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Authenticating Voices?

Diegesis and Stanza Quotation in the *Íslendingasögur*

Abstract. Stanzas in saga prosimetrum are often differentiated as authenticating stanzas, quoted by the narrative voice to evidence the prose account, and situational stanzas, spoken by characters as part of the plot. Yet in implying that only some types of stanza quotation authenticate events, the dichotomy conflates two questions: the narrative function of the stanza, and who speaks it in the text. I propose a new model based on diegetic level, which more accurately describes how sagas quote stanzas. I then analyse other functions of extradiegetic quotation in the *Íslendingasögur*, showing how it is used to control poetic voices, preserve narrative momentum, and construct complex forms of metalepsis.

1. Introduction

Many Old Norse sagas are prosimetric, in that they mix poetic and prose forms to some degree.[1] This prosimetrum typically takes the form of skaldic poetry, composed in the ninth to eleventh centuries (or presented as such), being preserved in prose texts that narrate events of the earlier period associated with the poetry, but which were themselves written later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As Judy Quinn (1997, p. 61) points out, this means that saga prosimetrum »almost invariably [...] involves the quotation of poetry«, in the sense that poetry that predates the written saga, and which was already in circulation via oral tradition, is embedded within the prose framework. Such quotation could encompass a single *lausavísa*

(›standalone stanza‹),[2] a short sequence of stanzas, or even the inclusion of a long poem, such as Egill Skalla-Grímsson's ›Höfuðlausn‹. The extent to which sagas are prosimetric varies across subgenres and texts, but in the subgenre of *Íslendingasögur* (family sagas), twenty-six texts (about two-thirds) contain at least one stanza, and at least twenty have five or more (Nordal 2007, pp. 220–221).

Scholars have conventionally divided the stanzas quoted in the sagas into two categories: those cited by the narrative voice as evidence corroborating the prose account, and those incorporated into the story itself as direct speech, spoken by the characters. Various terms have been used for this dichotomy; I refer to the categories as authenticating and situational verses, following the terminology coined by Diana Whaley (1993), which is common in contemporary scholarship.[3] While this distinction has been promoted as a means of tracing the textual development of saga literature (Males 2020), as well as assessing the usefulness of the sagas as historical sources, it has come under scrutiny in recent years from academics working in both literary and historical studies. As I argue in this article, the distinction, especially the idea that only certain kinds of stanza quotation can authenticate events, conflates two distinct questions about poetic quotation in the sagas: the narrative function that a particular stanza has in a saga, and the narrative level on which it is embedded. The term ›authenticating‹ derives from the idea that such stanzas have a primarily evidentiary function – but, as discussed below, these stanzas are typically identified grouped together not because of the reliability of their content, but by h o w they are embedded in the prose. By contrast, situational stanzas are defined only by the fact that they are integrated into the representation of narrative events within the plot of the saga. Nothing is explicitly stated about their function, but the dichotomy implies that, unlike authenticating stanzas, they are not used to evidence the prose account.

In this article, I suggest an alternative conceptual framework that facilitates literary analysis of this facet of the sagas. I begin by discussing how

the authenticating–situational paradigm has been applied to skaldic quotation in the sagas and previous critiques of how this model has been used. I then outline the narratological concept of diegetic level, which I suggest is better suited for characterising how verses are embedded in prose without making claims about the poetry's broader narrative function. I argue that focusing on diegetic level in itself, rather than conflating it with questions of narrative function, facilitates more accurate analysis of the textual strategies adopted by saga writers for embedding poetry into their narratives. In the final section, I outline the varieties of extradiegetic quotation used in the *Íslendingasögur*, including those edge-cases that do not fit easily into the authenticating–situational model.

2. The authenticating–situational paradigm

Saga scholars have distinguished between poetry quoted as evidence and poetry woven into the events of the narrative since at least Alois Wolf's (1965) article on the role of skaldic quotation in the sagas, with a focus on the subgenres of the *Íslendingasögur* and the *konungasögur* (kings' sagas).[4] Bjarni Einarsson (1974, pp. 118–119) differentiates these kinds of quotation by how essential the verses are to the plot:

> It follows that a reader of a saga cannot omit stanzas of the latter kind [i. e. situational verses, A. W.] without damage to his understanding of the context as a whole. On the other hand, stanzas quoted as evidence [i. e. authenticating verses, A. W.] may be leapt over without loss to the story told, but certainly not without impairing the artistic enjoyment of the work in question, because these stanzas are not mere footnotes, but have also their artistic value.

In other words, situational verses are spoken by characters within the narrative, and are thus to be read as plot elements. By contrast, authenticating verses are not staged as being performed within the story, but are presented as if they were spoken by the narrative voice. They are thus distanced from

narrative events, even though they implicitly originate in the saga's story-world, hence why Bjarni regards such stanzas as inessential to the plot, if not to the telling of the story.

This modern distinction – which, as we will see, does not appear in the medieval sources – is often associated with the different ways in which the stanzas are introduced in saga prose. It is common for formulas such as *þá kvað N. N. vísu* (›then [the poet] recited a verse‹) to be used when a character in the story speaks a verse, while formulas like *svá segir N.N.* (›as [the poet] says‹) or *þessa getr N. N. í vísu* (›[the poet] mentions this in a verse‹) frame the poetry as being quoted by the narrative voice; I refer to these formulas as ›inquits‹.[5] Inquits of the former type are necessarily situational, following the modern distinction, in that they locate the performance of the poetry within the story, while the latter formulas are seen as key indicators that a stanza is being presented as evidence and can therefore be termed authenticating.[6] The distinction is clear in two examples from ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹, which uses formulas of each type. Each passage quotes poetry attributed to Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, one of the protagonists, but while the first stanza is spoken by Þormóðr as a character, the second is quoted by the narrative voice:

> *Þeir spyrja, hvárt hann hefði unnit á Þorgrími. Hann kvað þat satt vera. Þeir spurðu hann tíðenda eða hversu mikill vera myndi áverkinn. Þ o r m ó ð r k v a ð þ á v í s u :* [Fbr, st. 23][7] (ÍF 6, p. 234, emphasis added)

> They ask whether he had killed Þorgrímr. He said it was true. They asked him for news [of it] and how great the blow had been. T h e n Þ o r m ó ð r r e c i t e d a v e r s e : [Fbr, st. 23] (emphasis added)

> *Þau urðu endalok þessa fundar, at Þorbrandr fell fyrir Þorgeiri, en Ingólfr fyrir Þormóði. Tveir menn fellu af liði Þorgeirs. Húskarlar Ingólfs urðu sárir mjök, þess at þó batnar þeim. Þ e s s a g e t r Þ o r m ó ð r í e r f i d r á p u Þ o r g e i r s :* [Fbr, st. 3] (ÍF 6, p. 139, emphasis added)

> This was the conclusion of their meeting, that Þorbrandr fell before Þorgeirr and Ingólfr before Þormóðr. Two men fell from Þorgeirr's troop. Ingólfr's housecarls were seriously wounded, but they recover nonetheless. Þ o r m ó ð r mentions this in his funerary poem for Þorgeirr: [Fbr, st. 3] (emphasis added)

In the first instance, the stanza is presented as part of a conversation, with Þormóðr reciting the poetry as a response to his companions asking him about how he killed Þorgrímr. In the second passage, the stanza is clearly distinct from the diegetic context: it is associated with a funerary poem composed by Þormóðr about his sworn-brother Þorgeirr, but Þorgeirr is still alive at this point in the saga, and will not be killed until several chapters later. The verse is best understood as being quoted on the level of narration as a means of corroborating the prose account.

It is commonly held that authenticating verses are typical of the *konungasögur*, the genre of historical texts centred on the kings of Norway, and situational verses of the *Íslendingasögur*.[8] Medieval discussions of the evidentiary function of poetry also focus on the *konungasögur*, usually in the form of prefaces to these works. A particularly extensive discussion, quoted below in part, can be found in the prologue to ›Óláfs saga ins Helga inni sérstöku‹ (›The Separate Saga of Óláfr helgi‹):

> *En þó þykki mér þat merkiligast til sannenda, er berum orðum er sagt í kvæðum eða öðrum kveðskap, þeim er svá var ort um konunga eða aðra höfðingja, at þeir sjálfir heyrðu, eða í erfikvæðum þeim, er skáldin færðu sonum þeira. Þau orð, er í kveðskap standa, eru in sömu sem í fyrstu váru, ef rétt er kveðit, þótt hverr maðr hafi síðan numit at öðrum, ok má því ekki breyta. En sögu þær, er sagðar eru, þá er þat hætt, at eigi skilisk öllum á einn veg. En sumir hafa eigi minni, þá er frá líðr, hvernig þeim var sagt, ok gengsk þeim mjök í minni optliga, ok verða frásagnir ómerkiligar. Þar var meirr en tvau hundruð vetra tólfræð, er Ísland var byggt, áðr menn tæki hér sögur at rita, ok var þat löng ævi ok vant, at sögur hefði eigi gengizk í munni, ef eigi væri kvæði, bæði ný ok forn, þau er menn tæki þar af sannendi fræðinnar.* (ÍF 26–28, vol. 2, p. 422)

> And yet that seems to me most noteworthy as far as accuracy is concerned which is said in plain words in poems or other verse that was composed about kings or other rulers so that they themselves heard them, or in memorial poems that the poets presented to their sons. The words that stand in verse will be the same as they were to begin with, if it is constructed correctly, though each person has later learned it from someone else, and it cannot be altered. But as for the stories that are told, with them there is the danger that they will not be understood by everyone in the same way. But some have no memory, when time has passed, of how they were told to them, and frequently they change a great deal in their memory, and the accounts become meaningless. It was more than two duodecimal hundred [i. e. 240, A.W.] years that Iceland had been settled before people began to write stories here, and this was a long period, and impossible for stories not to have changed in oral tradition if there had not been poems, both recent and old, from which people could obtain accurate history. (Snorri Sturluson 2014, pp. 280–281)

In contrast to the more malleable stories of oral tradition, poetry is conceptualised here as an enduring link to the past precisely because of its strict poetic form, which the preface claims cannot be altered as long as the poem is correctly composed.[9] It is worth noting, however, that while the passage presents poetry as plausible documentation for historical events, it does not associate this capacity exclusively, or even predominantly, with stanzas cited by the narrative voice, as the modern distinction would have it.

In this sense, the modern distinction between authenticating and situational verses is not equally weighted. The term ›authenticating‹ strongly implies a particular narrative function for the stanza – that is, to corroborate the prose account – while the broader concept of ›situational‹ verses refers only to how stanzas are presented in the text. While it is true that verses introduced with formulas like *svá segir N. N.* have an evidentiary function in most cases, to refer to them as authenticating stanzas implies that poetry must be quoted using such formulas for it to have a documentary function. Presumably this is why Mikael Males (2020, p. 216) suggests that the »near absence« of these formulas in the *Íslendingasögur* indicates

that »the historical veracity of such local lore was not deemed to be of crucial importance«, an interpretation that assumes stanzas spoken within the narrative play little to no role in corroborating the prose.[10] Similarly, while Bjarni notes that authenticating verses also have artistic value (see above), he associates the use of poetry as evidence exclusively with this form of stanza quotation.

As Margaret Clunies Ross (2005, p. 78) observes, however, no skaldic stanza as it existed in oral tradition was inherently authenticating or situational, because these terms are relevant only for discussing how stanzas were subsequently integrated into saga prose:

> The reason why the opposition of ›authenticating‹ and ›situational‹ verses is somewhat fuzzy [...] is that this distinction is what one can call a second-order distinction, that is, it is a perception of difference in the u s e of skaldic stanzas by saga writers and other prose authors and not necessarily a distinction valid for the poetry itself as it existed in the oral tradition. (emphasis in the original)

Indeed, some stanzas are presented either as authenticating or as situational depending on the context in which they are quoted. In ›Grettis saga‹, for instance, the outlaw Grettir is saved from execution by the intervention of Þorbjörg in digra, the wife of the chieftain Vermundr inn mjóvi. Grettir later recounts the episode to Vermundr in a series of stanzas (Gr, stt. 39–42; ÍF 7, pp. 170–172), in which the verses are framed as situational responses to Vermundr's questions. Yet the third of these stanzas is also preserved in the *Möðruvallabók* version of ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹ (Fbr, st. 1; ÍF 6, p. 122), where it concludes an abbreviated version of the episode.[11] In ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹, Vermundr does not appear as a character in this chapter, and the stanza is quoted without a specific performance context; the saga says only that *af þessum atburð kvað Grettir kviðling þenna* (ÍF 6, p. 122; ›Grettir spoke this ditty about these events‹).[12] The stanza is not inherently authenticating or situational; rather, its narrative function varies depending on how it is quoted across different contexts. We may think of Russell Poole's

(2001, p. 13) concept of a »medieval double vision«, where »the audience of a particular performance of a saga might well have been aware that a verse used there was also to be found embedded in some totally different context, say within a different saga (ascribed to a different poet) or as part of a free-standing poem«, and thus »to work variations on the contexts for verses may have entered into the artistry of saga narration, an artistry that would depend on what we should now call intertextuality«.

As Clunies Ross (2005, pp. 79–80) notes, the decision to incorporate a stanza into the events of the plot need not mean that its content was seen as less suitable for authenticating the prose; instead, there may be compelling stylistic reasons for presenting the poetry in this way. A stanza containing an address to a person featured as a character in the saga, for instance, lends itself to being framed as direct speech, rather than quoted by the narrative voice. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (2001, p. 188) similarly suggests that the role played by a skald as a character would also have influenced whether their poetry was framed as dialogue, with saga protagonists more likely to have their poetry presented as part of the narrative, given their presence in the story.

Forms of stanza quotation can also be influenced by genre conventions, as is apparent from how the ›Máhlíðingavísur‹ (›Verses about the People of Mávahlíð‹) are presented differently in ›Eyrbyggja saga‹, an *Íslendingasaga*, and the historiographical text ›Landnámabók‹ (›The Book of Settlements‹). The ›Máhlíðingavísur‹ narrate the battle between the poet Þórarinn svarti and his enemy Þorbjörn inn digri at Mávahlíð, Þórarinn's homestead. In ›Eyrbyggja saga‹, the verses are incorporated into the story. Þórarinn speaks the majority of them to Vermundr inn mjóvi the day after the battle; the verses are staged within the narrative as responses to the questions posed by Vermundr and Þórarinn's sister Guðný (Eb, stt. 6–13; ÍF 4, pp. 41–46). The other stanzas are spoken by Þórarinn in conversation with his mother Geirríðr, his wife Auðr, and his kinsman Arnkell (Eb, stt. 3–5, 14–19; ÍF 4, pp. 38–40, 47–50, 56). By contrast, ›Landnámabók‹

gives a much abridged summary of the events and quotes only a single stanza, which is framed as being spoken by the narrative voice:

Hans son var Þorbjörn hinn digri, er barðisk við Þórarin svarta ok fell sjálfr ok þrír menn með honum. Um þat orti Þórarinn Máhlíðingavísur, eptir því sem segir í Eyrbyggja sögu. Þessi er ein: [Eb, st. 11] (ÍF 1, pp. 113 and 115)

His son was Þorbjörn inn digri, who fought with Þórarinn svarti, and he himself fell and three men with him. Þórarinn composed the ›Máhlíðingavísur‹ about that, according to what it says in ›Eyrbyggja saga‹. This is one [of the verses]: [Eb, st. 11]

In ›Eyrbyggja saga‹, which focuses on these events in more detail, it makes sense for the verses to be staged within the narrative, as they contribute both to Þórarinn's characterisation and the building of suspense as he assembles allies in anticipation of a violent response. In addition, as Paul Bibire (1973, pp. 10–12) notes, the integration of the stanzas into various conversational contexts means the poetry can be incorporated into the narrative without halting the progression of the plot, as would happen were the poem to be quoted in full. By contrast, in ›Landnámabók‹, which covers a large number of events and genealogies from early Icelandic history, it is rarer for a single episode to receive as much narrative attention as it would in a saga. For its concise summary of events, it is enough that a single stanza of the ›Máhlíðingavísur‹ be quoted without a detailed performance context.

Given that the verse is used in ›Landnámabók‹ as evidence, it is also worth questioning whether the narrative integration of the ›Máhlíðingavísur‹ in ›Eyrbyggja saga‹ should preclude the poem from also having a documentary function in that context. Indeed, Þórarinn recites the poem to the household as evidence for the events of the battle. His presence as a character complicates matters, as his poetic performance influences subsequent events and reflects his motivations as a character within the story, but should this additional context mean that the poetry is stripped of its capacity to authenticate events when embedded within the story? We also

see this dynamic in the earlier example of a situational verse from ›Fóst-brœðra saga‹, which Þormóðr speaks as a response to his friends asking him how he killed his enemy Þorgrímr trolli: *Þeir spurðu hann tíðenda eða hversu mikill vera myndi áverkinn. Þormóðr kvað þá vísu*: [Fbr, st. 23] (ÍF 6, p. 234: ›They asked him for news [of the killing] and how great the blow had been. Then Þormóðr recited a verse: [Fbr, st. 23]‹). As with Þóra-rinn's recital, the verse necessarily gives Þormóðr's subjective experience of these events, but it is nevertheless staged as having been performed in or-der to provide evidence for what happened earlier in the narrative, albeit not primarily for the extratextual audience.

Finally, the distinction between authenticating and situational verses struggles to account for instances of stanza quotation where a verse is men-tioned in relation to the story, but the poetry is quoted by the narrative voice, rather than spoken by the character(s) to which it is attributed. Heather O'Donoghue (2005, p. 58) characterises such stanzas as being »composed in response to a narrative situation, but not presented as dia-logue in the saga narrative«. She notes that one of Whaley's (1993, p. 254) own examples of a situational stanza – a *níðvísa* (›insulting verse‹) com-posed about the Danish king and his steward, in response to events detailed in the saga – is in fact not presented as being spoken within the narrative:

Þat var í lögum haft á Íslandi, at yrkja skyldi um Danakonung níðvísu fyrir nef, hvert er á var landinu, en sú var sök til at skip, þat er íslenzkir menn áttu braut í Danmörk, en Danir tóku upp fé allt ok kölluðu vágrek ok réð fyrir bryti konungs, er Birgir hét. Var níð ort um þá báða. Þetta er í níðinu: [...] (ÍF 26–28, vol. 1, p. 270, emphasis added)

It was made law in Iceland that an insulting verse should be composed about the king of the Danes for every nose [i.e. every person, A. W.] that was in the country, and the reason for this was that a ship that Icelandic men owned was wrecked in Denmark, and the Danes appropriated all the goods and claimed it was flotsam, and it was the king's steward called Birgir who was responsible for this. The insult was composed about them both. This is in the insult: [...] (Snorri Sturluson 2016, p. 167, emphasis added)

In this example, the prose details the circumstances behind the stanza's composition: that the *níðvísa* was composed about both the king and his steward, that it stemmed from an incident in which Icelandic cargo was apparently wrongly appropriated, and that the stanza was part of a larger insult, perhaps an assemblage of similar verses. The verse is not a detached witness, but an integral part of the episode, which concerns the composition of this poetry. Yet the stanza is not staged in the narrative: no performance context is given, and its quotation by the narrative voice is indicated by the introductory formula *þetta er í níðinu*, which is comparable to others used by the narrative voice elsewhere in the sagas to curate the quotation of verse – apparently to reaffirm the narrative authority of the prose account by constraining how much of the poetry is quoted (Quinn 1997, esp. pp. 67–70). As the above example shows, it is possible for poetry to be attributed to a figure in the story, but actually quoted by the narrative voice.[13]

There are thus a number of issues that arise when characterising verses quoted in the sagas as authenticating or situational. In particular, it is notable that several uses of this framework focus on the content of the poetry itself, rather than the activity of the saga writers who chose how to use it. In fact, the content of a stanza seems to have been less important in determining its quotation in saga prose than broader stylistic and generic motivations, as is apparent from those instances in which the same verse is quoted differently across distinct literary contexts.

3. Diegetic level and saga prosimetrum

The issues outlined in the previous section suggest a need for an alternative approach to verse quotation in the sagas, one that does not conflate the separate inquiries concerning, on the one hand, how poetry is integrated into the prose account and, on the other, the narrative functions of quoted stan-

zas. In my view, narratology offers more suitable terminology for characterising how stanzas are quoted without ascribing them an inherent narrative function. As noted above, Bjarni Einarsson (1974) distinguishes authenticating and situational stanzas by how integral they are to the plot, that is, whether or not they are part of the story (rather than the text). The distinction lends itself to being reformulated in terms of diegesis, which concerns whether an element of a text is depicted within the storyworld itself, or is presented as part of the textual apparatus accessible to the audience but not to the characters in the story. The narratological use of the term ›diegesis‹ has a complicated history, especially regarding research in English. In contemporary scholarship, the term is used in two ways: (1) to contrast *mimesis* (showing, imitation, representation) with *diegesis* (telling, narration), a distinction derived from classical philosophy; and (2) to refer to the world in which a story takes place, and by extension to the different narrative (diegetic) levels in the story (Prince 2003, p. 20).[14] Both uses are described by Gérard Genette in his foundational narratological works, though Genette makes a distinction between ›diégésis‹ and ›diégèse‹, referring to the first and second meaning respectively. This distinction is lost on translation into English, where ›diegesis‹ is used for both meanings.[15]

This creates a terminological problem, in that each usage characterises the same element of a text in directly contrasting ways. In the first sense, the term ›diegetic‹ refers to the narrative modes of presenting speech in which the narrator's mediation is foregrounded, in contrast to ›mimetic‹ techniques, which background the role of the narrator (Herman 2009, pp. 183–184). For stanza quotation in the sagas, we could characterise stanzas framed as direct speech, and thus part of the narrative action, as mimetic, and those presented on the level of narration as diegetic. In the second sense, however, the diegesis refers to what happens within the world of the story, rather than on the level of primary narration. This results in stanzas framed as direct speech being classified as diegetic, and those quoted on the level of narration as being outside the diegesis (extradiegetic).

This inconsistency means that a (somewhat arbitrary) decision must be made over which sense of diegesis to prioritise for a particular line of inquiry. In this article, I follow the latter usage, which regards diegesis primarily in terms of narrative level, as this is the meaning that Genette prioritises in his discussion of narrators in ›Narrative Discourse‹ (›Discours du récit‹), a relevant concern for stanza quotation by the narrative voice. This usage also intersects with considerations of storyworld, though the relationship of diegesis to storyworld is not clearly delineated in most scholarship; I return to this issue below.

Genette (1980, pp. 227–231) distinguishes various diegetic levels in relation to the story. Any narrative consists of at least two levels: that of the story being told and that of the level of narration. As Genette puts it, »any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed« (p. 228), in which the first level is that of the primary narrator. Genette refers to this as the extradiegetic level and to events on the secondary level (the primary story narrated) as diegetic. Subsequent levels of diegesis can be introduced by further narratives being embedded within the primary diegesis; these are termed metadiegetic (and meta-metadiegetic, and so on).[16] For Genette, »the narrating instance of a first narrative is [...] extradiegetic by definition«, where this status is separate from the historical or fictional nature of the narrating entity: »We shall not confound extradiegetic with real historical existence, nor diegetic [...] status with fiction« (p. 229). He notes that the terms »designate not individuals, but relative situations and functions«, meaning that individuals are not exclusively diegetic or extradiegetic, but may fulfil functions on different diegetic levels.

In addition to characterising narrators by the level on which they speak, Genette (1980, pp. 243–252) distinguishes between narrators that appear in the story they tell (homodiegetic) and those that do not (heterodiegetic). In the *Íslendingasögur*, the narrative voice is never individuated as a character on the diegetic level, and would thus be classed by Genette as an

extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator, that is, »a narrator in the first degree who tells a story he is absent from« (p. 248).[17] Simone Elisabeth Lang (2014) argues that Genette is inconsistent in how he uses the term ›homo-diegetic‹, because it is sometimes unclear whether he treats the ›diegesis‹ as referring specifically to the story or more widely to the storyworld. This does not affect the description of the narrative voice in the *Íslendinga-sögur*, which is not coded as an individuated figure on the diegetic level,[18] but the question of whether diegesis maps onto storyworld is relevant for the extradiegetic quotation of skalds, who may also appear as characters in the story.

A cursory glance at the scholarship indicates that ›the diegesis‹ is often used as a synonym for the wider storyworld of the text, meaning the expansive world projected by the narrative. Lang (2014, pp. 374–384) conflates world and diegesis in her approach. She argues that the distinction between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators »must refer to an ontological [rather than thematic] difference« (p. 374), and suggests that the term homodiegetic refers to elements that belong to the storyworld regardless of whether they appear in the story itself. Yet this conflation misconstrues the relationship between storyworld and diegesis, the latter being a much narrower concept. In fact, the diegesis refers not to the storyworld in its totality, but to the s p e c i f i c   d e p i c t i o n of the storyworld; in other words, it encompasses only what we, the audience, are explicitly shown of this world through the lens of the narrative.[19] The term ›extradiegetic‹ conceptualises the level of primary narration as being situated outside the story that it narrates, but this does not mean that it necessarily occurs in an ontologically different world, as Lang's argument would imply. Consider the example of an autobiographical narrative presented as having been produced only after the events narrated. The extradiegetic and diegetic levels are ontologically identical, because the narrator is a character in their own story. What separates these levels is their thematic relationship to the story, that is, whether they are presented as part of events in the narrative

or as part of the external apparatus used to narrate the story. Elements that belong ontologically to the storyworld, but which are not part of the story, are thus heterodiegetic; those that meet both ontological and thematic criteria are homodiegetic. When it comes to stanza quotation in the sagas, skalds are always presented as ontologically part of the storyworld: either explicitly, if they are a character in the story, or implicitly, if their poetry is cited to corroborate the prose account, because it must be part of that world in order to stand as evidence for it. When a poet's verse is quoted only on the level of narration, however, that voice is thematically separate from the diegesis.

This raises a further question about how to deal with poets who appear as characters on the diegetic level, but whose verse is quoted elsewhere in the saga by the narrative voice without it being staged in the diegesis in that instance. The quotations in the previous section of Þormóðr's poetry in ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹ are a good example of this; Þormóðr recites poetry as a character, but other verses attributed to him are spoken by the narrative voice. Does the fact that the skald is a character in the story mean that these latter stanzas should be viewed as implicitly diegetic, despite the lack of a performance context? After all, any stanzas spoken by a poet whose birth and death are mentioned in the saga could be inferred to have been composed and performed at some point during the timespan of its narrative, even if the saga does not situate the processes of composition or performance in a particular time or place. Two factors that are important here, however, are that the diegesis refers to the storyworld only insofar as the world is presented in the text; and that textual elements are not restricted to a single narrative level, with metaleptic movement between diegetic and extradiegetic levels being possible. A textual element depicted as diegetic at a given moment may be presented extradiegetically later in the text; its ontological relationship to the world is unaffected, but its thematic relationship changes. Consequently, not all speech associated with a diegetic character need be consistently framed as diegetic, and we can recognise

Þormóðr's poetry as being quoted on both the diegetic and extradiegetic level.[20]

The advantage of considering stanza quotation in relation to diegesis, then, is that it allows us to characterise the textual strategies used to embed poetry in the sagas without assuming a particular narrative function, thus avoiding the aforementioned conflation of distinct questions. Where poetry is not staged in a diegetic performance context, we can interpret it simply as being quoted on the level of narration. Quotation on the diegetic level provides narrative context for the poem's content, while extradiegetic quotation removes this context, with stanzas embedded in this way lacking a spatiotemporal reference that could situate their recital at a given moment in the story. The voice that speaks the stanza is thus disembodied from any diegetic presence, even if it is attributed to a character in the narrative, and similarly dislocated from the diegesis with which the content of the poem is associated. Poetic voices are necessarily framed in distinct ways depending on which diegetic level they are quoted, but this does not mean that only verses quoted extradiegetically have an authenticating quality. Rather, it indicates that different textual strategies are available to balance the integration of the poetry with the broader demands of the narrative.

4. Extradiegetic stanza quotation in the *Íslendingasögur*

An advantage of focusing on the diegetic level on which a stanza is embedded, rather than its textual function, is that it facilitates the description of verse quotation not easily categorised as authenticating or situational, which allows connections to be drawn across otherwise disparate verses. In this section, I thus give an overview of extradiegetic quotation in the *Íslendingasögur*, with an emphasis on edge-cases of this kind.[21] The *Íslendingasögur* feature a variety of narrative strategies for embedding skaldic verse, and many of these involve extradiegetic quotation, even if they do not

look like straightforwardly ›authenticating‹ stanzas. In some cases, references to diegetic performance contexts are combined with extradiegetic quotation in ways that distance the verse from the diegesis, thereby aligning it more firmly with the narrative voice.

In comparison to the *konungasögur*, the *Íslendingasögur* do not often include sustained use of formulas like *svá segir N. N.* to introduce poetry. Two exceptions are the quotation of stanzas from the poems ›Illugadrápa‹ (Eb, stt. 1–2; ÍF 4, pp. 31–32) and ›Hrafnsmál‹ (Eb, stt. 20, 26, and 33–35; ÍF 4, pp. 67, 102, 124, 156, and 168) in ›Eyrbyggja saga‹, and from ›Þorgeirsdrápa‹ (Fbr, stt. 2–7 and 10–18; ÍF 6, pp. 130, 139, 146–147, 152, 156, 160, 181, 186, 191–192, 200–201, 203, and 207–210) in ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹. As an example of how these stanzas are integrated into the prose, the inquits of the ›Eyrbyggja saga‹ verses are listed below:

Svá kvað Oddr skáld í Illugadrápa: [Eb, st. 1] (ÍF 4, p. 31)
So said Oddr skáld in ›Illugadrápa‹: [Eb, st. 1]

Svá segir Oddr í Illugadrápa: [Eb, st. 2] (ÍF 4, p. 32)
So says Oddr in ›Illugadrápa‹: [Eb, st. 2]

Þormóðr Trefilsson kvað vísu þessa um víg Vigfúss: [Eb, st. 20] (ÍF 4, p. 67)
Þormóðr Trefilsson spoke this verse about the killing of Vigfúss: [Eb, st. 20]

Um dráp Arnkels kvað Þormóðr Trefilsson vísu þessa: [Eb, st. 26] (ÍF 4, p. 102)
Þormóðr Trefilsson spoke this stanza about the killing of Arnkell: [Eb, st. 26]

Svá segir Þormóðr Trefilsson í Hrafnsmálum: [Eb, st. 33] (ÍF 4, p. 124)
So says Þormóðr Trefilsson in ›Hrafnsmál‹: [Eb, st. 33]

Um þessa tíðendi [...] orti Þormóðr Trefilsson í Hrafnsmálum vísu þessa: [Eb, st. 34] (ÍF 4, p. 156)
Þormóðr Trefilsson composed this verse in ›Hrafnsmál‹ about these events: [Eb, st. 34]

Svá kvað Þormóðr Trefilsson í Hrafnsmálum: [Eb, st. 35] (ÍF 4, p. 168)
So said Þormóðr Trefilsson in ›Hrafnsmál‹: [Eb, st. 35]

The most important factor for determining that these stanzas are quoted extradiegetically is the absence of spatiotemporal markers that would place the stanza's recital within the events on the diegetic level. While the skalds and their poetry are associated with the world of the saga, their voices are not staged as being spoken from a specific standpoint in the diegesis, which implies to the reader that the verses are being quoted primarily on the level of narration. In these examples, the role played by the narrative voice in curating the poetry is foregrounded through the use of cataphoric and anaphoric markers, such as *þessi* (›this‹) and *svá* (›so‹, ›thus‹), which highlight the intertextual connection between the poetry and prose, either by connecting the poetry with the preceding events or by drawing attention to the verse as a corroborating account. While the demonstrative forms *þetta* and *þessi* also appear in connection with poetry quoted on the diegetic level, the use of *svá* to indicate a correspondence between the content of a verse and events depicted in the prose appears to be restricted to extradiegetic quotation. *Svá* appears in some relative clauses of diegetically integrated stanzas, where it gives additional information about the performance of the stanza – as with the stanza spoken by Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld in the presence of King Óláfr Tryggvason: *Hann kvað þetta, svá at konungr heyrði einn tíma* (ÍF 8, p. 157: ›He spoke this so that the king heard it on one occasion‹) – but this usage does not connect the content of the poetic and prose accounts in an intertextual sense.

In the examples from ›Eyrbyggja saga‹, the lack of spatiotemporal reference reflects the fact that neither Oddr skáld nor Þormóðr Trefilsson appears as a character in the narrative, as they are named only in connection with their poetry. This manner of quotation also occurs in some other *Íslendingasögur*, including two *lausavísur* by Þorkell elfaraskáld and Þormóðr Óláfsson, quoted in ›Njáls saga‹ (Nj, stt. 26–27), and a stanza from Þórðr Kolbeinsson's ›Gunnlaugsdrápa‹, quoted in ›Gunnlaugs saga‹

(Gunnl, st. 21).[22] R. D. Fulk suggests of the stanzas in ›Njáls saga‹ that »it is peculiar that [they] are attributed to persons who play no role in the saga narrative (unlike all the other stanzas in the saga)« (Nj, p. 1256), as skalds in the *Íslendingasögur* tend to appear as characters in the story. Yet this is not to say that poetry attributed to a diegetic character need always be staged diegetically. Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and Víga-Glúmr Eyjólfsson are the protagonists of their eponymous sagas, and most of their poetry is spoken within the diegesis, but each of them has a stanza quoted with no reference to it being spoken in a particular diegetic context:

> *Þetta sannar Hallfreðr í kvæði því einu, er hann orti um Óláf konung:* [Hallfr, st. 7] (ÍF 8, p. 154)

> Hallfreðr confirms this in that poem that he composed about King Óláfr: [...]

> *Þat var ok jafnt látit, víg Gríms eyrarleggs ok áverki við Guðmund, ok unði Glúmr illa við málalok, sem hann kvað í vísu þeiri, er hann orti síðan*: [Glúm, st. 13] (ÍF 9, p. 96)

> The death of Grímr eyrarleggr and the wound against Guðmundr were also declared to be equal, and Glúmr thought badly of the conclusion to the case, as he said in that verse that he later composed: [...]

Each inquit refers to the composition of the verse, but neither the process of composition nor the performance of the stanza is clearly staged on the diegetic level. The only spatiotemporal marker in either case is the reference to Víga-Glúmr having composed his stanza at a later stage than the events described in the narrative. While an audience can infer that the stanza must have been composed before the death of the skald, which is mentioned at the end of the saga in each case, the poetry is not strongly integrated into the diegesis, but rather associated with the level of narration.

Yet the skald's presence as a character may implicitly situate their poetry in relation to events in the diegesis, even though the poetry is itself quoted

extradiegetically. In ›Grettis saga‹, Grettir speaks much of the poetry attributed to him on the diegetic level, but the narrative voice quotes some of his stanzas, apparently as evidence for his own deeds. An example is the stanzas of his first ›Ævikviða‹ (Gr, stt. 22–24) about his dispute with Sveinn jarl, in which he is supported by his friends Þorfinnr and Bersi and his brother Þorsteinn drómundr. The events are recounted in the prose, followed by a narratorial comment on how the outcome affected Grettir's supporters, before his poetry on the matter is introduced:

> *Luku þeir jarli fé, svá at honum gazk at, ok skilðu með engum kærleikum. Fór Grettir með Þorfinni; skilðusk þeir Þorsteinn, bróðir hans, með vináttu. Varð Þorfinnr frægr af fylgð þeiri, er hann hafði veitt Gretti, við slíkt ofrefli, sem hann átti at eiga. Engi af þeim mönnum komsk í kærleika við jarl þaðan frá, þeira er Gretti höfðu lið veitt, nema Bersi einn. Svá kvað Grettir:* [Gr, stt. 22–23] (ÍF 7, pp. 85–86)

> They give wealth to the jarl to his liking, and parted with little love between them. Grettir went with Þorfinnr; he and his brother Þorsteinn parted with friendship between them. Þorfinnr became renowned for the support that he had given to Grettir against such great odds as he had to face. None of the men who gave support to Grettir, apart from Bersi alone, had good relations with the jarl from that point. So said Grettir: [Gr, stt. 22–23]

The first two verses are introduced with the formula *svá kvað Grettir* (›so said Grettir‹), while the third is separated by an additional inquit, *ok enn þessa* (ÍF 7, pp. 86–87; ›and also this‹).[23] The stanzas are not explicitly staged, as no spatiotemporal information is given to situate them within the diegesis. Yet Grettir's presence in the preceding prose account may have been read by audiences as an indication that he also recited the verses around this time, even though no performance context is given. Another example is Grettir's verse about his meeting with Gísli Þorsteinsson (Gr, st. 48). Gísli attacks the outlawed Grettir, but Grettir handily defeats him and flogs with a tree-branch. There follows a narratorial comment that many thought Gísli had been rewarded for boasting about how he would

kill Grettir, before the quotation of a stanza by Grettir about the events: *Grettir kvað þetta um sameign þeira* (ÍF 7, p. 193; ›Grettir said this about their dealings‹). The stanza is again dislocated from a particular diegetic standpoint, even though Grettir's immediate presence is reaffirmed in the verse itself by the reference to the events having occurred that day: *Enn fyrir mér um Mýrar | margneninn dag þenna | [...] físandi rann Gísli* (Gr, st. 48; ›And the very energetic Gísli ran farting before me today across Mýrar‹). While the quotation of the poetry is extradiegetic, the metaleptic juxtaposition of Grettir as character and poetic narrator complicates the encoding of his voice. By mediating Grettir's poetic stance through the narrative voice, the saga creates some distance between his diegetic standpoint and the speaking voice of the poetry, thereby allowing Grettir to comment on the (apparently) earlier events as a textual authority, rather than as a character.

Also ambiguous are references to a skald having composed a stanza at a particular time or place, but not necessarily having performed it there. In ›Egils saga‹, Egill is said to compose a stanza (Eg, st. 65) at a feast hosted by his friend Arinbjörn, commemorating his generosity. The scene appears in both the A- and C-redactions (Chestnutt 2006, p. 123; Bjarni Einarsson 2001, p. 129), but the stanza is quoted only in the A-redaction using the following inquit: *Þá orti Egill vísu* (ÍF 2, p. 213; ›Then Egill composed a verse‹). No mention is made of whether Egill also recited the verse at this point; the reader may infer that this is the case, but the text does not guarantee it. In the *Íslendingasögur*, such references appear especially frequently in ›Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa‹, where five stanzas, two by Björn Hítdœlakappi and three by his rival Þórðr Kolbeinsson, are introduced with this formula (BjH stt. 2, 24, 33, 38, and 39; ÍF 3, pp. 123, 161, 193, 204, and 205). In these cases, it is ambiguous whether it is the diegetic figure or the narrative voice that should be understood as ›speaking‹ the verse, given that no mention is made of a performance context to accompany the compositional reference.

In other cases, a saga may provide a diegetic performance context for a longer poetic work that is mentioned as part of the narrative, but quote only select stanzas on the extradiegetic level as evidence for the work itself. These stanzas are usually preceded by formulas such as *þetta er í [kvæði]* (›this is in [the poem]‹) or, for a *drápa* (a long poem with a refrain), *þetta er stefit í* (›this is the refrain in it‹). In ›Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu‹, for instance, Gunnlaugr is said to have performed a poem before King Aðalráðr of England, but the saga quotes only the refrain (Gunnl, st. 3): *Gunnlaugr flutti fram kvæðit vel ok sköruliga; en þetta er stefit í* (ÍF 3, p. 71; ›Gunnlaugr delivered the poem well and manfully, and this is the refrain in it‹). The stanzas of Gunnlaugr's ›Sigtryggsdrápa‹ quoted later on are introduced with similar formulas (Gunnl, stt. 6–8; ÍF 3, p. 75), as are the verses in ›Egils saga‹ from Egill's ›Aðalsteinsdrápa‹ (Eg, stt. 21–22; ÍF 2, pp. 146–147), ›Skjaldardrápa‹ (Eg, st. 126; ÍF 2, pp. 272–273), and ›Berudrápa‹ (Eg, st. 128; ÍF 2, pp. 275–276). Further examples include the stanzas quoted from ›Grámagaflím‹ in ›Bjarnar saga‹ (BjH stt. 26–28; ÍF 3, p. 168), ›Bjarkamál in fornu‹ in ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹ (Fbr, stt. 32–33; ÍF 6, p. 262), ›Hallmundarflokkr‹ and ›Hallmundarkviða‹ in ›Grettis saga‹ (Gr, stt. 46–47 and 51–56; ÍF 7, pp. 184–185 and 203), and ›Óláfsdrápa‹, as well as an unnamed poem about Eiríkr jarl, in ›Hallfreðar saga‹ (Hallfr, stt. 30 and 31; ÍF 8, pp. 194–195). This seems to be a particularly common form of extradiegetic quotation within the subgenre, where the narratorial curation of the verses suggests they are intended to verify the prose staging of the poetry without slowing narrative momentum, as would happen were the poem to be diegetically integrated in full (see Bibire 1973, pp. 10–12), or without ceding the anonymous narrator's textual authority to the individualised skald (see Quinn 1997).

Finally the anonymity of a stanza's performer or composer is unimportant for determining the diegetic level on which the stanza is quoted. Most anonymous stanzas in the *Íslendingasögur* are quoted extradiegetically using a formula like *þetta var kveðit um þat* (›this was spoken

about it‹). These include the anonymous verses quoted about Ingólfr in ›Hallfreðar saga‹ (Hallfr. st. 1; ÍF 8, p. 141),[24] Vetrliði in ›Njáls saga‹ (Nj, st. 36; ÍF 12, p. 260), and Þorgeirr Önundarson in ›Grettis saga‹ (Gr, stt. 6– 7; ÍF 7, pp. 27 and 31). Yet some stanzas are also anonymously spoken within the diegesis, as in ›Eiríks saga rauða‹, which includes the inquit *þá kvað einn maðr kviðling þenna* (Eir, st. 3; ÍF 4, p. 432; ›then a certain man spoke this ditty‹). An interesting case is found at the conclusion of ›Bárðar saga Snæfellsness‹, where the sons of Hjalti Þórðarson ride together to a legal assembly. After a narratorial comment that *váru þeir svá vel búnir, at menn hugðu þar væri komnir æsir* (›they were so well dressed that people thought that the gods had arrived there‹), an anonymous verse is quoted: *Þá var þetta kveðit* (Bárð, st. 6; ÍF 13, p. 171; ›Then this was spoken‹).[25] Whaley's model would treat this stanza as authenticating, as it is not associated with any group of poets, but the saga stages the verse within the diegesis, the temporal adverb *þá* situating its recital in proximity to the events. While the stanza corroborates the reaction in the prose, reiterating the comparison between men and gods, it is simultaneously presented as part of the scene – perhaps itself an example of the emphatic nature of the reaction. The poetry is purposed both as evidence for the events and part of the events themselves, both documentation and affective response.

5. Conclusion

The distinction between authenticating and situational verses in modern scholarship is beset by a number of methodological issues, not least the assumption that stanzas must be quoted in a certain way for them to have evidentiary force in a saga. As I have argued in this article, the use of these terms conflates the question of how verses are embedded in a prose text with their broader narrative function, a reductive approach that downplays

the documentary potential of diegetically integrated poetry and oversimplifies the source situation. Notably, this dichotomy is not attested in the medieval sources, where no distinction is made between verses quoted on the level of narration and those integrated into the events of the narrative.

By focusing on diegetic level, we see that, in addition to formulas associated with so-called authenticating verses, there are a number of other strategies in the *Íslendingasögur* that involve the quotation of poetry on the level of narration. Saga writers used extradiegetic verse quotation not only to corroborate the prose account, but for a variety of functions: to contain authoritative poetic voices by curating how much poetry appeared in a text; to preserve narrative momentum without having to integrate longer poems fully into the diegesis; and to construct complex forms of metalepsis so that skalds could act as quasi-narratorial witnesses to their own lives. Using narratological terminology can also enable more accurate descriptions of ambiguous stanzas that combine diegetic reference to performance or composition with extradiegetic quotation, in ways that imply these verses have both documentary and plot functions. Rather than evidencing a strong dichotomy of authenticating and situational verses, the examples discussed here point to a more fluid form of polyphony in the sagas, with writers making varied use of diegetic level to shape the complex interplay between prose and poetic voices in their works.

Notes

2   Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of Old Norse prose are my own. All quotations and translations of skaldic poetry are derived from the authoritative recent edition by Clunies Ross et al. (2022). When citing to this edition, I refer to stanza numbers for the verses, which are also accessible online (https://skaldic.org), and to page numbers in the printed edition for critical material.

3   Other scholars use different terms to express this idea. Alois Wolf (1965, p. 462) distinguishes between poetry used as »historisches Belegmaterial« (›historical evidence‹) and scenes »wenn die Strophen den Beteiligten selbst in den Mund gelegt werden, wenn nicht mehr von außen eine *vísa* eines Skalden als Fußnote hinzugefügt wird« (›when the stanzas are placed in the mouths of the participants themselves, when a skald's stanza is no longer appended from the outside as a footnote‹). Other scholars distinguish between stanzas as ›evidence‹ or ›part of the story‹ (Bjarni Einarsson 1974), ›substantiating‹ and ›non-substantiating‹ stanzas (Foote 1976), and stanzas as ›reports‹ or ›speech acts‹ (Jesch 1993). Judith Jesch also refers occasionally to skaldic quotation in terms of its encoding on the text's ›diegetic‹ or ›extradiegetic‹ level, a conceptual framework to which I return in the next section. Heather O'Donoghue (2005) refers more narrowly to ›dialogue verses‹ rather than situational verses, a category encompassing stanzas framed as part of the dialogue, but not those staged more broadly as having been composed in response to a situation.

4   The most influential studies in this regard are Whaley (1993) and Bjarni Einarsson (1974). See also Males (2020), O'Donoghue (2005), Jesch (1993), and Foote (1976).

5   This term is not my own, but is commonly used across the publications of the project ›The *Íslendingasögur* as Prosimetrum‹, where it refers specifically to the main clause of the sentence that directly precedes the quotation of a stanza in a saga.

6   These formulas, which are commonly cited by scholars distinguishing between authenticating and situational verses, are not universal, but are meant to be broadly representative of the kinds of wording used in the sagas to introduce stanzas in these ways. In practice, saga writers used a variety of phrasings and formulations to frame poetry either as being spoken by characters or as being quoted by the narrative voice as evidence.

7   For references to editions of skaldic poetry, I follow the abbreviations for primary sources used by the ›Dictionary of Old Norse Prose‹ (https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php).

8   Mikael Males (2020, p. 216), however, argues that this division more accurately describes the *Íslendingasögur* than the *konungasögur*, as the latter subgenre also features a high number of stanzas integrated into the plot.

9   This claim should not be taken at face value; the susceptibility of skaldic verse to (often productive) variation in oral and scribal contexts has been discussed extensively (Goeres 2013, pp. 194–197; Marold 2005, pp. 256–268; Abram 2001; Poole 1993; Fidjestøl 1982, pp. 45–60). ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹ even depicts Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld altering his poetry to suit different contexts. The accuracy of claims about poetry in the prefaces to the *konungasögur* are persuasively critiqued by Margaret Clunies Ross (2005, pp. 72–78) and Shami Ghosh (2011, pp. 50–63). It is also uncertain how consistent the writers of historiographical sagas were in their use of poetry. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes (2016, p. xi) suggests that the redactor of ›Heimskringla‹ was »more discriminating in his choice and more skilful in his interpretation of verses« than other redactors, as well as »more systematic than his predecessors in citing both the name of the poet and, very often, the longer poem from which the stanza cited has been extracted«. If we accept, as Ghosh (2011, pp. 16–17) notes, that there is »sufficient correspondence between [›Heimskringla‹] and [›Óláfs saga ins Helga inni sérstöku‹] to assume that both were composed by a single author«, it is possible that the claims made in this passage reflect the views of a particular authorial figure or school, rather than a more general approach.

10 This interpretation is no doubt influenced by Males' (2020, pp. 212–215) findings that authenticating stanzas in the *Íslendingasögur* are almost always authentic, in the sense that some of them seem to have been composed in the context of the prose events (usually 9th–11th c.), while situational stanzas are more likely to be spurious, in that some of them were composed in the later period during which the sagas were written (ca. 13th–14th c.), despite being presented as earlier compositions. It makes sense that saga writers would avoid inventing poetry for a skald who did not enter into the text as a character, while scenes involving poets within the plot may have offered more leeway for creative composition. Yet this does not mean that all stanzas spoken as dialogue must have lacked an evidentiary function; as Males notes, many stanzas quoted in a situational manner also seem to be authentic.

11 In the print volume of Clunies Ross et al. (2022), stanzas 31–41 of ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹ redirect the reader to the editions of the same verses in the earlier editions of poetry from the kings' sagas (Þorm, stt. 16 and 18–25) and from poetic treatises (Bjark, stt. 1–2). On the online edition of the volume (https://skaldic.org),

the stanzas are accessible as part of ›Fóstbrœðra saga‹. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to these stanzas using their numbering in relation to Fbr.

12 The stanza is also quoted in the R-redaction of the saga, now attested only in the 17th-century copies AM 142 fol and AM 566 4°, where the inquit conversely presents the stanza as part of the narrative events: *Þá kvað Grettir vísu* (Björn K. Þórólfsson 1925–1927, p. 3 [normalised, A.W.]: ›Then Grettir spoke a verse‹). No other details are given about the circumstances in which Grettir spoke the stanza, nor is a dialogue staged with Vermundr as in the ›Grettis saga‹ episode.

13 Whaley's (1993, p. 254) treatment of anonymous stanzas, which she calls »a special, and difficult, group«, is inconsistent. She suggests that »if the identity of the speaker was unknown, or mattered so little to the prose writer that he did not name him, the verse cannot be situational«, despite her characterisation of the above example, which is not attributed to a specific poet, as a situational stanza.

14 As Stephen Halliwell (2014) notes, however, the modern distinction between ›mimesis‹ and ›diegesis‹ does not precisely reflect how these terms are used in Platonic or Aristotelian thought. In Plato's ›Republic‹, diegesis refers to all forms of narration, and thus encompasses both speech on the level of narration and the more mimetic direct speech of characters: »The fundamental point [is] that mimesis is not opposed to, but is one type of, *diegesis*« (p. 131). By contrast, in his ›Poetics‹, Aristotle generally takes mimesis to be the overarching category, though his use of the term is not always consistent (pp. 133–134).

15 Stefano Castelvecchi (2020) provides an excellent overview of the development of the classical term ›diēgēsis‹ into modern (especially narratological) concepts of ›diegesis‹, including an account of Genette's (inconsistent) understanding of these concepts and how he changed his approach to them over his lifetime.

16 Metadiegetic proliferation in saga literature can be seen in the many dreamworlds across the corpus, which are accessible to other characters and to the audience only when recounted by the dreamers who experience them. These dreamers can be understood as experiencing a form of metalepsis – that is, a shift between diegetic levels – in that they function both as characters within the metadiegesis and narrators within the primary diegesis. For a discussion of dreamworlds as storyworlds with a focus on their ontological properties, see Wilson (2025).

17 It is notable that Genette, like many other narratologists, tends to speak of individuated ›narrators‹ rather than impersonal narrative functions, such as those that appear throughout the sagas. As Genette (1980, p. 214) notes, however, »the [narrating] instance does not necessarily remain identical and invariable in the

course of a single narrative work«, which nuances the underlying conceptualisation in his work of narrators as individuals.

18 Stefanie Gropper (2022, p. 282) observes that even in those rare instances where the narrative voice speaks in the first person in the *Íslendingasögur*, it cannot be concretely associated with a historical individual, in the sense of a verifiable author figure. She suggests such instances of first-person narration can be seen as »stellvertretend für die Autorstimme« (›substituting for the voice of the author‹), but argues that this voice is not »die Stimme eines namentlich identifizierbaren und historisch kontextualisierbaren Individuums« (›the voice of an individual who can be identified by name or contextualised historically‹).

19 This formulation loosely paraphrases that of Guido Heldt (2013, p. 61) in his assessment of extradiegetic film music (specifically, music which is only ever presented as extradiegetic) as being »essential to the d e p i c t i o n of the fictional world [but] not [essential] to the fictional world a s d e p i c t e d in the film, because the music is not a part of the fictional world, but a means of its depiction«.

20 A useful modern analogy here is the use of voiceover in film and television, through which speech associated with a diegetic character can be presented extradiegetically, in the sense that it is accessible only to the audience, and not to the characters in the story itself.

21 Some of the examples discussed here are addressed in a previous collaborative article (Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir et al. 2022, pp. 68–70). I expand on those findings here to present a more comprehensive overview of extradiegetic quotation in the *Íslendingasögur*.

22 Diana Whaley classifies this stanza as an authenticating verse (Gunnl, p. 858). As Laurence de Looze (1986, p. 492) notes, however, »that a poem attributed to Þórðr Kolbeinsson should be chosen to vouch for the validity of events may be a deliciously ironic intertextual joke«, given that Þórðr is depicted as a particularly duplicitious figure in ›Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa‹.

23 The inclusion of a second inquit interrupting the sequence probably indicates the »poetic evidence [being] orchestrated in such a way as to draw attention to the saga-narrator's presence« (Quinn 1997, p. 62).

24 The stanza is edited only as part of ›Hallfreðar saga‹ in Clunies Ross et al. (2022), but appears in much the same context in ›Vatnsdœla saga‹, where it is also quoted anonymously (see ÍF 8, p. 100).

25 The verse is also quoted in ›Landnámabók‹ in the context of the same episode. The inquit there reads *þar um er þetta kveðit* (›this is recited about it‹) (ÍF 1, p. 238), which conversely suggests an extradiegetic quotation.

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