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GROTESQUE ADVICE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ICELAND

*The Mysterious Origins of Grobbians rímur*¹

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY a twenty-five-year-old German student by the name of Friedrich Dedekind (1524–98) wrote, in Wittenberg, a book which advocated foul manners in explicit detail, albeit with the professed aim of acting as a deterrent to offenders against good manners. Dedekind’s work elaborated on a figure, Saint Grobian, the patron saint of vulgar people, who had been one of the travellers on Sebastian Brant’s *Narrenschiff* (Ship of Fools; 1494), albeit now presented as a purely secular figure. Around a century later the titular Grob(b)ian made his debut in Iceland. In this article, attention will be paid to this grotesque strand of seventeenth-century writing, as put on display in *Grobbians rímur*.² Like so much Icelandic literature of its time, almost nothing has been written about this curious work, and I am aware of only a couple of articles which make more than passing reference to it.³ Most literary histories mention

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- 2 Note that there is little agreement on how the name of the work should be spelled. Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímmatal* (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), I:177, gives it as “Grobbiansrímur,” but “Grobbiansrímur” and “Grobbians rímur” also occur. The earliest manuscripts give the name of the work as “Grobbions Rýmur” (AM 615 f 4to, f. 37v) and “heilræða Rymur Grobbians bonda og Gribbu husfreitu hans með merkilegum kienningum” (AM 149 8vo, f. 1r; note that the name is also spelt “grobbon” (f. 1r), “grobbon” (f. 3v) and “griobbon” (f. 6r) in the body of the text). There is no title provided for the work in AM 436 12mo, but the name is usually spelled “grobbon” in the body of the text (e.g. ff. 77v, 80v).
- 3 See Ellert Þór Jóhannsson, “Arfleifð Gróbbians,” *Þórðargleði, slegið upp fyrir Þórð Inga Guð-jónsson fimmtugan 3. desember 2018* (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 2018) and Tryggvi Gíslason, “Bókmenntir um Grobbian,” *Eimreiðin* 1 (1968). In the latter it is only pp. 32–34 (section V) which actually discuss the *rímur*.

it only in passing.⁴ The facts that it is based on a foreign work and that it could be considered didactic in nature have probably not helped, since original Icelandic writings and narrative ones have long received more attention. An edition (critical or popular) of this work, generically on the borderline between conduct literature and satirical writings, would make it much easier for scholars to include this poem in their discussions of Icelandic literature, but no such edition exists.

In light of this absence, my purpose here is to pave the way for future work by shedding light on the origins of *Grobbsians rímur* through a narrow focus upon the first four of the eight fitts commonly gathered under that title, which I shall refer to as the core *Grobbsians rímur* (the final four, I refer to as continuations).⁵ These original four fitts (fitts I–IV in what follows) are normally attributed to a single author, but this, I will argue, is by no means certain. The four continuations, each an individual fitt, which later came to be appended to the core *Grobbsians rímur*, are connected with five different writers, the earliest of whom was born c. 1648 and the latest in 1713.⁶ Thus it is highly unlikely that in the original conception of the work there was any plan to collaborate with these later authors, and it is defensible to look at the earliest four fitts as a single independent unit.

In what follows, I will look at a variety of features of these core *Grobbsians rímur* and consider what they might reveal to us concerning

- 4 Hailing from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is unsurprising that they are not mentioned in Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Rímur fyrir 1600* (Copenhagen: S. L. Möller, 1934) or Jón Þorkelsson's *Om digtningen på Island i det 15. og 16. århundrede* (with the exception of a single reference to one of the continuations in the context of explaining kennings for the name "Þorsteinn"). Perhaps more surprising is their absence from Sir William Craigie, *Sýnisbók íslenzkra rímna*, 3 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952). The *rímur* are mentioned briefly in Óskar Halldórsson, *Bókmenntir á lærdómsöld 1550–1770* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1996), 21; also in Sigurður Nordal, *Sambengi og samtíð* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1996), II:106–7; also in Böðvar Guðmundsson et al., *Íslensk bókmenntasaga II* (Reykjavík: Mál og Menning, 1993), 478–79; also in Stefán Einarsson, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga, 874–1960* (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, 1961), 230.
- 5 These four are "first" chronologically and always precede the continuations in those manuscripts which include both. A study of the entire tradition is beyond the scope of a single article.
- 6 The five authors associated with the later fitts are Jón Sigurðsson lögsagnari (c. 1685–1720), Vigfús Jónsson (also called Leirulækjar-Fúsi; c. 1648–1728), Brynjólfur Halldórsson (1676–1737), Árni Böðvarsson (1713–76) and Þorsteinn Jónsson (eighteenth century). Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímmatal*, expresses doubts about two of these attributions (Jón Sigurðsson lögsagnari, II:95; Brynjólfur Halldórsson, II:29).

the earliest phase of composition and authorship. First, I will look at the evidence for who may have written the *rímur* and give some background on the two most likely candidates. Second, I will present the contents and layout of the core *Grobians rímur* in the hope of making them more accessible to other researchers and stimulating interest, but also as a basis for the analysis which follows. Third, I will look at the earliest manuscript witnesses and make some observations concerning the different, previously unacknowledged, versions of the work which they present. Fourth, I will analyse the relationship of the Icelandic text to its German forerunners. And finally, I will make some observations concerning intertextual references in the poem which feed back into the discussion of authorship.

Attributing authorship

With regards to the author of the core *Grobians rímur*, we may be disappointed to read in the final verse of fitt IV the following:

Rek ég þennan rembihnút á rófukvæði
að enginn viti Authors heiti, eftir þó að margur leiti.⁷

(I tie this double knot on [i.e. bring to an end] the tail-poem such that nobody might know the author's name, though many a man might try to discern it.)

It was common for *rímur*-poets to include some kind of clue as to their identity in the final verses of their compositions, in response to which we find the contrary decision of the author to make an explicit statement that such will not be the case here. Nevertheless, despite this coyness, which we might guess to have something to do with the crudeness of some of the description in the body of the poem, the author of the core *Grobians rímur* is generally said to have been Jón Magnússon í Laufási (1601–75). The attribution to Jón Magnússon appears already in 1738 in Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík's *Apparatus ad historiam literariam islandicam*: the fifth of the five works which are listed under his name is said to be

7 All quotes from the poem have been normalised and are based on the text found in AM 615 f 4to, unless otherwise stated. Translations are my own. Note that some later manuscripts substitute *rollukvæði* (i.e. “sheep-poem” or, more likely, “repetitive poem”) for *roukvæði* (which I have normalised as “rófukvæði”).

“Grobians rímur 4” (i.e. four fitts of *Grobians rímur*).⁸ The attribution is also provided in Hálfðan Einarsson’s *Sciagraphia* (1777), where we read “Johannes Magnæus Laufasinus, præter varia poemata, inprimis sacra, Grobiani & Grobianæ monita (ex Frid. Dedekeni opere sub eodem titulo edito Francof. 1564. forte deducta) cum Apodosi carminibus aliquot complexus...” (Jón Magnússon í Laufási, in addition to various poems of a principally religious nature, composed the advice of Grobianus and Grobiana (from the work of Friedrich Dedekind, published under that title in Frankfurt, in 1564, greatly reduced) and with a moral commentary on some of the verses).⁹ Hálfðan Einarsson is likely to have made use of Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík’s work in the preparation of his *Sciagraphia*, so we cannot necessarily take this as independent confirmation of Jón’s association with *Grobians rímur*.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Finnur Sigmundsson goes tentatively along with the attribution saying that “virðist það geta staðizt” (it seems to hold).¹¹

The tentativeness seems justified, however, since there is no straightforward comment on authorship embedded in the poem itself, and Jón Ólafsson was born twenty years after Jón Magnússon’s death. Moreover, only two of the many manuscript witnesses of *Grobians rímur* include an attribution to Jón Magnússon, and both are late.¹² To complicate mat-

8 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, sem skiptist í þrjá hluta*, ed. by Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (Latin trans. by Hjalti Snær Ægisson), RIT 99 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2018), 213. A fifth and sixth fitt are also mentioned in Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík’s work, and Vigfús Jónsson á Leirulæk and Brynjólfur Halldórsson á Kirkjubæ are mentioned as their authors.

9 Hálfðan Einarsson, *Sciagraphia* (Copenhagen: Sander et Schröder, 1777), 84. Only one other work by Jón Magnússon is mentioned by Hálfðan Einarsson, namely the *Rímur af Auðbirni*. Uno von Troil, in his list of Icelandic literature, does not mention *Grobians rímur*. See *Brefrörande en resa till Island* (Uppsala: Magnus Swederus, 1777), 154. Another literary history written around 1700 by Páll Vídalín mentions Jón Magnússon í Laufási but not his authorship of *Grobians rímur*. See Páll Vídalín, *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum Islandorum hujus et superioris seculi*, ed. by Jón Samsonarson, RIT 29 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1985), 67.

10 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, xii.

11 He also non-committally states that the “fjórar fyrstu [eru] venjulega eignaðar sr. Jóni Magnússyni í Laufási” (first four [i.e. of the wider group of eight associated fitts are] generally attributed to pastor Jón Magnússon í Laufási). Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, 1:177–78.

12 These are Lbs 188 8vo (dated 1850–70) and ÍB 502 8vo. In the latter manuscript Jón’s name has been added by a later hand next to the title: the person who made the addition seems

ters, there are at least two potentially contradictory attributions. The first is based on a comment which has been inserted between the title of the poem and the first line in one of the earliest manuscripts (roughly dated to the seventeenth century), namely AM 615 f 4to.¹³ The comment reads simply “S[era] Guðmundar Erlendzsonar” (i.e. the genitive form of Pastor Guðmundur Erlendsson, suggesting his authorship of the work named immediately before; see Figure 1). The ink is a slightly different colour to the surrounding text, the hand is different, and the words are squeezed into a space seemingly not intended for them, so it is safe to say that they were not included by the original scribe of the manuscript. It is, however, uncertain when exactly these three words were inserted, although they could well be seventeenth century, based on the style of the hand. Guðmundur Erlendsson (c. 1595–1670) was the pastor at Fell, Sléttuhlíð (inland on the north-eastern side of Skagafjörður), from 1634 until his death and was known for being a prolific poet. The attribution of *Grobbians rímur* to him is found nowhere else in near-contemporary sources,¹⁴ though this single appearance in the manuscript has led to *Grobbians rímur* being associated with Guðmundur Erlendsson in a number of more recent ones. For example, Kristian Kálund’s catalogue of the Arnarnagæan collection mentions the attribution, neither confirming nor refuting it, and the Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans thus lists numerous citations from *Grobbians rímur* along with Guðmundur Erlendsson’s name.¹⁵

to be Jón Jónsson Borgfirðingur (1826–1912) who was the owner of the manuscript in the nineteenth century.

- 13 This appears on f. 37v (according to the handrit.is foliation) or f. 40v (if one follows the foliation found in the manuscript). For the dating of the manuscript, see Kristian Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagæanske haandskriftsamling*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1889–94), II:25.
- 14 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, 205–6; Hálfdan Einarsson, *Sciagraphia*, 80–81; Páll Vídalín, *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum*, 38–40.
- 15 Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagæanske haandskriftsamling*, II:25; Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans, *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*, ritmálssafn.arnastofnun.is. Páll Eggert Ólason also repeats this attribution in *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnáms tímum til ársloka 1940*, 6 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1948–76), II:141–42: “Aðrar rímur eftir hann eru og guðrækilegs eða siðferðilegs efnis [...] nema það, sem hann kann að eiga í Grobbiansrímum” (Other *rímur* by him are either pious or moral in content [...] except for the fact that he might have contributed to *Grobbians rímur*).

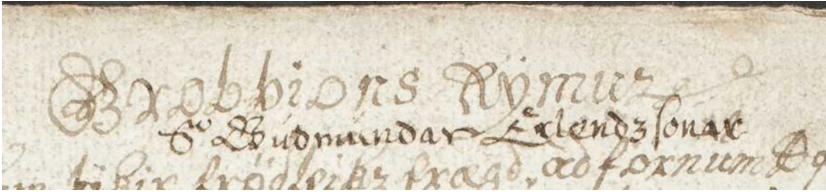


Figure 1: Detail from AM 615 f 4to, f. 37v

The second alternative attribution is explained by Finnur Sigmundsson, who informs us that the fitts attributed to Jón Magnússon have also been attributed to a “Grímur klerkur” (Grímur the clergyman). This attribution seems to stem from a poem by Þorvarður Hallsson (c. 1685–1758) which appears under the title “Ljóðmæli Þorvaldar Hallssonar á Búlandsnesi um nokkur Íslandsskáld og hvað hvort þeirra ort hafi” (Poem by Þorvaldur (*sic*) Hallsson from Búlandsnes about some Icelandic poets and what each of them has composed).¹⁶ The verse in question reads in full “Grímur klerkur gerði slag, af Grobbian merkur þýtt með lag” (Grímur, the fine clergyman, made a ditty about Grobbian, translated in poetic metre).¹⁷ The attribution is also mentioned in two manuscript witnesses of *Grobbsians rímur*, namely Rask 95, appearing along with a Latin title for the work, “carmina ironica kveðinn af Grími Presti fyrir norðan” (ironic poems composed by Grímur the clergyman from the north), and Lbs 1993 8vo where a postscript reads “fjórar fyrstu rímurnar er sagt ort hafa sr. Grímur Bessason” (the first four fitts are said to have been composed by Grímur Bessason).¹⁸ The scribes of both witnesses (dated 1800–15 and 1826–35 respectively) may have drawn on Þorvarður’s poem. This identification of the Grímur in Þorvarður Hallsson’s poem with Grímur Bessason (1719–85),¹⁹ if correct, excludes the possibility that the Grobbian-related work referred to is one and the same as the core *Grobbsians rímur*, given that the earliest manuscripts we have of the core *Grobbsians rímur* are from before Grímur Bessason was

16 The poem is found in Lbs 1685 8vo, images of which can be viewed on handrit.is. The manuscript is dated on handrit.is to the period 1775–1825, i.e. some years after Þorvarður’s death, which might explain why his name is reproduced incorrectly in the title.

17 The verse appears on f. 84r.

18 These attributions appear on f. 34r and f. 154v respectively.

19 Grímur Bessason lived 1762–85 at Hjaltastaður in Útmanasveit (Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímmatal*, II:45), which could be considered as “fyrir norðan” depending on the location of the scribe.

born. Even if the Grímur referred to is not Grímur Bessason but rather another clergyman named Grímur who lived in the seventeenth century and made a poetic translation, it need not mean that we should displace Jón Magnússon í Laufási or Guðmundur Erlendsson as the more probable authors of the core *Grobbians rímur*, since it is perfectly plausible for two individuals to try their hand at translating or adapting one and the same interesting foreign text.²⁰ And although the word *þýtt* (translated/interpreted) in Þorvarður Hallsson's poem suggests that Grímur was involved in a work of translation, this term could have been used loosely there to refer to an act of converting material (written or otherwise) into verse. If that is the case, Grímur might have been yet another individual who attempted to compose his own fitt as a continuation of the core *rímur*. If we read Þorvarður Hallsson's verse as such, it is moreover possible that the reference is to Grímur Bessason, and that there was at one time a continuation by him which is simply no longer extant. Due to these uncertainties, it seems reasonable to exclude "Grímur klerkur" from the discussion of authorship here unless further evidence is found.

Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson

Guðmundur Erlendsson's involvement in producing *Grobbians rímur* cannot, however, be so easily ignored owing to the appearance of his name in one of the earliest manuscripts. Nor, however, can Jón Magnússon's, because of the conviction concerning his involvement as shown by early Icelandic literary historians. Thus some additional information on their life and work is in order.²¹

Jón's father was Magnús Eiríksson (c. 1568–1652) who was the pastor at Auðkúla (Austur-Húnavatnssýsla) from 1596 to 1650. Thus he was living there when Jón was born in 1601. Jón did not stay there long, however, as he was fostered by the married couple Magnús Ólafsson í

20 It is worth noting, however, that Finnur Sigmundsson does not list any other *rímur*-poet named Grímur, apart from Grímur Bessason, either from the seventeenth century or any other period.

21 For information on Jón Magnússon í Laufási's life, see Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkrar æviskrár*, III:218. See also Páll Eggert Ólason, *Saga Íslendinga, Fimmta bindi: Seytjándi öld* (Reykjavík: Menntamálaráð og Þjóðvinafélag, 1942), 337–38, and Sigurður Nordal, *Sambengi og samtíð*, I:397–99.

Laufási (Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla) and Agnes Eiríksdóttir (also his paternal aunt) when only four years old, beginning an almost lifelong association with Laufás. When Magnús Ólafsson died in 1636, Jón Magnússon took over as pastor there and remained in that office until his death in 1675. Jón's wife was Guðrún Jónsdóttir, and they had four children who survived to adulthood: Jón, Elín, Steinvör and Katrín.²²

Like his foster-father and predecessor as pastor at Laufás, Jón was a man of letters. We know, for example, that on Magnús Ólafsson's death, Jón took over work on the dictionary which he had been preparing for Ole Worm.²³ For Hálfan Einarsson, however, it seems that it was Jón Magnússon's *rímur* which were most worthy of mention, since it is only *Grobians rímur* and the *Rímur af Auðbirni* that he alludes to in *Sciagraphia*.²⁴ The *Rímur af Auðbirni* tell the story of an avaricious man's conversion to a moral way of life and are apparently an original composition, an oddity among a style of poetry which most often retells pre-existing material. Another distinctive characteristic is the choice of religious themes for the rest of Jón's *rímur*-œuvre. Finnur Sigmundsson mentions six such examples: *Rímnaflokkur út af ævisögu þeirra fyrstu foreldra, Adams og Evu*, the *Rímur af Bileam*, the *Rímur af Enok*, the *Rímur af kóniga- og kroníkubókunum*, the *Rímur af lífssögu forföðursins Nóa* and the *Rímur af Salómon konungi hinum ríka*.²⁵ Other poetic genres also sprung from Jón Magnússon's pen: we have *erfiljóð* (epitaphs) composed for his father and Magnús Ólafsson í Laufási, a *huggunarkvæði* (consolation poem) for the aforementioned Guðmundur Erlendsson and his wife Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir after their son Jón Guðmundsson drowned, and three *harmljóð* (personal elegies) after Jón himself lost children at a

22 We know of other children of theirs who died at a young age, for example Magnús (1636–39), Guðrún (born and died 1638) and Steinvör (born and died in 1640). See Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, *Heiður og huggun: Erfiljóð, harmljóð og huggunarkvæði á 17. öld*, RIT 91 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2015), 287.

23 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Menn og menntir síðskiptaaldarinnar*, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Bókaverzlun Guðm. Gamalielssonar/Bókaverzlun Ársæls Árnasonar, 1919–26), IV:273–75.

24 See above, footnote 9.

25 See Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, I:1–3, 78–79, 120, 314–15, 363, 408–9. The topics of most of these *rímur* should be familiar. Bileam is better known in the anglophone world as Balaam (from the Book of Numbers).

young age.²⁶ We also have hymns and edifying poems, for example the *Píslarsaltari*, the *Vikusálmur* and the *Hústafla*. This latter, also known as *Oeconomia christiana*, is a work of conduct literature in which, in the words of Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “eru heilræðin flokkuð og þeim beint til hinna ýmsu hópa í samfélaginu” (pieces of advice are gathered together and directed at the various social groups).²⁷ Subdivisions of the work include “Faðerni” (Fatherhood) which discusses “skylda foreldranna við börnin” (the duty of parents to their children) and “Hjónaspegill” (Mirror of Married Couples).²⁸ In short, Jón Magnússon was a productive and wide-ranging author of poetry.

It seems reasonable to accept that Jón Magnússon was involved with producing the core *Grobbians rímur*, but we cannot exclude Guðmundur Erlendsson’s involvement in some way. He, like Jón Magnússon, was a “clergyman-poet” from northern Iceland,²⁹ born and raised at Fell in Sléttuhlíð where his father Erlendur Guðmundsson was the pastor. Guðmundur was educated at Hólar, after which he became deacon at Þingeyrar for three years. Following this, he was pastor at various parishes for around fifteen years before returning to Fell in Sléttuhlíð in 1634 and remaining there for the rest of his life as the pastor of the parish which had previously been served by his father. It was during his first assignment as pastor (Möðruvellir) that, around 1620, he married Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir.

26 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, *Heiður og huggun*, 285, chapter 7 (197–212) and chapter 10 (285–307). See also p. 79 for a discussion of the common English terms used for referring to such poetry and how they relate to the Icelandic taxonomy.

27 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, *Barokkmeistarinn: List og lærdómur í verkum Hallgríms Péturssonar*, RIT 63 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2005), 65. Three editions came out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, showing the popularity of the work. See also Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Dyggðafull kona er ein eðla gáfa’: Menningarleg mótun kyngervís á 17. öld,” *Áhrif Lúthers: Siðaskipti, samfélag og menning í 500 ár*, ed. by Hjalti Hugason, Loftur Guttormsson and Margrét Eggertsdóttir (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2017), 341–46.

28 Jón Magnússon, *Oeconomia christiana edur Huss-Tabla sem sierhverium i sinu Stande þann rietta Christendomens Veg fyrir Sioner leider* (Copenhagen: s.n., 1734), 13, 62.

29 Katelin Marit Parsons, “Songs for the End of the World: The Poetry of Guðmundur Erlendsson of Fell in Sléttuhlíð” (PhD Thesis, University of Iceland, 2020): 54. This is *skáldprestur* in Icelandic: see Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Hallgrímur með ‘sira Guðmund Erlendsson í Felli í bak og fyrir’: Tveir skáldbræður á 17. öld,” *Í ljóssins barna selskap: Fyrirlestrar frá ráðstefnu um séra Hallgrím Pétursson og samtíð hans sem haldin var í Hallgrímskirkju 28. október 2006* (Reykjavík: Listvinafélag Hallgrímskirkju – Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2007), 56.

They remained together for the rest of their lives until Guðrún died in 1668, two years before Guðmundur. Together they had eight children between 1621 and 1631, although only six of them survived to adulthood. While still fairly young, Guðmundur seems to have been wayward and argumentative, character traits which got him into trouble on more than one occasion. The result of one of his conflicts was his being more or less exiled to the parish of Grímsey between 1631 and 1634.³⁰ His later life seems, however, to have been much calmer.

Guðmundur's literary production, composed between 1615 and 1668, has not received a particularly warm reception from later critics, possibly in part due to his fairly simple style when compared with that of some of his contemporaries.³¹ Perhaps his most popular work, judging by the number of manuscript witnesses, was *Einvaldsóður* (Poem on Monarchy), a reworking into Icelandic of a pre-existing Danish translation of the Scot Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane dialogue betuix Experience and ane Courteour* (1554) (commonly known as *The Monarche*).³² In addition to this long poetic work, however, Guðmundur produced a wide array of other writings, among which can be mentioned two poetic anthologies, *Gíjja* and *Fagriskógur*, the latter unfortunately non-extant.³³ Guðmundur was also particularly active in producing religious *rímur*, often based on Old Testament narratives: twelve or so of these exist, among which can be mentioned *Forfeðrarímur* (i.e. on the Biblical patriarchs), the *Rímur af Móses*, *Samsonar rímur sterka* and the *Rímur af Jónasi spámanni*.³⁴ He also published poems about calamities and current affairs (for example on the Turkish raids, an Italian earthquake, the execution of Charles I in England), poems based on Aesopic fables, numerous short religious poems and occasional poetry. Páll Eggert Ólason made the claim that “veraldlegs kveðskapar gætir ekki að marki eftir síra Guðmund” (no secular poetry

30 See Katelin Parsons, “Gagn, gæði og gömul vísa um Grímsey,” *Són* 10 (2012): 41–60.

31 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Hallgrímur með ‘síra Guðmund Erlendsson í Felli,’” 49–50.

32 See Robert Geiger Cook, “A Critical Edition of *Einvaldsóður* (Poem on Monarchy) by séra Guðmundur Erlendsson (c. 1595–1670)” (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1962).

33 See Parsons, “Songs for the End of the World,” especially ch. 5, for an extensive discussion of *Gíjja* and p. 218 for her conclusions on the survival (or lack thereof) of *Fagriskógur*.

34 For the full list, see Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, II:50–51. The prophet Jónas is Jonah in English.

by Rev. Guðmundur is worthy of particular mention),³⁵ and it is true that religious conviction is a crucial motivation for and feature of much of his *œuvre*. There exist claims, however, that in addition to the two previously mentioned pious poetic anthologies, there was a third with a more secular focus.³⁶ If this is true, and knowing in any case what we do about his extant production, it would be misleading to pigeonhole Guðmundur as only producing religious literature.

Contents, structure and manuscript witnesses

Moving now to a discussion of the *rímur* themselves, a disclaimer must be introduced concerning my previous mention of the core *Grobbians rímur* as the “original four fitts,” namely that these four are only “original” in relation to the continuations. This is because in the earliest manuscripts the core *Grobbians rímur* take two forms, consisting of either three or four fitts, and it is not immediately obvious whether the three- or four-fitt version was composed first. I will discuss the relationship of these versions in more detail below, but for now the summary of contents will focus on the four-fitt version of the poem, since that is the one which predominates in the extant witnesses and the only one to be mentioned in previous scholarship.

The four fitts can be divided up into two groups of two: fitts I and II talking about Grobbian and his advice to his sons, and fitts III and IV talking about Gribba, Grobbian’s wife, and her advice to her daughters. Based on this division, one could feasibly divide the work up and call the first two fitts *Grobbians rímur* and the second two fitts *Gribbu rímur*. To give a bit more detail, after a brief *mansöng*, fitt I introduces Grobbian, the epitome of bad manners, and his wife, Gribba, whose behaviour is said to be like that of Hallgerður langbrók (v. 13).³⁷ Next their sixteen sons are introduced, each with a name which hints at a particular form of bad behaviour: (1) Augnarangur, (2) Bakvaskur,³⁸ (3) Blásinnkviður, (4) Blóti, (5) Fraktari,

35 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Saga Íslendinga*, 335.

36 See Sigurður Nordal, *Sambengi og samtíð*, I:396.

37 I include verse numbers based on the text in AM 615 f 4to, although there is no explicit numeration there.

38 “Bakvaskur” can be read as “slanderer” or “mud-slinger,” related to Middle Low German “bakwaschen” and Danish “bagvaske”. The advice he is given instructs him, fittingly, to slander all men (II:51–52).

(6) Gortur,³⁹ (7) Gagari, (8) Svelgbikar,⁴⁰ (9) Hákur, (10) Kargur, (11) Fjölþreifinn, (12) Kölski, (13) Fingralangur, (14) Rebbi, (15) Tungulangur, (16) Úlfaldi. After introducing them all, Grobbian proceeds to give advice to the first six. Advice for the remaining ten is the focus of fitt II. Fitt III introduces “Írónía,” a personification who reminds the reader not to take what is said at face value, before presenting the eight daughters: (1) Hispra, (2) Gelgja, (3) Skondra, (4) Skrafsa, (5) Strunsa, (6) Órækja, (7) Himpa, (8) Syrpusnegða.⁴¹ The rest of fitt III is concerned with Gribba giving advice to the first four of her daughters. Fitt IV thus continues the task with advice being given to the final four daughters.

The advice finishes with verse 47, and from there until the end of fitt IV (vv. 48–69) the poet’s voice takes over and explains to us how we should understand the strange material that has been presented thus far.

51. Orðsrok þessi á að líta ei með nösom
einfaldlega sem efníð hljómar.
Eru þetta ei Geiplur tómar.

(These sayings should not be taken literally and accepted at face value.⁴² They are not empty Geiplur.)⁴³

52. Heldur eru þetta heilræði í huldumáli
innan undir illum lörfum,
orða sneis úr fróðleik þörfum.

(These are rather pieces of advice in enigmatic language, deep down under foul rags, a mass of words coming from useful knowledge.)

- 39 “Gortur” means “Bragger” (like “gortari” from the verb “að gorta”). His advice tells him to do just that (I:76–79).
- 40 “Svelgbikar” should be understood as “Swallow-Cup” or “Gulp-Goblet,” and he is advised to drink as much as he can until he vomits (II:32–37).
- 41 Some of these names vary slightly in the different witnesses of the poem. Thus Himpa is Hnuppa and Syrpusnegða is Syrpusvegða in ÍB 105 4to.
- 42 The meaning seems clear from the context, but as a phrase “að líta (ei) með nösom” is unknown to me. It may mean that merely directing one’s eyes (nose) at the words is not enough, one must actively use one’s senses to go beyond the superficial meaning and perceive the deeper import.
- 43 *Geiplur* is the name of a *rímur*-composition based on a section of *Karlamagnús saga*, i.e. dealing with romantic and unserious subject matter. See Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Rímur fyrir 1600*, 364–66.

Having got to grips with the standard form of the *rímur*, it is also worth assessing its dissemination in the extant witnesses and considering which witnesses deviate from this pattern. This can help us to reconstruct the earliest history of *Grobbians rímur* and contribute to our understanding of to what extent the different versions might relate to the form which was first composed in response to its continental forerunner. Finnur Sigmundsson mentions thirty-two witnesses containing all or part of the multi-authored work which he calls “*Grobiansrímur*.”⁴⁴ By consulting the catalogues of Landsbókasafn Íslands, Uppsala University Library, the Royal Library in Stockholm, the Royal Library in Copenhagen and the British Library, I am able to add four new witnesses to that list.⁴⁵ Of the resulting thirty-six witnesses, twenty-four contain the core *Grobbians rímur* in whole or part.⁴⁶ This also means that twelve of the witnesses, besides other non-related contents, *only* contain the continuations, be it one or several. This leaves us with twenty-four witnesses of particular interest to the present study. It is worth noting that of these twenty-four, just under half (among which are two of the three oldest witnesses) contain, besides other non-related contents, *only* some form of the core *rímur*, and the other half contain some form of the core *rímur* in combination with some or all of the continuations. The former group, eleven manuscripts in total, provide further justification for looking at the core *rímur* in isolation, since for a number of early modern audiences that is how they would have been experienced.

While a full study of the filiation of all twenty-four of the witnesses containing the core *Grobbians rímur* would, naturally, be desirable, in the present context, I restrict myself to a consideration of only the oldest witnesses, that is to say those probably written in the seventeenth century and thus produced during or shortly after Jón Magnússon í Laufási's and

44 Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, I:178.

45 Those witnesses are Lbs 3906 8vo, Lbs 4068 8vo, Papp. 8vo nr 8 (containing only ‘Viðbjóðs ríma,’ the continuation by Vigfús Jónsson) and NKS 1131 fol. (a copy of AM 149 8vo, as stated on f. 1r). There seem to be no witnesses containing this work at Uppsala University Library or the British Library. Further witnesses may be present in collections in the UK, Ireland, Norway, Canada and the United States.

46 Two defective manuscripts which contain a fragmentary version of the core *Grobbians rímur* are JS 262 8vo (containing all of the second and third fitts but lacking the start of the first and the end of the fourth fitt) and ÍB 634 8vo (containing the end of the third fitt and all of the fourth fitt).

Guðmundur Erlendsson's lifetimes. These are AM 615 f 4to, AM 149 8vo and AM 436 12mo.

All three of these manuscripts are listed in Kålund's catalogue of the Arnarnagnæan Collection as being from "17. árh." (the seventeenth century),⁴⁷ which is imprecise but fits well with both Jón Magnússon í Laufási's and Guðmundur Erlendsson's authorship as they were born in 1601 and c. 1595 respectively. More accurate dating is difficult to arrive at, but there are some clues. AM 615 f 4to also contains the *Króka-Refs rímur* composed by Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–84). Finnur Sigmundsson, when editing these *rímur*, took a different manuscript as his base text, namely AM 614 4to, and said that it was the oldest of the preserved witnesses and written in 1656. He does not explain how he arrived at this conclusion, but if we accept it, then that would mean that AM 615 f 4to must be dated to the second half of the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ Moreover, AM 615 f 4to contains a single additional fitt, one of the continuations, named "Háðgælur" (Mocking-Rhymes) and normally attributed to Jón Sigurðsson lögsagnari (c. 1685–1720). If this attribution is correct, then the manuscript must have been composed at the very end of the seventeenth century (if not the start of the eighteenth). The next early witness, AM 149 8vo, is composed of fourteen separate sections, with *Grobbians rímur* in the tenth. Here again, one of the companion pieces, namely a poem named *Hringsdrápa*, helps us date the section of the manuscript with more precision. *Hringsdrápa* was written by Vigfús Jónsson á Leirulæk (often called Leirulækjar-Fúsi, 1648–1728), also author of one of the *Grobbians rímur* continuations. Assuming (generously) that he was at the very least twelve years old by the time he wrote the poem, this lets us know once again that the manuscript section must have been produced, at the earliest, in the late seventeenth century. AM 436 12mo came to Árni Magnússon from his paternal aunt, Halldóra Ketilsdóttir (1640–1727), but we do not know

47 Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske haandskriftsamling*, II:25, 415, 485.

48 Hallgrímur Pétursson, *Króka-Refs rímur og Rímur af Lykla-Petri og Magelónu eftir Síra Hallgrím Pétursson*, ed. by Finnur Sigmundsson, Rit Rímnafélagsins VII (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1956), ix. Finnur (p. xi) also mentions that the *rímur* seem fairly clearly to refer to the hardships Hallgrímur suffered with his wife, Guðríður Símonardóttir, so at the very least it seems that the *rímur*, and thus the manuscripts too, must have been produced after the couple met in 1636.

when exactly or who the scribe was.⁴⁹ We may now have arrived at slightly more restricted periods of composition for these witnesses, but determining which of the three represents the most original form is still uncertain.

A comparison of the texts in these three witnesses shows that there are a number of differences, but one of the most significant is the fact, alluded to already, that the text found in AM 436 12mo consists of three fitts rather than four. This is not a result of the text being defective and thus truncated at the end. Rather, while fitts I and II are fairly similar to the corresponding fitts as found in AM 615 f 4to and AM 149 8vo, there is in AM 436 12mo only one additional fitt, which I shall refer to as fitt IIIa, and which consists of eighty verses (fitt III in AM 615 f 4to consists of sixty-six verses and in AM 149 8vo of fifty-seven). Fitt IIIa is fairly close to fitt III in the other witnesses, albeit somewhat abbreviated, up until verse 28 (corresponding to verse 43 in AM 615 f 4to), after which it diverges significantly with a little over fifty verses not included in most other witnesses (Figure 2). I use the word “most” because there are in fact two later witnesses which also contain this three-fitt version, namely Lbs 1028 8vo (c. 1770) and Rask 86 (1700–99). While the four-fitt version spreads the discussion of Gribba’s eight daughters over fitts III and IV, the three-fitt version discusses all eight daughters in fitt IIIa. Another more minor difference is that the three-fitt version is abbreviated at the start of fitts I and IIIa as compared to the four-fitt version. More specifically, of the first forty-three verses of fitt I as it appears in AM 615 f 4to (the specific advice to the sons begins with verse 44), the three-fitt version in AM 436 12mo has only nine corresponding verses, and thus the list where the sons are introduced for the first time is missing in its entirety.⁵⁰ Likewise in fitt IIIa, verses 3–10 and 15–22 (as reckoned by the text of fitt III in AM 615 f 4to) are missing, the latter eight verses being those in which the names of the eight daughters are first listed.

49 For some context regarding this manuscript and its contents, see Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “Handritið hennar Dóru systur,” *38 vöplur bakaðar og bornar fram Guðrínu Ingólfsdóttur fimmtugri 1. maí 2009* (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 2009) 63–66.

50 AM 149 8vo has forty-one verses prior to the commencement of the specific advice to the sons in fitt I. Thus it has a text much closer to that found in AM 615 f 4to.

| | AM 615 f 4to (III, 66) | AM 149 8vo (III, 57) | AM 436 12mo (III, 80) |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| | x | x | x |
| | x | x | |
| | x | | x |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | x |
| | x | x | x |
| | x | x | x |
| | x | x | x |
| | x | x | 0 |
| | x | | 0 |
| | x | x | 0 |
| | x | x | 0 |
| | x | x | 0 |
| | | | 0 |
| | | | 0 |
| | | | 0 |
| | | | 0 |
| | | | 0 |

Fitt III
122 unique verses
25 in all 3 MS
29 only in 615 and 149
2 only in 615 and 436
0 only in 149 and 436
10 only in 615
3 only in 149
53 only in 436

| | (IV, 69) | (IV, 62) | |
|--|----------|----------|--|
| | x | x | |
| | x | | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | x | |
| | x | | |

Fitt IV
76 unique verses
55 in both MSS
14 only in 615
7 only in 149

Figure 2: Visual comparison of structure of the three oldest witnesses. Note that the “x”s do not represent individual verses. The diagram aims to give a rough sense of the density of verses (and thus where verses are missing in the three witnesses), thus each “x” represents

a group of approximately five verses. A gap means that fewer than three of the five verses are present. In fitt III, the “o”s are used to show where fitt IIIa diverges significantly from the version found in the other two witnesses. Prior to this point, there are strings of verses which are not found in any other witness, but the longest string is of four verses (e.g. I:4–7 and III:7–10 in AM 615 f 4to). Note that AM 615 f 4to also contains a fifth fitt, but this is not included in the diagram, since it is not considered one of the core *Grobbsians rímur*.

This begs the question, is the three-fitt or four-fitt version more original? The fact that large portions of the text are virtually identical lets us know that they are not two completely independent compositions, but rather that one must have been derived from the other. But it is not immediately obvious which has precedence. Based on the different endings alone, one might speculate that a scribe came across a text which was defective at the end and thus made an effort to complete it. This could have worked in either direction, i.e. a defective four-fitt version was found and was completed by a scribe in such a way that it became the three-fitt version, or a defective three-fitt version was found and was completed in such a way that it became the four-fitt-version. But it is not just the endings that diverge. As mentioned, the three-fitt version lacks the lists of sons and daughters found at the start of fitts I and III in the four-fitt version. The missing verses so perfectly excise the lists that it is hard to see this as anything other than conscious, albeit again in either direction. That is to say that a scribe may have consciously omitted the lists of names (seeing them, perhaps, as superfluous) or a scribe may have consciously added the lists of names (deeming them a helpful addition to orient the reader/listener). If the adding or removing of these lists was a conscious modification, then the extending or shortening of the ending might also be seen as conscious work rather than a necessity brought about by damage.⁵¹ Although two versions could be the result of a single scribe producing multiple versions of a work, this discussion also allows for the possibility that two scribes played conscious roles in two quite different versions of the core *Grobbsians*

51 It might be pointed out that if a scribe had come across a witness containing the three-fitt version which was defective at the end (i.e. with the text after III:43 missing), then it would have been very difficult to produce the four-fitt version in the way that we have it, since there was no list of daughters at the start of fitt III upon which the scribe could base the advice given after III:43. The names of daughters in both the three-fitt and four-fitt version are the same, even in the diverging endings.

rímur and might, moreover, provide a justification for the multiple names which appear in discussions of this work's authorship.

Some seeming errors in the three earliest witnesses might contribute to clearing up the question of precedence. For example, in AM 615 f 4to (four-fitt version), when Gribba's daughters are first listed, we are told of Skrafsa the fourth daughter, then Strunsa whose number in the sequence is not explicitly given, then Órækja the fifth daughter and Himpa the seventh daughter (III:18–21). It appears that Strunsa is the sixth daughter who has somehow got out of order, and this is confirmed later. When Gribba gives her individual advice to the daughters the order is Skrafsa (fourth), Órækja (fifth), Strunsa (sixth) and Himpa (seventh).⁵² The correct order appears in both the list and individual advice in the text as it appears in AM 149 8vo (ff. 12r–12v for the list), while AM 436 12mo, as we know, does not have the list at all. Yet another inconsistency with the list of daughters found in AM 615 f 4to presents an even greater problem. This arises when Gelgja is said to be the second daughter and Skondra the third (III:16–17). When we get to Gribba's actual advice to the daughters, however, Skondra is the second to be counselled (III:32–38) and Gelgja is the third (III:39–49). In this case AM 149 8vo (ff. 13r–13v) shares the confusion found in AM 615 f 4to. This inconsistency found in the two earliest witnesses of the four-fitt version could lead us to assume that the additional verses found there in which the daughters are listed is not original: these verses were added when the three-fitt version was expanded, but a lapse of attention led to the names of the daughters being inverted from the order in which they appear in the body of the fitt. Although this is not definitive, it is worth taking seriously the possibility that the three-fitt version is more original and that the four-fitt version represents a reworking of *Grobbsians rímur*.

Source and intertextual references

In entertaining the possibility of the three-fitt version's precedence, we must reckon with the fact that it would be closest to the foreign source material, thus a comparison between these two works is in order. Previous discussions of the source are restricted to the bare statement made by Finnur Sigmundsson that “mun fyrirmyndin sótt í þýzkt rit, sem prentað

52 The verses which deal with these four sisters are, respectively, III:50–65, IV:10–22, IV:23–35 and IV:36–40.

var á 17. öld” (the model will be found in a piece of German writing which was printed in the seventeenth century).⁵³ While indeed produced in Germany, and thus reasonably called “a piece of German writing,” the first version of this work was written in Latin. Regardless, it is not certain why Finnur mentions the seventeenth century, for while editions were certainly printed in the seventeenth century, Friedrich Dedekind’s work was first published in 1549.⁵⁴ After the original Latin text of 1549 (*Grobianus, de morum simplicitate*), a German adaptation by Kasper Scheidt, almost twice as long, was published in 1551 (*Grobianus, von groben sitten und unhöflichen geberden*). Scheidt’s reworking influenced Dedekind to produce a second Latin version (1552), incorporating the revisions, adding new material and making the two books into three. A third Latin edition was also produced by Dedekind in 1554, this time with descriptive chapter titles and a new overall title, *Grobianus et Grobiana*, reflecting the inclusion of the chapter on Grobianus’ female counterpart, which had already been present in the second edition of 1552. Many subsequent reprints and translations appeared,⁵⁵ among which can be mentioned a fairly close English translation of the three-book version from 1605, apparently carried out by R. F. Gent (possibly a pseudonym).⁵⁶ None of these various forms show any close verbal relationship to the Icelandic text, however, which cannot be considered even a loose translation. Nevertheless, in what follows, I take Dedekind’s third Latin version from 1554 as a basis for the discussion, since the presence of Grobbian and Gribba in the Icelandic suggests that the inspiration would have been the three-book version (from 1552, 1554

53 *Rímnatal*, I:178. Tryggvi Gíslason, “Bókmenntir um Grobbían,” 32–33, discusses Dedekind’s *Grobianus* and *Grobbianus rímur* and compares passages but never explicitly states how the relationship between the two should be understood.

54 This detail, correct but slightly misleading, is also repeated in Óskar Halldórsson, *Bókmenntir á lærdómsöld*, 21, and in a footnote in Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, 213, where we read the even more misleading statement that “fyrirmyndin er sótt í þýskt rit frá 17. öld” (the model is a German work of the seventeenth century).

55 For a full list of editions of the original and expanded Latin text and the German translations, see Gustav Milchsack, *Friedrich Dedekinds Grobianus verdeutscht von Kaspar Scheidt. Abdruck der ersten Ausgabe (1551)* (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1882), xiv–xxxvi.

56 R. F. Gent, *The Schoole of Slovenrie* (London: Valentine Simms, 1605). Reproduced by Ernst Rühl, *Grobianus in England: Nebst Neudruck der ersten Übersetzung “The Schoole of Slovenrie” (1605) und erster Herausgabe des Schwankes “Grobiana’s Nuptials” (c. 1604) aus Ms. 30. Bodl. Oxf. Palaestra XXXVIII* (Berlin: Mayer und Müller, 1904).

or thereafter) with both Grobianus and Grobiana. The 1552 three-book version had chronological precedence but was quickly replaced with the 1554 three-book version, and it is the latter which ended up being the basis of the many future reprints and translations and thus has precedence as regards impact and influence.

It is perhaps easier to compare *Grobianus et Grobiana* with *Grobbians rímur* by focussing on some of the differences between the Latin and Icelandic works. We can start with the fact that Dedekind's text does not make a character out of the narrator. Grobianus is the name attached to the work, appearing on the title page, but thereafter barely mentioned. The narrating voice, rather than being Grobianus, seems to be Dedekind himself (or a construction thereof). He reels off advice and anecdotes but never takes on much of a personality of his own. Thus we cannot see Grobianus as a fully rounded father in the way that Grobbian is in the Icelandic text. Comments by the narrator, discussing the father or master of the addressee in third person, also make it explicit that the narrator is not one and the same as the father or master of the addressee: "si te cogatur pater expectare uel hospes" (if your father or host is forced to wait for you) – as opposed to something along the lines of "if I am forced to wait for you, my son."⁵⁷

Dedekind's Grobianus is, in this way, to be identified with the addressee rather than the speaker. The addressee, male throughout the majority of the work, is never given a name (as are Grobbian's sons and daughters) nor associated with a specific vice. We get very little sense of who the addressee is as a person: he is more of an everyman, although usually treated as young and at times explicitly called "boy," e.g. "surge, puer, reseraque fores venientibus" (get up, boy, and open the doors for those who are arriving).⁵⁸ Some of the advice is specifically directed at a servant, as in this quotation from the start of Book II: "convivas exhilarare queas: sed tanquam famulum, cui non est plena potestas, et qui domini cogitur esse manu" (you might be able to gladden dinner guests, but as a servant, who does not have full power and who is obliged to be subject to a master).⁵⁹ But at other times the advice is for one who is the dinner guest himself

57 Friedrich Dedekind, *Grobianus, et Grobiana. De Morum simplicitate, libri tres, Ingratiam omnium rusticitatis amantium conscripti* (Frankfurt: Chr. Egenolphus, 1554), 26v.

58 Dedekind, *Grobianus, et Grobiana*, 27v.

59 Dedekind, *Grobianus, et Grobiana*, 40v.

or for one hosting a dinner party. It is hard to say whether the addressee really is a Grobianus – we get no description of what he does, just hear advice concerning what he should do. Perhaps the advice, if successful, brings the potential Grobianus into being. Though we must remember that outside the frame of the advice, the real aim is to discourage any individual from embodying the Grobianus.

The fact that the interlocutors are so different has significant implications for the overall layout of the two works. The Icelandic poet – as described above – structures the material around the list of first sons and then daughters, shifting the focus of the advice with each new child and their particular vices. Dedekind's Latin text is arranged rather differently. The first book gives advice structured around a day in the life of a servant, with the meals dominating. It consists of eleven chapters, the final five of which are dedicated to all the grossness that the servant should get up to during the evening meal. Book II, divided into nine chapters, focusses on what the addressee should do when invited to a meal as guest, while the final chapter gives advice on how to be a bad host to one's own dinner guests. Finally, Book III is more of a mixed bag, divided into eight wide-ranging chapters. It is only the last of these which focusses on advice for women. The name Grobiana appears at the head of that chapter, but the narrator is the same person who has given advice to men: he explains that girls "rogant ipsas pauca docere uelim" (beg that I should want to teach them some few things).⁶⁰ Grobiana is not a female counterpart to the male narrator but rather any misbehaving young lady who will receive the advice, an everywoman with the potential to misbehave. Gribba is a thoroughly Icelandic invention.

Thus the Icelandic poem shows a tendency to dramatise the situation of the narrator and addressees, turning them into fleshed-out individuals with Grobbian, the father of a family which includes a wife and numerous children each with their own name and unpleasant habits. Incidentally, a similar approach, which goes beyond merely revelling in fairly anonymous back-to-front advice, can be seen in a work entitled *Grobiana's Nuptials*, a bawdy comedy written in England around 1610 which exists in a single manuscript.⁶¹ In this play, Grobianus is now a character and Grobiana his daughter, for whom he is seeking a suitable marriage. While there is no

60 Dedekind, *Grobianus, et Grobiana*, 89v.

61 Rühl edited the play from the manuscript MS Bodl. 30 in *Grobianus in England*, 163–91.

reason to believe this play had any influence on the Icelandic poem, it is perhaps testament to a shared perception that Dedekind's advice could lend itself to more fully realised situational comedy.

The comparison of *Grobianus et Grobiana* and *Grobbians rimur* is made without ruling out the possibility of intermediary steps in the process of transmission. We know, for example, that many early modern Icelandic translations or adaptations of continental texts are based on Danish intermediaries.⁶² Yet while English and Hungarian translations of *Grobianus* are recorded, no Danish translation is known to have existed.⁶³ Thus it is simplest to assume that it was either a Latin or German form of the text which made it to Iceland. Nevertheless, since the Icelandic version is so different from Dedekind's second and third Latin versions, it cannot be determined specifically which of the many reprints of these texts was the impetus for the Icelandic work. The comment by Hálfðan Einarsson in his *Sciagraphia*, mentioned above, would seem to imply that a copy of the 1564 edition published in Frankfurt was accessible in Iceland in the eighteenth century, so this seems as likely a source as any. But while the comparison of the Icelandic with the Latin text is interesting in general terms, it cannot shed much light on the question of whether the three-fitt or the four-fitt version was more original. One might, however, note that the three books of Dedekind's second and third versions could have inspired a three-fitt structure. The greater space granted to the discussion of the male Grobianus in Dedekind's second and third versions, with only minimal discussion of the female Grobiana, might also better match the three-fitt version with its approximately 2:1 ratio of discussion of Grobbian to Gribba (as opposed to the 1:1 ratio of discussion in the four-fitt version). This is by no means conclusive, but added to the evidence presented above concerning errors in the opening verses of the four-fitt version, it leaves us grounds for speculating about the three-fitt version as the more original of the two.

62 For various examples of Icelandic texts based on Danish translations or adaptations of German works, see Hubert Seelow, *Die isländischen Übersetzungen der deutschen Volksbücher*, RIT 35 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1989).

63 On the bibliographical details of the English and Hungarian translations, see Milchsack, *Friedrich Dedekinds Grobianus verdeutscht*, xxxii–xxxiii. Note that the *Ordbog over det danske sprog*, under the entry for *Grobrian*, gives an example from around 1700 which shows that Danes were by that time familiar enough with the concept of Grobianus to use the term “grobrian” as a synonym for a coarse and unpleasant individual.

As a continuation of this speculation, we may also try to understand what might have led to the three-fitt version being adapted into a four-fitt version, where Gribba's advice to her daughters is spread over two fitts and is thus on an equal footing with Grobbian's advice to his sons. The obvious guess is that an author/adaptor/scribe wished to create more balance in the work. Barbara Correll has argued that in the act of taking on board Scheidt's additions and producing the three-book Latin version, Dedekind "redresses an imbalance, seeks completion for a text," and the adaptor of *Grobbians rimur* can be imagined as having continued this process.⁶⁴ Extra-literary reasons may also have played a part: bad behaviour in girls and young women may have been seen as equally in need of correction (through lampooning) as it was in boys and young men. Yet another literary inspiration may have come from previous works within the genre of *heilraði* (good advice) literature. One of the most important of such works was the *Disticha Catonis* (Distichs of Cato), which had already been translated into Icelandic in the Middle Ages as *Hugsvinnsmál*.⁶⁵ In the sixteenth century it retained its status, as all advanced students at the cathedral schools in Hólar and Skálholt had to study the Latin *Disticha*, as laid out in the Danish Church Ordinance of 1537, accepted at Skálholt in 1542. The work was thus highly familiar to literate Icelanders also in the seventeenth century, all the more so after Jón Bjarnason á Presthólum (c. 1560–c. 1634) produced a new translation, what Halldór Hermannsson called the "Hólar Cato," in the early 1620s and had it printed at Hólar.⁶⁶ That the *Disticha Catonis* were viewed as thematically similar to (if inverted) texts about Grobianus can be seen in the subtitle to R. F. Gent's English translation of *Grobianus et Grobiana*: "Cato Turnd Wrong Side Out."⁶⁷ The reason

64 Barbara Correll, *The End of Conduct: Grobianus and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 118.

65 Tarrin Wills and Stephanie Würth (eds. and trans.), "Anonymous, *Hugsvinnsmál*," *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) 358–449.

66 See Halldór Hermannsson (ed.), *The Hólar Cato: An Icelandic Schoolbook of the Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958). Note that Halldór Hermannsson (p. xxvii) differs slightly from other more recent sources in listing Jón Bjarnason's year of death as c. 1635.

67 See also Dedekind's comment in his preface (*Grobianus, et Grobiana*, 5v) that "forsitan et tetricos offendent ista Catones / carmina" (maybe these poems will also offend shadowy Catos).

for bringing up the *Disticha* here is that they are the pre-eminent model for early modern advice literature and are divided into four books. Jón Bjarnason's translation maintains this four-book structure, and it may be that both the Latin and Icelandic works have played a role in encouraging the three-fitt version of *Grobbians rímur* to be adapted into a generically appropriate four-fitt structure.

Having come up with a theory of how the three-fitt version was composed on the basis of a Latin/German original and subsequently adapted into a four-fitt version, we can return to the question of authorship which was brought up at the start of this article. There is no reason why both versions should not be the product of a single author, but we should also not rule out the possibility that the four-fitt version was adapted by someone other than the author of the three-fitt version. We know that both Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson have been connected to the core *Grobbians rímur*, so we can ask the question, are there any clues in either of the versions which point towards one of these men as author?

Just such a clue might be identified in the intertextual references found in the *rímur*. These include several to biblical characters, completely absent in the Latin source. Moreover, a number of these names are only found in the four-fitt version, principally in fitt I where, when the names of the sons are first listed, several of them are compared to characters from the Bible. In addition to Lucifer (I:19) and Satan (I:63), we have Absalom (I:21), Nabal (I:27), Ishmael (I:20), Achan (I:30) and Judas Iscariot (I:31). Since we know that both Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson composed poems and *rímur* on religious subjects, these references should come as no surprise if either of these men were the author. What might tip the balance in favour of Guðmundur Erlendsson as author of the four-fitt version, however, is a comparison of certain of these biblical references with his *Rímur af Sál og Davíð*, written during his stay on Grímsey (1631–34).⁶⁸

One example of such a verse involves Kargur (Stubborn), Grobbian's tenth son, who is said to be "Nabal rétt að nísku jafn" (A perfect equal of Nabal in terms of stinginess; I:27). The story of Nabal's stinginess appears

68 These *rímur* have not been edited in their entirety but can be read in the manuscript JS 232 4to online at handrit.is. According to the foliation in the manuscript (which I use here) they appear on ff. 157r–228v. handrit.is offers a different foliation, such that the *rímur* run from ff. 168r–239v. See Parsons, "Gagn, gæði og gömul vísa um Grímsey," for an edition of the *mansöng* of fitt XVIII.

in fitt VIII of Guðmundur's *Rímur af Sál og Davíð*,⁶⁹ where after being rudely refused Nabal's help, David goes to see the "nískan rekk" (stingy man; f. 177r) with violent intent. Nabal's wife, Abigail, intervenes and placates David with gifts, thus avoiding bloodshed. But when Nabal hears of what she has done, he is struck down by something like a heart attack and dies. We are thus told that "svo kom Nabals niskan hörð / nú með skyndi honum í jörð" (Nabal's unrelenting stinginess took him to an early grave; f. 178v). Another example of a verse found only in the four-fitt version of *Grobbians rímur* relates to Fraktari (Freighter/Cargo Ship), Grobbian's fifth son, who is said to be vain and boastful and "við Absalon líkjast vildi" (wanted to be compared to Absalom; I:21). Once again, Absalom appears in the *Rímur af Sál og Davíð*, introduced there in fitt XII as the son of David (f. 190r), and then playing a principal role from the end of fitt XV up to the end of fitt XVIII, first by killing his brother Amnon and then by usurping his father but ultimately dying in an ensuing battle. In the *rímur* we are told that "Absalóns lífs - á - lóni voru lýtin engi / og svo fegurð yfir mengi / auðar viður hafði fengið" (there were no flaws on the living Absalom and that tree of wealth [MAN] had been granted beauty superior to the multitude; f. 206r). It makes sense that Fraktari, vain and superficial and advised by Grobbian to get "sama fatasnið / sem frægast er í landi" (the same style of clothes as the most renowned men in the country), should want to be considered equal to a paragon of male beauty. No definitive conclusions can be drawn from these two examples, especially given that familiarity with Bible stories can be assumed for most learned Icelanders of the time, including Jón Magnússon, but it is intriguing that these two rather more obscure biblical allusions from *Grobbians rímur* match up with Old Testament stories retold by Guðmundur Erlendsson in another context.

If Guðmundur Erlendsson is responsible for turning the three-fitt version into the four-fitt version, he could also be the author of the three-fitt version. Alternatively, we could see Jón Magnússon as author of the three-fitt version and Guðmundur as the adaptor. The motivations for such an adaptation have already been discussed, but, in that regard, it might be worth remembering Robert Cook's comments concerning Guðmundur's adaptation of *The Monarche*, that "séra Guðmundur also has a nice sense of

69 The full story of Nabal appears on ff. 176v–178v (or ff. 187v–189v) of JS 232 4to. I normalise the text when quoting.

balance and repetition.”⁷⁰ The equal weighting of the two fitts focussed on Grobbian’s sons and those focussed on Gribba’s daughters certainly provides the poem with more balance, and the inclusion of the lists of names of the sons and the daughters at the start of fitts I and III also clearly provides repetition, in a way which reduces the burden on a listener or reader.

Guðmundur’s lengthy *Rímur af Sál og Davíð* can also provide further food for thought, especially if we consider them alongside Jón Magnússon’s *Rímur af Salómon konungi hinum ríka*. The former covers Old Testament events from Samuel making his sons, Joel and Abijah, judges over Israel (as in I Samuel 8) up to King David’s advice to Solomon just before his death (as in I Kings 2:1–11).⁷¹ Jón Magnússon’s *Rímur af Salómon konungi hinum ríka* continue the story precisely where it was left off by Guðmundur, starting by mentioning David’s death and then discussing the challenge to his rule which the new king Solomon faced from Adonijah (as in I Kings 2:13).⁷² In at least one extant manuscript, namely ÍB 509 4to (dated 1770–71), the two sets of *rímur* appear one after the other in this order, suggesting that the compiler might have been aware of this relationship or at least been reliant on an exemplar which was. What this implies, quite simply, is that Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson were engaged in complementary acts of literary composition, the writing of one continuing where that of the other left off. This may have occurred spontaneously, but knowing what we do about the close ties between the clergyman-poets of Northern Iceland in the seventeenth century, it seems perfectly reasonable to guess that such neat dovetailing involved direct consultation.⁷³ If their work on religious *rímur* seems to have involved collaboration, the possibility of them having collaborated in some way on *Grobbians rímur* is not so far-fetched.⁷⁴

70 Cook, “A Critical Edition of *Einvaldsóður*,” 9.

71 See JS 232 4to, f. 157v (f. 168r) and f. 228v (239r).

72 See JS 45 4to, ff. 133r–134r. It seems that Jón’s *Rímur af kóniga- og kronikubókunum* might also be considered another continuation, since the *Rímur af Salómon konungi hinum ríka* mention Jeroboam’s rebellion against Solomon towards the end (fitt XIV of XV) while the *Rímur af kóniga- og kronikubókunum* start by discussing Jeroboam in Solomon’s old age. More research remains to be done on these works and how they interact with each other.

73 On the friendship between Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson, see, for example, Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, *Heiður og huggun*, 198.

74 It is also worth bearing in mind Katelin Parsons’ recent discussion of the “possibilities of collaborative authorship even at the stage of its initial composition” with regard to

Conclusions

In this article new information has been presented about *Grobbians rímur*, both definitive and more speculative. Among the more definitive findings, the most important is that the earliest manuscripts contain two versions, namely a three-fitt and a four-fitt version, of the core *Grobbians rímur*. This is certain, but what remains unclear is the relationship between the two versions and who was responsible for producing them. Thus the more speculative findings involve suggesting a possible chronology of composition and a theory of authorship. The hypothesis put forward here, although by no means verifiable or certain at this stage, represents one possible explanation. In the absence of any other research on this material, it seems at the very least a useful jumping-off point for future discussions.

The question of authorship of the two versions draws on the extant manuscripts, in particular the reference to Guðmundur Erlendsson as an author of the four-fitt version of the core *Grobbians rímur* found in AM 615 f 4to, which, it should be noted, is the earliest attribution of authorship of any kind in relation to the poem. An alternative reading of this single attribution is that it was merely the product of a confused or misinformed scribe and thus that little weight should be granted it. I choose, however, to take the isolated attribution at its word and consider how Guðmundur Erlendsson could have been involved in the authorship of *Grobbians rímur*. A couple of problems therefore have to be addressed. First, if Guðmundur is the author of at least one version of *Grobbians rímur*, why is this not independently corroborated elsewhere? Second, what evidence is there within Guðmundur's literary output of him producing material like *Grobbians rímur*? Is it even credible that he would have been involved in authoring or adapting such a work?

In answer to the first question, it is important to recognise that our sources on seventeenth-century authorship are fragmentary and at times unreliable. Katelin Parsons has commented on the fact that Guðmundur Erlendsson “was a well-known poet to whom numerous works are (often spuriously) attributed.”⁷⁵ Perhaps the reference to Guðmundur in AM

Grylukvæði and her conclusion that “Guðmundur Erlendsson and Ásgrímur Magnússon could easily have composed *Grylukvæði* together” (“Grýla in Sléttuhlið,” *Gripla* 23 (2013): 211–33, at 228).

⁷⁵ Katelin Parsons, “Grýla in Sléttuhlið,” 213. An example is given, the *Rímur af krossrénu*,

615 f 4to is just such a misattribution, or perhaps the oft-repeated claim that Jón Magnússon was the author is the real misattribution, with the information provided in AM 615 f 4to being a fleeting glimpse of the true state of affairs. Potentially contributing to the hazy picture surrounding *Grobbians rímur*'s authorship is the possibility that a conscious and active effort was made to suppress information about its author. The poem itself attests to an author's choice not to reveal themselves, "að enginn viti Authors heiti."⁷⁶ The crudity of much of the content provides a comprehensible motive for a shy author. Moreover, Katelin Parsons' recent work on Guðmundur's poetic anthologies provides ample evidence that both he and his family played a significant role in curating his literary production. One aspect of this is that "Guðmundur seems to have deliberately excluded the carnivalesque from his legacy as a poet."⁷⁷ Given all this, it is feasible that Guðmundur might have concealed his authorship and that he and his descendants suppressed any association of it with his more respectable output.

An answer to the second question is dependent upon us determining what type of literature *Grobbians rímur* is. Since the ultimate aim of the *rímur* seems to be didactic and specifically aimed at the schooling of young people, we can say that it falls within the broad genre of conduct literature. On the other hand, since its method of instructing is through description of the inverse of good conduct, in a way which may be considered entertaining, one can say that it has a claim to be considered amongst satirical literature, especially that which uses grotesque imagery and bawdy humour. It is, also, an example of a work dependent upon, although not a direct translation of, writing from early modern Germany.

With regard to the first genre, we know for a fact that Guðmundur took an interest in conduct literature: for example, his poetic translation

which Páll Vídalín attributed to Guðmundur but which were actually by Sigurður Jónsson of Presthólar (224).

76 Note that this quote, mentioned at the start of the article, is the final verse of fitt IV and so is absent in the three-fitt version.

77 Parsons, "Songs for the End of the World," 223. One might, however, speculate about the contents of the aforementioned non-extant third poetic anthology of Guðmundur's work. It was supposed to contain more secular material and thus might speak against suppression of "the carnivalesque." Not all secular literature is, however, necessarily coarse or grotesque, and it is hard to make assessments of its contents *in absentia*. Moreover, the fact that it is non-extant might point to suppression, even if the original act of gathering the poems together implies a differing impulse.

Heilráð barnagafræðing meistara Antoni Mureti (Good Advice of the Child Discipline Expert, Antoine Muret);⁷⁸ *Vilbaldsrímur*, of which Parsons tells us that “steering young people away from a life of crime is a central theme;”⁷⁹ and his numerous poetic translations of Aesop’s fables, a favoured didactic text in the early modern period. As far as the second genre, satirical or grotesque literature, is concerned, while not typical of Guðmundur’s writing, a couple of examples can be found amongst his œuvre: a comic and somewhat grotesque *Grylukvæði* exists, which has recently been suggested to be a collaborative work by Guðmundur Erlendsson and Ásgrímur Magnússon.⁸⁰ It is easy to see some kind of family resemblance between the child-eating Gryla and the child-corrupting Gribba. Guðmundur’s “Skeggi til Laugu skrifar og segir” (Skeggi writes to Lauga and says) too is a “parody of a love-letter,” and Katelin Parsons has also suggested that *Brietarkvæði*, a poem which ends with a naked female vagrant lying collapsed on the floor in a puddle of suet, may also be the work of Guðmundur.⁸¹ Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur, moreover, tells us, with regard to Guðmundur’s illegitimate fathering of a child c. 1617, that “mælt er að Guðmundur hafi ort um barnsmóður sína heldur kímilegt klámkvæði” (it is said that Guðmundur composed a rather amusing pornographic poem about the mother).⁸² Thus grotesque, satirical and bawdy literature was not out of the question for this clergyman, despite Páll Eggert Ólason’s claim cited in the introduction to this article.⁸³ With regards to Guðmundur’s literary influence from early modern Germany, a recent article by Þórunn Sigurðardóttir and Þorsteinn Helgason highlights that his poem on the destruction of Magdeburg in 1631 was probably written soon after the event and that “accounts of events in Magdeburg must certainly have reached Denmark by various channels” but that “from there, and perhaps even directly from Germany, the news could have reached

78 Parsons, “Songs for the End of the World,” 130. See the text in JS 232 4to, ff. 114r–116r.

79 Parsons, “Songs for the End of the World,” 131.

80 Parsons, “Gryla in Sléttuhlið,” 228.

81 Parsons, “Songs for the End of the World,” 78.

82 See Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur’s *Prestaævir á Íslandi* (Skagafjarðarprófestsdæmi) in Lbs 2371 II 4to, pp. 1439–40 (ff. 297r–297v). See also Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Á Krists ysta jarðar hala: Um séra Guðmund Erlendsson í Felli og verk hans,” *Skagfirðingabók* 37 (2016): 171–84, at 175.

83 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Saga Íslendinga*, 335.

Iceland.”⁸⁴ Thus writing from Germany could quickly reach Iceland and was certainly capable of piquing Guðmundur’s interest.

All of this means that there is no reason to automatically rule out Guðmundur as having played a role in the composition or adaptation of the core *Grobbians rímur*. These arguments do not prove that Guðmundur was the author or adaptor, but the attribution in AM 615 f 4to and the biblical references in the four-fitt version of the core *Grobbians rímur*, which match stories retold by Guðmundur in his *Rímur af Sál og Davíð*, are pieces of circumstantial evidence which support this argument. The similarity of the tripartite structure of the three-fitt version to the three-book division of the Latin *Grobrianus et Grobiana* and the errors in verse order in the four-fitt version have also been adduced as circumstantial evidence that the three-fitt version was composed prior to the four-fitt version. The evidence of the Old Testament *rímur* also points towards the possibility of collaborative authorship involving both Jón Magnússon í Laufási and Guðmundur Erlendsson.

This article has restricted itself to discussion of the core *Grobbians rímur*, since to add the eighteenth-century continuations would have made a complex and lengthy analysis even more unwieldy. Nevertheless, future research will hopefully seek to clarify further the processes of composition and dissemination of the entire complex of *Grobbians rímur* and in doing so provide further evidence for alternative configurations of authorship within early modern Icelandic literature. Once we have got to grips with some of the basic questions concerning these poems, it is hoped that literary analyses of *Grobbians rímur* will help us to better understand a shadowy yet clearly popular strand of Icelandic seventeenth- and eighteenth-century culture.

84 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir and Þorsteinn Helgason, “Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland: The Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631,” *Quaerendo* 50 (2020): 310–36, at 314.

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ÁGRIP

Grótesk heilræði á Íslandi á sautjándu öld: Dularfullur uppruni *Grobians rímna*

Efnisorð: heilræði, satíra, *rímur*, sautjándu öld, gróteska

Grobianus et Grobiana er áhrifamikið þýskt verk frá sextándu öld eftir Friedrich Dedekind sem setti fram ráðleggingar um hvernig ætti að haga sér illa, að eigin sögn sem öfugmæli til að hvetja fólk til að haga sér vel. Þessi grein fjallar um íslenskt verk frá sautjándu öld, *Grobians rímur*, sem tekur innblástur frá persónu Grobianusar og konu hans Grobiönu (sem verður Gribba á íslensku) og er langt frá því að vera bókstafleg þýðing. *Grobians rímur* eru lítið rannsakaðar og flutningssaga þeirra er flókin, þar sem einhverjir höfundar hafa lagt til viðbótarrímur á margra áratuga tímabili. Í þessari grein er áherslan á fyrstu fjórar rímurnar (þær sem ég kalla “core *Grobians rímur*” eða “kjarna-*Grobians rímur*”), venjulega kenndar við einn höfund, annað hvort Jón Magnússon í Laufási eða Guðmund Erlendsson. Við nánari athugun á þremur elstu handritunum, öllum frá sautjándu öld, kemur í ljós að þar eru tvær gerðir, önnur með þremur rímum og hin með fjórum. Tilgáta er sett fram um að tveir höfundar gætu haft ort þessar tvær gerðir og unnið saman, þannig að Jón Magnússon og Guðmundur Erlendsson gætu báðir talist höfundar. Aðrar rímur þessara manna benda til þess að þeir hafi unnið saman. Þannig eru færð rök fyrir því að þriggja rímna gerðin sé líklega eldri gerð *Grobians rímna*, sennilega ort af Jóni Magnússyni, en gerðin með fjórum rímum sé yngri og líkast til ort af Guðmundi Erlendssyni. Þessi rannsókn mun vonandi ryðja brautina fyrir framtíðarrannsóknum á bókmennta- og menningarlegu gildi þessa forvitnilega verks.

SUMMARY

Grotesque Advice in Seventeenth-Century Iceland: The Mysterious Origins of *Grobians rímur*

Keywords: Didactic literature, satire, *rímur*, seventeenth century, grotesque

Grobianus et Grobiana was an influential sixteenth-century German work by Friedrich Dedekind which presented advice on how to behave badly, supposedly as an inverse way of encouraging people to behave well. This article looks at an Icelandic work from the seventeenth century, *Grobians rímur*, which drew on the figure of Grobianus and his wife Grobiana (who becomes Gribba in the Icelandic text) but is no mere translation. *Grobians rímur* is little studied and has a complex transmission history, with several authors contributing additional fitts over a period of many decades. The focus here is the earliest four fitts (what I call the “core *Grobians rímur*”), usually attributed to a single author, either Jón

Magnússon í Laufási or Guðmundur Erlendsson. Through a consideration of the three extant seventeenth-century manuscripts, two early versions come to light, one consisting of only three fitts as well as another consisting of the more familiar four fitts. A hypothesis is developed that these two versions could be the result of two authors working together and expanding on each other's compositions, thus both Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson could equally be considered the authors. Other poems by these poets suggest that they responded to each other's works. Thus arguments are presented that the three-fitt version is most likely the earlier form of the poem, probably composed principally by Jón Magnússon, while the four-fitt version came after and Guðmundur Erlendsson was probably involved in its composition. This study will hopefully pave the way for future research which will consider the literary and cultural value of this intriguing work.

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