatises of this period reflect disputes in a polarity between old and new concepts of authorship, which at the same time reflect recent developments of a philological tradition and the associated processes of canonization.

After some general remarks on the transmission of Icelandic prose literature of the premodern era, incipient reflections on authorial practices and the parameters of premodern Icelandic literary production are examined in an analysis of early representatives of Icelandic literary historiography: the *Apparatus ad Historiam Literariam Islandicam* by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík, and notes by his teacher Árni Magnússon. Furthermore, it will be argued that the canonization of the medieval tradition beginning with these literary-historical writings displays a close entanglement of ideas of trusted tradition, applied aesthetic ideals, and notions of authorship.

1. Anonymous, Open Transmission and Multiple Authorship

Anonymous transmission constitutes the standard case for the production and reception of texts in medieval and early modern Iceland. The 13th century introduced a long-lived textual tradition of vernacular prose texts, the so-called saga literature, encompassing a broad spectrum in terms of theme and subject matter – from translated hagiographic, courtly, and pseudo-historical literature from the continent to historiographically structured texts on the history of Iceland and the Norwegian kingdom to narratives about earlier historical and prehistorical times associated with heroic epic and fairytale traditions.¹ But for a few exceptions, all these texts have been transmitted anonymously, without any authorial, compilatory, or scribal entity being named; moreover, they have been handed down in an open textual tradition in new manuscript copies, and therefore have also been constantly recompiled and rearranged.² An autho-

1 O'Connor 2017 provides a comprehensive scholarly overview of debates on the relationship between historicity and fictionality and the use of the terms historiography and pseudo-historiography in the context of saga literature.

2 Common names for the different genres of saga literature in an English-speaking context are the sagas of saints, sagas of bishops, chivalric sagas, sagas of antiquity, *Sagas of the Icelanders*, contemporary sagas, sagas of kings, and legendary sagas. These subdivisions and designations of textual groupings, common today with some minor variations, are the results of philological scholarship beginning in the 18th century, not least in Árni Magnússon's milieu; by contrast, the designation of the various textual groupings as sagas is already found in the medieval manuscript tradition. The noun *saga* is a nominal derivation of the verb *segja* ('to tell'). For an introduction to the term, the transmission, and the characteristics of saga literature, see Clunies Ross 2010; on the anonymity of transmission and concepts of authorship, see esp. pp. 50f.

rial, scribal, or compiling entity is named for only a few prose texts in the medieval manuscript tradition. As for the few exceptions, these are primarily translations of courtly literature and texts on the (contemporary) history of the Norwegian kingdom and of Iceland in particular.³

In the 17th century and even more so in the 18th, a comprehensive process of viewing, cataloguing, and recopying medieval texts was initiated in the context of antiquarian and proto-philological endeavours. At the same time, new prose texts and new sagas continued to be written, recorded, and distributed in manuscript form until the end of the 19th century, mostly anonymously but linked to the names of authors in some cases – this will be returned to later. Indeed, the first scholarly editions of individual texts appeared from the 17th century onwards; the manuscript, however, remained the principal medium for the transmission and distribution of vernacular prose literature in the Icelandic reception context until at least the 19th century.⁴

2. *Poetæ et scriptores*: Concepts of Authorship in Early Modern Icelandic Literary Histories

The multiplicity of authorship processes in early modern Icelandic prose literature becomes obvious in a more conspicuous way for the first time in a newly emerging genre of texts in the 18th century, which in fact devotes itself to the individual author: literary histories, which in the Icelandic context are preserved in manuscripts and occasionally also in printed form, from the first decades of the 18th century. Just as in other regions of Europe, the emergence of print culture and humanist tendencies were also closely connected to a pursuit of the identification and staging of authorial entities in the Icelandic context, and the early literary histories that reflect this pursuit primarily supply lists of authors and the works attributed to them.⁵

3 The designations in these cases are also often to be categorized as invocations of an *auctoritas* rather than the identification of an *auctor*. On this subject, see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, pp. 222–236; Glauser 2010; Rohrbach 2021.

4 On the longstanding Icelandic manuscript tradition in coexistence with a slowly emerging domestic print culture in the early modern period, see McKinnell 1978–1981; Glauser 1994; Driscoll 1997; Driscoll/Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2017.

5 It is not possible in this chapter to recapitulate the extensive scholarship on the emergence of the aesthetics of genius in the 18th century; instead, reference is made only to some studies that are particularly relevant in the present context. On the difference between premodern and modern markings of authorship, see Haferland 2011. On the engagement with and the staging of forms of individual authorship in the early modern continental tradition in the polarity between print and manuscript culture, see Ezell 2019. On British debates over authorship in the 18th century, see Schellenberg 2019.

One of the oldest of these literary-historical treatises is the *Apparatus ad Historiam literariam Islandicam* by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík (1705–1779), a scribe and assistant to Árni Magnússon (1663–1730), the best-known Icelandic manuscript collector and proto-philologist, who also left his mark on his pupil's literary history, which appeared after his death.⁶ The treatise, transmitted via manuscript and first edited in 2018 by Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, lists central works of Icelandic literature, as well as, in alphabetical order, Icelandic poets, scholars, bishops, schoolmasters, and authors before and after the Reformation, and includes a designation of the works attributed to them.⁷ Jón Ólafsson distinguishes between *poetæ* and *scriptores*:

Tertia pars historiæ literariæ Islandicæ continens nomina scriptorum & poetarum, qvi ante et post Reformationem Lutherim vixere, cum brevi eorundem vitæ descriptione atqve operum recensu. Tribus sectionibus distincta, Quarum prima bimembris est, sistens primo scriptores, et mox deinde poetas.⁸

The third section of this Icelandic literary history contains names of scribes and poets who lived before or after the Lutheran Reformation, with a brief description of their lives and a summary of their work. Divided into three subsections, the first of which consists of two parts: first the *scriptores*, and then the *poetæ*.

While a tradition of listing poets and scholars can already be found in the 14th century,⁹ lists of the authors or *scriptores* of prose texts are new to this period. Jón Ólafsson elaborates on the concept of *scriptores* in an *Observatio ad lectorem*:

- 6 The *Apparatus* is preserved in the manuscript KB Add 3 fol. in the Arnarnagæa Collection in Reykjavík. On Jón Ólafsson's works, see the still most thorough study of his oeuvre by Jón Helgason (1926; on the *Apparatus*, see pp. 177–205); Jón Helgason predominantly investigates Jón Ólafsson's comments on post-Reformation authors. On the structure and embedding of Jón Ólafsson's *Apparatus* in contemporary developments, see Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir/Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2015. On Árni Magnússon's life and work, see Már Jónsson 2012.
- 7 Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (2015, pp. 35f.) rightly point out that the *Apparatus* is no mere list of authors but offers literary-historical classifications and interpretations. Yet the chosen mode of presentation in the form of alphabetical lists attests to an interest in the works and authors that was typical of the period.
- 8 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 14. Unless otherwise noted, translations from Icelandic correspond to the author's translations in the German original of this chapter.
- 9 Thus, the Codex Upsaliensis of the *Prose Edda*, dated to the first quarter of the 14th century, contains *Skáldatal*, a list of skalds from the 9th to the 13th century, and *Lögsögumannatal*, a list of Icelandic lawspeakers likewise from the 9th to the 13th century (DG 11 4to, fol. 23^r–25^v). On the embedding of both lists in the manuscript context and the medieval tradition, see Guðrún Nordal 2001, pp. 50–55; Schneeberger 2020, pp. 118–125.

Þá kalla ég scriptores sem bækur hafa skrifað, eður snúið þeim úr öðrum tungum, meir en kveðið, þó kveðið hafi nokkuð.¹⁰

I designate as *scriptores* those who wrote down books or translated them from other languages, more than they composed, even if they also composed something.

Jón Ólafsson’s definition of the *scriptor* thus does not follow scholastic distinctions between different authorial entities but comprehensively refers to scribes and translators, and it becomes clear in the further course of his treatise that his concept of *scriptor* encompasses various types of multiple authorship, of which the *auctor* is merely a special case.¹¹

In the third section of his *Apparatus*, Jón Ólafsson lists 21 names of medieval Icelanders and the prose texts attributed to them in an analysis of designations by name in the medieval tradition. In this section, Jón identifies some men as the authors of individual works.¹² This primarily concerns works of a historiographical nature on the more recent and older history of Iceland and Norway, translated texts, and poetological treatises. In doing so, Jón Ólafsson repeatedly analyses aspects that are extremely insightful in the context of ideas of multiple authorship, and in which obviously different, incongruent conceptions of authorship stand in conflict with one another. In his discussion of Eiríkr Oddsson’s authorship, he accordingly cites the reference to him in the medieval tradition as the one “er fyrsta sinn ritaði þessa sögu”¹³ (‘who wrote down this story for the first time’). The *fyrsta sinn* (‘for the first time’) implies the starting point of a constant process of writing and rewriting, which becomes even clearer in other passages in his list, such as when, in relation to Haukr Erlendsson, who was working at the beginning of the 14th century, he points out that, in his book of settlements, it says that he wrote it after – that is, on the basis of – the books of settlement by two other men:

10 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 193.

11 For a detailed discussion of the relevant textual passages, see below. On medieval distinctions between various authorial entities in the learned and vernacular traditions, see Minnis 1984; Müller 1995; Kraebel 2019.

12 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, pp. 21–34. The third section of the treatise bears the title “Scriptores Islandici vetustiores, seu ante Reformationem Lutheranam” (Older Icelandic writers, or those before the Lutheran Reformation), followed by a division into two parts: “I. Prosaici veteres” (I. Old prose works) and “II. Poëtæ et poëtriæ” (II. Poets and poetry). Prose texts with authorial attributions are subsumed into the first part, followed by the second and considerably longer part on poets and poetry.

13 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 25. Little is known about Eiríkr Oddsson. He is dated to the 12th century because of the reference to his name as an authority in the historiographical tradition of the 13th century.

Haukur lögmaður Erlendsson hefur ritað eina landnámabók, teste þeirri prentuðu vorri, p. 174. Þar segir að hann ritaði hana eftir landnámabókum er ritað höfðu Sturla lögmaður Þórðarson og Styrmir fróði.¹⁴

The judge Haukur Erlendsson wrote a book of settlements; see our printed version, p. 174. It says there that he wrote it after the books of settlement that the judge Sturla Þórðarson and that Styrmir the Learned had written.

The process of continuing the writing of a text on the basis of earlier models is spelled out even more extensively in the case of Ólafur Þórðarson hvítaskáld (ca. 1210–1259), about whom it is said:¹⁵

Ólafur Þórðarson hvítaskáld er auctor tractatsins í Eddu de orthographia. [...] Í það minnsta er hann hinn fyrsti er það hefur conciperað, en aðrir kannski aukið síðan, eins og um fleira er til gengið.¹⁶

Ólafur Þórðarson hvítaskáld is the *auctor* of the treatise about orthography in the *Edda*. [...] He is at least the first to have conceptualized this, and others may have expanded it later on, as has happened in some cases.

Jón elaborates in particular detail on Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), who was discovered and staged as a central authorial figure, primarily in connection with the transmission of sagas about the history of the Norwegian kingdom in the Scandinavian antiquarian tradition of the 17th century.¹⁷ As with Eiríkr Oddsson and several others, Snorri Sturluson is equally established as an authorial entity in medieval Icelandic textual transmission. For instance, the mythographic, poetic treatise of the *Prose Edda* in the Codex Upsaliensis manuscript from the beginning of the 14th century is introduced, unusually for the Icelandic context, by a rubric designating the title, authorial entity, and medium: *Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson eftir þeim hætti sem hér er skipat*¹⁸ ('This book is called Edda. Snorri Sturluson put it together in the manner explained here'). The explicit naming of Snorri in this manuscript, among other things, has been the inducement since

14 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 27. The printing to which Jón Ólafsson refers here is the first printing of *Landnámabók* from 1688, under the title *Sagan Landnama: Um fyrstu bygging Islands af Nordmönnum*.

15 Concrete dates given for the lives of medieval authors are based on the medieval Icelandic annalistic tradition.

16 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 29.

17 See Jørgensen 2013, p. 53; Rohrbach 2021.

18 Uppsala UB, DG 11, fol. 2^r. The semantic implications of the verb *setja saman* have been discussed extensively in scholarship. For a study of the semantic frames of *setja saman*, see Müller 2020, pp. 127–141; the relevant passage is discussed on pp. 129f. See also Glauser 2010, p. 319, and Stefanie Gropper's contribution in this volume, pp. 229–252.

the 17th century, and ultimately to the present day, for the widespread identification of Snorri as the author of a whole series of works from the Icelandic Middle Ages.¹⁹

Yet Jón Ólafsson deconstructs this incipient staging of an authorial genius in his literary history precisely in his discussion of the works attributed to Snorri,²⁰ and various aspects of multiple authorship come into play in these deconstructions. In relation to the sagas of kings, he highlights that Snorri “hefur ritað, eður látið rita” (‘wrote or caused to be written’). He further states that, on the one hand, Snorri’s text builds on an earlier tradition by Ari the Learned, and that Snorri supplemented this “með ýmsum traditionibus” (‘with various traditions’); and that, on the other hand, ‘some codices [were] supplemented and interpolated by later men’: “Þó eru sumir codices auknir og interpoleraðir af seinni mönnum.”²¹ Snorri’s authorship is thus relativized and multiplied in three directions: firstly, the act of writing is attributed to another entity; secondly, the composition is characterized as the supplementation of a model; and, thirdly and finally, we are made aware of the continued writing of Snorri’s text ‘by later men’ in its further transmission.

His discussion of Snorri’s authorship regarding the aforementioned mythographic and poetological treatise of the *Prose Edda* is similar. Jón Ólafsson writes about this:

Edda [...] er honum eignuð, og því kölluð Snorra-Edda. Meina sumir hún sé rituð hér um 1215, en það getur ei verið fyllilega satt, að hann sé auctor hennar allrar. [...] Þó kann maður ei allsendis að þverneita, né vita, nema Snorri hafi skrifað eitthvað þess konar stutt ágrip, sem aðrir hafi spunnið sinn toga af síðan. En hitt er víst að hann hefur eitthvað skrifað um skálda kenningar og heiti. En það hygg ég sömuleiðis hafi verið stutt ágrip [...] En annar hefur á seculo 14 aukið þetta allt og saman skeytt ýmislega; því þar eru citeruð þeirrar aldar skáld, svo vel sem Snorri sjálfur.²²

The *Edda* is attributed to him and is thus called *Snorra Edda*. Some think it was written here around 1215, but it cannot be entirely true that he is the *auctor* of all of it. [...] Yet no one can entirely deny or know it, apart from that Snorri wrote some brief outline of these things from which others later spun their own ball of wool. But it is certain that he wrote something about the kennings and *heiti* of the skalds. And that, I think, was likewise a brief outline. [...] But someone else in the 14th century expanded all this and put it together differently, for poets of that century are also quoted, as indeed is Snorri himself.

Here, Jón also focuses on the diachronically continued writing of the text and reduces Snorri’s share in the production of the text to drawing up a brief outline that was subsequently expanded and rearranged. Unlike in relation to the sagas of kings, Jón none-

19 The term ‘work’ has been deliberately selected here because in Old Norse studies, authorial attributions to Snorri Sturluson enter especially closely into philological constructions of abstract textual works. See Rohrbach 2021.

20 Jón uses the term *scripta*; Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 31.

21 All quotations are found in Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 31.

22 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 31.

theless identifies Snorri as the originator of a no-longer available original text for the *Edda*, and refers to him as its *auctor*, analogous to Ólafr Þórðarson in connection with the treatise on orthography. Consequently, the term *auctor* in both cases refers to a poetological work on the one hand, and on the other to the identification of a textual origin. Only in a few other places does Jón Ólafsson refer to men as *auctores*. He thus designates Oddr munkr (12th century) as the author of three works, namely *Skjöldunga saga*, *Yngvars saga víðförla*, and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* – though this is connected to a harsh critique of the textual form of the works attributed to him, which is unique for an early author in the *Apparatus*.²³ On Sæmundr the Learned (1056–1103), Jón Ólafsson notes that he knows nothing about his authorship for certain: “Ég veit í sannleika ekki hvað hann hefur skrifað eður er auctor til”²⁴ (‘In truth, I do not know what he wrote or of what he is the *auctor*’). Finally, the term also appears in a quotation of Árni Magnússon in relation to *Grettis saga*, which will be discussed in more detail in due course.

3. Claptrap and Fabrications

The processes described by Jón Ólafsson of the continued writing, expansion, and interpolation of texts in diachrony were not represented in such a neutral manner by all his contemporaries. More explicit evaluations of such interpolations are found in the case of Jón’s teacher Árni Magnússon – for example, with regard to the late medieval manuscript compilation *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol.), which he attests to contain a great deal of ‘claptrap.’ In an exchange of letters with the judge Páll Vídalín (1667–1727), he writes about a saga:

Hier excipera eg Olafs sögu ur Flateyjar bók (af henne hafed þier og copie), því hun er ödruvís enn allar adrar, og pessime interpolerud af þeim radlausa Flateyar bokar compilatore, sem þar hefur innsett þvætting og fabulas [...].²⁵

- 23 The works attributed to Oddr munkr are fundamentally evaluated negatively by Jón Ólafsson (*Safn til Íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 28) due to their fabulous character: “Nefnd Ólafs saga er þó svo fabulosa að annaðhvert hefur hann, eður hinir er honum sögðu, verið fjarskalegir fabulatores. [...] Ég þegi um Yngvars sögu, sem næstum ótrúlegt er að nefndur Gissur, eður Jón Loftsson, hafi viljað eiga nokkurn þátt í, eður viljað vita af, naumast að eiga” (‘The aforementioned *Ólafs saga* is so fabulous that either he or those who told it to him were immense fabulists. [...] I am silent about *Yngvars saga*; it is almost unbelievable that the aforementioned Gissur [Hallsson] or Jón Loftsson had some share in it or knew about it, let alone wanted to own it’). The property of the fabulous is otherwise attributed to late medieval texts only; see below.
- 24 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 33.
- 25 Árni Magnússon’s note on *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol.), AM 76 b II fol., fol. 25^v, 26^r. See Arne Magnusson’s private brevveksling, p. 662; Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir 2000, p. 96. For Árni Magnússon’s critical assessment of *Flateyjarbók*, see also Glauser 1998, pp. 34f.

I excerpt here the Óláfs saga from Flateyjarbók (of which you also have a copy), because it is different from all the others, and most poorly interpolated by the ignorant compiler of Flateyjarbók, who has inserted claptrap and *fabulæ* there [...].

The emphasis that the saga is 'different from all the others,' combined with the damning judgement of the text, reveals that at this juncture the characteristics of open textual cultures and multiple authorship collided with the concerns of early philologists, and that the textuality of this manuscript evidently and clearly transgressed the limits of accepted textual variance in manuscript transmission.

Such judgemental remarks about processes of multiple authorship are also found with Jón Ólafsson, albeit only occasionally. He cites two significant cases, exclusively in relation to post-Reformation traditions, in which a saga was 'fabricated' or new episodes were 'fabricated into' an old saga:

Jón Þorláksson sýslumaður hefur logið upp sögunni af Ármanni og Þorsteini gála, en Jón Guðmundsson hefur gjört rímurnar. Sami Jón hefur og logið 7 þáttum inn í Óláfs sögu.²⁶

The bailiff Jón Þorláksson fabricated the saga of Ármann and Þorsteinn gáli, and Jón Guðmundsson made the *rímur* for it. The same Jón also fabricated seven *þættir* [i.e. short episodes or narratives, L.R.] into Óláfs saga.

The selected terminology of *ljúga upp* and *ljúga inn* – the 'fabricating' and 'fabricating into' – in turn implies that there is a 'correct' text or a 'correct' tradition that is corrupted by these texts, or rather by the two men. In the case of *Óláfs saga*, as with *Flateyjarbók*, this concerns a saga about the history of the Norwegian kings, and thus a work close to the historiographical tradition; in the other case of *Ármanns saga*, it concerns a saga in the form of a *Saga of the Icelanders*, which narrates the events around the time of the settlement of Iceland in the 10th century.²⁷ *Ármanns saga* is mentioned twice at the very beginning of the apparatus in lists of sagas that are "öldungis upplognar" ('completely fabricated') or "ofur þurslega lognar" ('overly grossly fabricated').²⁸ In addition to *Ármann saga*, both these lists contain narratives that were extremely popular in espe-

26 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 10.

27 On Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga* and Árni Magnússon's preoccupation with this text, see Knöpfle 2021. In the case of *Ármanns saga*, Árni Magnússon is more reserved in his assessment than his pupil when he writes about it in a catalogue of Icelandic works preserved in a transcript: "Nefndan Söguþátt hefur Jon Þorlaksson sealfur componerad i prosam efter Ármanns Rímum Jons lærda, og hefur Jon siálfur þetta fyrer mer medkent" ('Jón Þorláksson himself composed the aforementioned saga in prose after the *Ármanns rímur* of Jón the Learned, and Jón himself informed me of this'; NKS 1836 4to, Part 2, p. 18). See Jón Helgason 1980, p. 40.

28 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 6.

cially the late premodern period, which are traditionally categorized as legendary or mythic sagas in modern scholarship, as well as translated chivalric sagas and individual *Sagas of the Icelanders* and *þættir* recorded later on, such as *Króka-Refs saga* or *Brandkrossa þáttur*.²⁹ Jón Ólafsson defines the status of their fabrication predominantly based on the existence of fantastical elements: “Það er mark á þeim er íslenskir hafa sjálfir logið, að þar er oftast að eiga við jötna, tröll, berserki, töfra og þvílíkt”³⁰ (‘The characteristic of those [sagas] that Icelanders fabricated themselves is that they mostly concern giants, trolls, berserkers, magic, and similar matters’). Following these statements, falsity is thus linked, in Jón’s understanding, to characteristics related to content; at the same time, however, he also repeatedly refers this condition back to aesthetic characteristics identified as later amplifications and revisions in relation to narratives of non-fabricated material, as in the case of *Óláfs saga*.

4. Sagas (of the Icelanders), Collective Authorship, and Authorial Genius

Jón Ólafsson reflects similarly on adaptations of narrative material for other sagas that modern scholars assign to the textual group of the *Sagas of the Icelanders*. As a whole, the *Sagas of the Icelanders* are mentioned only peripherally in Jón Ólafsson’s treatise. Unlike the sagas of kings or the contemporary sagas, for instance, the *Sagas of the Icelanders* – which become tangible in written form from the 13th century onwards, and which tell of the Icelandic society of the 9th and 10th centuries – are never linked to named authors in the medieval manuscript tradition itself.³¹ Likewise, the *Sagas of the Icelanders* are almost entirely absent from Jón’s list of authors. In the opening section of the *Apparatus*, directly preceding the remarks on fabricated sagas, there is instead a detailed reflection on the background to the emergence of the *Sagas of the Icelanders*, which, unlike the historiographical works central to his subsequent discussion, are ‘expanded and deduced’ from genuine material.³²

29 On the prominence of these textual groupings with an affinity for the fantastic in late medieval and early modern Icelandic transmission, see Glauser 1983; Glauser 1994; Driscoll 1994.

30 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 6.

31 For a more detailed discussion of the aesthetic structure of multiple authorship in the *Sagas of the Icelanders*, see Stefanie Gropper’s chapter in this volume, pp. 229–252.

32 The tripartite division into true, half-true, and fabricated stories identified by Jón Helgason 1926, p. 195, can be deduced from Jón’s text only implicitly, at least for the first two categories, but evidently goes back to the classical tradition; see Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2015, pp. 43 f.

Flestar vorar sögur (exceptis Ara fróða Schedis, Landnáma sögur, Sturlunga sögu, Noregskonunga sögum og nokkrum annálum) eru auknar og diduceraðar út úr sönnu efni [...]. Mennirnir hafa verið, og höfuðpassasernir, en aukið og amplificerað ýmislega, svo áheyrilega skyldi verða. Meðal slíkra reikna ég Vatnsdæla sögu, Laxdæla sögu, Eyrbyggja sögu, Svarfdæla sögu, Ísfirðinga sögu, Grettis sögu, Njáls sögu etc. Munkar hafa í þeirri tíð gjört sér fait af að dikta og samansetja slíkt til að ávinna með því fé og laun.³³

Most of our sagas (with the exception of Ari the Learned's *Schedæ*, the sagas of settlements, *Sturlunga saga*, the sagas of the kings of Norway, and some annals) are expanded and deduced from genuine material [...]. The people and major events existed, but were expanded and amplified in various ways to make them worth listening to. Among these, I count *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Ísfirðinga saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Njáls saga*, etc. At that time, monks made it a habit to compose and put together such things in order to acquire wealth and reward.³⁴

By naming monks as the ones who ‘composed and put together’ these narratives, which were elaborated and deduced from genuine material, and who also expanded and amplified them to make them worth listening to, Jón’s account remains cautious with regard to individual authorship, instead presenting the *Sagas of the Icelanders* as a product of collective authorship in a bygone era.³⁵

In his list of authors, Jón mentions only two sagas, after all, which are traditionally grouped among the *Sagas of the Icelanders*. On the one hand, with recourse to notes by Árni Magnússon, he discusses the extent to which *Grettis saga*, cited in his initial list, can be ascribed to Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), a nephew of Snorri Sturluson, because it ‘breathes’ the genius of this 13th-century skald:

Sumir hafa meint [Sturla] væri author til Grettis sögu, kannski það Björn á Skarðsá hafi svo meint. En það man ég fyrir víst að Páll lögmaður meinti svo, því honum þóttu vísurnar í henni spirera genium Sturlu, er var eitt hið merkilegasta skáld, sem sjá má af Hákonar sögur og víðar.³⁶

33 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 6.

34 This probably refers to the book of settlements (*Landnámabók*). For contemporary conceptions of *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingabók* or *Schedæ* of Ari the Learned, see Rösli 2021.

35 By contrast, Árni Magnússon discusses the truthfulness of the Icelandic sagas much more critically than his pupil, focusing decidedly on the (late) authorship of individual men in a negative manner: “Flestar af vorum Íslensku sögum eru skrifadar af hominibus historices penitus ignavis et chronologiæ imperitis, eru þar í mesta part scitur indigna, amplificerud med ærnum orðafiölda, item res confusissime tracterader, og mart aukid og ósatt [...], flestar eru og skrifadar so seint, ad autores kunnu ei vel vita veritatem gestorum” (‘Most of our Icelandic sagas have been written by men not familiar with the course of historical events or dates. They mostly contain inessential things, expanded with immense quantities of words, as well as confusingly treated events, and much is added or untrue [...]; most are also written so late that the authors could not have known the truth of the events’; NKS 1836 4to, Part 2, p. 79). See Jón Helgason 1980, p. 63.

36 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 33; see also p. 20.

Some have said that [Sturla] was the author of *Grettis saga*; perhaps Björn from Skarðsá meant this. Yet I certainly remember that the judge Páll [Vídalín] said this, because he thought that the verses in it breathed the genius of Sturla, who was one of the most remarkable skalds, as may be seen in *Hákonar saga* and elsewhere.

Árni Magnússon himself recorded the following in his notes on *Grettis saga*:

Grettis saga gengur nær *Fabulæ* enn *Historiæ*, er full med *Fabulas* <og> parachronismos. er interpolerud úr einhvöriu opere Sturla Þórðarsonar, og hans ætla eg vísurnar se. *Grettissaga* sú er vær höfum er interpolerud úr þeirri er Sturla Þórðarson hefur ritad, og það kannske seint á tímum. Interpolator mun hafa sett *fabulas* þar inn. Eg minnst mig ad hafa sed gamalt fragment úr þessari *Grettissögu*. Annars er ei óvíst at *Grettissaga* Sturlu hafe og *fabulosa* verid, og líkara þike mer ad Sturla muni hafa komid vid Visurnar er standa í þeirri sem vær nú höfum. Þessi saga er *fabulis plena*.³⁷

Grettis saga is closer to a *fabula* than a *historia*; it is full of *fabulæ* and parachronisms. It is interpolated from some work by Sturla Þórðarson, and I assume that the stanzas are his. The *Grettis saga* that we have is interpolated from the one written by Sturla Þórðarson, perhaps at a late date. The interpolator will have inserted the *fabulæ* at that point. I remember having seen an old fragment from this *Grettis saga*. Otherwise, it is not uncertain that Sturla's *Grettis saga* was also fabulous, and it seems to me more likely that Sturla will have contributed the stanzas that now exist in the one we now have. This saga is full of *fabulæ*.

Significantly, Árni Magnússon and Jón Ólafsson do not focus on the characteristics of the prose narrative but rather on the aesthetics of the embedded stanzas in order to identify the author and thus its associated early dating; for them, the fabulous quality that does not correspond to their aesthetic ideal cannot be reconciled with the positively connoted medieval *scriptor* Sturla Þórðarson.³⁸ In addition to *Grettis saga*, Jón Ólafsson

37 NKS 1836 4to, Part 2, pp. 34f. See Jón Helgason 1980, p. 49.

38 *Grettis saga* was and still is categorized, not least because of its 'fabulous' character, by scholarship as a 'postclassical' saga, together with some other *Sagas of the Icelanders*, including the aforementioned *Króka-Refs saga*, which Jón classed as a fabricated saga. This categorization originates in a constructed aesthetic ideal of the 13th-century classical saga, which is not methodologically unproblematic and integrally embedded in nationalist discourses, and which has long been at the centre of scholarly attention. This idea is methodologically problematic not least because many of the sagas dated to this period are preserved only from a much later period. The idealization of the 13th century and the actors known from this period goes back specifically to the so-called 'Icelandic School' in the first half of the 20th century, which stylized it as the heyday of Icelandic culture before the loss of political independence; in 1262, Iceland became part of the Kingdom of Norway, which in turn became part of the Kingdom of Denmark at the end of the 14th century, and it was only in 1918–1944 that Iceland became an independent state (O'Connor 2017, p. 90). In an attempt at reconciling these politicized aesthetic ideals with the existing textual aesthetics of *Grettis saga*, Sigurður Nordal 1938, p. 30, one of the most prominent figures in Iceland's national

ascribes to Sturla three works of contemporary Icelandic and Norwegian historiography, namely *Íslendinga saga* (which survives integrated into *Sturlunga saga*), *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, and *Magnúss saga lagabætis*, as well as a version of *Landnámabók* and the poetological treatise *Háttalykill*.³⁹ In relation to these works, Jón does not use the term *auctor* but rather describes Sturla's authorial activity using the verbs *skrifa* ('to write') and *setja saman* ('to put together'). In the section on ancient poets, however, he refers to Sturla as the *auctor* of the verses and prose of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*: "Hann er auctor svo vel til allra vísnanna í sögu Hákonar kóngs Hákonarsonar sem sjálfrar sögunnar"⁴⁰ ('He is the *auctor* of all the verses in the saga of King Hákon Hákonarson, as well as of the saga itself'). Jón's description of Sturla's authorship thus, on the one hand, reflects on positive assessments of inscriptions into processes of multiple authorship, which, on the other hand, are connected to an endeavour to identify individual authorship, especially of historiographical and poetological literature, while acknowledging original authorship primarily in connection to poetry.

5. Sagas (of the Icelanders), Philologists, and Impostors

The second *Saga of the Icelanders* mentioned in Jón Ólafsson's list of authors is *Heiðarvíga saga*. Jón Ólafsson reflects on the textual status of *Heiðarvíga saga* and mentions that he produced a compendium of this saga himself.⁴¹ *Heiðarvíga saga* survives to this day only in fragments, after part of the only extant medieval manuscript of the saga and a copy

literary historiography, went a step further following the attributions of authorship made by the proto-philologists and propagated the existence of a lost, classical first version of *Grettis saga* authored by Sturla Þórðarson, which was then subsequently 'watered down' in a second version. In the meantime, scholarship now assumes that *Grettis saga* dates from the late 14th or even 15th century, and thus clearly after Sturla Þórðarson's lifetime. On the dating of *Grettis saga*, see Örnólfur Thorsson 1994; Seelow 2005. One of the first monographic studies on sagas that do not correspond to the classical ideal and their treatment in the history of scholarship was Arnold 2003; there are now numerous studies of late medieval narrative traditions; see O'Connor 2017, p. 93. On the longstanding contempt for late medieval transmission in the Icelandic context, see Glauser 1998, pp. 35–37.

39 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 33. *Háttalykill* is a register of skaldic metrics, which Jón Ólafsson translated, along with other lists of this type, probably around 1737; see Jón Helgason 1926, pp. 95f.

40 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 49.

41 Jón Ólafsson: *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, p. 8: "Heiðarvíga saga, aðrir kalla Víðdæla sögu, hefur aldrei verið annað en appendix Styrs sögu. Vide minn formála fyrir framan compendium mitt af nefndri Styrs sögu" ('*Heiðarvíga saga*, which others call *Víðdæla saga*, was never anything other than an appendix to *Styrs saga*. See my preface to my compendium of the aforementioned *Styrs saga*').

by Jón Ólafsson were destroyed in the Great Fire of Copenhagen in 1728.⁴² Jón reconstructed the part lost in the fire in a summarized form from memory and appended lists of archaic word forms, as well as of characters, periods, and locations in this saga, to this summary.⁴³ Due to the loss of the medieval text, Jón's manuscript, evidently existing in and emerging from a scholarly context, was the only remaining textual trace of this saga and was consequently copied in a number of manuscripts, in each case with the inclusion of Jón's introductory note that it was written down from memory.⁴⁴ Lbs 132 4to, the oldest surviving intact copy of Jón's *Inntak*, precedes the introductory comments with a longer preface attributed to Jón Ólafsson, in which, among other things, it says:

Um Nöfn þeirra Manna sem lítit koma við Söguna hefi eg umgetit hvar eg eigi man þau glögt, so og um Bæja-Nöfn, var mer eigi auðvelt þau at muna, því eg hefi hvorki verid í Eyrarsveit en þar í Borgarfirði, sem Sagan mest um getur, og eru þar Sveitir so ad segia mer allz okunnar.⁴⁵

I have conjectured the names of people who only appear peripherally in the saga where I have not properly remembered them, and likewise the names of farms; it was not easy for me to remember them because I have not been to the regions around Eyri or to the places in Borgarfjörður with which the saga deals the most, and the areas there are, so to say, entirely unknown to me.

Unlike in the case of *Ármanns saga*, which is given the label 'fabricated,' Jón's own 'new writing' of *Heiðarvígá saga* is therefore disqualified neither by him nor by his contemporaries, but rather treated as a legitimate substitute for approximating a lost text. The situation looks different with regard to the recent textual tradition of another *Saga of the Icelanders*. The version in question of one of the best-known *Sagas of the Icelanders* – commonly known as *Vitlausa Egla*, the inverted *Egils saga* – has not been edited to this

42 The surviving medieval manuscript is Holm perg. 18 4to (c. 1300); another single-page fragment of the saga is Lbs frg 1 (ca. 1300–1350). On the textuality and transmission of *Heiðarvígá saga*, see Driscoll 2006, pp. xviii f.

43 The summary and both lists are preserved in Lbs 442 4to, an autograph by Jón Ólafsson from 1730: "Inntak sögubrotsins af Víga-Styr" ('Contents of the fragment of *Víga-Styrs saga*'), "Archaismi et loquendi modi rariores úr þessari Víga-Styrs sögu" ('Archaisms and rare phrases from this *Víga-Styrs saga*,' fol. 26^v–28^r), and "Nokkrar líkligar tilgátur um mennina, tímenn og staðinn sem heiðarvíginn snerta" ('Some probable assumptions about the people, times, and places that concern the battle on the heath,' fol. 29^r–31^v).

44 Copies of the *Inntak*, sometimes together with both lists, are found in six manuscripts from the 18th and early 19th centuries. For a detailed discussion, see Driscoll 2006, p. xix. The introductory notes state: "Nota: mm. merkir, minnir mig, og eg er eigi fullvið um. SS. merkir segir Sagan, o: það sem er Sögunnar egin Ord" ('Note: mm. means "I remember," but I am not completely certain. SS. means "the saga says," that is, these are the saga's own words,' quoted after Lbs 132 4to, fol. 3^r; the note is on fol. 1^r in Jón Ólafsson's autograph Lbs 442 4to, but fol. 1^r is preserved only fragmentarily). For the tentativeness expressed in the course of the *Inntak*, see also Jón Helgason 1926, p. 44.

45 Lbs 132 4to, fol. 1^v.

day and has been examined rudimentarily only in isolated studies.⁴⁶ The ‘inverted’ *Egils saga*, which is transmitted in four manuscripts, diverges from the three surviving versions of the medieval tradition in both its content and narrative style and stands parallel and unconnected to contemporaneous copies of the medieval textual tradition.⁴⁷ This more recent version of *Egils saga* is based on early modern poetic compositions of the saga that were retransformed into prose.⁴⁸ In the process, the narrative was comprehensively adapted to 17th-century usage in terms of vocabulary and style.⁴⁹ Thus, among other things, dialogues are designed to be more verbose; the syntax is phrased more hypotactically; the genealogies omnipresent in medieval saga tradition, as well as secondary characters, have been struck from the narrative; and the main characters are drawn in a more contrasting and drastic manner, with conspicuous attention given to descriptions of battles.⁵⁰

Árni Magnússon and his entourage also find critical words for this younger version of *Egils saga*. As in the case of *Flateyjarbók*, one of Árni Magnússon’s scribes – not identified by name, but in whose hand the saga’s first four folios are written – attests that it is ‘different from all other *Egils saga* s’ and must have been composed ‘recently’:

Þessi Egils Saga er skrifuð epter bók i folio frá Syslumanninum Olafi Einarßyni. Er hún ölik öllum öðrum Egils sögum, og að visu nylega componeruð af einhverium Islenskum, kanskie Sigurde á Kner, sem bókina ritad hefur.⁵¹

- 46 In his edition of *Egils saga*, Finnur Jónsson 1886–1888, p. xxviii, remarked in his introductory account of the manuscript tradition: “Ved denne omarbejdelse [...] er der ingen grund til at dvæle” (‘There is no reason to concern oneself with this version’). Michael Chesnutt 2006, p. lvii, similarly deals with this adaptation only briefly on one page in his edition of the C-redaction of the saga. The only two short studies of this version to date are Stefán Karlsson 1995 and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015.
- 47 The younger *Egils saga* is preserved in AM 163r fol. (1650–1700), Holm papp. 15 fol. (1650–1700), AM 454 4to (1700–1725), and Oslo NB 313 fol. (18th century); see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015, p. 181.
- 48 See Stefán Karlsson 1964, p. 9; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015, pp. 180f. There is currently a dissertation project by Nikola Macháčková on the transmission of *Egils rímur* and the younger *Egils saga* underway at the University of Iceland.
- 49 See Stefán Karlsson 1995, p. 70: “Stíll sögunnar er svo rækilega bylt, að varla mun þar finnast heil málsgrein sem sé tekin óbreytt úr gömlu sögunni” (‘The style of the saga is so thoroughly rejigged that one can hardly find an entire paragraph there that has been adopted unchanged from the old saga’).
- 50 See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015, pp. 182–193.
- 51 Supplementary note to the manuscript AM 454 4to (AM 454 4to, Acc Mat, fol. 1r). Similarly in the catalogue entry of the *Catalogus Librorum Arnæ Magnæi*, written by Jón Ólafsson in AM 384 fol. f. 17^v: “Eigels Saga, ölik öðrum (meinast nydiktud)” (‘*Egils saga*, different from others (seems to be newly composed)’); see also Thott 1046 fol., p. 90.

This *Egils saga* is written following a book in folio form of the bailiff Ólafur Einarsson. It is different from all other *Egils sagas* and surely composed recently by some Icелander – maybe by Sigurður á Knór, who wrote the book.

Further remarks in Árni Magnússon's hand on the identity of the author accompany this neutral statement:

Mig minner, eg hafi einhversstadar, epter sögu Sigurdar ä Knór, ad hann þessa Egilssögu ritad hafi epter hendi lærda Gísla i Melrakkadal, og er þä Gisle, öefad, author bokarinar. Gisle var ad visu sannreyndr impostor. Enn Sigurdur var frömur madr.⁵²

I remember that I [found out] somewhere, following the account of Sigurður á Knór, that he had written this *Egils saga* after the hand of Gísli the Learned from Melrakkadalur, and Gísli is then doubtless the *author* of the book. Gísli was certainly a veritable fraud. But Sigurður was a devout man.

In this account, the text is thus not only discarded from the corpus of the medieval textual tradition as newly composed, but Árni Magnússon goes yet further in identifying a certain Gísli from Melrakkadalur as the author of this text, who is known as a veritable fraud, and in turn excludes the authorship of a man named Sigurður known to be devout. Gísli is also portrayed as “obscurus et obscuri generis homo” and “magiæ suspectus” in other literary-historical treatises, such as Hálfðan Einarsson's *Sciagraphia Historiae Literariae Islandicae autorum et scriptorum tum ineditorum indicem exhibens*.⁵³ Unlike *Ármanns saga*, the new composition of *Egils saga* is not explicitly categorized as ‘fabricated,’ but ultimately it is similarly contextualized in an implicit manner through the identification of a suspect candidate as the author of this version.

52 AM 454 4to, Acc Mat, fol. 1^{r/v}. See also Jón Samsonarson 1979, pp. 50f.

53 Hálfðan Einarsson: *Sciagraphia Historiae Literariae Islandicae*, p. 79: “Gislavus Johannis, Melrakkadalensis, magiæ suspectus, & variorum carminum superstitiosorum auctor, Historiam Ala-flecki carmine pertexuit. Obiit repentina morte 1671. Gislavus Johannis, obscurus & obscuri generis homo, qvem a priore distingvendum puto, Historiam Sigurgardi & Valbrandi & fabulam de Alafleck metro reddidit” (‘Gislavus Johannis from Melrakkadalur, suspected of sorcery and author of various superstitious songs, composed in verse the *historia* of Áli flekkr. Died a sudden death in 1671. Gislavus Johannis, a sinister man and of sinister nature, whom I believe I am able to distinguish from the previous one, reworked the tale of Sigurgarður and Valbrandur and the *fabula* of Áli flekkr in verse’). On Gísli Jónsson's evaluation by his contemporaries, see Jón Samsonarson 1979. See also Páll Eggert Ólason 1949, p. 61.

6. Conclusions

In Árni Magnússon's and Jón Ólafsson's literary-historical elaborations, a juxtaposition of various connotations of authorship becomes clear. For one thing, the traditional narrative of the aesthetic prevalence of nameable, individual authors is confirmed in the Icelandic discursions of the 18th century. At the same time, however, the Icelandic context also shows a shift in the traditional connection of individual authorship with originality and innovation and of multiple authorship with ideas of epigonism, where authors who act too freely 'fabricate into' the tradition and evidently do not appropriately reproduce the time-honoured tradition in accordance with the expectations of contemporary recipients. It becomes clear from the attributions in Jón Ólafsson's *Apparatus* that multiple authorship is seen as the default state of textual transmission and that individual actors are identified in this process but are generally located only as one of a text's many formative entities, unless their intervention transgresses a certain framework and leads to a text marked as other and as divergent, which is subsequently linked with an individual author.

In the context of premodern Icelandic saga literature, two different types of practices and processes of multiple authorship can be identified as part of this context, for which I would like to suggest the terms consecutive and simultaneous multiple authorship. The literary-historical and proto-philological discourses of the 18th century already illustrate the consecutive textual and scribal traditions building on one another. This type of multiple authorship is a form of diachronic authorship through continued writing. At the same time, however, the transmission of saga literature is also characterized by a simultaneous multiplicity of production, or rather of productive reception, by parallel strands of transmission running synchronously and diachronically beside one another, as is also captured by the concepts of *variance* and *mouvance*, now omnipresent in the analysis of premodern textuality.⁵⁴ Consecutive and simultaneous multiplicity are evidently accepted by the scholars of the 18th century as belonging to tradition, and the establishment of a concept of individual authorship in this period takes place through engagement with this multiplicity of authorship and transmission. Yet there are also obviously limits to the acceptable divergence of consecutive and simultaneous multiplicity.

The positions of Jón Ólafsson and his contemporaries can be closely linked to the formation of a canon for the medieval textual tradition which began in this period. From Jón's catalogues and explanations, it becomes clear that variance – particularly in terms of additions and interpolations – is acceptable in the medieval tradition, even if it is not always esteemed; by contrast, in the contemporary textual tradition and transmission, it contravenes the conventions of the period and leads to exclusion from the canon. The proto-philologists and antiquarian scholars of the 18th century, anxious to preserve the

54 For the concept of *mouvance*, see Zumthor 1972; for *variance*, Cerquiglini 1989.

medieval textual tradition, defined the canon of the ‘correct’ tradition with their aesthetic value judgements, and also excluded from this canon both the continued writing of old texts and the additions of new texts that ‘fabricated into’ this old tradition of saga narration. It is precisely the 18th-century texts that violate tradition and were banned from the canon as a result, such as *Vitlausa Egl*a, that allow for insights into a literary saga tradition that was still productive in the 18th century, and which indeed still operated in the mode of consecutive multiple authorship, yet which embellished it under different auspices and more freely in order to develop its own new texts in connection with tradition.

Many of the literary-historical positions taken by 18th-century proto-philologists influence debates in literary studies and the formation of categories for premodern Icelandic prose literature to this day. The canon of Icelandic literature, first outlined in the 18th century, shaped and still shapes recognized aesthetic ideals and the continued, strangely anachronistic pursuit to identify nameable, individual *auctores* in an anonymous sphere of open textual transmission.

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