

**FORRÆÐA AND GUIAMARS LJÓÐ: AN INTRODUCTION, NORMALISATION,
AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

**FORRÆÐA Y GUIAMARS LJÓÐ: UNA INTRODUCCIÓN, NORMALIZACIÓN Y
TRADUCCIÓN AL INGLÉS**

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Abstract: *Forræða* and *Guiamars ljóð* are the first two parts of *Strengleikar*, an Old Norse prose translation based primarily on the Anglo-Norman *lais* of Marie de France found within the thirteenth-century Norwegian manuscript De la Gardie 4-7 and which was commissioned by King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217-63). *Forræða* ('Prologue') centres on the importance of these tales, not just as pieces of literature, but also as a way of demonstrating courtly behaviours deemed desirable. *Guiamars ljóð* ('Lai of Guiamar') focuses on Guiamar, the eponymous hero of this tale, and his lover, taking us through a number of events that befall them. The *lai* highlights, however, that despite all of Guiamar's knightly talents and his lover's womanly virtues, they are both unable to love one another unless they fulfil the requirements they themselves set.

Keywords: translation, *lais*, courtly values, love-sickness, Norway

Resumen: *Forræða* y *Guiamars ljóð* son las dos primeras partes de los *Strengleikar*, una traducción en prosa al nórdico antiguo basada sobre todo en los *layes* de María de Francia en anglonormando que se encuentra dentro del manuscrito De la Gardie 4-7 del siglo XIII y que fue encargada por el rey Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217-63). *Forræða* ('Prólogo') se enfoca en la importancia de estos cuentos, no sólo como unos textos literarios, sino también para demostrar el tipo de comportamiento cortesano que se consideraba deseable. *Guiamars ljóð* ('Lay de Guiamar') se centra en el personaje de Guiamar, el héroe epónimo de este cuento, y su amante, y el cuento nos guía a través de numerosos eventos que les ocurren. El *lay* destaca, sin embargo, que a pesar de todos los talentos caballerescos y los valores femeninos que poseen Guiamar y su amante respectivamente, los dos no son capaces de amarse, a menos que cumplen los requisitos que ellos mismos establecieron.

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Palabras clave: traducción, layes, valores cortesanos, mal de amores, Noruega

Introduction

This new translation, and one of only two normalisations, of the first two parts of *Strengleikar* – *Forræða* and *Guimars ljóð* – follows on the heels of at least two decades' worth of scholarship on the genre of romance in the field of Old Norse studies, scholarship which has exhibited a particular fondness for focusing upon translated romances, the effects thereof, studies of emotions therein, and the representations of women's voices therein, too (Reynard, 2004; Bornholdt, 2011; Larrington, 2011; Marti, 2012; Goeres, 2014; Larrington, 2015; Ríkharðsdóttir, 2015; Goeres, 2019). One must not forget, however, that the focus upon Old Norse romances dates back to much earlier scholarship, including Rudolf Meissner's (1902) seminal work which investigated, amongst other things, the use of alliteration, rhyme, and other literary devices within *Strengleikar*. Much of this scholarship is enlightening and judicious in its treatment of whichever *riddarasögur* 'chivalric sagas' are in question, but the caveat lies in the fact that a not insignificant part of such research depends upon diplomatic editions and translations already a number of decades old at the time of writing. Such is the case particularly with those studies which concentrate upon *Strengleikar*, the collection to which the two texts in question in this article belong (Su, 2020; Phelpstead, 2022). The absence of more readily accessible and understandable editions to students of Old Norse studies often proves a hindrance in cases where one has little experience with diplomatic editions wherein orthographic variations, owing to the lack of standardisation within manuscripts, abound or where one's linguistic understanding of Old Norse is still developing. I hope therefore that the translation and normalisation herein may further kindle a translational flame in scholars of Old Norse to consider working on more modern translations of not only *riddarasögur*, but also any other Old Norse text in need of a new Modern English translation, particularly those yet to receive one.²

² Examples of Old Norse texts yet unrendered into Modern English include *Dámusta saga* and *Kátrínar saga*.

Previous Editions

The Old Norse prose collection *Strengleikar* has only two diplomatic editions. The first of these dates from 1850 but is unaccompanied by a translation (Keyser & Unger, 1850), and the second dates from 1979 and is a diplomatic edition with a facing Modern English translation (Cook & Tveitane, 1979). Whilst there exist translations of *Strengleikar*, for example, in Danish by Henrik Winter-Hjelm (1850) and in Norwegian by Henrik Rytter, whose translation was later prefaced, revised, and published by Kjell Venås (1962), Cook & Tveitane's edition is the only complete translation of *Strengleikar* ever carried out into the Modern English language. There likewise exist renditions of individual *lais*, including Mariano González Campo's (2011) translations into Spanish of *Geitarlauf* and *Janval* contained within his larger work on Arthurian material. The Modern English edition, which is the diplomatic edition upon which the normalisation in this article is based, has not been readily accessible for quite some time, with its being rather difficult to get hold of within the United Kingdom save in the collections of some university libraries.³ Beyond Keyser & Unger's (1850) and Cook & Tveitane's (1979) diplomatic editions which also contain Norwegian and English discussions respectively, the only work, albeit with a discussion in Modern Icelandic, to currently contain a normalised edition is that of Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2006), but this aligns far more closely with Modern Icelandic spelling conventions than the Old Norse language of the thirteenth century.⁴ Indeed, the explicit aim stated in Guðmundsdóttir's edition is that it has been prepared *specifically* with a Modern Icelandic orthography for Icelandic readers (2006, p. 34).⁵ It ought to be clarified now, however, that the intention behind my normalisation is not to adapt the orthography to a Modern Icelandic standard as Guðmundsdóttir does; rather, it is to provide readers of Old Norse with an edition more closely resembling the Old Norse language of the thirteenth century as evinced by the manuscript itself.

³ The Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, for example, has a copy.

⁴ Where I write Old Norse, what I intend is Old Norwegian due to the context in which *Strengleikar* was written. The instances where I use Old Norwegian are to contrast with features of Old Icelandic.

⁵ Italics my own.

Manuscript

Strengleikar are preserved in full in a single medieval manuscript, that being manuscript De la Gardie 4-7, believed to date to thirteenth-century Norway.⁶ It is now housed in Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, Sweden.⁷ Contained within this manuscript are four other texts preceding *Strengleikar*, all of which are defective to varying extents, and in order of appearance in DG 4-7 they are as follow:

Title	DG 4-7 fol.
<i>Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar</i> ⁸	1 ^{ra} 1 – 2 ^{rb} 40
<i>Pamfiluss saga</i>	3 ^{ra} 1 – 5 ^{vb} 41
<i>Viðræða æðru ok hugrekki</i> ⁹	6 ^{ra} 1 – 6 ^{ra} 13
<i>Elíss saga ok Rósamundar</i>	6 ^{ra} 14 – 17 ^{va} 5
<i>Strengleikar</i>	17 ^{va} 6 – 43 ^{vb} 38

Table 1: An index of the texts present in the thirteenth-century manuscript De la Gardie 4-7.

The manuscript once comprised 56 leaves but is now, unfortunately, fragmentary. 14 of the original 56 leaves are now absent, including six at the end of the *Strengleikar* collection. The seventh and final gathering is no longer fully intact, with only the first and eighth leaves still attached to the manuscript. Four leaves, containing incomplete texts of *Tveggja elskanda strengleikr* and *Grelent* once originally belonging to DG 4-7, were miraculously found in 1703 but had been cut, shaped, and sewn into a bishop's mitre, so the texts are no longer complete; these leaves are now found separately as manuscript AM 666 b 4°, located in the Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection, Copenhagen. Furthermore, the widely agreed opinion is that DG 4-7 dates from thirteenth-century Norway, but no consensus has been reached

⁶ Henceforth referred to as DG 4-7.

⁷ A facsimile of DG 4-7 and AM 666 b 4° can be found in Tveitane (1972, pp. 37-124; pp. 127-134).

⁸ The two leaves containing this text are generally accepted as having originated in an independent manuscript, often called DG 4-7 I (Bandlien, 2014, p. 247).

⁹ The thirteen lines that have survived form part of a translation of the original Latin text *Moralium dogma*. A diplomatic edition of the 13 extant lines in DG 4-7 can be found in Unger (1877, p. 452).

regarding where precisely this manuscript was compiled. Cook & Tveitane (1979, p. x) state, based on references to earlier linguistic and palaeographic works (Hægstad, 1935, pp. 1-23; Tveitane, 1972, pp. 17-26), that the date of composition is c. 1270 and that the place of origin is either Bergen or some other place near to Bergen in southwestern Norway.¹⁰

It was for a long time believed that the translation of *Strengleikar* in DG 4-7 may have been the first such translation. Although Tveitane (1972, p. 25) wrote that *Strengleikar* was an obvious copy, the long-held opinion was only finally shattered when Marianne Kalinke discovered the eighteenth-century manuscript Lbs. 840 4° in the 1970s.¹¹ Keyser & Unger (1850, p. xix), on the topic of DG 4-7's being the first translation, wrote:

Det er ingenlunde usandsynligt, at vi i Haandskriftet have for os den første Reenskrift af Forfatterens Concept, hvilken Reenskrivning da er bleven besörget ved tvende Afskrivere. I ethvert Fald er det af Haandskriftets Beskaffenhed klart, at det ikke er Gjenpart af noget meget ældre med utydelige eller udslettede Steder. Feilene, som forekomme, ere ikke andre ende saadanne, som let kunne forklares, endog om man antog Haandskriftet for at være umiddelbart efter Forfatterens eget Dictamen eller endog af hans egen Hand.

[It is by no means unfeasible that we have within the manuscript before us the first rewriting of the author's draft, a rewriting which was then carried out by two copyists. In any case, it is clear from the nature of the manuscript that it is not an imitation of something much older with obscure or deleted passages. The errors which do occur are none other than those which may be readily explained, even if one were to assume the manuscript to have come directly from the author's own *dictamen* or even from his own hand.]¹²

Lbs. 840 4° contains the text *Guímars saga* which is strikingly similar to DG 4-7's *Guiamars ljóð*, but the former exhibits the preservation of some readings absent from DG 4-7 but which are paralleled in the original Anglo-Norman *Guigemar*. Indeed, a number of cases of such preservations in *Guímars saga* are far clearer and closer to the original Anglo-Norman text. To

¹⁰ For a more extensive discussion of DG 4-7, see Bandlien (2014, pp. 245-272).

¹¹ Kalinke writes about *Guímars saga* in a chapter from 1979 (pp. 106-139). She likewise provides a diplomatic edition of *Guímars saga* as in Lbs. 840 4° (1979, pp. 121-139).

¹² Translation is my own.

act as but one example at the phrasal level, chapter 16 of DG 4-7 contains the phrase *er hann ann enn sem lífi sínu* [lit. whom he loves as much as his life], but Lbs. 840 4° reads *er hann unni meir en lífi sínu* [lit. whom he loved more than his life];¹³ the latter is a direct analogue of the Anglo-Norman *k'il desirat plus que sa vie* [whom he wants more than his own life].¹⁴ Lbs. 840 4°'s text therefore demonstrates the divergences, primarily the absence of certain passages present in Anglo-Norman, within DG 4-7's rendition. As such, it implies that whosoever the original Old Norse translator was, and whenever the original manuscript was compiled, the translator was likely to have produced a more faithful rendition of Marie de France's *Guigemar* than DG 4-7 indicates due to those preservations in Lbs. 840 4°.¹⁵ Despite Kalinke's conclusion that *Guímars saga* is more faithful to, and indicative of, an original translation, I have not chosen to translate Lbs. 840 4°'s rendition in this particular instance, as I am focusing more upon the *Strengleikar* collection within this article, rather than the one *lai* which exists in Lbs. 840 4°.

Strengleikar

Strengleikar are a wider compilation of Old Norse courtly stories including translations of, amongst other anonymous *lais*, the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *lais* of Marie de France. During the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217-63), a number of continental texts, and perhaps insular in the case of Marie de France's *lais*, were translated into Old Norse at the behest of Hákon; indeed, *Strengleikar* were neither the first nor final text translated following Hákon's translational galvanisation.¹⁶ Hákon's intention appeared to have centred around his desire to emulate the courts and values of his more continental counterparts by mirroring them within the Norwegian court, consequently engendering a flurry of translations of courtly literature (Jacobs, 2015, p. 95; Goeres, 2019, pp. 75-76). *Strengleikar* comprise renditions of eleven of the twelve poems believed to have been composed by Marie de France, with only an Old Norse translation of *Eliduc* being absent.¹⁷ In fact, there exists no Old Norse translation of

¹³ Normalisation and translation of the phrase in Lbs. 840 4° is my own.

¹⁴ For the Anglo-Norman text and translation, see Waters (2018, pp. 84-85).

¹⁵ For a more in-depth treatment of Lbs. 840 4°, and the likelihood of an original translation resulting in DG 4-7's *Strengleikar*, see generally Kalinke (1979, pp. 106-139).

¹⁶ For example, see *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* which is said to have been written down by a certain Brother Robert in the year 1226.

¹⁷ For a more extensive discussion of *Strengleikar*, see Larrington (2011, pp. 77-97).



Eliduc in any surviving manuscript. It is believed, however, that *Eliduc* may have been known to Icelandic audiences due to the marked parallel it shares with *Völsunga saga* concerning resuscitation, healing, and weasels (Clover, 1986, pp. 79-84).¹⁸ It is therefore not beyond the realms of feasibility that *Eliduc* was similarly known to Norwegian audiences due to the shared connections between Norway and the British Isles, Norway and Iceland, and Norway and continental Europe; the reason why it was not included within the *Strengleikar* collection, however, will likely forever remain a mystery, but it does suggest some evidence for a divergence in narrative content compared to that which survives in the manuscript.¹⁹ The tables below demonstrate the texts subsumed under the title *Strengleikar* within DG 4-7 and AM 666 b 4° in order of appearance, their Anglo-Norman or French counterparts, and any authors attributed to the original texts:

Old Norse Title	DG 4-7 fol.	Anglo-Norman/French Title	Author
<i>Forræða</i>	17 ^{va} 6 – 17 ^{vb} 33	<i>Prologue</i>	Marie de France (second half)
<i>Guiamar</i>	17 ^{vb} 34 – 21 ^{vb} 12	<i>Guigemar</i>	Marie de France
<i>Eskja</i>	21 ^{vb} 13 – 23 ^{vb} 38 (chs. 1-11) 25 ^{ra} 1 – 25 ^{va} 30 (chs. 11-13)	<i>Le Fresne</i>	Marie de France
<i>Equitan</i>	24 ^{ra} 1 – 24 ^{vb} 38 (chs. 3-8) 25 ^{va} 31 – 25 ^{vb} 38 (chs. 1-3) 27 ^{ra} 1 – 27 ^{vb} 14 (chs. 8-12)	<i>Equitan</i>	Marie de France
<i>Bisklaret</i>	26 ^{ra} 1 – 26 ^{vb} 39	<i>Bisclavret</i>	Marie de France

¹⁸ In both the Anglo-Norman *Eliduc* and Old Norse *Völsunga saga*, it is a weasel that acts as the catalyst for the healing of a second weasel, which is in a death-like state, through the administering of herbs.

¹⁹ Guðmundsdóttir (2014, p. 126) exercises some caution regarding this, as it is quite possible that the tale was transmitted orally across cultures rather than by way of a textual tradition.



	(chs. 2-7) 27 ^{vb15} – 27 ^{vb38} (chs. 1-2) 28 ^{ra1} – 28 ^{va9}		
<i>Laustik</i>	28 ^{va10} – 29 ^{ra20}	<i>Laüstic</i>	Marie de France
<i>Desiré</i>	29 ^{ra21} – 32 ^{va42}	<i>Desiré</i>	Anon.
<i>Tidorel</i>	32 ^{vb1} – 32 ^{vb41}	<i>Tydorel</i>	Anon.
<i>Chetovel</i>	33 ^{ra1} – 33 ^{rb31}	<i>Le Chaitivel, ou Quatre Dols</i>	Marie de France
<i>Doun</i>	33 ^{rb32} – 34 ^{rb19}	<i>Doon</i>	Anon.
<i>Tveggja elskanda ljóð</i>	34 ^{rb20} – 35 ^{rb15}	<i>Deus Amanz</i>	Marie de France
<i>Gúrun</i>	35 ^{rb16} – 36 ^{va40}	unknown	Anon.
<i>Milun</i>	36 ^{vb1} – 38 ^{ra2}	<i>Milun</i>	Marie de France
<i>Geitarlauf</i>	38 ^{ra3} – 38 ^{rb39}	<i>Chevrefoil</i>	Marie de France
<i>Strandar strengleikr</i>	38 ^{va1} – 38 ^{vb30}	unknown	Anon.
<i>Leikara ljóð</i>	38 ^{vb30} – 38 ^{vb39}	<i>Lecheor</i>	Anon.
<i>Janvoal</i>	39 ^{ra1} – 40 ^{vb29}	<i>Lanvoal</i>	Marie de France
<i>Jónet</i>	40 ^{vb30} – 43 ^{rb14}	<i>Yonec</i>	Marie de France
<i>Naboreis</i>	43 ^{rb14} – 43 ^{va25}	<i>Nabaret</i>	Anon.
<i>Ríkar hinn gamli</i>	43 ^{va25} – 43 ^{vb38}	unknown	Anon.

Table 2: An index of the texts under the collection *Strengleikar* in the thirteenth-century manuscript De la Gardie 4-7.

Old Norse Title	AM 666 b 4° fol.	Anglo-Norman/French Title	Author
<i>Tveggja elskanda strengleikr</i>	1 ^v – 4 ^{rb20}	unknown	Anon.
<i>Grelent</i>	4 ^{rb21} – 4 ^{vb38}	<i>Graelent</i>	Anon.

Table 3: An index of the texts under the collection *Strengleikar* in the thirteenth-century manuscript AM 666 b 4°.

Normalisation and translation process

In her normalised and translated Modern Icelandic edition of *Strengleikar*, Guðmundsdóttir (2006, pp. 34-35) writes the following:

Í þessari útgáfu á *Strengleikum* hefur stafsetning handritsins DG 4-7 verið færð til nútímahorfs, en flestum fornum orðmyndum er haldið, þar sem slíkt er ekki einungis vel til þess fallið að sýna sérstæðan stíl þýðingarinnar, heldur einnig fornlegt málstig textans. Að meginreglu er handriti því fylgt náíð, og útgáfan sver sig í stórum dráttum í ætt við aðrar nýjar textaútgáfur, þar sem markmiðið er að varðveita málvenju ritunartímans, jafnt sem breytileika á máli.

[In this edition of *Strengleikar*, the spelling of the manuscript DG 4-7 has been adapted to a modern standard, but most ancient word forms have been maintained, for such a thing is not only well suited to demonstrating the translation's unique style, but also the text's ancient linguistic level. In essence, the manuscript has been followed, and the edition broadly resembles other new text editions, wherein the aim is to maintain the linguistic customs of the period of composition as well as linguistic divergences.]²⁰

This is, of course, an acceptable form of normalisation given the ultimate audience being Modern Icelandic readers who are not necessarily students or scholars of Old Norse. This, however, is only one method of normalisation. It could be argued, however, that Guðmundsdóttir's edition is more a translation to Modern Icelandic than a normalisation of an Old Norse text, which seems to have been the overarching aim given that the explicit audience is Modern Icelandic readers. It is therefore perhaps less well suited for students of Old Norse, whose mother tongue is not Modern Icelandic, if they are instead faced with a quasi-Modern Icelandic orthography that sometimes modernises and other times maintains Old Norse word forms; it is similarly perhaps less helpful to students if the orthography does not resemble an Old Norse orthography of the thirteenth century. With that being said,

²⁰ Translation is my own.

Guðmundsdóttir's edition of *Strengleikar* is a fantastic piece of modern scholarship that furthers not only our understanding of the lexical intricacies and complexities of the lexicon in DG 4-7, but also how, for example, *Guimars ljóð* differs from Lbs. 840 4^o's *Guímars saga*.

As is well known regarding the process of normalisation, it is incredibly challenging to decide to which 'standard' of language one should normalise a text, and so my comments above should not at all be interpreted as a criticism of Guðmundsdóttir's edition; rather, they should be understood as comments relating to the difficulty of textual normalisation. For example, in the case of the thirteenth-century *Strengleikar*, does one change all mediopassive verb forms so as to resemble an earlier stage of the language by amending all *-st* mediopassive exponents to *-sk* even where both appear? Does one merge two distinct vowels, such as having *æ* and *ǣ* all become *æ*, or is such a distinction retained? Does one amend all instances of words ending in *-legr* and *-lega* to *-ligr* and *-liga* respectively? These are but some of the obstacles that arise when grappling with the normalisation of Old Norse literature.

There exist three principal 'standards' available to those wishing to normalise an Old Norse text. The first of these is a process of normalisation based upon the internal criteria of any given manuscript. In the case of *Strengleikar* in DG 4-7, this would therefore mean, for example, that both mediopassive verb exponents — *-sk* and *-st* — are retained precisely how and when they appear. In so doing, the normalised text would maintain as far as possible the temporal and linguistic character of the manuscript in question. The second and third processes concern degrees of normalisation rooted in external criteria, but this perhaps runs the risk of imposing upon the relevant text a linguistic norm from a wholly different period. The second focuses upon following a 'classical' Old Norse standard of normalisation, chiefly advocated for by the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions for Old Norse texts which are normalised to a stage of the language dating to around c. 1200.²¹ This would mean, for instance, that word-final voiceless stops, such as *-k* and *-t* in *ok* and *at*, are retained in such a normalised edition. The third, as aforementioned regarding Guðmundsdóttir's (2006) edition, is to align the orthography with Modern Icelandic spelling conventions. One such example would be the

²¹ Admittedly, the normalisation process adopted by the *Íslenzk fornrit* series seems to be the one most frequently used in normalised editions.



removal of the orthographic distinction present between the endings *-r* and *-ur* by way of inserting an epenthetic *-u-*, such as rendering Old Norse *maðr* as Modern Icelandic *maður*. Whichever method of normalisation an editor pursues in the end, there will always be difficult decisions that need to be made, so the primary objective ought to be to produce an edition that facilitates a reader's understanding, irrespective of which method is ultimately chosen.

My own process of normalisation for this article combines the internal criteria and *Íslenzk fornrit* approaches to normalisation, which may seem a rather unorthodox decision *prima facie*, but I feel it best encapsulates both the language of the manuscript and the language of the thirteenth century more broadly. The main element that remains unchanged from the manuscript, and which the reader may quickly observe, is the retention of the privative prefixes *ó-* and *ú-*; I have decided to leave unchanged the forms in which they appear, for the compiler of the manuscript appears to use them interchangeably, and the variation ought to pose no problem to students reading the texts even if they have only recently begun to study the language. The *ú-* and *ϥ-* distinction in binomial or multinomial expressions ought therefore not to prove impeditive either when, as is similarly the case with Old Norse poetry, any vowel may alliterate with any other vowel in prose texts. In this normalised edition, I have corrected any spelling or grammatical mistakes when it is evident that the spelling or grammar is not quite correct, decisions which are primarily based upon alternatives evinced in Lbs. 840 4^o; any significant emendations have been signalled with a corresponding footnote. Both word division and punctuation in Old Norse and Modern English are my own, so these will naturally vary between different editions. The following table elucidates the chief orthographic changes made when normalising these texts:

DG 4-7	Normalisation
Instances of <i>-c, -sc, -zc</i>	<i>-k, -sk, -sk</i>
<i>æi, æi-, -æi-</i>	<i>ei, ei-, -ei-</i>
<i>æy, æy-, -æy-</i>	<i>ey, ey-, -ey-</i>
<i>-æy-</i>	<i>-ey-</i>
<i>ia-, -ia-; -lia-; sia-</i>	<i>ja-, -ja-; -lja-; sjá-</i>
<i>gia-, -gia; gio-, -gio-</i>	<i>gja-, -gja; gjϥ-, -gju-</i>

<i>lio-</i>	<i>ljó-</i>
<i>-legr, -lega</i>	<i>-ligr, -liga</i>
Instances of vowels intended to be long	á, é, í, ó, ú, ý
Instances of final <i>-e</i>	<i>-i</i>
Instances of <i>æ</i>	Distinguishes between <i>æ</i> and <i>ǣ</i>
Instances of <i>-om</i> ending	<i>-um</i>
Instances of <i>hu-</i> interrogatives or pronouns	<i>hv-</i>
Absent <i>h-</i> appearing in <i>hl-</i> , <i>hn-</i> , <i>hr-</i> clusters	Absent <i>h-</i> per the reduction of clusters in Old Norwegian ²²
Absence of required u-mutation e.g. <i>-azto</i>	Addition of u-mutation e.g. <i>-ustu</i>
Substitution of <i>-v-</i> in <i>þu-</i> words e.g. <i>þui</i>	Replacement of <i>-u-</i> in <i>þu-</i> words e.g. <i>því</i>

Table 4: A list of the main normalisation decisions made for *Forræða* and *Guíamars ljóð*.

Concerning the translational process taken, I have translated the text into Modern English with an archaised flair due to the nature of the text itself: a romance text from approximately eight centuries ago. I acknowledge, however, that the translation may at times seem rather unnatural to a reader of Modern English, but this was the intention due to the elevated and courtly style of the text's genre as well as my desire to respect the intricacies of the Old Norse text as far as possible without significantly impeding comprehension. This is perhaps nowhere more evident within the translation than in those places where alliterative binomial or multinomial expressions occur in the original Old Norse text; in each of these instances, I have endeavoured to replicate the alliteration which at times necessitated a somewhat looser translational choice in Modern English in order to respect the original alliteration. That is not to say, however, that every instance of alliteration in the Modern English translation is directly transferable onto an Old Norse equivalent, but what is the case

²² The words, and any forms thereof, affected by such a reduction are as follow: for *hl-*, the words are *hlæss, hlaupa, hlið, hlutr*, and *hlæja*; for *hr-*, the words are *hreysti, hryggleikr, hryggva, hræða*, and *úhræddr*. There are no cases of *hn-* clusters, reduced or otherwise, present within the manuscript.



is that every instance of Old Norse alliteration can be mapped onto a Modern English equivalent.

Forræða

1. Athœfi þeirra er í fyrnskunni vǫru líkaði oss at forvitna ok rannsaka, því at þeir vǫru listugir í vélum sínum, glöggsýnir í skynsemðum, hyggjir í ráðagerðum, vaskir í vápnum, hœverskir í hirðsiðum, mildir í gjöfum, ok *at*²³ alls konar drengskap hinir frægjustu. Ok fyrir því at í fyrnskunni gerðusk margir undarligir lutir ok óheyrðir atburðir á várum dögum, þá sýndisk oss at frœða verandi ok viðrkomandi þeim sögum, er margfróðir menn gerðu um athœfi þeirra sem í fyrnskunni vǫru ok á bókum létu rita til ævinligrar áminningar, til skemtanar, ok margfrœðis viðrkomandi þjóða at hverr bæti ok birti sitt líf af kunnustu liðinna luta. Ok at eigi leynisk þat at hinum síðarstum dögum er gerðusk í öndverðum. Svá ok at hverr íhugi með allri kunnustu, ok kosti með öllu afli, fremi ok fullgeri með öllum fongum at búa ok bæta sjálfan sik til ríkis guðs með sómasamligum siðum ok góðum athœfum ok helgum lífsenda. Því at dáðir ok drengskapir ok alls konar góðleikr er skryddi ok prýddi líf þeirra er guði líkuðu ok þeirra er í þessa heims atgerðum frægðust ok vinsældust í fyrnskunni, hverfr þess gjorsamligri sem heims þessa dagar meirr fram líða. En bók þessi er hinn virðuligi Hákon konungr lét norrœna ór völsku máli má heita Ljóðabók, því at af þeim sögum er þessir bók birtir gerðu skáld í syðra Bretlandi, er liggr í Frans, ljóðsöngva þá er gerask í hörpum, gígjum, simphanum, organum, timpanum, salteríum ok corum, ok alls konar öðrum strengleikum er menn gera sér ok öðrum til skemtanar þessa lífs. Ok lýkr hér forræðu þessari ok þessu næst er upphaf söngvanna.

Öllum þeim er guð hefir lét vizku, ok kunnustu, ok snilld at birta, þá samir eigi at fela né leyna lán guðs í sér. Heldr fellr þeim at sýna öðrum með góðvilja þat sem guði líkaði þeim at ljá. Þá bera þeir sem hinn vildasti viðr lauf ok blóm, ok sem góðleikr þeirra frægist í annars umbótum, þá fullgerist aldin þeirra ok nærir aðra. Þá var siðr hygginna ok hœverskra manna í fyrnskunni at þeir mæltu frœði sín, svá sem segi, með myrkum orðum ok djúpum skilningum sakir þeirra sem úkomnir vǫru, at þeir skyldu lýsa með ljósum umrœðum þat sem hinir fyrri höfðu mælt ok rannsaka af sínu viti þat sem til skýringar horfði ok rétttrar skilningar af þeim

²³ Any editorial additions, be it a single letter or an entire word, have been italicised.



kenningum er philosophi fornir spekingar hofðu gort. Síðan sem aldrið leið fram, ok ævi mannanna, þá vóx list, ok athygli, ok smásmygli mannkynsins með margs konar hætti svá at í þllum lǫndum gerðusk hinir margfróðustu menn mælandi sinna landa tungum. En þeir sem líf sitt vilja lýtalaust varðveita, þá samir jamnan nokkut þat at íhuga ok iðna er þá geri sjálfa vinsæla ok af kunnustu sinni megi aðra frœða. Ok fyrir því íhugaða ek at gera nokkura góða sögu ok ór vǫlsku í bókmál snúa at þat mætti flesta hugga er flestir megu skilja. En ljóð þau er ek hefi heyrt er gǫr váru í syðra Bretlandi af þeim kynligum atburðum er í því landi gerðusk, þá líkaði mér at snúa ok ǫðrum segja, því at ek hafða mjök mǫrg heyrt þau er ek vil at vísu fram telja. Ok engum gleyma af því er ek má minni mínu á koma einum kurteisum konungi er guð léði yfir oss, vizku ok vald, gæfu ok gnótt margfaldligs hins frægjasta góðleiks. Því íhuga ek oftsamliga at samna ljóðin ǫll ok í eina bók at fœra þér, herra minn hinn hœverski konungr. Ef þér líka, þá er mér fagnaðr at starf mitt þekkisk ok hugnar svá hyggnum hǫfðingja ok hans hirðar kurteisum klerkum ok hœverskum hirðmǫnnum.

Guiamars Ljóð

2. Sǫgur þær er ek veit sannar, ok Bretar hafa ljóðsǫngva af gort, vil ek segja yðr sem ek má með fæstum orðum. En svá sem ritningar hafa sýnt mér, vil ek segja yðr atburði þá sem gerðust á hinu syðra Bretlandi í fyrnskunni. Um þá daga réð því ríki Odels konungr, stundum í friði, oftsamliga í úró ok í úfriði. Þessum konungi þjónaði með vild ok góðvilja einn ríkr lendr maðr er allri réð einn Leunborg, ok var hann kallaðr Dridias at nafni. Þessi var einkenniligr vinr ok hinn kærasti herra sínum konunginum. Hann var hinn vaskasti riddari í vǫpnum, ok átti hann með sinni eigin þúsu tvau börn, son ok dóttur. Ungen hét dóttir hans, en sonr hans Guiamar. Í þllum þeim konungdómi var engi maðr honum jamfríðr. Móðir hans unni honum yfir alla lifandi, ok í þllum lutum líkaði hann vel feðr sínum. Þegar sem hann var heimanfœrr, þá sendi hann faðir hans heiman til konungshirðar at þjóna konungi. En sveinninn var vitr ok vaskr, þokkaðist ok vinsældist þllu konungs hirðliði. Síðan sem honum vóx vit ok vaskleikr, þá bjó konungrinn hann ríkuliga þllum riddaraherklæðum svá tigriliga sem hann vildi sjálfr œskja.

3. Guiamar sem hann var riddari, þá dvaldist hann þar mjök lengi. Síðan skildisk hann við konung ok allt hirðlið hans í vinsæld ok vináttu, ok stefndi hann þaðan í Flandr at reyna



reysti ok riddaraskap sinn, því at um þá daga var þar jafnan úfriðr ok bardagar. En hvergi í Lorenge né í Búrgúndí, ok eigi í Angeu né í Gaskóníu fannsk engi honum jamvaskr í vápnaskifti. En þat var undarligst í hans náttúru at hann hafnaði vandliga konum at unna, því at engi var svá fríð né ágæt frú, né fríð mæ, at hann vildi sinni ást til snúa. En engi myndi honum synjask ef hann vildi til mæla. Margar birtu honum berliga vilja sinn, en hann lézk ekki vita hvat er þær vildu, því at hugr hans horfði svá vandliga frá þeim at engi þeirra gat þat fundit af hann myndi konu vilja hafa.

4. Sem hann var í blóma ok hæstum tíma æsku sinnar, þá fór hann heim at sjá fõður sinn ok herra, móður ok systur, er lengi höfðu langat til hans heimkvámu ok fundar. Ok dvaldisk hann þá heima með þeim vel svá mánað fullan. Því næst líkaði honum at fara á dýraveiðar, ok stefndi hann þá til sín um kveldit riddurum sínum ok veiðimönnum. En um morguninn fór hann í mörkina, því at þess konar skemtan líkaði honum einkar vel. Ok fundu þeir þegar einn mikinn hjört, ok váru þá hundarnir leystir, ok fylgðu þá veiðimenn hirtinum. En sá hinn ungi maðr reið tómliga eftir ok einn sveina hans, ok færði honum boga hans ok sporrakka dýra ok villisvína, en hann vildi gjarna skjóta ef nokkut dýr koemi í skotmál fyrr en hann færi þaðan. Þá leit hann eigi fjarri sér í einum þykkum runn hjartkollu eina ok kálf hennar hjá henni. En var ǫll snjóhvít ok hafði eina kvísl hjartarhorns í miðju enni, ok ljóp hon þegar ór runninum er hon heyrði gauð sporrakkanna, en hann bendi boga sinn ok skaut at henni ok laust hana framan í brjóstit. En hon féll þegar til jarðar, en broddrinn þegar aftr snerisk ok laust Guamar í gegnum lærit ok nam staðar fastr í hestinum, ok var þá af *at* stíga hestinum, ok féll hann þar á grasvöllinn hjá kollunni. En kollann er þar lá sár, virkti sár sitt ok kærði angr sinn. En því næst mælti hon með þessum hætti: „Harmr er mér at ek em nú drepin. En þú gaurr er mik særðir, þessi skulu vera þín ǫrlög: aldri skaltu fá lækning hvárki af grǫsum né grasarótum, ekki skulu tjá læknar né heilsudrykkir at bæta þér, ok aldri skaltu heill verða af þessu sári er nú hefir þú í þínu læri til þess er sú grœðir þik er sakir þinnar ástar skal bera ok þola svá miklar þínslir, hugsóttir ok harma, at aldri fyrr bar kvenmaðr þvílíka. Ok þú þvílík fyrir sakir hennar svá at allir þeir er elskat hafa ok framleiðis skulu konur elska munu undra ok kynligt þykkja með hverjum hætti er þit máttuð svá mikinn ástarharm bera. Skríð brott sem skjótast ok lát mik hafa fríð fyrir þér. Þessi ǫrlög skulu sannast þér.“

5. Guíamar var skeindr, ok þótti honum kynligt þat sem dýrit hafði sagt honum, ok íhugaði hann þá í hvert land hann skyldi fara til lækningar at láta grœða sár sitt, því at honum líkar eigi svá búnum at deyja. Hann veit at sǫnnu ok hugr segir honum at aldregi líkaði honum kvennaástir, ok aldregi sá hann þá er honum væri fýst á né þá er hann vissi at sár kynni at grœða, ok kallaði hann þá svein sinn ok mælti: „Vinr,“ kvað hann, „leyp sem skjótast hesti þínum ok stefn hingat félogum mínum, því at ek vil tala við þá.“ Ok þá fór sveinninn frá honum, en hann dvaldisk eftir, ok angraði hann mjök sárit. Skar hann þá skyrta sína ok batt um sárit sem hann kunni. Því næst steig hann á hesti sinn ok stefndi þaðan á brott ok skundaði at firrast féлага sína, því at hann vildi at engi þeirra vissi hvert hann snerist. Ok fór hann þá af veginum um þveran skóginn, ok fann hann þá gǫtu grasvaxna. Ok minkaði þá skóginn, ok því næst kom hann á slétta vǫllu, ok kom hann at fjalli miklu. Ok undir fallinu rann á, ok fylgði hann ánni til þess er kom til sjóvar. Ok var þar hafnarvágr, ok í hǫfninni sá hann eitt skip. Ok gekk hann á þat skip ok reisti tréit. En þat skip var kynligum hagleik gǫrt, því at útanborðs ok innan mátti engi sjá samfelling borðanna né negling naglanna nema svá var til sýnis sem einn viðr væri allt. Ok komsk hann þá með miklu angri sársins á skipit, ok hugði hann at menn væri á skipinu þeir er gætti skipsins, ok sá hann engan mann þann er þar væri á. Ok sá hann á miðju skipi rekkju gǫrva með miklum hagleik. Forfjalar váru gǫrvar með Salómons hagleik, gullgǫrvar með hinum fegrstu skurðum af cypressu²⁴ ok fílsbeinum, en silkipell gullvofit var yfir breitt rekkjuna sem kult væri. En eigi kann ek virða þau ǫnnur klæði er í rekkjunni váru nema þat segi ek yðr frá koddanum at sá er hann lagði á hǫfuð sitt skyldi aldri eldast. En hit efra ábreizl var purpura ór Alexandríalandi ok undir gǫr sabelinaskinn. Í framstafni stóðu tvær kertistikur af hinu skírasta gulli, hin lakari var mikils fjár verð, ok á þeim tvau tendruð²⁵ stafkerti, ok ǫllu því er hann sá, þá þótti honum þat kynligast. Síðan hallaðisk hann í rekkjuna at hvílask, því at sárit verkti hann mjök. Eftir þat sem stund var liðin, þá stóð hann upp ok vildi brott ganga, en hann mátti eigi þá aftr komast, því at skipit var fjarri í hafi ok hinn mesti skriðr at ok byrr hinn bazti ok hinn hǫegasti. Ok fann hann þá at honum téði ekki aftr at leita. Ok ryggðist hann þá mjök ok vissi ei hvat hann skyldi at hafast. Ok var þat eigi kynligt, því at mikill var verkr í sári hans. Ok verðr hann allt at þola, því at hann fær ekki at gǫrt þessum

²⁴ *ms* cipres; emended to follow the spelling and dative ending of other occurrences. For example, see *Alexanders saga* and *Egíðíuss saga*.

²⁵ *ms* tendrað; emended to match the gender and number of the noun *stafkerti* which is a neuter plural.



kynliga atburði.²⁶ Ok það hann þá mjök guð miskunnar sér ok sjá til sín, at verja hann fyrir dauða ok koma honum til hafnar. Síðan lagðist hann í rekkjuna ok sofnaði. Nú er honum liðit þat sem harðast var, því at skipit mun brátt lenda þar sem hann mun heilsu fá.

6. Undir einni forneskjuborg er höfuðborg var alls þess ríkis lendi skipit. En sá herra ok höfðingi er þeirri borg réð ok stjórnaði var gamall at aldri ok kvángaðr ungri konu. Þessi frú var hinnar baztu ættar, mild ok kurteis, hyggin ok hœversk, ok hin mætasta í öllum kurteisra kvenna kvenskum, hin fríðasta ok fegrsta. En þúsi hennar ok herra var óhófsamliga ábrúðigr, því at þat beiddist náttúra hans, því at gamlir menn er litla fýst hafa til kvenna ok þat vildu er þeir megu eigi, ok náttúran synjar þeim, en jamnan ofunda ok hata þá er ungir eru: með þeim hætti er lunderni gamalla manna. En þessi hinn auðgi maðr hafði svá um sik búit: at alnarvíðangarð²⁷ undir borgarturninum hafði hann látit gerða, hávan grœns marmaragrjótsvegg²⁸ mikinn ok svá at ekki mátti yfir komast. Ok einar dyrr litlar til kastalans, ok þar gæta nætr ok daga með öruggum vörðum. En öðrum megin gekk sjór, ok mátti þann veg ekki at komast nema á báti kæmi ef í kastalann ætti nokkut at sýsla. En því lét herra kastalans gerða svá hávum vegg ok þykkum at hann skyldi úræddr ok öruggr varðveita þar konu sína. Þar lét hann gera henni hit fegrsta ok fríðasta loft ok þar kapellu í hjá, ok þar einn gamall prestur til tíðaveizlu, bleikr ok blóðlauss, kaldr ok kolnaðr, ór öllum líkamslosta. Hann sǫng jafnan messur ok byrjaði at borði. Þat hit fríða loft var steint innan hinum fríðustum líkneskjum prúðra manna ok fríðra kvenna ok þeirra ástir ok ástarþokki, ok með hverjum hætti samir at elska ok tryggliga ástar gæta svá sem Ovidius kennir í bók ástarvéla. Þar var sú hin kurteisa frú sett, ok eina fríða mey fekk herra hennar at þjóna henni. Þessi var systurdóttir hennar,²⁹ hin kærasta hvǫr annarri hon ok frú hennar. Með frúnni var þessi mætr þeim

²⁶ *ms* atburð; emended to match the cases of the preceding demonstrative pronoun and weak adjective.

²⁷ Lbs. 840 4°: alldinviðrgarðe

²⁸ *ms* malmara grioz vegg

²⁹ Guðmundsdóttir (2006, p. 55) suggests this should instead be *hennar* rather than *ms* hans. The Anglo-Norman is ambiguous, as it uses *sa* "his; her". I have chosen to emend to *hennar* because of the context surrounding the relationship between the two women in the text, which would make little sense if it were the sister of the lord who keeps the woman cooped up in a chamber. Lbs. 840 4°: hennar



stundum er hann³⁰ fór heiman til þess er hann³¹ heim kom. Þess á milli kom þar aldregi maðr né kvenmaðr. Svá var hon byrgð innan þess hins háva steingarðs ok gekk aldregi ór garðinum.

7. Þann hinn sama dag sem nón var liðit, sú hin fríða frú sem hon hafði sofit eftir mat, þá gekk hon í grasgarðinn ok þjónustumær hennar með henni at huggask ok skemta sér. Sem þær litu ofan til sjóvarins, þá sá þær skipit siglanda³² með innfallanda³³ flóði³⁴ í höfnina ok engan mann á skipinu ok lendi þar undir steingarðinum. Sem hon hafði þetta sét, þá ræddisk hon ok vildi brott ganga. Ok var þat eigi undr at henni þótti kynligt svá at hon roðnaði ǫll. En fylgismær hennar var kurteis ok hygginn. Huggaði frú sína ok gerði ǫrugga ok úræddur. Ok kastaði skikkju sinni ok gekk ofan til strandar ok sá á skipit svá frítt ok fagrt, ok ríkuliga búit at aldri sá hon annat þvílíkt. Ok fann hon þar ekki vætta á nema riddara einn sofanda, ok fyrir því at hon sá hann bleikan ok blóðlausan, þá hugði hon at hann væri dauðr, ok skundaði hon þá aftr ok kallaði þangat frú sína ok sagði henni þat sem hon hafði sét ok kærði mjök ok kvíddi at riddarinn myndi dauðr vera.

8. Frú hennar svaraði henni: „Skundum nú,“ sagði hon, „til skipsins. Ef hann er andaðr, vit skulum grafa hann. Prestur várr mun duga okkur. En ef vit finnum hanna kvikan, þá mun hann ræða við okkr.“ Því næst skunduðu þær báðar, frúin fyrir en mærin eftir henni. Sem hon var komin á skipit, þá nam hon staðar fyrir rekkjunni ok hugði vandliga at riddaranum. Ok kærði hon þá ok harmaði mjök æsku hans ok ryggleik ok várkyndi sjúkleik hans. Ok lagði hon þá hönd sína á brjóst honum ok kenndi at hann var heitr ok at hjarta hans barði undir síðunni.

³⁰ Owing to the fact that the woman cannot leave home due to the lord's keeping her in the chamber, it is unlikely that the *ms* hon is intended. As such, I have emended this to *hann*, as it is the man who is able to leave. Lbs. 840 4°: hennar herra

³¹ Same reasoning as above. Lbs. 840 4°: hann

³² The *ms* reads siglandi which is not quite correct, as the noun it qualifies is a neuter singular accusative. Given that present participles, when used adjectivally, decline according to gender, number, and case, it ought to read *siglanda*, hence the emendation. This emendation aligns with fol. 294r of Lbs. 840 4°: siglanda

³³ The *ms* reads innfallandi which is not quite correct, as the noun it qualifies is a neuter singular dative (*ms* accusative). Given that present participles, when used adjectivally, decline according to gender, number, and case, it ought to read *innfallanda*, hence the emendation. It should be noted, however, that fol. 294r of Lbs. 840 4° reads innfallande, but given that the preceding present participle siglanda has been declined according to gender, number, and case in Lbs. 840 4°, it stands to reason that this, too, should have been declined accordingly.

³⁴ Due to the sense of the preposition *með* here, the dative seems likely to have been the intended usage, so I have emended *ms* flóð accordingly. This emendation aligns with fol. 294r of Lbs. 840 4°: flóði



En riddarinn er áðr var sofandi, vaknaði í því er hon tók á honum, ok er hann leit hana, þá gladdisk hann miklum fagnaði ok heilsaði henni þegar með hinum blíðustum orðum. Nú veit hann at sǫnnu at hann hefir lent. En hon grét þegar áhyggjufull fyrir honum, svaraði kveðju hans fǫgrum ok góðviljuðum orðum ok spurði hann því næst ór hverju landi hann var kominn eða ór bardaga flýtt.

9. „Frú,“ sagði hann, „þat er ei með þeim hætti, en ef þér líkar at ek geri þér þann atburð kunnigan er mér er fallinn, þá vil ek eigi leyna þik. Ek em kominn ór hinn minna Bretlandi. Ok var ek í dag á veiðar farinn, ok laust ek í dag veiðimǫrkinni eina hvíta kollu með ǫr minni. Ok er ek hafða³⁵ lostit hana, þá flaug ǫrin aftr at mér ok laust mik í lærit ok hefir svá mjök sært mik at ek óttumk at ek verða³⁶ eigi grœddr. En er ek hafða³⁷ lostit kolluna, þá kærði hon mjök at ek hafða³⁸ drepit hana, ok mælti hon þá ok þolvaði mér ok svór mikinn eið at aldregi skylda ek heill verða né grœðing fá nema kona grœddi mik, ok veit ek ei hvar ek skal þá finna. Sem ek hafða heyrtr þessi ǫrlǫg, þá skundaða ek ór skóginum, ok sá ek þá í hǫfn einni þetta skip. Ok féll mér heimaska at ek dirfdumk á at ganga, fyrir því þegar sem ek var á kominn, þá tók skipit brott í haf. Nú veit ek ei hvar ek hefi lent né hvat þessi borg heitir, því bið ek yður, hin fríða frú mín, fyrir guðs sakir ok hæversku sakir yðarrar, miskunnið mér með hjálpraði yðru, því at ek veit ei hvert ek skal heðan fara, ok eigi em ek fœrr þessu skipi at stjórna.“

10. Þá svaraði honum sú hin fríða frú: „Góði herra,“ sagði hon, „ok hinn kærasti, gjarna vil ek veita þér hjálpraði. Þessa borg á minn herra ok allt landit umhverfis. Hann er ríkr maðr, ǫflugr ok ættgóðr. En hann er mjök á aldr siginn, angraðr ok ábrúðigr. Fyrir því hefir hann hér byrgt mik ok læst í þessum steingarði er eitt at einu er liðit á. Ok einn gamall prestr fyrir settr gæzlumaðr. Er þol ok bál brenni! Svá em ek hér byrgð nætr ok daga, ok eigi svá djǫrf at ek þori út at ganga nema minn herra sendi eftir mér. Hér á ek loft ok kapellu ok þessa mey mér fylgjandi. Nú er þér líkar hér hvílast til þess er þér bœtist ok batnar, gjarna skulum vér þér með góðvilja þjóna.“

³⁵ *ms* hafði; a number of first person singular verb forms hereafter have the same ending as the third person singular in the past tense, so they will be emended and noted accordingly.

³⁶ *ms* verði; emended to match past subjunctive ending for first person singular.

³⁷ *ms* hafði; emended to match past indicative ending for first person singular.

³⁸ *ms* hafði; emended to match past indicative ending for first person singular.



11. Nú er hann hafði heyrt ræðu hennar, þá þakkaði hann henni með sætum ok soemiligum orðum ok kvazk vilja dveljask gjarna með henni. Ok reistisk hann þá upp ór rekkjunni, ok þær báðar studdu hann ok leiddu í loft hennar ok lögðu hann þar í hægja hvílu. Ok þógu þær þá lær hans ok sárit, ok er þær höfðu þvegit af blóðit gjørsamliga, þá bundu þær fyrst um sárit. Sem þau váru mett af at kveldi, þá gekk hon í brott. Nú er honum vel gætt af gnógum mat ok góðum drykk, en ást hefir nú skeint hug hans ok hjarta í úró, því at sú hin fríða frú hefir lostit hann hugkvæmiligri ást. Ok kennir hann nú þat er hann kenndi aldri fyrr. Öllu hefir hann nú gleymt: fóstrlandi sínu, feðr ok frændum, ok fóstrbrœðrum, ok kennir hann alls engan verk sársins. Andvarpar hann af öllu hjarta með kynligu angri ok undarligri úró. Ok bað þá frúin þjónustumey sína at hon skyldi gefa riddaranum svefnhvíld ok ró, ok gekk hon þegar í frá henni er hon gaf henni leyfi. En frú hennar var þá ornað³⁹ ok tendrað þeim úróareldi er herra Guiamar kenndi sik skeindan af óhófsamligum hætti ok hug ok öllu hjarta.

12. Nú dvelsk þar riddarinn einn saman, fullr angrs ok ástarúróar, en þó veit hann eigi enn at sonnu með hverjum hætti úró hans stendr. En þó finnr hann at fullu at ef ei vill sú hin fríða frú hugga harm hans, þá veit hann at vísu búinn bana sinn. Vakti hann alla þá nótt með angri ok úró ok oftsamligum andvörpum. Ok gengu aldregi ór hug hans ræður hennar ok fegrð hennar augna ok andlits ok allr fríðleikr vaxtar hennar, ok mælti hann oftliga innan tanna sér: „Miskunna mér, frú mín.“ Ok at komit at hann myndi kalla hana unnustu sína. En ef hann hafði at sonnu vitat at hon kenndi þess hins sama sárs, þá myndi harmr hans nokkut huggast ok lass hans léttask. En nú gerir hann bleikan ok blóðlausan.

13. Mjök árla sem tók at daga, þá stóð upp sú hin fagra frú ok klæddisk, ok kærði hon at hon hafði lítt sofit um nóttina. Ok völdi því úró ástar hennar er fóstum þöndum hafði bundit hana. En mærin er þjónaði henni fann þegar hvat þeim var: ok at ást völdi hvárutveggja honum ok henni, ok at frúin var fastrí ást tekin þess riddara er þar dvaldisk at grœða sár sitt ok þar hvíldisk í loftinu. En þó vissi hon eigi til sanns nema af grunsemð hvárt riddarinn unni nokkut frú hennar eða ekki. Sem frú hennar var í gengin kapelluna, þá gekk mærin í loftit til riddarans ok settisk fyrir hvílu hans ok mælti til hans: „Herra,“ sagði hon, „hvert er frú mín gengin? Hví er frú mín svá árla upp staðin?“ En hann þagnaði ok andvarpaði. Ok mælti hon öðru sinni til

³⁹ *ms orvað*



hans: „Herra,“ sagði hon, „þú annt at vísu. Sé við at þú leynisk eigi of lengi. Þú mátt unna með þeim hætti ok þeirri er vel fellr ást þinni. Sá er unna vill frú minni honum samir mart at íhuga. Ok væri ykkur ást vel samfallin ef þit værið bæði staðföst, því at þú ert hinn fríðasti maðr, hon er hin frægjasta frú.“ En þá svaraði hann meynni: „Ek em,“ kvað hann, „þeirri ást tekinn at skjótt mun mér snúask til harms meira nema ek sé⁴⁰ skjóta huggan. Hin söeta jungfrú mín, viðrhjálp mér þat sem þú mátt.“ En hon þegar huggaði hann ok hét honum staðfastliga þat sem hann bað hana. Síðan gekk hon til frú hennar ok sagði henni hvílíkan harm riddarinn hafði af ást hennar.

14. Nú sem frú hennar hafði heyrt þat sem hon mælti, þá gleymdi hon eigi ok gekk þegar aftr til hans ok vildi vita hversu hann mátti, því at hon kenndi sik mjök ást kenna af honum. Ok heilsaði hann henni ok hon honum, ok hafa þau nú í miklum ok kynligum harmsböndum netjast. En hon vildi eigi segja honum né sýna vilja sinn, því at hann var henni úkunnigr ok ór þöðru landi. Hon óttaðisk ef hon birtir nokkut fyrir honum þat sem hon hafði hugfast at hann myndi hata hana ok hafna henni. En hann þegar hinn djarfasti sýndi henni vilja sinn. „Frú mín,“ sagði hann, „ek dey fyrir þínar sakir. Þinn hugr ok minn, ok hjarta er harms- ok angrsfullt. Ok bið ek ástarþokka þíns ok hœversku, at þú hafnir mér eigi.“ Sem hon hafði skilt þat sem hann bað ok beiddisk, þá svaraði hon kurteisliga ok læjandi mælti til hans: „Unnasti,“ sagði hon, „þat væri of bráðskeytiligt at veita þér svá skjótt þess böen. Eigi ek em léttlætiskona né vön slíku misverki.“ „Frú mín,“ sagði hann, „fyrirkunn ei orðum mínum. Sú kona er skartsöm er samir at láta biðjast lengi ok metast ok miklast at maðr hyggi hana þeim mun vildri sem hon synjast lengr. En þú, hin fríða frú mín, svá sem ek bið ver unnasta, en ek unnasti.“ Ok fann hon þá at hann sagði satt um kvenna lunderni ok játti honum þegar þat sem hann beiddist. Ok var þá herra Guíamar í félagskap⁴¹ hennar full þrjú missari. En þat misféll þeim at þá kom upp samvist þeirra.

⁴⁰ This is the first person present subjunctive of *sjá* and is not to be mistaken as a subjunctive form of *vera*.

⁴¹ Equally frequent is a spelling with geminate *s* i.e. *félagsskap*, but given the clarity in meaning with a single *s*, I have maintained the *ms* spelling.



15. Qndverðu sumri mjök árla dags sem þau lágu bæði í faðmi, svá sem báðum þeim líkaði, þá mælti sú hin fríða til Guiamars: „Hinn sœti minn unnasti,“ sagði hon, „mér segir svá hugr at ek mun brátt missa þín ok mun nú samvist okkur upp koma. Ok ef þú verðr hér drepinn, þá skal ek hér deyja með þér, en ef þú brott kemsk, þá muntu fá þér aðra unnustu, en ek mun ástar sakir þinnar jamnan vera harmsfull ok hugsóttar.“⁴² „Frú,“ sagði hann, „mæl eigi slíkt. Aldri sé mér friðr né fagnaðr ef ek sný hug minn til annarrar. Óttast aldri þat.“ „Unnasti,“ sagði hon, „handsala mér þat ok fá mér skyrtu þína, en ek skal falda hana svá saman ef þú finnr nokkura þá, hvar sem þat er, er eftir faldi þeima⁴³ faldi,⁴⁴ þá gef ek þér leyfi at unna þeirri.“ Ok tók hon þá skyrtuna ok faldaði saman, ok handsalaði hann þá henni þat sem hon beiddist ok mælti þá at engi myndi þann fald aftr falda nema með knífi skæri eða með sœxum klippi. Sem hon hafði saman faldat, þá fekk hon honum skyrtuna með þeima formála sem hon hafði sagt at hon skyldi ei efask né óttask at hann myndi halda henni handsöl sín. Svá ok tók hann því næst belti eitt ok batt um beran líkam hennar heldr í fastara lagi, svá sem innyfli hennar gátu borit, ok mælti: „Ek lofa þér at unna þeim er þetta belti leysir af þér.“ Því næst kystust þau, ok stóð þá svá búin viðrœða, ástsemð, ok skemtan þeirra.

16. Þann hinn sama dag kom upp viðrskifti, ok funnu menn þau bæði saman. Ok fannsk þat ǫllum sem títt var hjúskaps með þeim, því at einn vándr riddari hafði allt þegar uppi er herra hennar hafði þangat sent at rœða við hana. Ok er hann kom at loftinu, þá komsk hann eigi inn, ok sá hann í gegnum glugg einn þat sem þar var títt. Ok gekk hann þegar til herra síns ok sagði honum þat sem þar hafði hann sét. Sem herra hennar hafði heyrt frásögu hans, þá fekk hann hinn mesta harm ok angr. Ok kallaði hann þá til sín þrjá hina vildustu vini sína, ok gengu þegar til svefnlofts hennar. Ok lét hann þá brjóta upp hurðina, ok fann hann þar riddarann með henni. Ok af þeirri hinni miklu reiði er á honum lá, þá bauð hann þeim þegar

⁴² The element *hugsóttar-* is the first element of the adjectival compound *hugsóttarfullr*. The second element appears in the preceding adjectival compound form *harmsfull*.

⁴³ This is an older form of the masculine singular dative demonstrative pronoun *þessum*. Interestingly, under the entry for *sjá* as a demonstrative pronoun, *þeima* exhibits around five times more tokens in the *Dictionary for Old Norse Prose* than *þessum*. See s.v. “*sjá*.”

⁴⁴ *ms* falld; this noun, due to its being a strong masculine dative singular noun, ought to have the regular ending *-i*. Indeed, in ch. 20, this noun does have the anticipated dative ending for nouns of this type: *þessum faldi*. As such, I have emended this for clarity, as otherwise it would suggest the noun were in the accusative case with a dative demonstrative pronoun preceding, something which makes little grammatical sense.



at drepa riddarann. En Guiamar hinn vaskasti maðr ok hinn vápnðjarfasti ljóp þá upp ok óttaðisk þá alls ekki ok greip eina digra furustong er klæði á hengu. Ok mun hann nú gera einum hverjum þeirra ærinn angr ef þeir leita til hans. Ok áðr en þeir skilisk, þá mun *hann* svá leika þá ok lemja at þeim væri hægra heima. En herra þeirra leit þá lengi á hann ok spurði hvat manna hann væri ok hvar hann var barnfœddr. Ok taldi hann honum allt: hversu hann kom þangat, ok hversu frú hans tók vel við honum, ok frá kollunni er sagði honum orlog hans þá er hann hafði sært hana, ok hversu hann fekk sár af henni, ok frá skipi því er hann á steig, ok hversu skipit flutti hann þannug, „ok með þessum hætti kom ek í þitt vald.“ Þá svaraði sá herra honum at hann trúði eigi því er hann hafði sagt honum, „en ef svá er sem þú hefir sagt ok verðr skipit fundit,“ þá skal þegar reka hann í haf. Ef hann týnist, þá er honum fagnaðr, en ef hann kemr kvikr ok heill af skipinu, þá líkar honum illa. Því næst sem hann hafði heitit honum oruggan frið, þá gengu þeir ofan til strandar. Ok fundu þeir skip í höfninni, ok gekk hann þegar á skipit. Ok tók þá skipit mikinn skrið ok stefndi í haf. En riddarinn andvarpaði, grét, ok harmaði unnustu sína. Ok bað hann þá guð at hann skyldi skjótt brott takast ok koma aldri til hafnar nema hann fái unnustu sína er hann ann enn sem⁴⁵ lífi sínu. Svá sem honum hélt þessi harmr, þá kom hann því næst til hafnar þar sem hann fyrst skipit sá hjá fylki sínu. Ok gekk hann þegar af sem hann var at landi kominn, þá sá hann einn af sínum sveinum fylgjanda riddara einum ok leiddi vápnhest í togi. Ok kenndi hann þegar sveininn ok kallaði á hann. Ok er sveinninn leit á bak sér, þá kenndi hann herra sinn ok steig þá af hesti sínum ok fekk herra sínum ok fylgði honum með miklum fagnaði. Ok allir vinir hans fognuðu kvámu hans, því at hann var hinn vinsælasti ok hinn frægasti í fóstrlandi sínu. En síðan er hann heim kom, þá var hann jafnan hugsjúkr ok áhyggjufullr. Ok vildu þá vinir hans ok frændr at hann kvángaðisk, en hann vildi þat engum kosti, ok mælti hann at hann skyldi engarrar⁴⁶ konu fá nema þeirrar er eftir kunni falda skyrtu hans hvárki sakar ríkis, né fjár, né fegrðar, né ástsemðar. Ok fóru þessi tíðendi um allt Bretland, ok kvámu þá til herra Guiamars allar þær ekkjur ok meyjar er friðastar ok ríkastar váru ok kynbazar í öllu Bretlandi. Ok freista ef eftir gæti faldat skyrtu hans, ok fannsk alls engi í öllum þeim er þat kunni at gera.

⁴⁵ This ought to be read as *meir en* per fol. 296v of Lbs. 840 4° and the Anglo-Norman original *plus que*.

⁴⁶ This ought to be read as *engrar*.



17. Nú þessu næst samir at sýna yðr ok segja frá þeirri hinni fríðu frú er herra Guiamar vildi svá mjök unna. Sá hinn ríki gamli maðr er fekk hennar, eftir því sem einn af lendum mǫnnum hans réð honum, setti hana í einn hávan turn. Þar hafði hon illt um daga, en verra um nætr. Þar þoldi hon svá margfaldligan harm ok hugsótt, ok þíningar, ok vesaldir, ok meinlæti, angr ok úró, sorg ok svefnleysi, ok alls konar mein ok meinlæti at engi getr ritat né rannsakat. Svá nætr sem daga var líkamr hennar ok líf í harm ok hugsótt. Ok var hon í turninum betr en tvá vetr með slíkum válkum ok vesöldum ok fekk þar alls enga huggan né hjálp sinna harma, oft kærandi ok mælti hon: „Herra minn Guiamar sorg er mér at ek sá þik. Miklu kýs ek heldr skjótan dauða en svá leiðar ok langar vesaldir. Ef ek má heðan brott komask, þá skal ek þar á sjóinn laupa sem ek sá þik síðarst á skip ganga.“ Sem hon mælti þetta, þá stóð hon upp ok gekk at durunum ok fann *eigi* loku fyrir hurðinni. Ok af þessum atburð gekk hon brott ok fann alls ekki þat er henni var til meina. Ok er hon kom í höfnina, sá hon skipit þar sem hon vildi ganga á kaf ok drepa sik sjálfa. Ok gekk hon á skipit ok íhugaði at þar væri unnasti hennar druknaðr. Ok er hon gat eigi á fótum staðit, þá lét hon fallask á skipit ok þoldi þar válk ok þíning.

18. Skipit tók þegar er hon var á komin hinn mesta skrið ok lendi síðan á Bretlandi undir kastala einum miklum ok ósækiligum. En herra sá er þann kastala átti var kallaðr at nafni Meriadus. Ok fyrir því at hann átti nokkut at sýsla til eins greifa síns, þá var hann árla upp staðinn ok vildi brott senda hirðlið sitt at gera skaða úvinum sínum. Sem hann sat hjá einum glugg í kastalanum, þá leit hann skipit er þar lendi, ok gekk hann þegar ofan um gráðurnar ok kallaði til sín einn rekkjusvein sinn. Ok gengu þeir þá báðir skyndiliga ofan til skipsins, ok fundu þeir þar eina fríða frú sem álfkona væri. Ok tók hann þá í skikkjuskaut hennar ok leiddi hana með sér í kastalans. Ok var hann mjök feginn af þeim hinum fagra fund, því at hon var hin fríðasta allra þeirra er hann hafði fyrr sét, ok vissi hann at sonnu at hon var ríkrar ættar. Ok sneri hann svá mikilli ást til hennar at aldregi fyrr unni hann konu svá mikit. Þessi herra átti eina systur, hina fríðustu mey, ok leiddi hann hana þangat í þat hit fagra loft systur sinnar. Ok fekk þá hina fríðu frú í gæzlu ok félagskap hennar, ok var hon þar í miklu yfirlæti ok ríkuliga henni þjónat. Hann klæddi hana ríkuliga með hinum vildustum klæðum er í því landi fundusk. Hann gekk oftsamliga til hennar, því at hann unni henni af öllu hjarta. Ok bað hann hennar þá mjök, en hon lézk eigi vita þat sem hann mælti. Ok sýndi hon honum þá beltit er



læst var um hana ok mælti: „Aldri skal ek unna manni,“ sagði hon, „nema þeim er svá leysi þetta belt af mér at hann slíti þat eigi í sundr.“ Sem hann hafði heyrt svör, þá reiddisk hann ok mælti til hennar í angri ok reiði sinni: „Svá er þér sem riddara einum er hér í landinu. Hann versk fyrir kvánfangi ok kvezk engarrar⁴⁷ konu vilja fá, né engri unna fyrir sakir ríkis né fjár nema þeirrar einnar er eftir faldi skyrtu hans svá hvárki viðr komi knífr né sǫx. Ok hygg ek,“ sagði hann, „at þú munt þann fald hafa gǫrt.“ Sem hon heyrði, þá andvarpaði hon ok myndi næsta í úvit falla, en hann tók hana í faðm sér, ok sundrskarr blíatbǫndin, ok tók hendi sinni á beltinu, ok viðrleitaði at leysa, ok gat alls ekki at gǫrt. Ok því næst var engi sá riddari í Bretlandi at eigi fór þangat at freista ef beltit gæti leyst, ok gátu alls engi at sýst. Ok stóð þá svá búit lengi.

19. Því næst bar svá at at Meriadus lagði atreið við riddara þann er úfriði upphélt í móti honum, ok stefndi hann til sín miklum fjǫlda riddara. Ok kom þar fyrstr allra herra Guiamar ríkuliga herbúinn ok í fylgð hans hundrað riddara vel klæddir á góðum vápnhestum, því at Meriadus hafði honum orðsending, gǫrva upp á mikla ǫmbun, sem hinum vildasta vin sínum ok félagá, at hann skyldi eigi bila honum í slíkri nauðsyn. Nú sem Guiamar var þar kominn, þá fagnaði honum Meriadus ok herbyrgði hann ok herlið hans í turn kastala síns, scemiliga með gnógum fǫngum. Ok sendi hann þá eftir systur sinni tvá riddara ok bauð henni í ástsemð sína at hon komi at fagna gestum hans ok sú hin fríða frú með henni er honum var svá einkanliga ást á. Þær váru ríkuliga klæddar, ok héldusk þær í hendr ok gengu svá í hǫllina. Sem frúin heyrði nafn Guiamars, þá myndi hon í úvit falla ef eigi héldi mæran á henni, því at hon var litlaus ok hugsjúk. En Guiamar ljóp upp þegar sem hann sá þær inngangandi. Sem hann leit frúna, þá sá hann mjök á hana at vera víss af athœfi hennar ef hann hefði rétt kennt hana. Ok nokkuru síðarr mælti hann: „Er eigi þessi unnasta mín, ván mín, líf mitt, hjarta mitt, mín sceta frú er svá mjök unni mér? Hvaðan er hon komin eða hvern hefir hana hingat flutt? Nú hefi ek íhugát mikla heimsku, því at margar eru líkar konur, en með því at hon er svá lík þeirri er ek ann svá mjök, ok allr skelfr hugr minn ok hjarta. Þá vil ek gjarna rœða við hana.“ Ok gekk þá riddarinn fram ok kyssti hana ok setti hana í hjá sér, ok mælti hann ekki fleira til hennar nema þat at hon skyldi sitja í hjá honum.

⁴⁷ This ought to be read as *engrar*.



20. Meriadus hugði at þeim, ok fyrir kunnni hann mjök at þau létu svá blíðliga, ok mælti hann þá til Guiamars læjandi: „Herra,“ sagði hann, „ef þér líkaði, þá vilda ek at mæri þessi freisti ef hon gæti aftr faldat skyrta þína. Mikill fagnaðr væri mér ef hon gæti nǫkkut at sýst aftr at falda faldinn.“ Ok svaraði þá Guiamar: „Því játta ek yðr,“ sagði hann, „gjarnsamliga.“ Ok mælti hann þá til féhirðis síns at fœra sér skyrta, ok fekk hann hana meynni. Ok tók hon viðr ok viðleitaði allt þat er hon kunnni ok mátti, ok gat eigi leyst. Sem frúin leit skyrta, þá kenndi hon faldinn þegar, ok var þá hugr hennar í miklu angri at hon þorði eigi þat sem hon vildi: til at taka skyrta ok leysa faldinn. Ok fann þegar Meriadus at frúin vildi viðleita at leysa faldinn, ok var honum mikill harmr at því ok gat þó ekki at gǫrt. Ok mælti hann þá: „Frú,“ sagði hann, „freista þú nú hvat þú kannt at gera at þessum faldi er svá margar hafa viðleitat ok ekki at sýst.“ Þegar sem hon skildi þat sem hann bauð henni, þá tók hon skyrta ok hafði skjótt leyst. Herra Guiamar undraði ok kynligt þótti. Hann kenndi, ok þó ifaðisk hann í ok mælti þá: „Þú hin fríða skepna, ertu þessi unnasta mín? Seg mér satt ok lát mik sjá líkam þinn ef þú hefir belti þat er ek læsta um þik.“ Ok lagði hann þá hendr sínar á síðu hennar ok kenndi þegar beltit ok mælti: „Mín hin fríða,“ sagði hann, „með hverjum hætti komt þú hingat eða hverjum atburð hefi ek þik hér fundit?“ Ok taldi hon honum þá þínslir, ok meinlæti, ok vesaldir er hon hafði í turninum haft fyrir sakir hans meðan hon var þar illa haldin, ok þá atburði er síðan viðrkvámu, hversu hon kom ór turninum, ok fann skipit, ok á gekk, ok lendi þar, ok hversu riddarinn fann hana, ok síðan soemiliga haldit hana með ríku yfirlæti, jafnan með vild ok vináttu, ok oftsamliga beizt ástar hennar. „En nú er,“ kvað hon, „fagnaðr minn fundinn. Unnasti,“ sagði hon, „kom mér heðan í brott at vit megim í frelsi ok í friði saman búa ok með fagnaði framleiðis lifa.“

21. Guiamar stóð þá upp ok mælti: „Herra,“ sagði hann, „lýðið rœðu minni. Ek hefi hér í dag fundit unnustu mína er ek hugðumk hafa tapat. Nú bið ek Meriadum með vináttu ok félagskap at hann uppgefi mér unnustu mína, en ek skal þjóna honum sem eiginn hans riddari með hundrað riddurum eða fleiri ef hann vill.“ Þá svaraði Meriadus: „Herra Guiamar,“ sagði hann, „góði vinr, ek em eigi svá ǫngðr með úfriði né úvinum at ek vilja⁴⁸ þessa þœn jata þér. Ek fann þessa frú, ok ek skal verja hana í móti þér.“ Sem Guiamar heyrði svǫr hans, þá bauð hann hirðliði skyndiliga at herklæðast ok stíga á hesta sína, ok fór þá þaðan ok sagði Meriadum

⁴⁸ *ms* vili; emended to match past subjunctive ending for first person singular.



ór vináttu sinni ok í fullan fjándskap, ok fór þá við svá búit í brott, harmsfullr ok hugsjúkr, ok unnasta hans eftir sat. En allir þeir riddarar er til banlagaráðs váru komnir ok atreiðar staðfestu honum trú sína at þeir skulu allir fylgja honum hvert sem hann vill stefna, ok sá skjótt dauðr ef nokkut bilar honum. Ok komu þeir þat sama kveld til kastala þess riddara er úfriðinum hélt upp í móti honum Meriadus. En *var* hann þegar feginn ok glaðr við kvámu þeirra, herbyrgði þá ríkuliga með dýrligum fagnaði, huggaðr mjök at herra Guiamar var kominn til hans með svá miklum riddarastyrk at viðrhjálp honum, því at nú veit hann at hann mun sigrast ok úfriðrinn friðast. Um morguninn árla þá herklæddist allt liðit um allan bæinn þar sem þeir váru í herbergjum ok ríðu því næst ór bænum með miklum gný. Herra Guiamar var leiðtogi ok merkismaðr, ok er þeir komu til kastalans, þá réðu þeir vaskliga til at sækja hann, ok gátu eigi sótt. Ok skipaði þá Guiamar liðinu umhverfis borgina ok vill engum kosti brott fyrr en hann hafi sótt. En þá vóx svá mjök lið hans, frændr hans ok félagar, ok tóku þeir visti alla fyrir þeim ok sveltu alla þá er í váru borginni ok kastalanum. Síðan tók Guiamar borgina ok kastalann, ok drap Meriadum er fyrir sat. Ok tók hann svá þaðan unnustu sína með fögurum sigri ok miklum fagnaði ok steig svá yfir alla sína harma. En af þessari sögu er nú hafið þér heyrt þá gerðu Bretar í hǫrpum ok í gígjum, symphonis, ok organis hin fegrstu strengleiks ljóð. Ok heitir þetta Guiamars ljóð með hinum fegrstum nótum er á Bretlandi fundusk. En yðr sé fræði ok friðr ok fagnaðr er heyrt hafið. Amen.

Prologue

1. It pleased us to look into and investigate the affairs of those who lived in days past, for they were accomplished in their crafts, astute in their reason, wise in their advice, audacious with their arms, courteous in their courtly customs, munificent with their gift-giving, and the most renowned for all manner of courage. And because many wondrous things and happenings unprecedented in our time occurred in days past, we thought it fitting to teach those alive now and those arriving in the future these tales, which very learned men composed concerning the affairs of those who lived in days past, and which they had written down in books to serve as an eternal reminder, as entertainment, and as a fount of learning for those to come so that every man could improve and illuminate his own life through the knowledge of



past happenings. And so that in later days that which came to pass in the beginning will not be hidden. And so that every man may ponder with complete knowledge, and endeavour with all his might, and may attain distinction and achieve with every opportunity to prepare and perfect himself for the kingdom of God with appropriate conduct, good deeds, and a pious end to life. For the deeds and daring and all kinds of goodness, which decorated and ornated the lives of those who satisfied God and those who grew in fame and favour through their accomplishments in this world in days past, such things are disappearing altogether more as the days of this world advance. This book, which the magnificent King Hákon had someone translate into Norse from the French tongue, may be called the Book of Lais, for from those tales, upon which this book shines a light, poets in Brittany,⁴⁹ which lies in France, composed lais performed on harps, fiddles, hurdy-gurdies, lyres, dulcimers, psalteries, crowds, and all kinds of other stringed instruments which men create for the entertainment of themselves and others in this life. Here concludes this prologue, and what follows is the beginning of the lais.

To all those whom God has granted wisdom, and intelligence, and eloquence to make famous these tales, it is unseemly for them to hide and secrete within themselves God's benefaction. Rather, it befalls them to show others with compassion that which pleased God to give them. Then, akin to the most magnificent tree, they shall bear the foliage and flowers, and as their benevolence grows famous by way of the improvement of others, so shall their fruit fully mature and nourish others. It was the tradition of prudent and polite men in days past to pronounce their learning, as it were, with obscure words and profound meanings for the benefit of those yet to come, that these pronouncements should illuminate in plain discourse that which the ancestors had uttered and investigate with their own knowledge that which concerned the explanation and correct understanding of those teachings which the philosophers, the wise men of yesteryear, had made. Afterwards, as time and the life of men marched on, the craft, and attentiveness, and assiduity of mankind grew in many sorts of ways such that in every land the most knowledgeable men became speakers of their own land's vernacular. It is befitting that those who desire to maintain their life free of blemish will ever muse over and moil for something that will make them known and may educate others from their own understanding. That is the reason why I pondered composing some fine tale and

⁴⁹ Lit. "southern Britain". The in-text translation applies to any other case where this collocation appears.

rendering it from French into Latin so that most people might be reassured by what most people can understand. The *lais* which I have heard, however, which were composed in Brittany concerning those peculiar events which occurred in that land, I desired to render and recount to others, for I have heard a great many things which I naturally want to set forth and not to omit anything from what I can call to mind about a certain well-mannered king whom God bestowed upon us, imbued with acumen and authority, good fortune and a great deal of manifold, most renowned goodness. I often consider therefore assembling all the *lais* into a single book to give to you, my lord and most courteous king. If they please you, I shall be delighted that my labour contents and satisfies such a sage sovereign and his court's courteous clerks and cordial courtiers.

Lai of Guiamar

2. Those tales which I know to be true, and from which the Bretons have composed *lais*, I will recount to you as best I can with the fewest words. In the same way as writings have shown me, so will I recount to you the events which occurred in Brittany in days past. In those days, King Odels ruled that kingdom, at times in peace, but often in strife and struggle. A certain mighty baron, who alone had dominion over all of Leunborg, served this king favourably and with goodwill; and his name was Dridias. This man was an especial friend and the dearest lord to his king. He was the bravest knight-at-arms and had two children by his wife: a son and a daughter. His daughter was called Ungen, and his son Guiamar. In all the kingdom there was no man as striking as he. His mother adored him above all living things, and he truly pleased his father in all regards. When he was able to leave home, his father sent him away from home to the king's court in order to serve the king. The boy was insightful and intrepid, and he was liked and respected by all the king's troops. After insight and intrepidity had grown within him, the king armed him splendidly with all the knightly armour, just as elaborately as he would have desired for himself.

3. Guiamar, upon becoming a knight, remained there for a very long time. He parted ways thereafter with the king and all his troops in fame and friendship, and he went thence to Flanders in order to show his mettle and gallantry, for there was ever war and conflict there in those days. Nowhere in Lorraine, nor in Burgundy, nor in Anjou, nor in Gascony was found



anyone equally as brave in the clashing of weapons as he. That which was most extraordinary concerning his nature, however, was that he entirely forsook loving women, for there was no lady so comely or magnificent and no maiden so delightful to whom he desired to direct his affection. None would have denied him if he had wished to propose. Many women openly showed him their desire, but he feigned ignorance about what they wanted, for his mind⁵⁰ was so wholly turned away from them that not one of them was able to perceive whether he wished to have a woman.

4. When he was in the flower of, and at the very height of, his youth, he went home to see his lord father, mother, and sister, who had all long yearned for his homecoming and a reunion. And he stayed at home with them for an entire month. He then wished to go deer hunting, and so, in the evening, he summoned his knights and hunters to him. In the morning, he ventured into the forest, for this kind of pastime so greatly pleased him. They immediately came across a large hart, and the dogs were then released, and the hunters hunted the hart. The young man rode leisurely behind a squire of his, who had brought with him Guiamar's bow and slot hounds in order to track down deer and wild boars. He would eagerly shoot if any deer were to come within range before he departed thence. Then he saw, not far from himself in some dense shrub, a hind and her calf therebeside. She was entirely snow-white and had a single branch of deer antler in the centre of her forehead. She immediately leapt out of the shrub upon hearing the slot hounds' barking, but he drew his bow and shot at her, striking her in the front of the chest. She immediately collapsed to the ground. The arrowhead then turned back on itself and struck Guiamar through the thigh and lodged itself fast into his horse. He then dismounted the horse and collapsed there in the grassy field by the hind's side. The hind, who lay there injured, was suffering due to her wound and bemoaned her grief. She uttered thereafter the following: "Woe is unto me, for now I am slaughtered; but you, lout, who injured me, so shall this be your lot: you shall never obtain a remedy, from neither herbs nor a herb's roots. Neither shall physicians nor curative draughts assist in restoring you to health. You shall never recover from this wound which you now have in your thigh until she heals you, she who, on account of love for you, shall carry and suffer such great torments,

⁵⁰ The Old Norse term *hugr* is exceedingly difficult to translate given its numerous possible definitions. As such, the translation could very well also be "heart" or "head" in a figurative sense, for example.

agony and anguish, the likes of which no woman has ever before borne. And you the same for her so that all those who have adored women and shall love them hereafter will marvel and consider it extraordinary in all regards that you both were able to endure such love-induced grief. Slink away forthwith, and let me have peace from you. This lot shall hold true for you.”

5. Guiamar was injured, and he thought it strange that which the deer had said to him. He considered to which land he should fare for a cure in order to have his wound healed, for he did not like the thought of dying in this way. In truth, he knew, and his mind told him, that women’s love never satisfied him, and he never saw the woman whom he desired nor the woman whom he knew would know how to heal wounds. He then summoned his squire and said: “Friend,” he said, “mount your horse as quickly as possible and call my comrades hither, for I wish to speak with them.” The squire then departed from him, but Guiamar remained behind, and the wound grieved him so. He then cut his shirt and bandaged the wound as best he could. He mounted his horse thereafter and rode away from there, hastening to distance himself from his comrades, for he wanted none of them to know whither he was going. He deviated from the road, traversing through the forest, and he came upon a grassy path. The forest grew less dense, and he arrived thereafter at a level plain and then came to a large mountain. At the foot of the mountain there ran a river, and he followed the river until he reached the sea. There was a haven formed by a bay, and within the haven he spotted a single ship. He boarded the ship and stepped the mast. That ship was wrought with extraordinary skill, for none could see the joining of planks nor the nailing of nails without or within, as if, when looking upon it, the ship were all one continuous piece of wood. He boarded the ship with great agony provoked by his wound and thought that men would be onboard guarding the ship, but he saw no man thereupon. He saw in the centre of the ship a bed fashioned with great craft: the sideboards were wrought with Solomon’s skill, made of gold and with the most beautiful carvings made of cypress and ivory, and a silken cloth intertwined with gold was laid over the bed as if it were a quilt. I know not how to value those other bedclothes, save that I may tell you about the pillow: he who lays his head thereupon shall never grow old. The outer cover was made of purple fabric from Alexandria and lined with sable fur thereunder. On the prow stood two candlesticks made of the purest gold, the lesser of which was worth a great deal of money, and upon them were two lit candles; and of all that which he saw, he



thought this the most extraordinary. He lay in bed thereafter in order to rest, for the wound was greatly affecting him. After a while had passed, he stood up and wanted to go forth, but he was unable to return, for the ship was far out at sea on the greatest course and with the best and fairest wind. He realised then that it was of no use to him to seek to turn back. He grew very despondent and knew not what he ought to do. And this was not peculiar, for there was great pain in his wound. He had to suffer everything, for he could not do anything about this strange event. He then prayed earnestly for God to show him mercy, to care for him, to defend him from death, and to bring him to port. He lay in bed thereafter and fell asleep. Now that which was the hardest for him had passed, for the ship would soon make land at the place where he would receive healing.

6. At the base of a certain ancient city, which was the capital city of the entire kingdom, the ship made land. The lord and leader who governed and presided over that city was advanced in years and married to a young woman. That woman descended from the best stock, pleasant and courteous, prudent and polite, and the most outstanding in all the womanly virtues of courteous ladies, the most splendid and most striking. Her husband and lord, however, was unreasonably envious, for his disposition demanded it, for elderly men, who possess little desire for women and who covet that which they cannot have, and which nature itself denies them, ever begrudge and detest men who are young: such is the nature of elderly men. This wealthy man had organised the issue in the following manner: he had had a wall the breadth of an ell⁵¹ erected at the foot of the town's tower, a high wall of green marble so great that none might pass thereover. There was a single small entrance leading to the castle, which was guarded night and day by trustworthy guards. On the other side ran the sea, and it was not possible to approach from that route if one had business within the castle unless one came by boat. The lord of the castle had thus such a high and thick wall erected so that he could keep his wife therewithin with surety and in security. He had there constructed for her the most striking and most splendid chamber and a chapel therebeside. And there was a certain elderly priest there for the purpose of divine service, who was bleak and bloodless,

⁵¹ If the translation were based upon the reading of *aldinviðargarði* in Lbs. 840 4°, rather than DG 4-7's *alnarviðangarð*, the sentence would read along the lines of: "in an orchard at the foot of the town's tower he had had erected a high wall of green marble ...". This would place the translation much closer to the Anglo-Norman original, which I think is more likely to be the case.



cold and cool, and absent of all carnal desires; he was forever singing mass and filling cups at the table. That beautiful chamber was painted within with the most excellent forms of impressive men and fair women and their darlings and devotions, and the way in which it was appropriate to love and to faithfully take care of love, just as Ovid teaches in the poem *Remedia amoris*.⁵² Therein the courteous lady was placed, and the lord gave her a fair maiden to attend her. This was her sister's daughter, and she and her lady were most dear to one another. This maiden accompanied the lady from the moment the lord left the house until he returned. In the meantime, no man or woman ever came thereto. She was thus enclosed within this high stone wall and never fared beyond the garden.

7. On that very same day, when three o'clock in the afternoon had passed, that fair lady, who had slept after eating, went into the garden accompanied by her maidservant in order to console and entertain themselves. Upon gazing down at the sea, they spotted a ship sailing into the haven on the incoming tide, but there was nobody onboard, and it made land at the foot of the stone wall. Upon having seen this, the lady grew afraid and wanted to flee. And it was no wonder that she thought it odd, for she blushed all over. Her confidante, however, was courteous and intelligent. She comforted her lady and made her feel safe and secure. The maidservant cast off her cloak, walked down to the strand, and saw a ship so splendid and striking, and so magnificently adorned such that she had never seen another ship akin thereto. She encountered thereupon no living being save a slumbering knight, and because she saw him bleak and bloodless she thought that he was dead. She hastened back and called her lady thither and recounted to her that which she had seen, and she was very worried and concerned that the knight might be dead.

8. Her lady responded to her: "Let us make haste now," she said, "to the ship. If he has breathed his last, we two shall bury him. Our priest will aid us. If, however, we two should find him alive, then he will speak with us." They both hurried thereafter, the lady in front and the maiden trailing her. Upon having come aboard the ship, she stopped before the bed and studied the knight intently. She bemoaned and sorrowed much over his youth and suffering

⁵² I have chosen to supply the Latin name of Ovid's poem rather than providing an English translation of *ástarvélar*. A possible translation, however, could be "artifices of love". Another of Ovid's works — *Ars amatorial* — could likewise be the text in question, but it is not wholly clear which of the two it is.

and pitied his sickness. She then placed her hand upon his breast and felt that he was warm and that his heart was beating under his ribs.⁵³ The knight, who had previously been sleeping, awoke as soon as she touched him, and, upon seeing her, he rejoiced with great delight and immediately greeted her with the most agreeable words. He now knew for certain that he had reached the shore. Full of worry, she wept for him at once, responding to his greeting with fine and kind-hearted words and asked him thereafter from which land he had arrived or from which battle he had fled.

9. "Lady," he said, "that is not how it unfolded, but if it pleases you for me to make you aware of that event which betided me, then I shall not conceal it from you. I have come from Brittany.⁵⁴ Today, I went hunting and struck a certain white hind with my arrow in the hunting forest. Upon having struck her, the arrow flew back at me and hit me in the thigh, wounding me so greatly that I fear that I will not be healed. And when I had struck the hind, she bemoaned greatly that I had killed her, and she spoke then, cursing me and swearing a great vow that I should never be hale nor receive healing unless a woman were to heal me, but I know not where I shall discover her. Upon having heard this fate, I hastened out of the forest and saw then a ship in a certain haven. Such folly befell me that made me bold enough to go aboard, for as soon as I had come aboard, the ship set sail. Now, I know not where I have come ashore nor what this city is called, so I implore you, my fair lady, for the sake of God and the sake of your courtesy, to show me mercy through your helpful counsel, for I know not whither I shall fare hence, and I am unable to steer this ship."

10. The fair lady then replied to him: "Good lord," she said, "and the most beloved, I will eagerly offer you helpful counsel. My lord owns this city and all the land therearound. He is a wealthy man, strong and of good stock. Yet, he is much advanced in years, sorrowing and suspicious. It is for this reason that he has enclosed me herewithin and trapped me within this stone wall, through which there is but one gateway. A certain aged priest is likewise placed

⁵³ I have translated *síðunni* as "ribs" rather than "side", as the Anglo-Norman original uses the plural noun *costez* which means "sides" or "ribs" according to the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*. The choice of "ribs", however, makes greater anatomical sense given that the lady has her hand upon Guiamar's chest, so directly above the ribs, rather than her initially placing her hand on his side; there is no mention that she moves her hand from Guiamar's breast to his side.

⁵⁴ The literal translation would be "Lesser Brittany".



there to act as a watchman. May bale and brand burn him! I am thus trapped here night and day, but I am not so daring to have the courage to go out unless my lord should call upon me. I have here a chamber and chapel and this maiden to accompany me. Now, if it pleases you to stay here until you are rested and recuperated, then we shall eagerly attend you with goodwill."

11. Now, upon having heard her speech, he thanked her with sweet and suitable words and said himself that he would eagerly stay with her. He then got up out of bed, and both the women held him up, leading him to her chamber and there set him down on a soft bed. They then cleaned his thigh and wound, and when they had fully washed away the blood, they bound the wound at once. Upon having sated their hunger in the evening, the lady left. Now, he is well taken care of with an abundance of food and adequate drink, but love has now pierced his head and troubled his heart, for that fair lady has struck him with wondrous affection. He feels then that which he has never before felt. He has now forgotten everything: his fatherland, father and family, and foster-brothers, and he suffers no pain at all from his wound. He heaves a sigh with all his heart, with peculiar distress and astonishing disturbance. The lady then asked her maidservant to give the knight rest and tranquility in order to sleep, and she immediately departed from the lady when the lady had given her permission. Her lady, however, was inflamed and kindled by that restless flame which Sir Guiamar felt, he himself injured in an unreasonable way in both head and all his heart.

12. Now, the knight dwells there altogether alone, full of anguish and of affection's unrest, although he knows not yet for certain in what manner his trouble comes about. He still feels completely, however, that if the fair lady wishes not to soothe his sorrow, then he knows without doubt that his death awaits. The entire night he lay awake with distress and disturbance and persistent deep breathing. The lady's words never departed from his mind, nor the appeal of her eyes and expression, nor all the allure of her body, and he frequently uttered to himself: "Have mercy on me, my lady." He was at the point of calling her his beloved. If he had known without doubt, however, that she felt this very same injury, then his sorrow would have to some degree been soothed, and his burden eased. Now, however, it renders him bleak and bloodless.



13. Very early, when it began to grow light, the fair lady got up and got dressed, moaning that she had very little sleep during the night. This was caused by her affection's unrest which had bound her with fast bonds. The maiden who attended her, however, immediately perceived what the problem was between them: love had power over both him and her lady, and that the lady was seized by a powerful love for that knight who was staying there in order to heal his wound and who was resting there in the chamber. She knew not yet for certain, however, save only from suspicion, whether or not the knight felt any love for her lady. When her lady had gone to the chapel, the maiden went to the knight in the chamber and sat before him and spoke to him: "Lord," she said, "whither has my lady gone? Wherefore did my lady get up so early?" He remained silent, however, and sighed. She spoke to him for a second time: "Lord," she said, "you are certainly in love. Be careful that you do not hide it for too long. You can love in that manner and that woman who is well suited to your love. It is appropriate for he who wants to love my lady to contemplate a great many things. And both of your love would be well-matched if you were both resolute, for you are the most beautiful man and she the most renowned woman." He then responded to the maiden: "I am," he said, "seized by that love which will quickly change into greater sorrow for me unless I see quick comfort. My sweet lady, aid me howsoever you can." She immediately consoled him and steadfastly promised that which he had asked her. She went thereafter to her lady and told her of the sort of sorrow which the knight had on account of love for her.

14. Now, when her lady had heard that which she spoke, she did not forget and returned to him at once, wanting to know how he was doing, for she perceived that she felt a great love for him. He welcomed her and she him, and they were now intertwined in great and peculiar chains of grief. She wished not to speak to him of, nor show him, her desire, for he was an outsider to her and from other lands. She feared, if she were to show him any of that which she had set within her mind, that he would abhor and abandon her. He, upon becoming most daring, however, showed her his desire. "My lady," he said, "I am dying for your sake. Your head and heart, and mine too, are brimming with anguish and sorrow. and I beg for your devotion and courtesy so that you do not forsake me." Upon having understood that for which he was begging and beseeching, she politely answered and spoke to him, chuckling: "Darling," she said, "it would be overhasty to bestow this request upon you so quickly. I am not an



indecent woman, nor am I wont to such misconduct." "My lady," he said, "do not reproach my words: a woman who is ostentatious thinks it fitting to be courted for a long time, loved and lauded such that a man thinks of her as more desirable the longer she refuses offers. You, however, my fair lady, be my lover just as I request, and I will be yours." She discerned then that he spoke true regarding the nature of women and consented forthwith to that for which he was asking. Sir Guiamar was then in her company for eighteen months.⁵⁵ It misfell⁵⁶ them, however, that their cohabitation became known.

15. Very early one day at the onset of summer, as they both lay in one another's arms, which they both enjoyed, the fair lady said to Guiamar: "My sweet beloved," she said, "my mind tells me that I will soon lose you, and our cohabitation will become known. If you are slain here, I shall die here alongside you. If you escape, however, then you will find yourself another lover, but I will forever be, for having loved you, full of agony and affliction of the mind." "Lady," he said, "do not speak in such a manner. May I never be calm nor contented if I turn my mind to another. Never fear that." "Sweetheart," she said, "shake my hand on that matter, and give me your shirt. I shall tie it together in such a manner that if you find any woman, wheresoever she is, who is able to untie this knot, then I give you leave to love her." She then took the shirt and tied it, and he shook her hand in agreement to that which she had asked and then said that none would be capable of undoing the knot unless one were to cut it with a knife or clip it with shears. Upon having tied the shirt, she gave it to him with the stipulation which she had stated so that she needed not doubt or dread whether he would uphold his pledge to her. He, too, took a belt thereafter and bound it around her bare body in a rather tight fashion, as tight as her innards could endure, and said: "I give you permission to love that man who slackens this belt from you." They kissed thereafter, and the matter was thus with their conversation, love, and amusement.

⁵⁵ The original Anglo-Norman states that they were together for *an e demi* "a year and a half", hence the translation choice here. That being said, however, *missari*, when in the plural, as in this case, can be taken to mean "a year", so such a translation is possible but unlikely due to the original text.

⁵⁶ Although this word is primarily obsolete nowadays, it best encapsulates the sense of something unfortunate befalling a person, and it nicely corresponds to the Old Norse.

16. That very same day, the illicit affair became known, and people discovered them both together. It appeared to everyone as if it were an ordinary marriage between them after a certain wicked knight, whom the lord had sent thither to the lady in order to speak with her, brought it all to light. Upon coming to the chamber, he did not enter therein, but he saw through a window that which was occurring. He immediately went to his lord and told him that which he had seen. Upon having heard the knight's tale, her lord was seized by the greatest anguish and sorrow. He then summoned to him his three best friends, and they went forthwith to her bedchamber. He had them break down the door, and he found Guiamar there with her. Owing to that great ire which resided within him, he ordered them to immediately slay the knight. Guiamar, the most valiant and valorous at arms, however, sprang to his feet, not fearing them at all, and grabbed a thick fir⁵⁷ staff, upon which clothes hung. And he will now inflict upon each of them sufficient suffering if they assail him. Before they part ways, he will maltreat and maim them to such a degree that they would have been better off having stayed at home. The lord, however, leered at him for a long time and inquired what kind of man he was, and where he was born and bred. Guiamar told him everything: how he had come thither; how the lord's lady gave him a hearty welcome; about the hind who had told him his lot when he had injured her; how he was wounded by her; about that ship aboard which he climbed; and how the ship bore him thither, "and I came into your authority in this manner." The lord then replied to him that he did not believe that which Guiamar had told him, "but if it is as you have said, and the ship is found," then he shall immediately be pushed out to sea. If he is lost,⁵⁸ then the lord will rejoice, but if he leaves the ship, alive and well, then that will displease the lord. Upon having granted Guiamar a secure guarantee of inviolability, they walked down to the strand. They found a ship in the haven, and Guiamar immediately climbed aboard the ship. The ship then departed at great speed and set out to sea. The knight

⁵⁷ Cook & Tveitane (1979, p. 29) translate *furustong* as "pine staff", but Waters translates the Anglo-Norman *sap* as "fir". Indeed, according to relevant dictionary entries, both Old Norse *fura* and Anglo-Norman *sap* may be translated as both "fir" and "pine". Either translation ought to be acceptable, as the distinction between these two types of wood in the medieval period was not as clear-cut as it is today; the main point is that the staff was made of some kind of coniferous wood. I have chosen "fir" as a translation, as it has a reputation for generally being a harder wood.

⁵⁸ I have chosen the more figurative translation of "to be lost" rather than other more explicit alternatives, such as "to perish" or "to die", because of the sense of loss inherent to the Old Norse verb *týna* whence comes the mediopassive verb *týnask*.



sighed, wept, and grieved for his beloved. He then beseeched God to let him be swiftly whisked away and never reach port unless he were to get his beloved whom he yet loves more than his own life.⁵⁹ This sorrow seized him for so long that he arrived thereafter back at the haven where he first saw the ship near his own district. He immediately disembarked upon coming to shore and saw one of his squires, who was following a knight and was leading a warhorse with a rope in his hand. He immediately recognised the squire and called out to him. Upon looking behind him, the squire recognised his lord and then dismounted the horse, giving it to his lord, and he accompanied Guiamar with great joy. All his friends delighted in his arrival, for he was the most favoured and famed in his homeland. Upon coming home, however, he was ever heartsick and fraught. His comrades and kinsmen wished for him to take a wife, but he did not want that by any means and said that he should marry no woman, neither for the sake of the kingdom, nor prosperity, nor pulchritude, nor love, save the one who managed to untie his shirt. These tidings travelled all across Brittany, and all the widows and maidens, who were the fairest, wealthiest, and from the best families in all of Brittany, came to Sir Guiamar. And they endeavoured to be able to untie his shirt, but there was not one amongst them who was able to do so.

17. Now following this, it is appropriate to show you, and speak about, that fair lady whom Sir Guiamar so greatly desired to love. That rich, old man, who took her hand, placed her within a high tower in accordance with the counsel that one of his barons gave to him. She suffered badly therein during the day, but it was even worse at night. She endured therein such manifold agony and affliction of the mind, torture, dismay, pain, distress and disturbance, woe and wakefulness, and all manner of pang and pain that none may set down in words or show. Night and day her body and being were therefore racked by anguish and affliction of the mind. And she spent more than two years in the tower in such despair and dismay and received therein no alleviation or aid at all for her anguish, and often bemoaning she spoke: "Guiamar, my lord, woe is unto me that I saw you. I would much rather choose a

⁵⁹ I have slightly emended the phrasing from the Old Norse when translating into Modern English, as the translation advanced by Cook & Tveitane – "whom he still loves as his life" (1979, p. 31) – seems unnatural in this instance. Indeed, the Anglo-Norman original provides somewhat of a solution here, as it gives us the quantifier *plus que* "more than". This aligns with the reading of fol. 296v of Lbs. 840 4°: *meir en*



quick death than such execrable and enduring dismay. If I may get away from this place, I shall run to the sea where I last saw you climbing aboard the ship." Upon having uttered this, she stood up and went over to the door and found no bolt thereupon. In light of this happening, she departed and found nothing at all that would impede her. Upon arriving at the haven, she saw the ship there at the spot where she desired to plunge into the water and drown herself. She climbed aboard the ship and believed that her beloved was drowned there. Upon being unable to stand on her feet, however, she let herself collapse upon the ship and thereupon endured despair and torture.

18. The ship set sail with the greatest speed as soon as she was aboard, and it came ashore thereafter in Brittany at the foot of a certain great and impenetrable castle. That lord who owned the castle went by the name of Meriadus. Owing to the fact that he had some business to conduct with one of his counts, he had arisen early and wanted to send forth his troops in order to inflict harm upon his enemies. Whilst he was sitting near a window in the castle, he spied the ship making land there and immediately descended the stairs and called one of his chamberlains⁶⁰ to him. They both then hastened down to the ship and found there a fair lady who was akin to an elf-maiden. The lord seized her then by the flap of her cloak and steered her into the castle with him. He was very pleased at that fair find, for she was the fairest of all those women whom he had ever before seen, and he knew without a doubt that she descended from a magnificent family. He gave so much love to her and had never before adored a woman to such a great degree. This lord had a sister, the most beautiful maiden, and he led the lady thither to his sister's magnificent chamber. He entrusted the fair lady into his sister's charge and fellowship, and she was treated with much honour there and attended magnificently by her. He dressed her splendidly in the finest clothes found in that land. He frequently visited her, for he loved her whole-heartedly. He often asked for her hand, but she professed not to know what he was saying. She revealed to him the belt which was fastened around her and

⁶⁰ Although this word when taken to mean a king's male servant who attends him in his bedchamber is now obsolete, it best encapsulates the two elements making up the compound noun *rekkjusveinn* [lit. "chamber-boy"]. Cook & Tveitane (1979, p. 33) choose to translate the noun literally, which is by no means a poor translation, but I think it somewhat loses the nuance intended when translating the term from Anglo-Norman into Old Norse, as it suggests a degree of infantilisation and is perhaps therefore closer in meaning to "hall-boy" rather than "chamberlain".



said: "I shall never love a man," she said, "save the one who unfastens this belt from around me without breaking it asunder." Upon having heard her response, he grew wroth and said to her in his sorrow and ire: "Such is it with you as with a certain knight here in this land. He safeguards himself from taking a wife and says that he wants to have the hand of no woman nor love any woman for the sake of a kingdom or wealth, save that certain one who is able to untie his shirt without touching it with either a knife or shears. I think," he said, "that you must have made that knot." Upon hearing this, she sighed and was on the cusp of fainting, but he took her into his arms, tore asunder the bands of her silk tunic, gripped the belt in his hands, and attempted to unfasten it, but he was not at all able to do so. There was thereafter not a single knight in Brittany who did not fare thither in order to try and see whether he could unfasten the belt, but they were unable to do it by any means. And thus it remained for a long time.

19. It so happened thereafter that Meriadus held a tournament against that knight who was waging war upon him, and Meriadus called a great number of knights to him. First of all to arrive there was Sir Guiamar, magnificently equipped, and in his retinue were a hundred knights, well-clad and astride fine war-steeds, for Meriadus had a message delivered to him as Meriadus' finest friend and comrade, asking him, in exchange for a great reward,⁶¹ not to fail him in such a time of need. Now, when Guiamar had arrived there, Meriadus welcomed him and housed him and his army, befittingly and with sufficient provisions, up in his castle's tower. He then sent for his sister two knights and lovingly invited her to come and greet his guests, together with the fair lady by whom he was so particularly enamoured. The women were magnificently dressed and were holding one another's hand and went thus into the hall. Upon having heard Guiamar's name, the lady would have fainted if the maiden had not been holding her, for she was pale and heartsick. Guiamar, however, sprang to his feet as soon as he saw them entering the hall. Upon seeing the lady, he observed her closely in order to ascertain whether, based on how she behaved, he had correctly identified her. A short while later, he said: "Is this woman not my lover, my hope, my life, my heart, my sweet lady who

⁶¹ The expression *gorva upp á mikla qmbun* is a rather obscure phrase in the Old Norse text, and Cook & Tveitane (1979, p. 35) translate it as "with great insistence". I do not think this sufficiently captures the nuance of the phrase or word *qmbun*, however, and it does not at all match the Anglo-Norman *par guerdun* "in exchange for a reward".

loved me so dearly? Whence has she come, and who has brought her hence? Now, I have contemplated a great folly, for many such women exist, but on account of her being so similar to the woman whom I love so dearly, my head and heart are all atremble. I eagerly desire to speak with her." The knight then went forth and kissed her, sitting her beside him, and he said nothing more to her, save that she should sit beside him.

20. Meriadus considered them and was greatly displeased that they behaved so amicably. He then spoke to Guiamar, chuckling: "Sir," he said, "if it pleased you, then I would like for this maiden to try and see whether she is able to untie your shirt. I would get much joy if she were somehow able to succeed in untying the knot." Guiamar then responded: "I grant you this," he said, "willingly." He then ordered his treasurer to bring the shirt to him, and he gave it to the maiden. She received it and tried everything that she knew and could, but she was not able to untie it. Upon seeing the shirt, the lady immediately recognised the knot, and her mind then was in great distress, for she dared not do that which she desired: to take the shirt and untie the knot. Meriadus immediately discerned that the lady wanted to try and untie the knot, and he was much afflicted by this, yet he was unable to do anything. He then said: "Lady," he said, "try and see what you can do about this knot, which so many women have attempted to untie but have not succeeded." Upon understanding that which he was ordering her to do, she took the shirt and had swiftly untied it. Sir Guiamar was astounded and thought it curious. He recognised her, and yet he was in doubt. He then said: "You, fair creature, are you my beloved? Tell me the truth, and let me see whether you are wearing on your body that belt which I fastened around you." He then placed his hands on her side and recognised the belt at once and said: "My fair one," he said, "by what means have you come hither, and by what circumstances have I encountered you here?" She then told him the torments, pain, and distress which she had suffered in the tower for his sake whilst she was wickedly locked therein; and the events that followed thereafter, how she escaped the tower, found the ship, climbed aboard, and came ashore there; and how the knight found her and then kept her befittingly with much honour, ever with favour and friendship, and frequently asked for her affection. "But now," she said, "my joy has been found. Beloved," she said, "come away hence with me so that we both may live together in freedom and free from strife and live felicitated from now on."

21. Guiamar then stood up and said: "Lord," he said, "hear my speech. Today, I have here encountered my beloved whom I thought I had lost. Now, I ask Meriadus in friendship and fellowship to relinquish my beloved to me, and I will attend him as his own knight with a hundred knights or more if he wishes." Meriadus then replied: "Sir Guiamar," he said, "good friend, I am not so beset by fighting or foes that I would want to grant you this request. I found this woman, and I shall safeguard her against you." Upon hearing his response, Guiamar commanded his troops to arm themselves with haste and mount their horses. He then left thence and told Meriadus that their friendship was at an end and that absolute animosity would ensue. He departed thus, full of sorrow and soul-sick, but his beloved remained behind. All those knights who had come to the gathering of death-dealing and to the tournament placed their faith in him insofar as they would all accompany him wheresoever he wished to go, and any man would swiftly die if he somehow failed Guiamar. That same evening, they arrived at the castle of that knight who was waging war against Meriadus. He was immediately joyful and happy at their arrival. He housed them magnificently with expensive entertainments, greatly reassured that Sir Guiamar had come to him with such a mighty host of knights in order to aid him, for he now knew that he would be victorious and that the war would be settled. Early in the morning, all of the troops equipped themselves wheresoever they were housed across all the town, and they rode thereafter out of the town with a great clangour. Sir Guiamar was the leader and standard-bearer, and upon arriving at the castle, they valiantly attempted to assail it, but they were unable to advance. Guiamar then placed troops around the town, and under no circumstances would he leave before he had captured it. His retinue then swelled so much from his kinsmen and comrades. They seized all the provisions for themselves and starved all those who dwelt within the town and castle. Guiamar captured the town and castle thereafter, and he killed Meriadus who sat within. Guiamar then took his beloved thence in joyful victory and great jubilation and thus overcame all of his sorrows. From this tale, which you have now heard, the Bretons composed the most beautiful *lais* for a stringed instrument, such as harps, fiddles, hurdy-gurdies, and lyres. This one is called the *Lai of Guiamar* with the most beautiful melody which existed in Brittany. May you, who have listened, have sagacity, serenity, and satisfaction. Amen.

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