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## HRÓMUNDUR IN PROSE AND VERSE

### *On the Relationships between Four Versions of the Story of Hrómundur Greipsson* \*

#### Introduction

THINKING of medieval Icelandic literature, one of the first associations that comes to mind is probably the famous saga form, which has its origins in the twelfth century and blossomed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Even though this form of literary production is usually associated with the medieval period, the writing of the sagas did not stop with the end of the Middle Ages, as Icelanders continued to produce sagas throughout the early modern period and all the way into the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> This long life of saga literature, entertaining generations of Icelanders, makes the saga into a truly timeless literary form. However, it is not the sole Icelandic literary form to have stood the test of time. *Rímur* (sg. *ríma*), a form of Icelandic secular poetry (metrical romances), have an almost equally long history – spanning from the fourteenth century onwards – even though their popularity as a research subject is nowhere near that of sagas.<sup>2</sup> What

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1 For an introduction to saga literature see, for example, publications by McTurk (2005), Clover and Lindow (1985), and Stefán Einarsson (1961). On post-medieval saga-production, see, for example, works by Driscoll (1997; 2006; 2012; 2017). One could even say that the saga form, if not strictly practised today, has influence on modern literary landscape, delivering inspirations for works such as Halldór Laxness' novel *Gerpla* and Einar Kárason's novels *Óvinafagnaður* and *Ofsi*.

2 For a detailed overview of *rímur* see the publications by Björn K. Þórólfsson (1934), Craigie

is well known to literary historians of Iceland, but perhaps escapes the attention of non-specialised audiences, is that these two forms, sagas and *rímur*, coexisted in the literary landscape of Iceland for many centuries, and various stories travelled freely between them, changing forms from prose to verse and back.<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenon of poetry-based prose and prose-based poetry existed in medieval and early modern Iceland across all genres of Icelandic literature, but when it comes to certain genres, such as, for example, legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), the fact that many sagas have poetic counterparts can be considered a key characteristic. At the same time, the number of studies devoted to this phenomenon has traditionally been relatively low. Researchers tended to focus either on the prose manifestation of the story or on its metric manifestations, rarely engaging in a discussion of the relationship between subsequent literary manifestations of the same story or the process of adaptation *per se*. Similarly, younger adaptations of older narratives were usually ignored, due to their secondary position in relation to their older and more original counterparts. Luckily, our understanding of Icelandic literary production from a diachronic perspective is expanding, as this attitude has been changing in the past few decades, with studies by, among others, Peter Jorgensen (1990; 1997), Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2001), and Philip Lavender (2020).

Among the narratives that have an extremely rich transmission and adaptation history is a story of Hrómundur, son of Gripur (or Greipur), which exists in many literary manifestations created at different periods of time, in different styles and genres, and in different languages. The story of Hrómundur used to exist in one form or another in the Middle Ages, as according to *Þorgils saga og Hafliða* – a part of the thirteenth-century *Sturlunga* compilation – *Hrómundar saga* was recited at the wedding feast in Reykhólar in the year 1119 to entertain the wedding guests (Brown, ed. 1952, 17–18; Brown 1946–53; Foote 1953–57). The contents of that story may have been to a certain extent different from what we know from extant adaptations dealing with the same material, since some of the episodes

(1938; 1949; 1952), and Stefán Einarsson (1955), as well as more recent works by Davíð Erlingsson (1987; 1989), Vésteinn Ólason (1993), Hughes (1980; 1982; 2005), and Sverrir Tómasson (2005; 2012).

3 As an introduction to the subject of coexistence of the saga and *rímur* forms – with focus on *rímur*-based sagas, see Jorgensen (1990).

present in the known manifestations are not mentioned in *Þorgils saga og Hafliða* (cf. Kölbing 1876, 185; Andrews 1912, 396–97; Björn K. Þórolfsson 1934, 354; Holtsmark 1961, 314–18; Jesch 1984, 96–97). Similar material is utilized in the Scandinavian ballads: in the Danish *Rigen Rambolt og Aller hin stærke, Ungen Ranild* (Grundtvig, ed. 1853, 1:358–74), and *Ramund* (Nyerup and Rahbek, eds. 1813, 4:334–40), the Norwegian *Ramund den unge* (Landstad, ed. 1853, 189–95), and the Swedish *Ramunder* (Arwidsson, ed. 1834, 114–20).

So far, only a fraction – mostly the medieval fraction – of the rich transmission and adaptation history of this story has been the subject of scholarly investigation, mainly due to the saga's relevance for the discussion of the origins of legendary sagas as well as the modes of their composition and performance in the medieval period. Scholars focused on the lost saga of Hrómundur and its medieval metric adaptation in the form of *rímur*, while the post-medieval adaptations have been less interesting for scholarship. This resulted in sparse knowledge of the long-lasting and fascinating transmission history of the story of Hrómundur in prose and verse, which has been present in the cultural landscape of Scandinavia in one form or another for almost a millennium; with the most recent adaptation of the story being in a form of a metal song performed by a Faroese Viking Metal band (Kapitan forthcoming).

The present study focuses on the Icelandic tradition of the story of Hrómundur, which includes the medieval metric manifestation of the story called *Griplur*, or *Hrómundar rímur Gripssonar* (Simek and Hermann Pálsson 2007, 130), a seventeenth-century prose manifestation of the story called *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar (17HsG)* (Simek and Hermann Pálsson 2007, 196), a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century prose manifestation also called *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar (19HsG)* (unmentioned in the secondary literature), and a nineteenth-century versification called *Rímur af Hrómundi Greipssyni (RHG)* composed by Sigfús Jónsson from Klungurbrekka (Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, I:262). While the older versions of the story are well known to scholarship and are available in multiple editions and translations, the younger versions remained unknown until very recently, and no edition of these texts yet exists.<sup>4</sup> The present

4 *Griplur* have been edited twice by Finnur Jónsson (1896; 1905–22); they were most likely composed in the second half of the fourteenth century, but the earliest known manuscript

study is a first attempt to reveal the relationships between four versions of the story of Hrómundur in Icelandic, two sagas and two sets of *rímur* – which appear to be very closely related – with the main aim of identifying the influences present in the younger saga of Hrómundur, which has hitherto remained unknown, and the younger *rímur* of Hrómundur, which have hitherto been rather sparsely treated in the scholarly literature. The possibility of the influence of the lost *rímur* of Hrómundur composed in the years 1775–77 by Benedikt Gröndal (Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, I:263) is also taken into consideration, but since no witness of this work survives, the possible influences remain purely hypothetical.

The present study is organized into five analytical sections, each devoted to relationships between different manifestations of the story. The first section looks at the relationship between the older saga and the medieval *rímur*. The second, third, and fourth sections are focused on the younger saga and its relationship to the older saga and the medieval *rímur*. Finally, the fifth section examines the sources of the younger set of *rímur* of Hrómundur. The main findings of these five sections are summarized in the last section of this article, where their relevance and perspectives for future research are outlined.

## The Relationship between *17HsG* and *Griplur*

The relationship between the two oldest extant versions of the story of Hrómundur, *17HsG* and *Griplur*, has been a matter of scholarly discussion for over a century now. Eugen Kölbing (1876, 182) suggested that the *rímur*

dates to the late fifteenth century. The seventeenth-century saga is the only prose manifestation of the story of Hrómundur known to scholarly discourse. It was first edited by Biorner (1737) and later included in Rafn's (1829–30) edition of the *fornaldarsögur*. The existence of the younger set of *rímur* of Hrómundur has been registered in *Rímnatal* (Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, I:262), but no edition of their text yet exists. The younger prose adaptation of the story, which is preserved exclusively in nineteenth-century manuscripts, has remained unknown to scholarship until very recently (Kapitan 2018). There is also a post-medieval metric adaptation called *Hrómundar kvæði Grippsonar*, which was published by Andrews (1911) and later Jón Helgason (1979, 173–79) but is not included in this analysis, as according to Andrews' (1911, 540–44) observations of the differences between *kvæði* and the *rímur*, the relationship between them cannot be established with certainty using the method applied in this study. Andrews (1912, 397) seems convinced that the *kvæði* were composed based on the *rímur*, while Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2014, 5–6; 2018, 26) does not exclude the possibility that they are based on the lost saga.

and the saga are independent of each other and that both can be traced to the lost medieval saga of Hrómundur. This idea was rejected by Andrews (1911), who considered the saga to be derived from the *rímur*. Similarly, the editor of the *rímur*, Finnur Jónsson (1905–22, 409–10), commenting briefly on the discrepancies between the saga and the *rímur*, also concluded that the saga is based on the *rímur* (Finnur Jónsson 1907, 333–34; 1923, 2:802–03). Kölbing’s interpretation was, however, revived by Hooper (1930, x–xi; 1934, 56), who believed that the seventeenth-century saga is based on the lost saga, with certain interpolations from the *rímur*. This was in turn rejected by Brown (1946–53), who provided the most convincing evidence in favour of Andrews’ interpretation. Today, Brown’s interpretation is widely accepted in the literature, for example by Jesch (1984; 1993).

Brown, in her study, focused on verbal similarities between the saga and the *rímur*, in order to demonstrate that the saga is secondary to the *rímur*. The examples of alliteration preserved in the saga that originate from the *rímur* are convincing evidence of the relationship, for example: “Stattu á fætr stúrulaust ... skrið þú af stóli, skálkrinn latr, skilinn frá öllu happi” in the *rímur* corresponds to the saga’s “Stattu stuðnungslaust á fætur aptr ... Skriddu af stóli, skálkr argr, sviptir öllu fé” (Brown 1946–53, 73). This example, however, is taken out of context and gives the reader a false impression of the extent of the similarities. The contents of stanzas III:24 and III:25, which Brown used as an example of alliteration, are significantly repositioned in the saga, and there is a large amount of text between the two, on which Brown chose not to comment (the order of the stanzas is discussed further in this section). Brown also generally did not comment on the particular manuscripts preserving the *rímur*, making her study satisfactory only to a limited extent. In that sense, Andrews’ analysis is more detailed, as he takes into account the readings of manuscripts included in the variant apparatus of Finnur Jónsson’s edition. Based on three textual variants, Andrews concluded that the saga is more closely related to the branch of the *Griplur* tradition that includes Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek Cod. Guelf. 42.7. Aug. 4to, and Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum AM 146 a 8vo.<sup>5</sup> Based on the

5 On manuscripts preserving *Griplur*, see Kapitan (2020). The very same interpretation of the relationship between *17HsG* and *Griplur* as that proposed by Andrews was presented by Björn K. Þórólfsson (1934, 353) in his short discussion of the relationship between the saga and the *rímur*, but it is most likely directly borrowed from Andrews.

transpositions of the stanzas in the saga, however, Andrews suggested that the saga is based on a different branch of the *rímur* tradition to any of the existing texts of *Griplur*.

If we consider that the order of stanzas is genealogically informative for establishing relationships between texts in prose and verse, the analysis of the transpositions does not allow any conclusion other than the one suggested by Andrews, that the saga is based on an independent tradition of *Griplur*. A good point for comparison of the order of the stanzas is the fight between Þráinn and Hrómundur, because the order of the stanzas describing this episode in various texts of the *rímur* is different.

## 17HsG

“Rigaþo þier á færtr ragur oc blauþr, oc takþu  
suerþed aptr af mier ef þu þorer”

Draugur mælti: “Það er einginn fremd að bera  
suerþ á mic vapnlausann, helldr vil ec reina afl  
vit þik oc glýmo”

Hromund kastar þá suerþino, oc treiste afli  
sýno. Þráinn sá þetta, oc leiste ofann ketil sinn  
er hafþi uppi

Funi mikill var i millom fóta hanz. enn ketel-  
lenn fullr af bukom

Hromundur mælti: “skrýtto af stóli skálkr argr,  
suiþr aulu fie” (2v:2–10)

## Griplur III

28. “Riga þú þér í rúmi blauðr,  
Ragari en nokkuð kvendi,  
sæktú að mér svartr og dauðr,  
sverð er burt úr hendi.”

26. “Fremd er engi að fella mig  
með fránum hjalta-vendi;  
eg vil reyna afl við þig,  
ef ekki er vætta í hendi.”

27. Hrómund kastar hrotta þá,  
handa afli treysti,  
Þráinn var glaðr, er þetta sá,  
þungan ketilinn leysti.

5. Funi var millum fóta hans,  
fullur ketill af búkum;  
ásjón hefr hann einskis manns  
jafnt og segir af þúkum

25. “Hugrinn þinn er harla flatr”  
Hrómund talar af kappi,  
“skrið þú af stóli, skálkrinn latr,  
skilinn frá öllu happi”

Based on the verbal similarities between the saga and the *rímur*, the following order of stanzas in the third *ríma* lying behind the saga can be proposed: 28, 26, 27, 5, 25. The proposed order does not follow any of the known texts of the *rímur* (cf. Kapitan 2020), which suggests a separate branch of the *Griplur* tradition. Therefore, it seems safe to assume that the saga was based on some other branch of the *rímur* tradition than those extant today. Moreover, we might be tempted to follow Andrews' (1911, 539) lead that *17HsG* is actually based on the lost *Griplur*, which used to be preserved in AM 603 4to – a manuscript preserving a number of defective *rímur* in which *Griplur* were registered in the early eighteenth century but which disappeared sometime during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth (Kapitan 2018, 164–67). This hypothesis is impossible to prove, but if the prose adaptation of *Bragða-Ölvis saga* in AM 601 b 4to, whose transmission history appears to be closely related to that of *Hrómundar saga*, turns out to be based on the version of *Bragða-Ölvis rímur* preserved in AM 603 4to, we could entertain a hypothesis that it was also the case with *Hrómundar saga*.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, we need to consider whether the verbal similarities between particular stanzas of the *rímur* and the text of the saga deliver sufficient evidence to assume that there was a separate “version” of the *rímur* behind the saga and whether it is not possible that the saga-writer freely adapted the text of any of the versions of *rímur* into the prose style without paying too much attention to the order of the stanzas. The answer to this question depends on our understanding of how an early modern saga-writer worked. Did the saga-writer have a manuscript(s) of *rímur* at hand when they converted the verses into the prose, or did they write the story down from memory? If the story was written down from memory, then the transpositions of stanzas would be more natural than if the story was based on the written text of the *rímur*. There is not enough comparative material to allow us to draw a conclusion about this matter, but I will come back to the problem of stanza order later in the section devoted to the younger saga and its relationship to *Griplur*.

Without identifying any specific branch of the *Griplur* tradition, it is

6 Teresa Dröfn Njarðvík is currently researching the transmission of *Bragða-Ölvis saga* and related *rímur*. Her work will provide valuable insights into the question of the relationship.

safe to agree with previous scholarship that *17HsG* is based on the medieval *rímur*.

## The Relationship between *17HsG* and *19HsG*

The hitherto unknown *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* (*19HsG*) is four times longer than the seventeenth-century saga (*17HsG*) and contains a number of motifs and episodes which lie outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition.<sup>7</sup> Since these episodes, often originating in the romance tradition, do not help to establish whether *19HsG* uses *17HsG*, they will not be discussed here. Instead, this section focuses on some differences in the structure, style, and contents of these two narratives in order to illustrate how they treat the same material.

Already at the very beginning of the story, clear differences in the structure and style of *19HsG* can be observed in comparison to *17HsG*. The two sentences that open the saga in AM 601 b 4to (henceforth A601), the best-text manuscript of *17HsG*, correspond to a whole paragraph in British Library Add 11,109 (henceforth B11109), the oldest manuscript of the younger saga known to date.<sup>8</sup> The difference lies not only in the length of the introduction but also in its style and structure, especially regarding the details concerning particular characters.

From the opening of A601, we learn that there was a king in Denmark named Ólafur, who was the son of Gnoðar-Ásmundur, and that there were two retainers in Ólafur's army, the brothers Kári and Örnúlfur, who were great warriors. The introduction in B11109 is much more verbose, and from it we learn that Ólafur was one of the petty kings in Norway, not Denmark, and that he was generous and brave; that Ólafur had two sisters, Dagný and Svanhvít, who were exceptional women; and that there were two retainers in Ólafur's army, the brothers Bildur and Vóli, who were deceitful and evil.

The only thing these two passages have in common is the name of the king, Ólafur, who in A601 is the son of Gnoðar-Ásmundur, while in B11109 his father is not mentioned at all. In B11109 the evil brothers

7 An introductory study to the nineteenth-century saga and its multiple innovations has been presented elsewhere, see Kapitan 2021.

8 All references to *17HsG* use loci from A601, while all references to *19HsG* use loci from B11109.



Bildur and Vóli are introduced at the beginning of the saga, while in A601 the saga-writer introduces them later in the text, after Hrómundur and his family have been introduced. Moreover, Ólafur's sisters are not introduced until they play a role in the narrative (chapter 3 of A601). In B11109, on the other hand, most of the characters are introduced right at the beginning of the story, while Kári and Örnúlfur are not introduced until they are supposed to play a role in the narrative (chapter 2 of B11109). When they are introduced in chapter 2, Kári is presented as Hrómundur's foster-brother and a pro-woman in Ólafur's army, who was very strong, etc. (B11109, f. 107r:13–16). This change is peculiar, and it is uncertain why the saga-writer decided to introduce Bildur and Vóli first, instead of Kári and Örnúlfur, since Kári and Örnúlfur appear already in chapter 2, while Bildur and Vóli are not mentioned until chapter 7 of B11109.

From a structural point of view, it seems more logical either to introduce both pairs of characters immediately before the episodes in which they play a role, or to consistently introduce all characters at the beginning of the story. The saga-writer of *19HsG*, however, chose a hybrid of these two approaches, which allows us to hypothesize about the intentions behind these changes. First, at the beginning of the story, the saga-writer introduces all characters who could be considered the saga's main characters, such as King Ólafur and related characters, and Hrómundur and related characters. Then, over the course of the story, the saga-writer introduces the secondary characters immediately before the episodes in which they play a role. For example, as mentioned previously, Kári and Örnúlfur are introduced in chapter 2, as is Hröngviður, while Máni is presented in chapter 5, etc. Taking into consideration this transposition, we can assume that, in the saga-writer's view, Bildur and Vóli were more important for the story than Kári and Örnúlfur. Bildur and Vóli are main characters of the saga, while Kári and Örnúlfur are not. This can be explained by the role the two pairs of brothers play in the saga. Kári's role is to die, and his death is supposed to prompt Hrómundur into killing Hröngviður, while Bildur and Vóli reappear in most of the main episodes: they do not want to enter Þráinn's mound, they kill Hrómundur's dog Hrókur, they defame Hrómundur at Ólafur's court, and finally, Hrómundur fights Vóli at the frozen lake Vänern after the battle with the Swedes.

The saga-writer is, however, not consistent in his practice of introducing secondary characters. The kings of Sweden, both called Hálfðan,<sup>9</sup> are mentioned in chapter 5 although they do not play any role in the narrative until chapter 9. This might be a borrowing from the *rímur*, where the Swedish kings are already mentioned in stanza II:16. The relationship between the saga and the *rímur* is treated in the next section.

As the opening of the saga shows, one of the striking differences between *17HsG* and *19HsG* is the level of detail and description provided in the two sagas. The main characters in *19HsG* are frequently introduced with a short description involving a few adjectives, to give the reader background information on the characters; on the other hand, no – or very sparse – descriptions are provided in *17HsG*, aside from the crucial features of the characters which are communicated using more-or-less fixed expressions, such as “hermenn miklir” to describe Kári and his brother. This is also true for our main hero, Hrómundur.

#### *17HsG*

Þo var Hrómundr fyrir þeim aullom. hann kunni eigi at hræðast, hann var augna fagr, hárbíartr, oc herþamikill, mikill oc stercr, lýktiz miöc Hróki móþr fauþr sýnom (11:9–11)

#### *19HsG*

⟨Hrómundur⟩ var eldstr þeira bræþra oc hinn frægasti maþr at hreysti oc öllom fræcleica, sva hann bar langt af mönnom þar í byg- gþom, þeir bræþr allir voro af alþýþo kallaþir Hrócar, því þeir voro af Hrócs ætt qvomnir. Hrómundr var bjatr á hár, hýr í tilliti, en snar í augom, breiþr á herþar oc stormenni at vexti, hann gaf sic alldrei fyrir und eþr ákomo, oc vit enga æþru var hann kéndr; þeir bræþr hans voro oc allir miclir menn til allra mannburþa (106v:27–107r:6)

As the example above illustrates, there are clear stylistic differences between these two sagas when it comes to descriptions of characters. While *17HsG* is more laconic and to some extent closer to the traditional saga style – characterized, among other things, by brief descriptions of characters (Finnur Jónsson 1923, 2:303–35) – *19HsG* is more verbose and may reflect the stylistic preferences of late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century audiences.

9 Notice the difference in the name Hálfðan in *19HsG* for Halldingur of *17HsG* and Haddingur of *Griplur*.

Another important feature of *19HsG* is that the saga-writer introduces greater logic to the narrative compared to *17HsG*, not only by presenting events in a particular order but also by making minor changes to the descriptions of the characters. For example, in *19HsG*, the saga-writer introduces Kári as a foster-brother of Hrómundur instead of presenting him just as one of the king's retainers. This minor alteration gives an indirect explanation of why Hrómundur wants to avenge Kári's death when Hröngviður kills both Kári and Örnúlfur. This is explicitly brought up in the saga in chapter 3, which describes Hrómundur's conversation with King Ólafur, during which Hrómundur tells the king that he and Kári were friends and foster-brothers (B11109, 108v:27–109r:6). This entire conversation between Hrómundur and Ólafur is missing from *17HsG*, and its sources are unknown. On the one hand, Hrómundur could equally well just decide to avenge Kári without any conversation with the king; because Kári has already been introduced as Hrómundur's foster-brother in chapter 2 of *19HsG*, there is no need to repeat this information. On the other hand, the repetition increases the dramatic mood of this episode, so it serves as a stylistic improvement on the saga.

The discrepancies between *17HsG* and *19HsG* when it comes to episodes related to Kári do not end here. The description of Kári and his brother's first meeting with Hröngviður and his followers also delivers evidence of a quite different style in the two narratives.

### *17HsG*

Konungr býr Kára oc Örnulfi  
 aþ ganga upp á eyuna, oc vita,  
 huort þeir sæe einginn herskip.  
 Þeir gengu upp á landet, oc  
 litu.vi. herskip under hömrum  
 nocrum. Þar var eirn dreke  
 allskrautligr. Kári kallar til  
 þeira, oc spir huorier fyrir  
 skiponom rieþi (1r:14–17)

### *19HsG*

Þá mæliR Kóngr vit Kára: "nú skulot þit bræþr ganga  
 á land oc þvert yfir þessa eyo sem vit erom vit komnir,  
 oc vita hvort þér verþit ecki varir vit, at vícingar neinir  
 séo hino megin eyarinnar." Kári mæliR "sva skulom  
 vit gora sem þér tilmælit, Herra!" Taca þeir bræþr  
 vapn sín oc ganga á land upp oc yfir eyona, oc sem þeir  
 qvomo á hamar nocorn, sjá þeir vj herscip liggia undir  
 eyunni, micit stor oc skrautleg, þó bar þar eitt af öl-  
 lom, þat var dreci sva veglegr, at Kári þóktist ei annan  
 slícan sjeþ hafa, hann var scygr oc scorinn stafna á  
 millom. Kári settist niþr oc qvaþ margar vísr af ágæti  
 scipana; síþan kallaði hann til þeira er láo fyrir, oc spyR  
 hvorjir væro? (107r:21–107v:3)

The more laconic description in *17HsG* does not describe the potential opponents of Kári as Vikings (“at vícingar neinir séo hino meginn Eyarinnar”), nor does it mention Kári reciting verses about the ships (“Kári settist niþr oc qvaþ margar vísr af ágæti scipana”). Both these details appear only in *19HsG* and are actually borrowings from *Griplur*, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

### The Relationship between *19HsG* and *Griplur*

Just as it is difficult to establish the relationship between *17HsG* and *19HsG* without using evidence from *Griplur*, it is equally difficult to discuss the relationship between *19HsG* and *Griplur* without using evidence from *17HsG*. As is presented in the next section, the most convincing clues for the relationship between *19HsG* and *Griplur* are provided by the episodes which appear only in these two manifestations of the story and are absent from *17HsG*. At the same time, we can assume that if the saga-writer of *19HsG* used *Griplur* directly, we would be able to observe some trace of alliterations or rhymes in the prose text, originating from the *rímur*. While there are numerous examples of alliterating word pairs, upon closer examination, it appears that some of them also appear in *17HsG*, and they are therefore not necessarily signs of a direct borrowing from the *rímur*. The alliteration of three words in one sentence that appear in the *rímur* but not in *17HsG* would be more convincing evidence for direct borrowing, but I have not identified such an example.

There are, however, other strong indications that the saga-writer utilized *rímur* directly, even though they adapted the poetic language to the narrative form very skilfully, not leaving many traces of poetic influence. These include the following borrowings:

<i>Griplur</i>	<i>19HsG</i>
breiðr um herðar, bjartr á hárr, blíðr og snarr í augum (I:19)	bjartr á hárr, hýr í tilliti, en snar í augom, breiþr á herþar (107r:3–4)
ertu fretkall flatr og aumr og faðir ins illa Kára (I:56)	þú mant vera þinn ólukko fretkarl, faþir Kára (109r:13)
ekki ertú sem menskur maðr (III:36)	ecki erto mennscr maþr (113r:3–4)
og blæði úr hverju sári (I:44)	þó mér blæþi or hvorjo sári (107v:19)
höfuðlaus allur herrinn stóð (VI:25)	allr herinn yþar stóþ höfotlaus (127v:15)
Gálgi merkir gamlan hest (VI:33)	gamall oc latr hestr merkir gálga (128r:11)

While the first three examples belong to episodes which are present in both *17HsG* and *19HsG*, the following three examples do not have counterparts in *17HsG* and are present exclusively in *19HsG* and the *rímur*. Based on these verbal similarities, we can assume that there is a direct influence from *Griplur* on *19HsG*.

In order to determine which branch of *Griplur* tradition might have served as the basis for *19HsG*, it is useful to compare the order in which certain elements of the story are introduced. The comparative analysis of *19HsG* and *Griplur* reveals extensive repositioning of the contents of the stanzas in relation to all known manuscripts of *Griplur*. For example, in *19HsG*, the contents of stanza III:51 are narrated before the contents of stanza III:50 as follows:

*Griplur*

III:50. “Svó hef eg lengi loðað á fé  
og lifað í haugi mínum,  
ei er gott, þó góðir sé,  
gripum að treysta sínum.

III:51. Garprinn jafnt og sjálfum sér  
sverði þessu trúði,  
nú skal verða að meini mér  
Mistilteinn inn prúði.”

*19HsG*

Þá mælir Þráinn: “gjæfo munr varþ nú  
meþ ockor, at þú náþir sverþi míno,  
oc ætlaþi ec þat aldrei, at þú, minn  
góþi Mistilteinn! mundir mér at meini  
verþa, oc er því alldreii gott at treysta á  
gripi oc gersemar sínar, oc sannast þat  
nú á mér” (114r:11–15)

Similarly, the contents of stanza I:44 are placed between the contents of I:36 and I:37 in *19HsG* (107v:14–25), the contents of stanza III:24 are placed after III:34, and the contents of III:33 after III:36. This suggests that the saga-writer may have worked with some “version” of the *rímur* other than the one we know today. At the same time, it seems equally possible that the saga-writer of *19HsG* intentionally did not follow the order of the stanzas, but rather was focused on narrating the events in a logical and stylistically pleasing way, with little regard for the order of the *rímur*. Finally, it is not improbable that the saga-writer actually utilized orally transmitted material. An oral account would also explain some of the misunderstandings occurring in *19HsG*, especially regarding the confusion in the direct speech discussed further on in this article.

## The Relationships between *17HsG*, *19HsG*, and *Griplur*

As mentioned earlier, there are many episodes in *19HsG* which do not appear in *17HsG*. The sources of some of these episodes are unknown, or lie outside of the *Hrómundar saga* tradition, but others can easily be traced to *Griplur*. This section presents only a sample of three (of many) episodes that suggest *19HsG* is dependent on *Griplur*. Moreover, based on a comparison of *19HsG* with *17HsG* and *Griplur*, this section delivers some evidence that *19HsG* is most likely also dependent on *17HsG*.

The first and most obvious example of *19HsG* being dependent on *Griplur* is the episode in which Hrókur is killed by Bildur and Vóli. As observed in previous scholarship, according to *17HsG*, Hrókur was a man, but according to *Griplur* he was a dog (Andrews 1913; Jesch 1984). It happens that in *19HsG* Hrókur is also a dog, which suggests *19HsG*'s dependence on *Griplur*.

<i>Griplur</i>	<i>17HsG</i>	<i>19HsG</i>
IV:4. Grundi hét einn góður þegn, gefr hann honum með prýði og megn <b>rakka þann er heitir Hrókr;</b> hann var bæði snarpr og klókr.	Hann gaf einum manni, þeim er Hrókur hiet eitt sinn, <b>gullhring góðann er vó eyri.</b> Það fíek Vóli aþ vita, oc <b>drap Hrók á náttartýma</b> enn tók hringinn (3r:18–20)	þar hafði Kóngr vetrseto meþ hyrþ sína, þann vetr, hjá Burgeis nockrom, hann var Gnúdi kallaþr, hann gaf Kóngi marga góþa gripi oc sva mön- nom hans; hann gaf Hró- mundi <b>einn racka</b> , sem var sva vel viti borinn, sem maþr, oc skjótr sem ör, oc hit mesta gersemi var hann, sá var <b>Hrókr kallaþr.</b> Hrómundr gaf Gnúþa aþtr ágætann <b>hríng af betsta gulli</b> , oc var talat at hann væri or haugi Þráins, oc vóg vit <b>ij mercrc sylfors;</b> þessa gjöf öfundaði Vole hyrþmaþr Kóngs, hann kémor at
IV:5. Hrómund gaf honum <b>hríng með gull,</b> – hundsins þótti launin full- <b>eyrir vegr og aðra sjau,</b> er það meir en verðin tvau.		
IV:6. Vissi þetta vóndur trúðr <b>Vóli</b> kall, er ei var prúðr, <b>drepr hann</b> þann inn dýra hund, dragnaz til á <b>náttarstund.</b>		

máli vit Bíld féлага sinn, oc  
segist vilja drepa hund þann  
[...]

Þeir Vole oc Bíldr, höfþo  
gát á hundinom Hrók, oc þá  
menn voro sofandi, gengo  
þeir at hönom oc stúngo til  
bana, því hann lá sofandi oc  
var þreyttr (114v:3–115r:2)

It is clear from the comparison above that the saga-writer of *19HsG* had access to some version of the story in which Hrókur was a dog, and *Griplur* are the only known manifestation of the story that contains this information. Moreover, in *Griplur* Hrókur is “bæði snarpr og klókr,” and in the saga he is “vel viti borinn, sem maþr, oc skjótr sem ör,” so the message that Hrókur was a great dog is clearly delivered in both adaptations – regardless of the fact that *19HsG* is substantially more verbose and descriptive than *Griplur*. The omitted part in the citation from B11109, indicated by “[...]”, describes the hunting trips that Ólafur organized and the qualities of Hrókur as an outstanding hunting dog. It is unknown where this description came from, but it is certain that neither *Griplur* nor *17HsG* could be its direct source, as they do not mention any hunting trips.

Even though *19HsG* presents Hrókur as a dog, there are also discrepancies between *Griplur* and the saga when it comes to the value of the dog. In *Griplur* stanza IV:5, Hrómundur gives a man named Grundi – from whom he received the dog – a golden ring which weighs one mark – double the dog’s price (“eyrir veqr og aðra sjau, er það meir en verðin tvau”) – but in *19HsG* the golden ring weighs two marks of silver (“hring af betsta gulli, oc var talat at hann væri or haugi Þráins, oc vóg vit ij *mercr sylfors*”). This may be the result of a misunderstanding of the poetic language of the *rímur*, as in *17HsG* the value of the ring is also corrupted: here the golden ring weighs only one ounce (“gullhring góðann er vó eýri”). If we assume that both *17HsG* and *19HsG* had access to the same version of *Griplur*, this case can indicate that the poetic language of the *rímur* was sometimes difficult to understand for the seventeenth- and nineteenth-century scribes. At the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility that the source text of *19HsG*, or the tradition on which *19HsG* is based, had already introduced

the change and that it has nothing to do with the poetic form of *Griplur*. Given the chronology of these adaptations, the latter explanation seems more likely.

The second example confirming the hypothesis that *19HsG* is utilizing *Griplur* can be found in the episode when Kári and Örnúlfur go ashore to check whether there is anyone on the other side of the island, as described in the section devoted to the relationship between *17HsG* and *19HsG*. As previously mentioned, in *17HsG* there is nothing about reciting any verses, while in *19HsG* Kári is impressed by the magnificent ship of Hröngviður and recites some glorifying verses about the excellence of his fleet (“oc qvaþ margar vísr af ágæti scipana”). The potential opponents of Kári in *19HsG* are also called vikings (“at vícingar neinir séo hino megin Eyarinnar.”), while *17HsG* is silent about them. The explanation for both can be found in *Griplur*, where the corresponding passage reads:

I:27. Þið skuluð **ganga þvert yfir ey**  
þengill talar við Kára,  
vita ef **hittið víkings fley**  
og vaxi kífið sára.

I:28. Kári og Örnólf kanna land,  
**klæði og vopn sín fengu,**  
þeir hafa skjöld og skygðan brand,  
skjótt yfir eyna gengu.

I:29. Herskip náðu sex að sjá  
sjáfar-hömrur undir,  
skreyttur dreki lá skeiðum hjá,  
skorinn á margar lundir.

I:30. Kári réð að kalsa skæðr  
**og kveðr þá vísur margar**  
“hverr er þann að höldum ræðr?  
– hafi þig allir vargar.”



These stanzas contain information about both the act of reciting verses (I:30:2) and calling the opponents vikings (I:27:3). Even though there is no information in *Griplur* regarding the subject matter of the recited verses, *19HsG* most likely borrowed the fact of reciting verses from the *rímur*, while the information that the verses were about the ships must be the saga-writer's own invention. Another example of borrowing from *Griplur* is the passage in *19HsG* which informs us that Kári and Örnúlfur take their weapons with them when they go on the island ("taca þeir bræpr vapn sín oc ganga á land upp" 107r: 25), which must be a borrowing from stanza I:28:2, as there is no mention of weapons in *17HsG*.

The hypothesis that *19HsG* depends on *Griplur* can be also supported by the example found in the sequence of prophetic dreams that Blindur presents to the Swedish king. Even though Blindur's dreams are difficult material for comparison, as there is no clear logical pattern behind the ways they are presented and interpreted, there are still clear discrepancies between *17HsG* and *19HsG*, some of which can be explained by borrowings from the *rímur*. The dreams in all the manifestations of the story are presented following a consistent pattern: first Blindur gives an account of his dream, and then the king provides his interpretation of it. In both sagas, however, this pattern is disrupted when the sixth dream is presented. There is no interpretation of this dream. Instead, immediately afterwards, another dream is presented.

<i>Griplur</i>	<i>17HsG</i>	<i>19HsG</i>
VI:17. "Kómu úr norðri kolsvort ský með klær og vængi bjúga og með þenna breiða bý burtu gjörði að fljúga."	"Siötta sinn dreimde mik," segir Blindur "að mier þótti koma af landi suört ský. med klóm oc vængiom oc flugu brott med þic kongr."	"Sá er hinn sjötti draumr minn," segir Blindr "at ec sá kolsvort ský qvoma or norþri, þau höfþo klær oc bjúga vængi, þau flugo burto með þic, oc ec vissi ecki hvaþ af yþr varþ,
VI:25. "Dreki þinn leiz mér færðr á flóð, flaut í báru miðri, hofuðlaus allur herrinn stóð í heitu vatni niðri."	--No corresponding text--	

oc þar eptir sá ec yþar  
betsta drecaskip, mara  
í miþjo kafi í brimi  
oc sjóaræþi gangi, en  
allr herinn yþar stóþ  
höfotlaus niþr í eino  
vatni,

VI:11. “Dreymdi mig að æliz einn  
úlfr hjá Hagli kalli,  
sá var ei í blíðu beinn,  
beit hann menn á hjalli.

VI:12. Jafnvel reif hann yðr sem mig  
og alla kónsins þegna;  
heldr var sýnin hræðilig,  
hvað mun slíku gegna?”

“Þá dreimdi mic  
enn aþ ormr einr  
væri hiá Hagali  
kalli sá beit menn  
grimmliða át hann  
Bæþi mik oc ýdur  
upp og alla kongs  
menn eda huat  
man þetta þýþa.”  
(5v:16–20)

síþan þóttist ec staþdr  
nærri bæ Hagals,  
kom þar út höggormr,  
hann var illúþlegr,  
hann beit menn til  
bana, síþan át hann  
alla sem hann beit,  
síþarst át hann yþr oc  
mic.” (127v:10–18)

As presented in the example above, in *17HsG* two dreams are narrated one after another without any explanation or interpretation, while in *19HsG* three dreams are merged. The dream about the king’s ship has no counterpart in *17HsG*, but it corresponds to VI:25 in *Griplur*, which supports the argument for the hypothesis that *Griplur* were used as a source of at least this part of the text in *19HsG*.

In the dream sequence we can also find evidence that *19HsG* is dependent on *17HsG*. If we focus on the order of the dreams and their interpretations, there are multiple examples that demonstrate that *19HsG* presents dreams in the same order as *17HsG*, and that the dreams are not preserved in this order in any known manuscript of *Griplur*. For example, the dream about the king’s falcon being featherless (stanza VI:23) in *Griplur* is interpreted by the king as a prophecy of men coming to his country with weapons and his irritation about it (VI:24). In both *17HsG* and *19HsG*, however, the same dream is interpreted to mean that a storm will come over the king’s country and shake the castle (which corresponds to stanza VI:10:1–2). In *19HsG* the interpretation is further extended by the information that the king himself will be sitting by the fire, and this originates in *Griplur* (VI:10:3–4). If we wanted to reconstruct the order of the stanzas that

give an account of Blindur's dreams in the *rímur* presumably underlying *19HsG*, we would assume the following order: 7–9, 22–23, 10, 15–16, 21, 24, 19–20, 17, 25, 11–13, 27, 29, 31, 30, 32–33. With the exception of the position of stanza 30 (after VI:31) and the omission of VI:25, the order is the same in both *17HsG* and *19HsG*, which may be interpreted as further evidence that the saga-writer of *19HsG* had access to *17HsG*.

There are also some textual variants which *19HsG* shares with *17HsG* against *Griplur*, suggesting a close relationship between *17HsG* and *19HsG*. For example, in *Griplur* we learn that Ólafur, together with his fleet, stopped by Elfarsker, where the fight with Hröngviður took place: “Heldu nú fyr Nóreg austr niflungs menn á ferjum, lofðungs herr á lægir traustr legz að Elfarskerjum” (I:25). *17HsG*, however, corrupts the name Elfarsker to Úlfasker: “Eytt sinn hiellt olafr konungr, austur fyrir noreg med her sinn, oc hielldo aþ Vlfaskerium” (1r:13–14), and the same corruption can be found in *19HsG*: “sva Kóngr hlaut at halda austr til Svíþjópar, oc at eino qveldi sigldo þeir undir Eyar þær er Ulfaskér heita” (107r:19–20). This does not seem to be a potential place for polygenetic variation to appear, as the place name Elfarsker is frequently attested in other *foraldarsögur*, including but not limited to *Örvar-Odds saga* (Rafn, ed., 1829–30, II:187), *Sörla þattur* (Rafn, 1829–30, I:395), and *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* (Rafn, ed. 1829–30, II:441), while no mention of Úlfasker is known to me beyond these two sagas of Hrómundur. Thus, it would be less surprising if the name Úlfasker was changed to Elfarsker, rather than the other way around; therefore, it is likely that *19HsG* is borrowing from *17HsG*.

Shared textual variants between *17HsG* and *19HsG* against *Griplur* can also be found in the episode of the first meeting between Kári and Hröngviður, when one of them tells how long he was in the battle. In *Griplur* we read:

I:35. “Kant að segja Kára þú,  
kappinn, það er vér beiðum,  
hversu lengi hafi þér nú  
hernað plágað á skeiðum?”

I:36. “Sextigi lét eg seggjum hætt  
sumur í stála hjaldri;  
og svó margar mútur grætt  
minkan fekk eg aldri.”

As this passage demonstrates, in *Griplur* the number sixty is given,<sup>10</sup> while in *17HsG* and *19HsG* we find information about sixty battles and the thirty-three years of a military career:

**17HsG**  
Hraungvípr mælti: “Ek  
hefi heriað sumar oc  
vetr, i xxxiiij ár, oc  
háþ lx orustur, oc  
feinget jafnan sigr”  
(1r:21–22)

**19HsG**  
Kári qvaþst ecki kunna því at hrósa. “en í xxxiiij vetr  
hef ec í vícingo verit, oc margt sjeþ oc heyrte, eþa  
villto leggja til atlögo vit mic?” Hraungvípr mælir  
“á morgun skalto sanna þat, at ec skal ecki undan-  
teljast.” Kári mælir “þat þykist ec sjá, at fáa muni á  
þinn fund fýsa, því ec hefi LX sinnom einvíg haldit”  
(107v:11–15)

We can assume, therefore, that the number thirty-three is borrowed from *17HsG* into *19HsG*. There is, however, some discrepancy between the sagas. In *17HsG* (and also in *Griplur*, at least in Finnur Jónsson’s reading of them) it is Hröngviður who fought sixty battles and never lost, but in *19HsG*, for some unknown reason, it is Kári. Did the saga-writer intentionally merge *17HsG* and *Griplur* and then change the meaning? This seems unlikely, as the text of *17HsG* is fairly straightforward. Therefore, we should allow for the possibility that this reading is a result of a double layer of misinterpretation, for instance through the lost *rímur* of Hrómundur composed in the years 1775–77 by Benedikt Jónsson Gröndal (1762–1825) or through oral tradition.

A similar explanation can be given to other episodes in which it is difficult to determine whether the saga-writer of *19HsG* misunderstood *Griplur* or whether they intentionally changed the meaning of the story. It is especially frequent with direct speech, where it seems as if the saga-writer frequently confused which character is saying which stanzas. For example, stanza II:59 of *Griplur* is spoken by Vóli: “Oss mun (blossa) brugðið við (kvað báru spennir) – tveir eru meir en tuttugu þrennir – tröll ef öllum þessum rennir,” but in *19HsG*, it is paraphrased and put into Þráinn’s mouth: “Þráinn mælir fleyri sóctu mic heim forþom, þegar Lxij menn veitto mér ásteyting meþ ráni oc róti á hús kofa mínom, oc fengo þeir lítit til ábata” (112r:3–6). *17HsG* reproduces the contents of this stanza

10 It is problematic to determine whether the number in *Griplur* refers to sixty battles (Sextigi stála hjaldri), sixty years (Sextigi sumar), or sixty men killed (lét sextigi seggjum).

following *Griplur*, with the exception of the corruption of the number of men: “Voli qvad Einginn mvníþi vilia giefa lýf sitt vit þúi, ero hier nu lx. manna, oc man troll þetta qllum dauþa veita” (2r:12–13).

Direct speech also seems to be confused in the episode of the fight between Þráinn and Hrómundur. According to Finnur Jónsson’s interpretation, stanzas III:41–42 of *Griplur* are spoken by Hrómundur, followed by stanza III:43 spoken by Þráinn, but *19HsG* merges the two and the contents of both stanzas are narrated in Hrómundur’s direct speech.

<i>Griplur</i>	<i>17HsG</i>	<i>19HsG</i>
41. “Hafðag á því hugarins skyn,” Hrómund talar enn færi, “hvaðan ið leiða katta kyn komið í hauginn væri.	...nu skal ek rýfa þic kuikann i sunþr.” “Eg veit eigi,” sagþi	“...nú skal ec þic qvicann í sundr rífa taug frá taug.” Hrómundr þeinkti meþ sér, at þetta eina mundi Þráinn satt segja herþtist hann af stórri bræþi, oc mælir til Þráins: “varla ber ec vit til oc skynsemd, at þú, sem Kóngr hefr heitit, skulir orþinn vera at versta kétti, oc er skómm at þer gráhærþom karli, at gorast slíc fjandans fordæþa, oc mantú sonr tróllkono sem Gunnlöþ hiet, hún átti born morg, oc voro þau öll blauþir kettir, oc finn ec at þú ert ein ketta, því þat sá ec áþann, at þú vermdir þic á milli fótana, því þú satst meþ kétlinn í klofino, en ert orþin hundgömul.” Vit orþ þessi reiþdist Þráinn (113v:17–27)
42. Fæ eg það séð að fríða þig fæstir kostir góðir, kalla eg ráð þú klórir ei mig, katta bannsett móðir.”	Hromundr “huaþann sod- dann kattarkin, er komiþ i haug þennann.”	
43. “Gunnlöð hefr ei Grips í bý getið sér arfa slíkan, þú munt freddr af flatrí þý, fýlu tel eg þig líkan.”	Draugurinn mælti “þu munt fæddr vera af Gunn- löþ, ero fáer þijner lýkar.” (3v:20–23)	

There is a remarkable discrepancy between *17HsG* and *19HsG*; this suggests that this part of *19HsG* is more likely to be directly based on *Griplur*, which the saga-writer interprets quite differently from the *17HsG*. However, the striking similarity between *17HsG* and *19HsG* in using the phrase “nú skal ég rífa þig kvikan í sundur” (now I shall tear you apart alive), does not allow us to exclude the possibility that the saga-writer actually had access to both *17HsG* and *Griplur* and made a conscious choice regarding the readings they wanted to include in the saga. In the same manner, we cannot exclude the possibility that some now lost, intermediate

version of the story (e.g. Gröndal's lost *rímur*) influenced the story at some earlier stage and that this may be reflected in the younger saga.

### The Relationship between *Rímur af Hrómundi Greipssyni* and the Rest of the Tradition

Even though at the time of the composition of *Rímur af Hrómundi Greipssyni* (*RHG*) the younger *Hrómundar saga* (*19HsG*) was already in circulation, there are strong indications that the *rímur* were based on *17HsG*, not *19HsG*. None of the additional episodes that are present in *19HsG* and absent from *17HsG* have their counterparts in *RHG*. This is strong evidence that *19HsG* could not have been used as the basis for *RHG*. If that had been the case, at least some of the episodes would probably have made their way through to the *rímur*, even if the *rímur*-poet was determined to abridge the narrative. There is also no evidence for *RHG* using *Griplur* to any extent, even in instances where *Griplur* clearly preserve a more logical version of the story. In light of the lack of evidence for any direct relationship between *RHG* and *Griplur* or *19HsG*, the last pair of texts that need to be discussed here is *17HsG* and *RHG* as well as the relationship between them.

As previously mentioned, *RHG* have never been edited. By being preserved in a single manuscript (Lbs 825 8vo), they have also remained mainly outside the scope of existing scholarship. Davíð Erlingsson (1987, 391) suggested, however, rather intuitively, that “a poet retold the story in *rímur*, perhaps using as his source the prose tale printed by Rafn which had as its basis the early *rímur*, though I cannot prove this.” The evidence presented in this section confirms Davíð Erlingsson's assumption regarding the relationship between *17HsG* and *RHG*. Moreover, this section not only presents the evidence for the general relationship between these two adaptations but also determines which particular branch of the saga tradition was the basis of the *rímur*.

There are multiple passages that strongly suggest that the *rímur*-poet relied exclusively on *17HsG*, as for example in the case of the misunderstanding regarding Hrókur, who is Hrómundur's dog but who in *17HsG* is a man. *RHG* reads as follows:

4. Garpur klókur geds um flet,  
**gaf baug einum manni**  
 þessi **Hrókur þegninn hét**,  
 þundar jók sá tíðum hret.
  
5. Voli sóði sóma spar  
 seggin drapum grímu  
**hríngin góða burtu bar**,  
 þjóður glóða þáings valla.  
 (III:4 & III:5 (9r:17–9v:1))

It is clear from the clauses “gaf baug einum manni” and “Hrókur þegninn hét” in *RHG* that Hrókur is a man rather than a dog, and that the object of Vóli’s jealousy is a golden ring, not the dog – the misunderstanding introduced in *17HsG* – indicating that *RHG* are dependent on *17HsG*.

Further verbal similarities between *17HsG* and *RHG* serve to confirm this interpretation of the relationships between these two adaptations. In *RHG* II:40–41, Hrómundur asks Þráinn how many men he defeated in duels, and Þráinn answers that it was 124 men. This is a clear borrowing from *17HsG*, because both *19HsG* and *Griplur* refer only to a hundred duels. Additionally, in *19HsG* we read about the killing of twenty-four kings “xxiv Konga hjó ec til bana með því” (114r:18), which is omitted in other adaptations.

Another similarity between *RHG* and *17HsG* can be found in the following stanza (*RHG*, II:42), in which Þráinn tells Hrómundur that he and Semingur, the king of Sweden, were competing in sports: “okkar gjördum ágætar íþróttirnar reina” (stanza II:42, 8v:3–4). This closely resembles “reindom ockar i þrótter” in *17HsG* (A601, 3r:7), but neither *Griplur* nor *19HsG* refer to *íþróttir* (sports) in a direct way.

Finally, there are also two stanzas which allow closer identification of the source of *RHG*. In stanza 51 in the third fit we read: “Frækna Helga fylgja réð frilla sem hét **Lara** illsku velgja otargeð álptar belg hún klæddist með” (12r:14–16). Similarly, in the first stanza of the fourth fit: “Þar nam farast þulins knör við þagnar kletta sem hún **Lara** dauð nam detta” (13v:2–4). In both stanzas of *RHG* Helgi’s mistress is called Lara (or Lára), while in *19HsG*, *Griplur*, and the majority of the manuscripts preserving *17HsG*,

the name of the mistress is Kára. The only part of the tradition of *17HsG* in which Helgi's mistress is called Lára is the text-sub-group  $A_3$  (Kapitan 2018). Text-sub-group  $A_3$  includes the manuscripts that are based on Rafn's printed edition of the saga. *RHG*'s composition post-dates the publication of the edition, so there is a fair likelihood that the edition served as the basis for the composition of the *rímur*. It is, however, impossible to determine with high certainty whether the text of *RHG* was based on the printed edition or on one of the manuscripts derived from it.<sup>11</sup>

## Discussion and Conclusion

Through comparative analysis of textual and structural similarities and differences between four manifestations of the story of Hrómundur in prose and verse in the Icelandic language, the present study aimed to reveal the relationship between these manifestations, primarily to cast light on two previously marginalized versions of the story, the younger saga (*19HsG*) and the younger set of *rímur* (*RHG*). While the influences on *RHG* are fairly straightforward, the sources of the younger prose adaptation are quite difficult to identify with certainty and open up many possibilities for interpretation.

The seventeenth-century saga of Hrómundur (*17HsG*) is certainly based on the medieval *rímur Griplur*, and it can be seen as a sort of summary of the contents of the *rímur*. The practice of preparing summaries of *rímur* in the early modern period is well attested in the literature, but as the present study has demonstrated, this summary is not completely true to its sources, as it is not free of misunderstandings. For instance, the case of Hrókur, a dog or a man, is a good example of such a misunderstanding which survived all the way to the literary descendant of *17HsG*, i.e. the younger *rímur* of Hrómundur (*RHG*).

*RHG* establish a reliable versification of the story presented in *17HsG*, as they preserve all the corruptions of *17HsG* without altering anything. *RHG* are most likely based on Rafn's printed edition of the saga, or some edition-derived manuscript, as they reproduce an error on the part of the saga's editor. The name of the mistress of Helgi in *RHG* is Lára, which is

11 There are multiple manuscripts derived from Rafn's printed edition; see Kapitan (2018, 109–25).



an innovation in Rafn's edition and is preserved only in the edition-derived manuscripts. No relationship between *Griplur* and *RHG*, nor between the younger saga and *RHG*, can be proven based on the verbal similarities and the contents of the subsequent adaptations. Therefore, they must be independent of each other.

The sources of *19HsG* appear to be more complicated to reveal. Despite the extensive amplifications in *19HsG* whose sources lie outside of the *Hrómundar saga* tradition and the numerous changes on the level of the style, structure, and content, in many cases, *19HsG* is a better saga than *17HsG* in terms of its narrative coherence. The present study has shown that the materials originating from both *Griplur* and *17HsG* are present in *19HsG*, but it is uncertain whether the saga-writer of *19HsG* based the story on a written account (or accounts) of *Griplur* and *17HsG*, or whether they committed the story to writing from memory. The saga-writer seems to have consciously used both sources and in some cases provided additional details originating from *Griplur* which are omitted in *17HsG*, as for example an additional dream of Blindur based on stanza VI:25. In other cases, they chose to follow *17HsG* against the *rímur*, as for example in the occurrence of the place name Úlfasker in both sagas but not in *Griplur*. It is equally possible, however, that the saga-writer had a written account of only one manifestation of the story and supplied additional information from another manifestation from memory. Finally, we cannot exclude the possibility that *19HsG* is actually based on the lost *rímur* by Benedikt Jónsson Gröndal (1762–1825), meaning that the merger of *Griplur* and *17HsG* would have taken place before *19HsG* was committed to writing; nevertheless, we do not have any means to prove or disprove this hypothesis as this intermediate text is lost.

This scenario, involving an intermediate step in the tradition in the form of the lost *rímur*, could explain some of the corruptions present in *19HsG* that we are unable to explain using the evidence at hand. An example of this is the number of years of military experience that Hröngviður or Kári had. It is somewhat easier to imagine that the saga-writer of *19HsG* used as the basis for the story a set of *rímur* in which the information from *17HsG* and from *Griplur* was already merged, rather than imagining that they sat with two competing accounts of the story, one in verse and the other in prose, and created a hybrid of the two. The intermediate

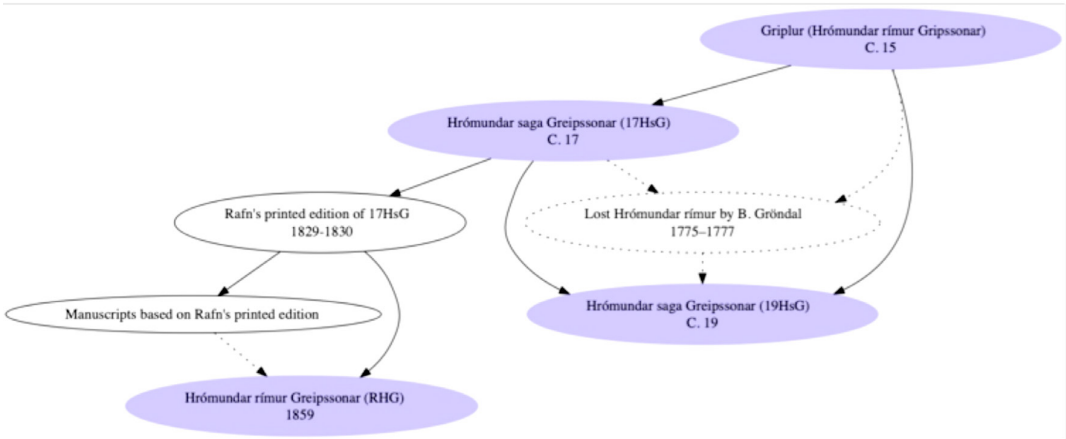


Figure 1: The relationships between four versions of the story of *Hrómundur* in Icelandic.

step seems to be the best explanation we can give in this case, unless we are ready to assume that the saga-writer of *19HsG* was either interested in reconstructing the lost saga of *Hrómundur*, and therefore treating both accounts as equally valuable, or that they were just trying to write a good, entertaining story – which they certainly achieved – and therefore did not necessarily see one version as superior to the other and in some instances freely chose which version of the events to follow.

Based on the evidence at hand, the relationships between the four Icelandic manifestations of the story of *Hrómundur* can be illustrated in the form of a stemma as presented in Figure 1. The dotted lines in the stemma represent uncertain or disputable connections, as we lack strong evidence to prove their existence.

The comparative analysis of *Hrómundar saga* and related materials allows us to ask further questions about the general practice of adaptation from one medium to another in Iceland. Why did someone convert *rímur* into prose in the first place? Why were some of the *rímur* converted into prose more than once? Was it because of a lack of access to the prose

version in a particular area, because of a dislike of their poetic form, or because of the need to simplify the poetic language and deliver an easily accessible story to a less sophisticated audience? A comparative analysis of a wider array of *rímur*-based narratives is needed in order to enable us to draw general conclusions and answer these questions, but the present study hopes to deliver a meaningful contribution to this discussion.

The present study is the first in-depth analysis of the relationships between extant versions of the story of Hrómundur in Icelandic which illustrate the multi-layered process of the transmission and adaptation of medieval literature in the post-medieval period. This study not only casts light on this particular tradition, but it also contributes to the broader discussion of Icelandic literature from a diachronic perspective and especially the process of adaptation from one medium to another. It shows that throughout centuries, a medieval story could entertain generations of Icelanders who were willing not only to transcribe one of its versions but also to engage with its contents on a more creative level. Over the years, the story, like a snowball rolling down a hill, accumulated various influences which became so strongly interconnected that at times it becomes impossible to separate the individual narratives that influenced the story, just as it is impossible to separate the individual snowflakes that were picked up by the rolling snowball.

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## ÁGRIP

Hrómundur í bundnu og óbundnu máli: Um tengsl fjögurra gerða sögunnar af Hrómundi Greipssyni

**Efnisorð:** *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, *Griplur*, fornaldarsögur, rímur, varðveislusaga, rittengsl og textatengsl

Þessi grein rannsakar varðveislusögu frásagna um Hrómund Gr(e)ipsson á íslensku. Áhersla er lögð á rannsókn textatengsla fjögurra verka um Hrómund: tvö í rímnaformi, *Griplur* og *Hrómundar rímur Greipssonar* (RHG), og tvö í prósaformi, 17. aldar saga (17HsG) og yngri, hingað til óþekkt saga af Hrómundi, hugsanlega frá 19. öld (19HsG). Helstu niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar eru að sagnaritari 19HsG notaði líklegast bæði *Griplur* og eldri *Hrómundarsögu* til að búa til samhangandi frásögn um Hrómund. Annars byggði hann eða hún aðlögun sína á glataðri gerð sem þegar sameinaði frásögn sögunnar og rímnanna, vegna þess að efni úr báðum eldri aðlögunum finnst í yngri sögunni. Enn fremur er komist að þeirri niðurstöðu að yngri rímurnar af Hrómundi (RHG) eigi uppruna sinn í prentaðri útgáfu 17. aldar sögu, af því útgáfuvillu C.C. Rasks er að finna í rímunum.

## SUMMARY

Hrómundur in Prose and Verse: On the Relationships between Four Versions of the Story of Hrómundur Greipsson

**Keywords:** *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, *Griplur*, legendary sagas, rímur, transmission history, intertextuality

The present study examines the transmission history of the story of Hrómundur Gr(e)ipsson in Icelandic. Its focus lies in the investigation of textual relationships between four works dealing with the story of Hrómundur: two in metric form, *Griplur* and *Hrómundar rímur Greipssonar* (RHG), and two in prose, the seventeenth-century saga (17HsG) and the younger, hitherto unknown saga, possibly originating in the nineteenth-century (19HsG). The study concludes that the saga-writer of 19HsG most likely utilised both *Griplur* and the older saga to create a coherent story of Hrómundur. Alternatively, they based their adaptation on a now lost intermediate version of the story that already merged the accounts

of the *rímur* and the saga, as elements from both older adaptations can be found in the younger saga. Furthermore, the study concludes that the younger set of *rímur* (RHG) are derived from the printed edition of the seventeenth-century saga, as the editorial error of C.C. Rask, the saga's editor, appears in the poem.

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