

Outsiders on the Inside: Conception of Disability in Medieval Western Scandinavia

By

Todd Michelson-Ambelang

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Scandinavian Studies)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

Date of final oral examination: 12/15/2015

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Kirsten Wolf, Professor, Scandinavian Studies

Walton O. Schalick, Medical Director, Adjunct Assistant Professor, and Research
Director, School of Medicine and Public Health

Thomas DuBois, Professor, Scandinavian Studies

James Leary, Professor, Scandinavian Studies

Susan Brantly, Professor, Scandinavian Studies

Peter Gorman, Head, UW Digital Collections Center

For Liz Bebo, John O., Kendra B.,
who educated me.

For Dorothy H. Michelson†
(1920 – 2003)
who believed in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
Narrative	1
Structure and Goals of the Dissertation	6
Parameters	10
Limitations	11
CHAPTER 1 – AN OVERVIEW AND EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY OF DISABILITY STUDIES AND SITUATING IMPAIRMENT AND DISABILITY IN MEDIEVAL WESTERN SCANDINAVIA	14
Introduction	14
Sagas and <i>Þættir</i> of Icelanders	16
Disability and Impairment.....	24
Moral Model of Disability.....	26
Tragedy/Charity Model of Disability	26
Medical Model of Disability	27
Social Model of Disability.....	27
Economic Model of Disability	28
Exchange Model of Disability.....	30
Curses and Fate	31
Familial Ties to Impairment.....	32
Academic Disability Studies	33
Medieval Disability Studies.....	34
History of Disability Studies	35
Beginnings of Studies of Disability in Pre-Modern Europe	37

Continuations of Studies of Disability in Medieval Europe	36
Studies of Disability in Medieval Iceland	44
Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 2 –QUANTITATIVE AND LEXICOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF IMPAIRMENT AND DISABILITY IN THE SAGAS AND ÞÆTTIR OF ICELANDERS	52
Introduction	52
Disability and Terms for Disability	58
Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities	60
General Physical Impairments and Disabilities	60
Arms	62
Legs	64
Age	67
Sensory Impairments and Disabilities	69
Eyes	69
Hearing	72
Mouth/Speech	74
Head.....	75
Cognitive and Emotional Impairments vs. Disabilities	76
General Cognitive.....	76
Other Terms Relating to Disability and Impairment	80
Healing.....	80
Physicality/Disposition.....	81
Homosexuality.....	82
Bynames	83
Positive/Neutral	85
Impairing	86
Unknown	87
Conclusion.....	87

CHAPTER 3 – ANALYSES OF CHARACTERS WITH IMPAIRMENTS AND DISABILITIES IN THE SAGAS AND <i>ÞÆTTIR</i> OF ICELANDERS	89
Introduction	89
Cognitive/Emotional Impairments and Disabilities	91
Qlvir (Bjálfi) – <i>Bandamanna saga</i>	92
Oddný – <i>Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa</i>	94
Hreiðar – <i>Hreiðars þátr</i>	96
Feigning Cognitive/Emotional Disabilities	97
Gísli – <i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	98
Sensory Impairments and Disabilities	98
Guðrún – <i>Laxdæla saga</i>	99
Björn – <i>Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa</i>	100
Stúfr – <i>Stúfs þátr inn meiri, Stúfs þátr inn skemmri</i>	104
Feigning Sensory Disabilities	106
Melkorka – <i>Laxdælasaga</i>	106
Karl Ómæli – <i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	108
Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities	110
Egill – <i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i>	111
Þórðr beigaldi – <i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i>	113
Qnundr – <i>Grettis saga</i>	114
Refr – <i>Harðar saga</i>	115
Feigning Ambulatory Disabilities	116
Gunnlaugr - <i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	116
Other Impairments and Disabilities	116
Njáll – <i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i>	117
Þormóðr – <i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	120
Conclusion	121
CHAPTER 4 – FOUR CLOSE READINGS OF TEXTS FROM THE SAGAS AND <i>ÞÆTTIR</i> OF ICELANDERS	123
Introduction	123

<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	130
<i>Harðar saga</i>	137
<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i>	143
<i>Hreiðars þáttur</i>	148
Conclusion	154
CONCLUSION	157
Terminology for Impairment	158
Cognitive and Emotional Impairments and Disabilities	160
Sensory Impairments and Disabilities	160
Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities	161
Other Impairments and Disabilities	161
Missing Terms	162
Gender	162
Impairments Specific to Medieval Iceland	163
Fate and Foreshadowing	164
Overcoming and Feigning	164
Multiple Perspectives	165
APPENDICIES	
Appendix I – Sagas and <i>Þættir</i> of Icelanders in the Íslenzk fornrit editions	168
Appendix II – Sagas and <i>Þættir</i> of Icelanders in the Leifur Eiríksson Editions	170
Appendix III – Lists of Terminologies	172
Appendix IV – Chart of Nicknames and Bynames	187
BIBLIOGRAPHY	195
IN TEXT FIGURES	
Figure I – Impairments Found in the Texts	54
Figure II – Word Classifications	56
Figure III – Number of Instances of Impairment per Text	124

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been a long journey, and I have benefited from the help and guidance of many friends and colleagues. First of all, I am very grateful to my committee: Kirsten Wolf, Walton O. Schalick III, Thomas DuBois, Jim Leary, Susan Brantly and Peter Gorman. Their advice, excellent comments and suggestions, and vitally important questions were invaluable for this dissertation.

I am thankful to the Department of Scandinavian Studies, for resources and support during my graduate education. I thank the Morgridge Family for their generosity in the creation of the Barbara Morgridge Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, which provided me time to conduct preliminary research. The American Scandinavian Foundation's Helen Lee and Emil Lassen Fund and The Scan|Design by Inger and Jens Bruun Foundation Fund provided me the opportunity to live and conduct research in Denmark in 2011-12. In Denmark, I wish to thank The Arnamagnæan Collection and colleagues at The Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, especially Christopher Sanders†, Helle Degenbol, Ragnheiður Mósesdóttir, Sjöfn Kristjánsdóttir, Phil Lavender, Marteinn Sigurðsson, Sebastian Mortensen Mariné, Alex Speed Kjeldsen, Eva Rode and director Matthew Driscoll. I am also grateful to colleagues at Die Deutsche National Bibliothek in Leipzig, especially Carola Staniek and Katrin Teichmann, for providing me with a great work environment during my stays in Leipzig.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present sections of my work in progress at the University of Santiago de Compostela, the Hermes Consortium for Literary and Cultural Studies Annual Conference, The Arnamagnæan Institute Forskermøde, the

Nordisk Institut at Aarhus Universitet, and the Boundaries of Disability Symposium at UW-Madison. I thank my hosts, organizers and lively audiences for these events.

I wish to thank my friends and colleagues in the Department of Scandinavian Studies: William Banks, Marcus Cederström, John Eason, David Natvig, Jason Schroeder, Natalie Van Deusen, Rachel Willson-Broyles, Tanya Thresher, and Judy Anderson for their unflinching support. I am grateful to my friends and colleagues at Memorial Library, especially Doug Way, Karla Strand, Mary Rader, and Paloma Celis Carbajal, for allowing me to balance my library duties with my research. I thank Michael Bernard-Donals for his tireless work on coordinating my multiple responsibilities at the UW-Madison.

I am uniquely beholden to my friends, who have helped me along the way, in Madison, Denmark, Germany, and elsewhere: Kirsten Thisted, Leif Pedersen†, Anna Kristiansen, Ingeborg Kongslie, André Kleinschmidt, Jan “Leo” Leonhardt, Nicole Schultz, Serkan Arslan, Jan König, César Dominguez, Kirin Narayan, Ken George, Courtney Mayo-Fink, Brent Vermilion, Klaus and Doris Berghahn, Steven K. Smith, David Korfhagen, Edith Beltrán, Nalan Erbil Erkan, Nurettin Erkan, Sabine Groß, and Marcus Bullock.

Un groot særligque धन्यवाद till Paul Gérard Гнатюк per あなたの Freundschaft, 信心, et samtalene nossi! Ik ti savner とても jeden giorno, þú, यार-en de mein corazón!

I am thankful to my parents, Judy and Peter Ambelang, for their constant support of me and for encouraging my curiosity in all things. I thank my brother and sister-in-law, Jay and Lennie Ambelang, and their children Peter and Thomas; my Indian family, Amma, Muniatte, Periatte, (my three mothers) Gauri and Mahima, (my two sisters) and Bahadur (my friend, my family in Wisconsin: Lynn and Steve† Nelson, Don Michelson,

Sue and Steve Hoffenberg, Jim, Patti, and Erik Michelson, Kristi, Matt, Katherine and Caroline Clover, Jessica and Tom Ambelang, and Audrey Knibb Ambelang†.

Finally, I am grateful to have B. Venkat Mani in my life. He has been a constant support, firefly-admirer, friend, stargazer, and partner in crime. He, along with my pound puppy and best buddy Copper, make life joyous and much less stressful.

ABSTRACT

Outsiders on the Inside: Conception of Disability in Medieval Western Scandinavia

Todd Michelson-Ambelang

Under the Supervision of Professor Kirsten Wolf

at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

This dissertation analyzes disability and impairment as found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. Through the analysis of impairment and disability as seen through the lens of minority and cultural studies, lexicographical studies, character studies and close readings of texts defined in the genre of Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders it is possible to construct a more thorough understanding of how medieval Icelandic and Norwegian society received and perceived concepts of impairment, disability, and people who were impaired and disabled.

The dissertation comprises four chapters, each one a different type of analysis of impairment and disability. Chapter 1 begins with an examination of the current trends in studies of medieval Icelandic and Norwegian culture as well as the current state of disability studies. From the disability studies standpoint, understanding the effects of impairments comes through the use of different cultural models. The second chapter consists of an examination of terms for impairment in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders and allows for a comprehension of different terms used and their frequency. Chapter 3 provides a character analysis of sixteen characters with impairments found in the texts; this helps to ascertain if a character with an impairment was considered disabled by society or not. Chapter 4 is a close reading of four texts, which helps establish specific views of impairment and disability, as seen through models of disability studies.

Introduction

Narrative

I came to the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a graduate student to study Scandinavian linguistics. In the second semester of a course on Old Norse, I read my first complete saga in Old Norse-Icelandic: *Bandamanna saga* (*The Saga of the Confederates*), one of the “feud sagas.” This saga is full of elements typically associated with the widespread understanding of saga literature, especially in popular cultural depictions in cinema and television: blood, battles, intrigue, adventures, deception, law and its defiance, and more blood. I enjoyed the fact that I was reading something in Old Norse-Icelandic, much more than I enjoyed what I found to be a terse, non-descriptive, macho, and rather violent plot. My views of the plot notwithstanding, *Bandamanna saga* opened up the complex world of Old Norse-Icelandic literature for me. It piqued prior interests on two levels: the Old Norse words that constituted the saga and carried the plot, and the culture of the people that slowly started to unveil itself through the use of those words.

I have always been interested in the why and how of things. Because of the writing style of the sagas, I thought I would not have been able to ask the questions I usually would when reading, for example, a modern literary text. For me, language is paramount to a text. I constantly ask questions, when reading, about why a word was chosen. What exactly does the word mean in the context in which it was written, but also in the context in which I was reading it? Why did the author use a specific word instead of its other synonyms? How is a word meaningful, or what meanings do readers ascribe to words? The lush and descriptive language of Old Norse-Icelandic—which somehow

seemed to augment and other times impede the terse, macho, and violent plot—inspired me to embark upon a thorough and nuanced study of its vocabulary.

In addition to my curiosity about words, I am interested in culture; not necessarily the mainstream, hegemonic culture that is often ascribed to the “leading figures” of a saga or the “vanguard” in a society, but more specifically the meaning of culture as it reveals itself when a society’s outsiders, those on the margins, or those relegated to the status of figures that follow the leaders, are taken into consideration. As such, very often when I read, I am drawn to characters who are actively rejected by society or more passively just considered outsiders or border-liners. I like to see how members of the majority in society treat these characters, and how they are aesthetically and politically represented in the text to depict them as part of the groups of outsiders. Groups that have interested me in my readings are women, homosexuals, foreigners, people with impairments, as well as people who do not ascribe to the majority religion. While saga literature is replete with examples of all of these groups, it was surprising to me that very few studies have systematically focused on these figures.

As I read *Bandamanna saga*, I realized that by focusing on my interests, by following two parallel lines of inquiry, my own reading experience of this genre became aesthetically much more pleasurable, and intellectually more rewarding than just following the violent story lines. This first line of inquiry was into words, and the second into the meanings of culture that are created by the choice and deployment of those words. To mention just one example, in chapter 2 of this saga the reader is introduced to Bjalfi.¹ Bjalfi’s interaction with the plot is very brief, but it is clear that he is considered

¹ It was not until I read the Íslenzk fornrit version that I realized that Bjalfi is called Qlvir in another manuscript. This is discussed further in chapter 3.

disabled. The text states: “Bjálfi hét bróðir hans, hálfafglapi ok rammur at afli,” (Magerøy, 35).² [“His brother was named Bjálfi, he was half-an-imbecile and strong in power,” (*CSol* vol. V, 307).]³ First I asked myself what *hálfafglapi* actually means, and if Bjálfi is *hálfafglapi* (half-an-imbecile), what would it mean to be fully *afglapi*?

At the time of my first examination of this passage, my still-developing knowledge of and interest in Disability Studies and History of Medicine was forcing me to recognize Bjálfi as someone who might have been autistic. As I trained myself further in these fields in tandem with my continued reading of sagas, I found that many of the Sagas and *Þættir* had examples of people with what I now recognize as having “impairments.” Their “disability” was conditioned by the society, as my further readings would reveal to me. Characters, such as Egill, Njáll, Björn, Oddný, Melkorka, and many more, populated the wide qualitative spectrum that ranged from insiders to outsiders, heroes to villains, and the most beloved to the most despised.

How many heroes or non-heroes with a disability were there in fact in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders? How did they qualify as impaired, or disabled? What role did societal norms play in declaring these figures impaired or disabled? Conversely, how did impairment and disability contribute to the creation of societal norms of a healthy body and mind? What instances of impairment are found in multiple members of the same family? Wanting to find out more about the quality, the quantity, and the societal reaction to these impairments, I set out to read all of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders,

² Even though different volumes of the Íslenzk Fornrít editions of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders span over a century and are edited by, I cited them by the series and not the editor here

³ Just as with *ÍF*, I use *CSol* as an abbreviation for the Leifur Eiríksson edition of the *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders* edited by Viðar Hreinsson.

excerpting all terms relating to impairment and disability, as well as the characters who were being described with these words. However, I was aware that in order to make informed analyses about impairments discussed in the texts, rather than indulging in a questionable “diagnosis” of disability among the characters, my engagement with theories of disability was not merely necessary, it was a prerequisite.

This dissertation is the result of pursuing these two lines of inquiry, a story of words and the cultures encapsulated in those words. This is the task central to this dissertation, which is a study of impairment and disability in medieval Norway and Iceland from historical, philological, and lexicographical perspectives. It investigates how these societies perceived and distinguished natal (from birth) and post-natal (acquired in a person’s lifetime) impairments; the dissertation offers an analysis of the terminology for impairments, as well as people with impairments. In addition, the current study explores the differences in societal perception of ambulatory, sensory and cognitive/emotional impairments, by focusing on the terminology used for them. To this end, the dissertation offers an examination of the descriptions of people with impairments⁴ found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.⁵

Before I begin an analysis of modes of presentation of impairments in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, I need to define the concept of *impairment* and the intricacies surrounding the word, which either do or do not necessarily *disable* a person. In this

⁴ Here and in the following, I use the “person first” style of describing people: person with an impairment/disability, people with impairments/disabilities, etc. Within the field of Disability Studies, this is the norm, and although the flow of sentences may at times seem awkward, it is done with forethought.

⁵ For a list of the Sagas and *Þættir* read and analyzed, see Appendix I (Old Norse-Icelandic) and II (English Translations).

dissertation, I use the terms impairment and disability as generally used in the Social Model of Disability Studies. The definitions of these terms, as conceived and used by scholars, are innumerable.⁶ I therefore use the definition provided in *The Encyclopedia of Disability* (2006), as taken from the 1982 version of the Disabled Peoples' International definition. Impairment is defined as, "Functional limitation within an individual, caused by physical, mental, or sensory impairment," (Shakespeare et al. 2006, 1104). Disability is defined as, "Loss or limitation of opportunities to participate in the normal life of the community on an equal level due to physical and social barriers," (Shakespeare et al. 2006, 1104).

Considering that Disability Studies is a new field, many concepts developed in the field do not function in the medieval world in the same way that they do in the modern world. I do not attempt to project contemporary ideas of a disability, an impairment, an illness, or an injury on medieval descriptions in the dissertation. This is not because there is lack of need for such an inquiry, but because the terse style of saga literature, the changes in perception and recognition of disability over the centuries make it difficult in many instances to assess if a term relates to more than the most basic information about an impairment. This is especially the case in cognitive or emotional impairments.

This dissertation contributes to extant studies of disability and Scandinavian literature and culture in three major ways. First, it argues that disability is a dynamic concept; its conceptual transformation is a function of the evaluation of impairment in a specific historical-social moment. Second, the dissertation identifies that extant studies of the body, sickness, and disability—largely based on theories of post-structuralism

⁶ The social model is discussed in depth in chapter one.

originally formulated by Michel Foucault—are firmly anchored in the modern period and the urban setting. Therefore, they are largely inadequate in considering the position and perception of disability in the medieval period, and the laissez-faire government of a chiefly agrarian or non-urban society, especially like that found in medieval Scandinavia and the North.⁷ Finally, the dissertation takes issue with scholarship within Scandinavian Studies, whereby examinations of saga literature, linguistics, and historical-cultural dimensions have largely been compartmentalized, leading to a curiously skewed understanding of disability. Benefiting from, while maintaining a critical distance from modern post-structuralist models, the dissertation makes a case for an integrated examination of saga literature and linguistic sources.

Structure and Goals of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion; each of the four chapters investigates disability by focusing on a particular set of texts:

Chapter 1 – An Overview and Examination of the History of Disability Studies and Situating Impairment and Disability in Medieval Western Scandinavia

This chapter introduces the concepts of impairment and disability and provides a history of the study of disability, the differences in approaches to disability studies in the 20th and early 21st centuries, and the main models of disabilities developed in the fast growing field of in disability studies. I engage with extant scholarship in the following four ways. First, the chapter explains the way in which the terms “impairment” and “disability” are used in the dissertation. Second, it provides a brie

⁷ In this dissertation, however, there is limited interaction with Foucault’s theories themselves, specifically those surrounding the state, such as biopower and nominalism.

f review of the literature on the history of disability, focusing on the Middle Ages and on the few studies of impairment and disability in medieval Iceland that have been conducted so far. Third, it gives a brief analysis of the concept of both inclusion and exclusion within medieval Icelandic society: the ways in which certain people were able to move throughout all facets of society, while others were limited to only certain areas through restrictions created by society. Finally, the analysis provides insight into how society created boundaries that excluded certain members who were disabled.

In addition, in this chapter I place the general perception and reception of disabilities in medieval Western Scandinavia within the context of the fields of history, cultural studies, and disability studies—in the specific context of the Middle Ages. This serves to give an understanding of which impairments were considered disabling in the Middle Ages and which were not, and also how impairments could fluctuate from being considered disabling or not, according to the changing perception of society over time. This chapter also explains contemporary conceptualization of disabilities and compares them with those in the Middle Ages to account for changes in perception.

Chapter 2 –Quantitative and Lexicological Analyses of Impairment and Disability in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

In this chapter, I analyze all terms in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders relating to disability and impairment. These were found through an extensive analysis of the text and an excerption of terms relating to disability and impairment. The excerption and analysis are performed to establish which terms were used in medieval Western Scandinavian literature and also how frequently they occur in the texts under consideration. The terms are listed according to the part of the body affected; synonyms are listed together under

the same headings, and all terms are divided by part of speech, as found in Old Norse-Icelandic: noun, adjective, verb (active), verb (medio-passive), byname, phrase. Because of their ambiguous nature, cognitive impairments are placed all under the same heading.

The terms are then examined with regard to their context and divided into themes to allow for further investigation and comparison in specific sub-classifications of disabilities, such as cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, disability and age, disability and gender, simulated or feigning disability, etc. This mode of investigation allows for an in-depth and exhaustive understanding of which terms for impairment and disability in saga literature were used and it presents reasons for their usage.

Chapter 3 – Analyses of Characters with Impairments and Disabilities in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

This chapter extends the findings of chapter 3 into the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders by focusing on specific impairments and uses of impairments as examples of cultural exclusion and inclusion of people in society. The examples provide a record of how society viewed people with impairments and disabilities, and how those people with disabilities were able to function in society. I analyze texts mentioning impairments and people with impairments for terminology and descriptions of their lives and interactions with others. This further assists in interpreting the societal view of a person with a disability or at least in interpreting what saga recorders took to be—or chose to represent—as societal views in an imagined narrative past, sometimes separated from the records' present by centuries, sometimes by a mere generation or two.

Descriptions of impairment are broken down into three main categories: ambulatory, sensory, and cognitive/emotional impairments, which are then further broken down into sub-categories. The sub-categories describe if a specific perception of the

impairment was considered to be disabling or not. A move from the macro view of terms to an examination of how an individual character with a disability experienced the world makes way for a reader to understand how society interacts with individuals as a whole, especially those who are not considered “normal.”

Chapter 4 – Four Close Readings of Texts from the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

This chapter offers a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes toward impairments and characters with impairments through close readings of four texts from the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. Three of the texts are from the subgenre of outlaw sagas; the fourth text is a *þáttur*. Two of the outlaw sagas, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, contain some of the largest numbers of instances for disabilities in the corpus, and that number is even more significant when placed in ratio with the total pages of the sagas. To further the study of the subgenre, I include a close reading of *Harðar saga*, which also contains terms for impairment, but not as many. The *þáttur*, *Hreiðars þáttur*, is the only text describing a character who overcomes a cognitive impairment to become a fully functioning member of society by the end of the text.

The three texts allow for an analysis of the subgenre of the outlaw sagas. The subgenre includes magical curses, which are unique in the Saga and *Þættir* of Icelanders. I do the same for *Hreiðars þáttur*, which doesn't have the magical curse, but it uses narrative prosthesis to show the grace of a king. At the end of each of the close readings, I study the way the characters with impairments can be seen through the different models of disability studies, described in chapter 1.

The close readings are focused on the descriptions of the characters' impairments and disabilities. In two of the texts, magic curses are associated with the downfall of the

character and lead to their deaths. Magic curses serve as a way of impairing the characters, and in one case it disables the character. Other comparisons and contrasts are made to understand the intricacies and unique aspects of each of the impairments and disabilities surrounding the characters in the texts.

Conclusion

The conclusion integrates the findings of the four chapters to underline the significance of a multifaceted examination of investigations conducted in each chapter. By combining linguistic and lexicographical studies with character analyses and close readings, I revisit aspects of cultures of impairment and the treatment of characters with impairments.

Furthermore, in this chapter I also include discussions of two types of impairments that are not found in the corpus of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. The first group comprises impairments discussed marginally, for which I could not find enough information to understand the belief systems surrounding the disability. The second group includes impairments that are found in other texts of the time, but are not included in the corpus.

Parameters

The terms examined in the dissertation originate in the pre-modern era, well before the medical community first began to classify illnesses and disabilities in earnest. Cognitive disabilities in particular are very often unclear in medieval texts. The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders use speculative terms, such as *hálfafglapi* (half-an-imbecile) and *fiþfl* (idiot), instead of contemporary definitive terms that describe more than just a general concept.

Linguistic—more specifically lexicographic and etymological—examinations of words used to designate disabilities during the Middle Ages from a comparative standpoint facilitate an understanding of how people with disabilities were perceived in society. The context of the word describing a disability may indicate if the terminology is derogatory or more benign. An examination of the placement of terms within the text—examples being vocative epithets or descriptions of people with disabilities—reveals how authors of literary texts viewed mental and physical disabilities in the Middle Ages. By collating and counting the number of times of appearance of specific terms, the study also shows which terms were normative during this time and which were outside of customary parlance.

Limitations

The dissertation does not concern itself with a precise definition of every disability in all cases. There is a fluid sense of disability, which is framed by power, to other a character, both in historical context and in contemporary analysis. Nevertheless, the dissertation is not presentist nor oblivious to the shifts in disability's power as a social agent. The analysis in the dissertation adopts the methodological criterion that, in the terse verbal economy of the sagas and *þættir*, if a cognitive or emotional impairment was considered disabling, it proved narratable; if not, it was presumably not deemed worthy of mention. Examples of this are found especially in bynames. For example, in *Laxdæla saga*, *Grettis saga*, and *Vatnsdæla saga*, there is a character called Ásgeir æðikollr (scatter-brained). Although the difference is mentioned so as to explain the byname, it receives no further attention in the plot.

The dissertation comprises examinations of somewhat fictional texts (Sagas and *Þættir*). The availability of non-fictional texts that describe people with impairments in medieval Iceland is very close to nothing. Other than legal texts, fictional texts are the only ones that a researcher can consult. Legal texts, however, do not provide enough information to warrant a full study.

Given the culture of saga telling and eventually writing in Iceland, the reader can see that there are large differences in the book culture in medieval Iceland during the time of setting of the sagas and when they were written down. This is supported by the fact that there is no mention of writing in the stories during the time, but there is discussion of professionals, such as lawspeakers and procedures and ceremonies, such as oath-taking. Medieval Icelandic literature serves to bolster an understanding of how impairment and disability were regarded and how people with disabilities were treated during the time of the setting and composition of the works. It would be impossible to be able to say without a doubt how societies reacted to certain impairments, but it is possible to gain cognizance of the general reactions and attitudes to disabilities.

Science and social science, such as forensic anthropology and isotopic analysis, offer concrete proof of the existence of impairments, the eating habits, the cause of death, and the birthplace of people whose remains are found. These areas of study do not offer an explicit understanding of the culture and belief surrounding impairment and the disabling of people. It would be very easy to take the contemporary view of disability and people with disabilities and place that neatly on descriptions found in medieval literature and other texts. A cursory glance at disability and the treatment of people with disabilities even within the last thirty years offers great insight into how society changes its views. A

humanistic analysis of texts, therefore, is indispensable for gaining greater comprehension of disability and the treatment of people with disabilities in Medieval Iceland, Norway, and elsewhere in the world.

Chapter 1 – “An Overview and Examination of the History of Disability Studies and Situating Impairment and Disability in Medieval Western Scandinavia”

Introduction

The Viking Age (793-1066 CE) was a time of massive changes in Nordic society. In the Western areas of the North, such transformations manifested themselves in the settlement and creation of the state of Iceland and after its creation, the divergence from various Norwegian cultures; the conglomeration of smaller kingdoms into larger kingdoms in Norway; the solidification of shared culture by kingdom or country to a model, which exists more or less today; and the eventual conversion to Christianity. In tandem with these changes came the creation of a new culture of writing, at first with the codification of laws, and then the creation of shared literary cultures. Literature, as exemplified in texts like sagas, first started as an oral practice, and then a few centuries after the settlement era, as codified literature.⁸

Genres such as the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders provide insight into the culture of the time: both when they were created and when they were written down. However, it would be naïve to assume that the print cultural artifacts, which included literary texts such as sagas, or the literary style of the sagas and *þættir*—which was often sparse and terse—provided a holistic picture or a systemic understanding of how different groups in the society were received and perceived by others. The researcher must look elsewhere to create a differentiated understanding of the culture of the time.

Icelandic culture, much like any given culture at any point of time in history, did not exist in an isolationist vacuum. People interacted with others; thoughts, ideas and

⁸ For more in-depth discussion see: (Jón R. Hjálmarsson 1988, 14-24), (Larsen 1974, 33-106), and (Turville-Petre 1953, 48-69).

beliefs were exchanged on a regular basis. This fact held true particularly for the literate records of the sagas, who often had close connections to the continental ecclesiastical culture as well as centers of power and learning elsewhere in Iceland, mainland Scandinavia, and places like England. Cross-cultural understanding through references to and comparative analyses of other places that are contemporary to the focus area are indispensable for a researcher to comprehend anomalies and possible breaks in the understanding of Nordic cultures in general, and Icelandic culture in particular.

Such a cross-cultural, historical analysis prerequisites the consideration of three factors: time (history), place (geography), and societal manner (norms that govern customs, traditions, but also everyday lived realities). An historical timeframe facilitates a general understanding of the world outside the focus area—whether actual or created. Understanding the distinctions created around temporality allows the researcher to identify cultural exchanges within a given timeframe, thus making way for further identifying the possibility of awareness of such exchanges through the temporal perspective.

Examination solely from a temporal and cross-cultural perspective, however, can be limited if the actual terrain remains neglected. Understanding the concept of place is an indispensable factor in the creation of cross-cultural understanding of how variation existed from one place to another. The population, landscape, climate, and way of life that are associated with place can distinguish the body of knowledge about one geo-cultural space from another. Pursuing this distinction in concrete terms means a synchronic, comparative analysis of knowledge available about specific geo-cultural spaces.

The final factor is that of the society, specifically the manner in which governmental, religious, and educational systems and institutions are formed and informed by the society, which in turn is formed and informed by them. Understanding the way in which society functions through its institutional systems includes and provides for some groups while excluding others, becomes crucial for acknowledging the fine differences between different societal groups that exist within a given historical time period. In the specific case of this dissertation, society emerges as the most prominent organ that reacts to impairments, and through its reactions it creates the outsider—the disabled.

Factoring in time, place, and societal manner paves way for analyses of a range of documents that serve as records of actual events, such as laws, registers, and court decisions along with analysis of fictionalized or fictitious events, such as those that appear in literary biographies. Admittedly, the remarks I have offered so far are fairly general, as they are meant to provide a preview of analytical foci of my dissertation. Let me now turn to some specific observations about the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, which are works of historical fiction. As I intend to show in the following section, an analysis of the corpus of the sagas and *þættir* with a focus on time, manner, and place of the setting sheds light on an author's depictions of these foci, and in turn, on the societal meanings that these factors generate.

Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders are a loosely categorized group of stories reminiscing the golden age when Iceland was independent and wealthy, and as a result they show a created reality composed by the people who codified them. They represent a

dual view of the past through time and societal views: they tell stories of a pre-Christian, Christianizing, and Christian reality through manuscripts, which survive in copies, usually separated from their original composition by at least two centuries and sometimes by even more. As Vésteinn Olason comments in his monograph *Dialogues with the Viking Age*:

Apart from a handful of fragments, which have been dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, the *Íslendingasögur*⁹ are preserved either in vellum manuscripts from the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, or in paper manuscripts of more recent providence. All these manuscripts are copies, and sometimes represent the text at several removes from an early archetype; no sagas texts survive which can be said to be an author's original copy. There are, however, good reasons for believing that a majority of the sagas, perhaps almost two thirds of the texts in the corpus, and most of the major works, were written during the thirteenth century—both before and, perhaps more often, after the Icelanders swore allegiance to King Hákon of Norway in 1262. The remaining texts were written in the fourteenth century; some, exceptionally, may even derive from the fifteenth century, (Vésteinn 1998, 18-9).

Because of the gaps between the settings depicted in the sagas, the composition of the sagas themselves, and the era when the extant copies were produced, the texts not only present a commentary on society from the time of settlement, but also on the time when the sagas were codified. Due to the difference in time, it is impossible to understand the finer nuances between what was believed when the text was codified and when it took place. The reader must accept that instead of relying on the texts for specific cultural information either from the time of settlement [10th century] or the time of the codification [in centuries thereafter], the reader must reconstruct the cultural context from the entire time period.

A related issue that surfaces in a cultural analysis of Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders is accuracy: if and how they represent reality. The genre of saga literature can

⁹ Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.

be taken to be similar to historical fiction in contemporary times, starting with lives of Norwegian kings (Vésteinn 1998, 49-50). Vésteinn Olason points out that there is no consensus as to the verity of the written sagas to their former oral counterparts, and adds that he is able to describe what he believes would have been the reasoning for a scribe to change something:

The saga writer was not inventing a story, but composing (the Icelandic phrase was *setja saman*, “to put together”, a direct translation of the Latin *componere*) and telling a story over which he had no ultimate authority. When adding something from his own imagination, be it speech or and conversation, descriptions of people and places, or supplementary narrative events, he probably felt that he was not inventing something new but rather “finding” or adding something which had been a latent part of his story, (Vésteinn 1998, 20).

Robert Kellogg adds to this discussion in the introduction to the Leifur Eiríksson edition of *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, where he describes two key points in understanding the way that the time of the setting and the time of the recording of sagas can be a problem. The first point concerns the rhetoric of the literature, which presents a reality that can be challenging, in that the reader may take what is written as literature to be solid truth. He writes:

The rhetoric of the *Íslendinga sögur* is designed to give the impression that they related events exactly as they happened, or at least as people have said they happened. Contributing to this effect is the minimal sense of the narrative voice that is in any way distinct from the anonymous author’s. Neither the existence of a reader nor the presence of an analyzable meaning beneath the surface of the story is acknowledged by the saga composer, (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, vol. I, xxxc).

The other point is that the composers of sagas relay the fact that there is a time difference between the setting and the composing of the sagas:

Saga composers are aware, however, that the events they narrate happened a long time ago. And by drawing attention to this they do open a space between themselves and their story, explicitly acknowledging the temporal distance between the “then” of the story and the “now” of its telling. The motivation for

doing so is sometimes to authenticate a story by pointing to the continued existence of some physical object mentioned in the saga, (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, vol. I, xxxvi).

Despite the cultural reception of the sagas as being true and especially because of the time lapse between the setting of the sagas and their writing, the reader must take a step back and look at the sagas as idealized, but not authentically representational documents. There are several differences between what is told and what probably happened. One such example is the clear Christian bent seen in several texts set before the conversion to Christianity. The reader and/or listener of sagas, even in the Middle Ages, was very much removed from the settlement era and would not know for sure if the way one saga presents the reality was indeed the reality of the time. In other words, scribes who were writing down the sagas were not entirely cognizant of the reality of the stories they recorded.

Understanding the function of the genre, how the storyline of the sagas was perceived, and how they should be read, leads to the question of how a group of characters, like those with impairments, were viewed in medieval society. Was there a concept of grouping people with impairments similar to what is done in contemporary society? What was the medieval understanding of impairment? What about disability?

In the Middle Ages, the concept of impairment and disability was not what it is today. As Lennard Davis explains in his article “Dr. Johnson, Amelia, and the Discourse of Disability” (2000): “Although there may have been a great number of people with disabilities, one must, however, assume that disability was not an operative category before the eighteenth century,” (Davis 2000, 56-7). In this article, Davis defines disability in the following way:

Disability is not so much the lack of a sense or the presence of a physical or mental impairment as it is the reception and construction of that difference. Contemporary theoreticians of disability distinguish between an impairment and a disability. An impairment is a physical fact, but a disability is a social construction. For example, lack of mobility is an impairment, but an environment without ramps turns that impairment into a disability. In other words, a disability must be socially constructed; there must be an analysis of what it means to have or lack certain functions, appearance and so on, (Ibid., 56).

Language plays a large part in the understanding of disability: as an entire category, as well as how words are translated from one language to another, and from one time period to another. In her 2006 monograph *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairments during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400*, Irina Metzler outlines the difference in thinking about disability and then cites a pre-modern lack of terminology for disability in medieval society. Her examples refer to Latin:

The problem of categories of disability is further confounded by the lack of an umbrella term such as ‘disability’ during the medieval period... Some physical impairments were recognised as such by medieval people, in other words the crippled (*contracti, defecti, decrepiti*), blind (*caeci*), mute (*muti*) or deaf (*surdi*) people, epileptics (*epileptici* or people with *morbus caducus*), and children born with congenital deformities. In Medieval Latin (which is the language of the vast majority of my sources), *infirmi*, *aegri* and *egroti* were often used as interchangeable terms for ‘diseased’, ‘sick’ and ‘impaired’, (Metzler 2001, 4).

Metzler outlines the lack of a one-to-one relationship between medieval Latin and Modern English terminology for impairments, disabilities, and their conceptualizations. Lack of terminology also exists—though with some minor difference—in Old Norse-Icelandic.

Since there was no overarching category of impairment or disability in Medieval Nordic society, one must look at studies of other groups of characters and societal attitudes towards them. These studies reveal that medieval Nordic society was deeply hierarchal and binary and operated distinctly on the idea of inclusion and exclusion. The

concept of binaries between men and women, or men and *not* men in the Nordic setting was first introduced by Carol J. Clover in her article “Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe.” In the article Clover states,

...that early northern Europe “lived” a one-sex social logic, a one-gender model, to a degree unparalleled elsewhere in the west; and that the medievalization of the north entailed a shift of revolutionary proportions—a shift in the direction of two-sex thinking, and one therefore in kind not unlike the shift Laqueur¹⁰ claims for Europe in general eight hundred years later, (Clover 1993, 386).

She continues:

The case could be made, particularly on the basis of the mythic narratives, that Norse femaleness was a more complicated business than Laqueur’s model would have it, but the general notion, that sexual difference used to be less a wall than a permeable membrane, has a great deal of explanatory force in a world in which a physical woman could become a social man, a physical man could (and sooner or later did) become a social woman, and the originary god, Óðinn himself, played both sides of the street, (p. 386-7).

I argue that Clover’s notion of a strict gender-binary that trumps even biological anatomy can be extended to other aspects of what today’s society calls identities. The gods of the Nordic pantheon did not just play with gender; they were also impaired, in order to gain super-human abilities.¹¹ The idea of superhumanity and subhumanity exists in texts in Old Norse-Icelandic, both in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders and in many other genres. The abilities that were taken away from—and much less often given to—people, as a result of having impairments, caused them to enter and exit the societal ideal. If all descriptions of one character are assembled and examined, the reader can establish how

¹⁰ Clover builds her idea of the one sex system from Thomas Laqueur, in his book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, UK, 1990).

¹¹ Some examples are Óðinn giving an eye to have super-human knowledge and sight, Týr being a great warrior and yet having only one hand, Völundr being lame, but making the finest of metal weapons, etc. These examples are arguably part of a supernatural model of disability, and not exactly a moral one. These are examples of the Exchange Model, which is discussed below.

the parts can be viewed separately. For example, there are no characters in saga literature who are heroes and happen to be homosexual.¹² By excerpting examples of characters that are described as homosexual, or accused of being homosexual, and examining how they are discussed and treated in the narrative, one can articulate the modes in which homosexuality was looked down upon by society.

An examination of physical or personality-based features of characters reveals that heroes are described with a majority of positive traits and outsiders with a majority of negative traits. This is not to say that outsiders cannot have good features or that heroes are presented in a perfect light, but usually the undesirable features are presented in such a way that it is obvious that they are undesirable. For example, ugliness, dark hair, dark features, shortness, femininity in men, masculinity in women, dressing as the other gender, to name a few, were considered undesirable features. When such descriptions accompany an impairment, they help to strengthen already existing binaries. The current view of these features may not be the same as they were in the Middle Ages; society has arguably moved beyond the binary ideals as were presented in saga literature. Because society has moved beyond a binary system, there is a contemporary lack in understanding of all minority groups represented in saga literature and in medieval Nordic society.

The bifurcation of the society appears in many ways: men and women, natives and foreigners, free persons and slaves, the rich and the poor, the able and the impaired. It cannot be said that all men, natives, free persons, who were rich and able were heroes; they were simply judged in different ways than their counterparts. In addition, fewer

¹² In this dissertation, the term homosexual refers to the act of men having sex with men, or women with women, and does not refer to the contemporary sense of the orientation.

members of these groups could move up and down the echelons of society as quickly and as much as people with disabilities. Women—especially from wealthy backgrounds—in the post-Christianized Middle Ages were only allowed to enter the world of men after they married, gave birth to and raised children, and then lost their husbands. Jenny Jochens describes the freedom of women once they entered menopause:

If well-to-do and still in their reproductive years, women often remarried after divorce or the decease of their husbands. After menopause, bereft of reproductive capabilities and perhaps losing sexual attractiveness, older women did not remarry—and often enjoyed their greatest independence as widows. Saga women were frequently admired for qualities normally associated with men, (Jochens 1995, 61).

Other stations in society allowed for little freedom. A person born poor generally stayed poor and lacked what was needed to rise up in society. Fundamental to those stations were notions about physical appearances of members of those classes.

People in the Middle Ages—just like those of today—could have their lives changed in an instant due to warfare, accidents, illness, etc. The percentages, especially on the battlefield or because of disease or sickness, vary from the past to the present. Now, just as then, impairment affects people from all walks of life, in all stages of life, and from a variety of causes. There are myriad possibilities, and while it is impossible to understand exactly how people with disabilities were treated, it is possible to understand how people with disabilities were viewed and how these views differ from those of today.

Until now, the discourse on disability and people with disabilities in medieval Scandinavian society has received limited scholarly attention. Questions about why characters with impairments are mentioned in texts, and what disabilities signify, have been left unanswered. There are no lexicographic studies of the words used to describe disabilities, people with disabilities, the positions that people with disabilities held in

society, how others viewed people with disabilities, and how people with disabilities viewed themselves. From the standpoint of disability studies, it is necessary for scholarship in the field to keep three factors in mind. First, the ways in which impairment and disability are viewed differently throughout time; second, how people react to impairment; third, if the impairment enables or restricts a person's full participation in society.

Disability and Impairment

Analysis of impairments and their effects requires study of the impairments, the people with impairments, and society's reaction to the impairments. The models that have been created in the last seventy years or so provide a multi-perspective understanding of impairments and disabilities. According to the organization Disabled World, there are eleven models of disability in contemporary society and social studies: moral, tragedy/charity, legitimacy, empowering, economic, expert/professional, market, medical, social, social adapted and spectrum, ("Definitions of The Models of Disability" 2015). This list is not complete; there are numerous governmental and organizational accounts not included in the list.¹³ Each of these models views the phenomena associated with impairment in vastly different ways; none are without problem.¹⁴ One can, however, state with certainty that none of the models can represent all impairments and people with impairments equally, a fact that comes with its own problems.

¹³ For further information on different models see Shakespeare et. al., "Models" in Gary L. Albrecht (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Disability* (2006) and chapter one in Goody, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (2011).

¹⁴ The four main models of disability studies, which will be presented below are the social model, the medical model, the tragedy/charity model, and the economic model. These are not the only models. Others, such as the social adapted, market, and empowering models have specific uses that will not be of direct help to this dissertation.

The models listed above provide a current view of what was happening in terms of impairments and disabilities in the past, but they also provide a view of how society viewed impairments and disabilities in the past. Empirical research helps to understand the culture of the time: an examination of societal manners and attitudes in specific geographical locations assists in working towards creating a fuller picture. Admittedly, even though I primarily use the social model in my analyses, the societal self-understanding of impairments and disabilities in medieval Iceland and Norway is very different from what is understood under the social model today. Remaining flexible about the use of various models, combining the social model with others as needed for my analyses, I strive to establish a better understanding of medieval society from a contemporary perspective.

In extant discussions of impairment in the West, the moral, tragedy/charity, medical, and social models are by far the most used from the infancy of the field until the present. As can be seen below in the discussion of the four main models of disability studies, each one reacts in a unique way to how a person is impaired and/or disabled. The moral model places all blame for the disability on the person with the disability or the family of that person. The tragedy/charity model looks down upon and takes pity on the person with the disability. The medical model is concerned only with treating or curing the disability. None of these first three models is concerned with the societal reaction to the disability; the social model, however, includes the societal reaction and examines if the person with the impairment is excluded from participating in “the normal life of the community,” (Shakespeare et al. 2006, 1105).

To this discussion, I add two additional models, which are contractually pre-modern: the economic model and the exchange models. These two models, as I shortly demonstrate, are needed to understand the intricacies of medieval Icelandic society and its reception of impairment.

Moral Model of Disability

The Moral Model is the oldest and most unqualified understanding of disability. It views disability as “a defect caused by moral lapse or sin and the reification of sin or evil, seen as a failure or a test of faith. [It] includes [the] myth that as one sense is impaired by disability, another is heightened,” (Goodley 2011, 8). The repercussions of the model cause the person with a disability to feel shamed by society and the family to feel the need to investigate the actions, which caused the disabling effects on the person. One must mention here that unlike religious texts from mainland Europe;¹⁵ some blame is placed on a person described as impaired in the Sagas and *Pættir* of Icelanders; however, there is largely no discussion of the cause of the impairment being from sin or evil. There could be many reasons for this lack of critique. The model is strictly about the judgment and blame of the person with the impairment, but not so much about the family or an action to cause the impairment.

Tragedy/Charity Model of Disability

The tragedy/charity model follows the moral model, but it considers the idea that people with disabilities are victims of circumstance and deserving of pity. The notion of

¹⁵ Scholars such as Irena Metzler discuss the idea that even though clerics may have written about sin being a reason for impairment, the general population did not agree with this idea. See (Metzler 2001, sec. 3.1), for further discussion.

pity is based in religiosity. To quote Jean-François Ravaud and Henri-Jacques Stiker in their article “Inclusion/Exclusion: An Analysis of Historical and Cultural Meanings”:

Disability recalls the suffering of Christ, and the charity that it stimulates enables practicing Christians to atone for their sins. The church plays a major role in the development of individually targeted assistance, initially through the intermediary of its convents, monasteries, and other religious institutions and then through specialized institutions such as hospitals, hospices, and orphanages. This protective role of the church was also an aspect of its power, (Ravaud and Stiker 2001, 505).

The tragedy/charity model and the medical model are the models most used by non-disabled people to define and explain disability in contemporary society. In the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, this view is used in idealizations of disability, especially found in dreams.¹⁶

Medical Model of Disability

The medical model of disability is in fact a combination of several models. In this model, disability is defined as “a medical problem that resides in the individual – a defect in or a failure of a bodily system that is inherently abnormal and pathological. Impairment and disability are conflated,” (Goodley 2011, 8). In their entry “Models” in *The Encyclopedia of Disability* (2006), Shakespeare et al. state that the largest problem with the medical model is that it, “is equated with medicalization and the prejudice that suggests having an impairment makes an individual inferior, incapable, and dependent,” (p. 1105).

As Walton O. Schalick observes in the entry “Medieval History” in *The Encyclopedia of Disability* (2006), the medical model was already in use in mainland medieval Europe (869) This is not the case in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, where

¹⁶ This notion is discussed later in the dissertation in chapter four, specifically in a discussion about Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*.

apart from treating wounds there is little discussion of medical practice. This is not to say that medicine was not practiced at the time, or that there were no ideas about curing impairments; such discussions are simply not part of the Sagas and *Pættir*.¹⁷

Social Model of Disability

In the article “The Social Model of Disability,” Thomas Shakespeare explains that Social Model of Disability was introduced by the Union of Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) in Great Britain in 1976. This network started work after a British citizen and resident of a medical facility, Paul Hunt, wrote to *The Guardian* newspaper in 1971 proposing the creation of a consumer group of disabled residents of institutions (Shakespeare 2013, 214). He quotes the UPIAS’s reason (from 1975) for the creation of the social model: “In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society,” (Ibid., 215).

The model has evolved over time to reflect more impairments and people with impairments. Originally, UPIAS defined an impairment as “the lacking part of, or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body.” A disability was defined as “the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities,” (Goodley 2011, 8). The core of the model is that impairment is simply a reality, and that society is at fault if it judges or reacts to the impairment. As documented in *The Encyclopedia of Disability* (2006):

¹⁷ I do not claim that it was not in use elsewhere in Medieval Iceland or Norway, just that it was not in use in the genre.

The social model mandates and places high priority on barrier removal and social inclusion rather than medicine or rehabilitation. Instead of special provision based on impairment, the social model suggests that barrier should be removed so that disabled people can access mainstream services. Rather than counting the numbers of people with impairment, the social model suggests that the focus should be on discrimination and prejudice, (Shakespeare et al., 1105).

The social model is not without its problems. Shakespeare, who contributed to the quote above, is also critical of the model. He addresses the weaknesses of the social model in his article, “The Social Model of Disability,” in which he states that some of the problems stem from the very foundation of the model:

The simplicity, which is the hallmark of the social model is also its fatal flaw. The social model’s benefits as a slogan and political ideology are its drawbacks as an academic account of disability. Another problem is its authorship by a small group of activists, the majority of whom had spinal injury or other physical impairments were white heterosexual men, (Shakespeare 2013, 269).

Despite the apparently benign nature of the social model, there are problems with its use, especially in the academic setting. The exclusion of individuals with cognitive, psychological, learning, or other impairments presents a difficulty from the onset of the model. The political nature of the social model is also problematic. Nevertheless, the vast majority of studies still use the social model, and will do so until a better model is created.

Economic Model of Disability

The Economic Model,¹⁸ that I am proposing here, is based on the idea that societies create a mainstream, majoritarian standard of “active participation” of all of its members, and therefore judge members as “inactive,” “ineffective,” or “unproductive” when they fail to meet that created. The need for an economic examination of

¹⁸ The Economic Model (Modern) of Disability as found on Disability World’s webpage is different from my Economic Model (Medieval) here. For their definition, see their webpage.

impairments and disabilities comes from the following simple question that I have asked of the Sagas and *Þættir*: how did Icelanders and Norwegians feel about impairments, and when did they start judging members of the society on the basis of those impairments? The religion-based “Moral” Model or the pity-based “Tragedy/Charity” Model can hardly explain the social judgment and eventual exclusion of members of the society with impairments. Equally inadequate is the “Social” Model, which supports the overcoming of barriers for persons with impairments in order to prevent their disabling, or the “Medical” Model that tends to find all solutions to disabilities in curing and healing. As my readings of the Sagas and *Þættir* will demonstrate, for the most part, judgment was passed on characters who were not able to actively take part in society. This led to an almost wholly economic view of impairments, characters with those impairments, and indeed the act of impairing or disabling.

Early laws of medieval Iceland and Norway mention compensation for injuring others. They are much like insurance policies in current society, where a price is set to the loss of use of each particular part of the body. As time went on, the prices disappeared, and it seems that it was up to the individual court to decide the price for losses. Compensation is mentioned many times in scenes depicting assembly meetings and claims against antagonists. These compensations were very much determined on the “productivity” and were meant to compensate for the “active” participation of a member in a society, who had been rendered “inactive” because of the injury.

Exchange Model of Disability

A second model of disability studies that I use is the Exchange Model. This model is based on a transactional paradigm and is found in texts where a character is disabled by

a curse. In exchange for the curse, the character possesses superhuman abilities to evade his enemies, until the curse comes to fruition. The superhuman abilities that characters have are quite similar to the abilities that Nordic gods received in exchange for giving up another lesser ability. Unlike with gods, characters in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders do not consciously choose to give up one thing and receive another; instead, they receive the superhuman ability and the curse passively. The key component here is the fact that they will eventually be “handicapped by magic.”¹⁹ In other words, they will die when the curse is realized.

Curses and Fate

Curses are found in the two of the outlaw sagas discussed in chapter four. Magic and curses are not common in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. In all cases where the curse does not fail, the character embodies an amazing human ability to fight and to evade his enemies, and usually even might be in possession of a superhuman ability, such as excessive degrees of strength, cunning, or agility. The presence of the curse and the superhuman ability in the text can be explained as a narrative technique to keep the plot from ending quickly; however this narrative technique is unique because it provides a character with a positive quality at the same time as the negative curse. In addition, the curse is never realized immediately, so the character is afforded time with superhuman ability, until the curse is realized and he falls from power and then dies. Fate is also an important feature in its relationship with curses. When a character is cursed, it is often

¹⁹ I use the term “handicapped by magic” [handicapped meaning to be put at a disadvantage] to describe the effects of a curse because it is neither impairment nor disability, but somehow in between. It is not a disability in the sense that it is not judged by society, but it is not purely an impairment either. The person is disadvantaged, but society also just lets things happen, and in a way then indirectly judges a person for being cursed.

mentioned in the text that the character is fated to die, and that there is nothing that can reverse this.

Familial Ties to Impairment

The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders presents many instances of multiple family members who have similar impairments. They can be grouped as follows: symbolic impairments and seemingly real impairments. Symbolic impairments are seen in characters where more than one family member has an identical or similar impairment, but it is not necessarily inherited. In fact it might even be impossible to inherit. One example of this is Grettir and Qnundr in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. Both characters have ambulatory impairments in their legs, but they are both caused by cuts and could not be inherited. One of them was accidentally self-inflicted and the other acquired in a battle. Despite the fact that both impairments are manifested on the same part of the body, the situations surrounding them are quite different, so society reacts negatively to only one of them.

Seemingly real impairments are interesting, but usually difficult to establish as inherited. Their examples include impairments that apparently could seem to be passed from the parent to the child, but in reality one does not know for sure. In *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Njáll and his sons cannot grow beards. There is nothing in the text to suggest that either Njáll or his sons were different from each other in their ability to grow beards. A second example is Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga* and her son Stúfr in *Stufs þáttur*. Both of them go blind, but again there is nothing to suggest that their blindness was indeed inherited.

The last two models that I propose are also filtered through developments in theories of disability, to which I now turn.

Academic Disability Studies

The academic study of disability and impairment first started in critiques of contemporary society and came about just after the social movement started. Later on, examinations of earlier times were conducted using the social model. As Lennard Davis outlines in his article entitled, “The End of Identity Politics: On Disability as an Unstable Category”:

Disability studies is, as I have said, a relatively new field of study. Its earliest proponents were writing in the 1970s and 1980s. The second wave of disability writing can be seen as emerging in the 1990s. Both the first and second waves have had a strong interest in preserving the notion of a distinct and clear entity known variously as ‘people with disabilities’ (PWDs) or ‘Deaf people, (Davis 2013, 302).

A central concept required for even considering what disability consists of is the modern notion of normalcy. The concept of normalcy, like disability studies, has a very short history. Davis writes about the cultural impact and desire of normalcy history in another piece, “Constructing Normalcy.” He states that norms are all around us, usually quantifiable amounts dealing with our health, our ability, and statistics we create. (Davis 2010, 3)

Understanding the idea of normalcy in the Middle Ages, or at least in the pre-Modern Era, is complicated. According to Davis, the awareness of normalcy did not even exist to the point that there was a word for it. This is seen in his discussion of the etymology of words relating to normal and normalcy:

[There is] the rather remarkable fact that the constellation of words describing this concept ‘normal,’ ‘normalcy,’ ‘normality,’ ‘norm,’ ‘average,’ ‘abnormal’—all entered the European languages rather late in human history. The word ‘normal’ as ‘constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common type or standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840, (Ibid., 3-4).

Davis's discussion of the word *statistik* is particularly illuminating in understanding normalcy. "The word *statistik* was first used in 1749 by Gottfried Achenwall in the context of compiling information about the state," (Ibid., 5). The etymologies of these two groups of words show the way the culture of analysis and normalcy is something that cannot be applied, as we know it in the Middle Ages. Davis's claim here is very much at par with Metzler's observation about lack of terminology and Davis's own belief that disability was not a category before the eighteenth century.

Medieval Disability Studies

The current classification of disabilities did not exist in medieval Norway and Iceland. This echoes the discussion above about the lack of terminology for impairment and disability in the modern sense, as described by Irina Metzler. The current terms *uførhet*, (disability) *handikap* (handicap) and *handikappet* (handicapped), as well as *funksjonshemmet* (inhibited function) in modern Norwegian and *öryrki* (disabled), *fötlun* (disability) and *örkuml* (disability) in modern Icelandic do not have direct medieval equivalents.²⁰ The lack of such terms in Old Norse-Icelandic confirms that the contemporary inclusion of physical and cognitive disabilities into one group, called disabilities, did not exist in medieval Norway and Iceland.

In addition to a lack of terminology, there is very little commentary in literary studies about the reasons as to why a person was disabled in Old Norse and Icelandic saga literature. This may be in part due to the fact that European literature of the time and all the way up to the Romantic era did not provide for a narrative shared sympathy

²⁰ Although there are words in Old Norse-Icelandic, such as *óþærr* and *örkuml*, which impart the idea of disability, they do not represent the breadth and depth that the modern and medical concept of disability does, and they generally refer to physical disability or impairment.

through witnessing a loss. This is to say that although a limb may be severed in a scene, there is no sadness expressed in the text over the loss of the limb. Debjani Ganguly coins this idea in the term “melancholic realism,” and although it does not refer directly to impairment or disability, it does provide insight into the lack of background information in saga literature.²¹

History of Disability Studies

The field of disability studies has existed in various forms over the last century. It started out within the field of history of medicine and science. In following the medical model of the study of disability, early research looked at disability through the eyes of the physician, viewing disabilities as solvable problems and not viewing the rights of the individual as a person with a disability. One scholar, who redefined disability and people with disabilities into a more modern concept, was Owsei Temkin. In his book, *The Falling Sickness: A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology (1945; 1951)*, he introduces the history of epilepsy and the ancient Greek view of the condition. Such studies helped to move the areas of history of medicine and historical aspects of disability studies forward, but they are also lacking in that they are deeply steeped in the medical sciences and not the social sciences. With the advent of the social model—two decades after Temkin’s book—the focus turned even more to the person, putting the person first, and examining how society acted on the person and the impairment.

After World War II, and especially after the atrocities committed on people with impairments during the Nazi and other fascist regimes, scholars started to research the

²¹ For further discussion on this, see Debjani Ganguly’s forthcoming book (2016).

general rights of the individual, focusing on those with impairments and how they could live most actively and interact with society. Individuals with similar impairments and disabilities also started to form groups and then movements to ensure their rights in society and in an effort to lessen the way society disabled them. This was the burgeoning of the field of disability studies and was simultaneous to and central to the study of other minority rights groups, such as women and gender studies, queer studies, studies of minority cultures, etc. The field itself did not break away into its own entity until the late 1990s, and is still in many ways associated with other minority group studies.

One of the first scholars to examine the concept of disability and its effects on the rights of the individual was Michel Foucault. He examined behavioral impairments and disabilities, such as psychosis, and their history going back to the Middle Ages. In his later studies, he also examined sexuality, sexual deviance, and their histories. His impact on the field of disability studies—as with many other minority studies fields—advanced the social model to a point closer to what it is today.

Foucault studied France and engaged in a more focused way with the institutional idea of disability and people with disabilities. In his work, he also presented the idea of biopower. Foucault defines biopower as the way to control people as a large group. It is the sole privilege of the modern nation state to “make live or let die.” This is juxtaposed to the medieval concept of control, which is congruent to the Roman notion to “let live or make die,” as expressed by the power of a monarch, (Foucault 1977, 54-57, 76-78).

Beginnings of Studies of Disability in Pre-Modern Europe

Pre-Modern Europe, specifically the Classical Age, has been the focus of studies such as Martha Rose's monograph, *The Staff of Oedipus* (2003). In her work, she creates a general landscape of disability in ancient Greece. She then concentrates on the following specific areas: exposure of physically disabled babies, stuttering and overcoming impairment, deafness, degrees of blindness.

Rose's studies are taken from ancient texts; her study provides a strong level of comparability to the studies conducted in this dissertation. The most prominent aspect of comparison is the fact that both societies practiced the exposure of children. Exposure in the Nordic countries became technically illegal after the conversion to Christianity. Early post-conversion legal texts from Norway and Iceland still allow exposure, if the baby is witnessed as physically deformed and has been baptized before the exposure.

Another aspect, which Rose presents in her monograph, is the question of what a term, in this case blind, really means. Textual references to blindness in many cases do not explain the degree of blindness. A person or a character could be described as blind, but the range of the impairment could run the gamut of not being able to distinguish people at a distance to not even being able to see light.

Continuations of Studies of Disability in Medieval Europe

Scholars use the idea of biopower in disability as well as other minority studies to examine the way that people were utilized for their ability to work. These studies focus anything from the beginning of time and up until the present. In the last two decades, scholars have begun focusing on historical studies of disability. Pre-modern studies

focusing on the medieval era tend to focus on Europe and are by far and large concentrated on France and England.

Studies on disability in the Middle Ages also tend to focus on particular impairments, with a large number of them examining blindness. The sources for the studies tend toward governmental/court documents and religious texts. The importance of manner of society and place, as presented above, are key in understanding how society in Iceland worked in comparison to France and England during the same time. Disability studies focusing on the Middle Ages is an expanding field. Notable scholars of disabilities in the medieval European context include Henri-Jacques Stiker, Zina Weygand, Mark P. O'Tool, Edward Wheatley, Abigail Elizabeth Comber, and Irina Metzler. However most scholars focus on mainland Europe, and do not discuss disability in medieval Nordic countries in any detail in their work.

Henri-Jacques Stiker's *A History of Disability* (1999) is an English translation of his 1997 edition of the original, *Corps infirmes et sociétés* (1982), which took the historical difference in bodies as its foundation to understand the significance of disability in Western civilization. Stiker claims that there is "no disability, no disabled, outside precise social and cultural constructions," instead of forwarding the notion that disability is an inherent part of biological organisms (Stiker 1999, 4). Rather than looking at the past from the present, he theorizes about the culture of the present of the study by examining the past. He sets the stage for many later scholars and the current notion of disability studies, but his study does not give a sense of what disability was before the modern era.

A second study to come out of France and on France is Zena Weygand's *The Blind in French Society: From the Middle Ages to the Century of Louis Braille* (2009),

originally *Vivre sans voir. Les aveugles dans la société française du Moyen Age au siècle de Louis Braille* (2003). Weygand's study establishes the royal and then governmental creation of institutions for people with sensory impairments and the attempts to integrate the blind into society. She presents the history starting with the medieval idea of charity for the beneficence of the king, a time where giving alms was encouraged and a main way for the blind to earn money. This tradition moves slowly into teaching the blind to work and finally to educating the blind and using modes, such as the Braille alphabet, to educate the blind. The study includes chapters on fictional representations of the disabled, as well as chapters on the creation of institutes, hospices, and schools for the blind and the reason for the creation, as well as their changing purposes.

Continuing Weygand's study of society, but focusing on institution is Mark P. O'Tool. In his dissertation *Caring for the Blind in Medieval Paris: Life at the Quinze-Vingts, 1250-1430* as well as the article "Disability and Suppression of Historical Identity: Rediscovering the Professional Backgrounds of the Blind Residents of the *Hôpital des Quinze-Vingts*" (2010), he examines blind people in medieval France, the courtly government of the time, and the creation of the hospital *Quinze-Vingts*. He then discusses the residents of *Quinze-Vingts* and their usefulness to society and the governmental intervention with the Church to help the blind to become more useful.

This analysis is an example of the Foucauldian notion of biopower, where the state can harness the usefulness of the blind worker to its advantage. He also examines Foucault's studies of hospitals "by analyzing them within contemporary discourses of power and authority to argue that they can reveal how societies create and repress their own cultural anxieties," (Caring, 2). Hospitals were not available in a large-scale

operation in non-urban societies like settlement-era Iceland; society did try to harness the power of the individual to be productive. This is comparable, but there is no discussion of social welfare during the Viking Age in the genre, so it is not entirely analogous.

Edward Wheatley bridges different medieval conceptions of disability, specifically blindness, in his monograph *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (2010). His theoretical framework is a comparison of different locations, different groups of people, and blindness as a symbol in both places. His comparisons look at differences in French and English societies, Jewish and Christian depictions, comedy, sexual transgression, as well as religious interactions with blindness and curing blindness.

Wheatley's comparisons help the reader understand the finer nuances of depictions of blindness in multiple areas and among different groups, and his analysis of humor and satirizing the blind is especially important to this dissertation. Wheatley shows examples of many characters who are blind in literature and song, and in many cases the blind are depicted as being foolish as well, (Wheatley 2010). This notion sheds light particularly on Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, who feigns cognitive disability in order to evade his attackers, and at the same time he provides a bit of comic relief to the reader.

Narrative Prosthesis is a theory introduced in David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder article by the same name. There they define narrative prosthesis as, "as shared characteristics in the literary representation of disability," (Mitchell and Snyder 2013, 222). In the article, Mitchell and Snyder describe the idea that descriptions of inner

aspects of a character, such as being outside the norm or the normal, can be manifested through physical disability. They describe the concept in the following way:

Our thesis centers not simply upon the fact that people with disabilities have been the object of representational treatments, but rather that their function in literary discourse is primarily twofold: disability pervades literary narrative, first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device. We term this perpetual discursive dependency upon disability narrative prosthesis. Disability lends a distinctive idiosyncrasy to any character that differentiates the character from the anonymous background of the “norm.”...Physical and cognitive anomalies promise to lend a “tangible” body to textual abstractions; we term this metaphorical use of disability the materiality of metaphor and analyze its workings as narrative...We contend that disability's centrality to these two principal representational strategies establishes a conundrum: while stories rely upon the potency of disability as a symbolic figure, they rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions, (Ibid.).

Mitchell and Snyder examine “The Steadfast Tin Soldier” and Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* in the article. Their insight allows for interesting discussion, but it is hard to correlated to the medieval situation.

Abigail Elizabeth Comber continues the discussion in her article, “Medieval King ‘Disabled’ by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of Richard III,” exemplifies scholarship whereby literary works are considered central to understand impairment and societal views of people with disabilities. Comber examines Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and the theory of narrative disabling as seen through his hunchback in the play. She applies Metzler’s notion of the influences of the Bible, drama, and law to examine the play and states that even though the play is written in the early modern period, it has an “inherited medieval past,” (Comber, p. 183). She argues that “it is only through contextualizing *Richard III* in terms of the medieval climate inherited by Shakespeare that we can come to understand, not only how the early modern age gave birth to *Richard III*, but the meaning to be found in its metaphors,” (Ibid).

Comber discusses the concept of what David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder call “narrative prosthesis,” where a disability satisfies the literary function of outwardly showing something that is not visually perceptible in a person. Narrative prosthesis, used in productions of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* to portray Richard III as evil, is seen through later depictions of him being disabled. The fact that this appears in more modern productions makes it difficult to demonstrate social reality in either the Middle Ages or the Early Modern era. Comber’s analysis of whether or not Richard III was actually deformed, or if it was a construct of his personality in the play, is very comparable to studies of impaired characters in Chapters 3 and 4, such as Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. Because of the lack of further texts describing such impairments, it is impossible to surmise if the descriptions of the impairments could be true. Within contexts of saga literature, there are situations where narrative prosthesis is used. It is unclear if the composer uses it wittingly or unwittingly. It is never used as a punishment or emblem of sin. In two cases, it is used as a depiction of superhuman ability, about characters who are cursed. In another case, it is used to show grace.²²

Irina Metzler examines disability in medieval Europe. Her groundbreaking work, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages, c.1100-1400* (2006), studies the culture of impairment and disabling in medieval Europe. Her publications find their theoretical basis in Foucault, Goffman and Stiker. She creates an understanding of pre-Modern disability by locating impairment and disability in their historical specificity. Metzler begins by presenting a lexicographic study of language through terms found in Latin as a starting point to identify medieval perception

²² Examples of narrative prosthesis are found and discussed in chapter four in the close readings of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Harðar saga* as well as *Hreiðars þáttr*.

of disability itself and what modern aspects of disability are lacking in those terms. From that vantage point, she challenges many of these “presentist” concepts and alters them to fit to the medieval model, which helps the reader understand how disability was different in its time.

Metzler examines medieval theoretical concepts of impairment, medieval beliefs and practices of medicine and natural philosophy, and medieval miracles and impairment, as described in hagiographic texts. As with many writings of the time, religion is at the center of the texts she examines. Metzler presents the disparity between clergy who wrote about sin and impairment being interrelated, and the laity who had little access to these writings. She concludes that the general population did not actually associate disability with punishment for the sins of the individual or the family of the individual. She states that in the New Testament, where Jesus performs miracles by curing impairments, there is little mention of sin associated with the impairment. The ambiguity, she states, is found in the religious dialogue of the time.

Although there is a more finite time span and place in Metzler’s work, there are only a few references to Nordic cultures. This may be due possibly to the fact that Metzler’s study focuses on Latin, and the judicious use of Latin among the laity in mainland Europe is not found in the North. Metzler also interweaves religion—the field of her own background—into the study. Although this aspect is very important for mainland Europe, the settlement era of Iceland does not have only one religion, and there is a marked difference between the genres of clerical writing and saga literature. Key to Metzler’s study is the notion that the cultural influences of the Bible, law, and drama influence medieval society. This can be taken directly into the study of Iceland at the

point when the sagas were written down,²³ with a marked regard toward the Bible and its influence.

The structure and theoretical models of Metzler's work are very helpful in understanding medieval impairment and disability in mainland Europe and even how to begin work on the Nordic countries, especially following the idea that "disability has no 'inherent meaning' outside of culture," (Metzler 2001, 9). However, it is very difficult to examine her study on England and France—countries with much more complete medical, governmental, and ecclesiastical systems—and compare her ideas with Iceland, a newly settled land with farms, no cities, a beginning ecclesiastical structure, and a very laissez-faire government.

Studies of Disability in Medieval Iceland

Two scholars focus on disability in medieval Iceland: Lois Bragg,²⁴ and John Sexton. In order to examine their works, it is important to keep medieval Icelandic societal expectations and needs in mind. These societal expectations and needs create a framework for how disabilities were received. The framework includes the economic culture and practices of the society in addition to the population and density of different locations of the society. The Middle Ages were the first time that large cities outside the Mediterranean region appeared in Europe. Places like Paris, London, Prague and Aachen were centers of non-agrarian mercantilism, trade, and government. Even in the North, larger towns started to appear in Hanseatic cities, such as Bergen, Norway; Stockholm,

²³ Even though the setting of sagas is before Christianization, there are numerous examples of sagas being culturally and textually Christianized when they were written down.

²⁴ Lois Bragg is now known as Edna Edith Sayers, though I refer to her here and in the following by her former name, to avoid confusion.

Sweden; Malmö and Falsterbo, Denmark (now in Sweden, etc. In medieval Iceland, there were no towns—only farmsteads and collections of farms—and the society was almost wholly based on shipping, agriculture, and fishing. This trend continues to be true today, with the exception of Reykjavik and Akureyri; Reykjavik and Akureyri are the only place considered a city in Iceland, followed by a number of towns and villages.

Government and representation, along with culture and population, are also important. Unlike France, England, and even Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, Iceland had a republican form of government after settlement until 1262 when it was annexed to Norway and later Denmark. This form of government was very different from the forms of monarchy- or kingship-based government of the time. The small size, the needs of the population, and the lack of a centralized fund from the church or state did not allow for the creation of specialized hospitals, as found in England and France.

Colin Barnes discusses the importance of looking at the setup and culture of society and how it affects society's view of impairment and people with impairments in his article, "A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People." His study speaks volumes to the agrarian medieval Icelandic culture of disability:

Some writers have suggested that cultural intolerance of disability and disabled people can be explained by reference to the economy. For example, our distant ancestors lived in such a harsh environment that there was little opportunity to support individuals with impairments who could not take care of themselves, but with the advent of relatively stable communities able to produce an economic surplus through the development of agriculture, such an analysis becomes difficult to sustain. (Barnes 2010, 20).

The spirit of this citation is echoed throughout the literary texts found in medieval Iceland. It is demonstrated in the difficulty of the survival of people who had no physical or cognitive limitations, let alone those who did. Unfortunately, such an important theory

is under-discussed in what little is written about disability and impairment in medieval Icelandic society.

Lois Bragg discusses how medieval Icelandic society looked at impairment and people with impairments in her book, *Oedipus Borealis: The Aberrant Body in Old Icelandic Myth and Saga* (2004), and her article, “From the Mute God to the Lesser God: Disability in Medieval Celtic and Old Norse Literature” (1997). Both publications present a macro-level analysis of disabilities with a focus primarily on those that are macabre or grotesque in their descriptions. Her main contribution is her way of turning attention to medieval Icelandic society and examining society in specific instances. Her choice of texts and the disabilities she discusses are limited. They render her research unable to understand society as a whole, and it does not address the economic notions of society’s reaction to impairment.

Bragg uses the social model of disability studies and does not pay attention to other models. She draws on ancient Greek, Old English, and Old Irish texts, but primarily on a large corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, including mythical-heroic sagas, Sagas of Icelanders, *Heimskringla*, Eddic poems, *Grágás*, and romances. She focuses on thematic disabilities, such as weakness or physical disability, as a precursor to or symbol for homosexuality or other behavior considered aberrant at the time. She establishes an understanding—albeit a deficient one—of views and descriptions of disabilities in both pre- and post-Christian medieval Nordic society.

While Bragg presents an in-depth analysis of many unclear terms in her monograph, her study, with all its achievements, is selective in its focus and therefore does not provide a full cultural understanding of disabilities and people with

disabilities.²⁵ Certain terms selected, such as *berserkr* (berserk)²⁶ and *kolbíttr* (coal-biter)²⁷ remain vague in their usage. Nonetheless, these terms—at the very least—present the characters as being outsiders, which puts them at par with characters with disabling impairments. This paves the way to think through the insider/outsider model.

While Bragg focuses on themes found throughout Old Norse-Icelandic literature and law, John Sexton highlights naming conventions and the medieval Icelandic use of bynames and nicknames in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. He has written extensively on disability in Old English literature. In his article, “Difference and Disability: On the Logic of Naming in the Icelandic Sagas,” he discusses naming conventions in Iceland and then all bynames and nicknames used in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.

Sexton begins by analyzing some of the aspects presented by Bragg in her book. His discussion of disability, however, is rather limited in that he focuses only on bynames and nicknames. Sexton shows that bynames and nicknames were used to distinguish people in a place where given and patronymic naming practices could cause confusion due to the smaller pool of names available. These bynames and nicknames could be descriptive of physical attributes, ability, or disability, mental ability or disability, job, etc. He presents the idea that bynames and nicknames are a good source for finding

²⁵ I only interact with specific examples from her book in this dissertation.

²⁶ Bragg (2004) discusses *berserkr* in the context of *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. She also includes it in a chapter entitled “Sundry Odd Characters.” In the chapter, as its title suggests, the term is included among many other random descriptions. This chapter seems more to be a collection of characters who are outsiders, than a study on disability.

²⁷ Likewise, Bragg (2004) discusses *kolbíttr* in the context of *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, as well as in the chapter “Sundry Odd Characters.”

characters, who existed outside the norms of society, as well as those who represented the ideals of society.²⁸

Conclusion

In sum, extant studies on disabilities in medieval literature from Iceland and elsewhere beg new questions. What can a lexicographic study of terminologies describing disabilities and people with disabilities provide the field? If the sources of native texts from Iceland in the Middle Ages are as comprehensive in comparison to those of countries further south in Europe, why are they not studied along with those texts? What will these findings tell the reader about the societies they describe?

So far in disability studies, there has not been a comprehensive linguistic analysis of terms across a genre to describe impairments and disabilities in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. For this reason, there is no adequate understanding of societal reactions to impairment based on sagas. In addition, there is no comprehensive understanding of terminology for impairment and the cultural disabling of characters. Extant studies, such as those by Lois Bragg and John Sexton, may help the reader understand how a particular person or character was viewed by society, but they do not offer an understanding of how the idea of disability was constructed in medieval Icelandic society.

Although most of the current study centers on what is considered today as codified literature, I seek to provide a narrative on the societal understanding of disability. A comprehensive study of lexicographic terms serves to understand how society viewed disability. If one keeps in mind not only the words used to describe

²⁸ An analysis of bynames and Sexton's work is found in chapter three.

disabilities, but also how the affected persons were described, it is possible to develop as complete an understanding as possible of the view of disability in the medieval North. This has not been done before.

Theories used in the field of disability studies—regardless of the area or era being studied—are certainly helpful in the current study, without direct application. The differences in settlement era Iceland and its unique culture make studies of contemporary societies from elsewhere difficult; however, it is not impossible. An added complication is the fact that the extant information about life in medieval Iceland is not always complete.

The genre of saga literature is so different from the writings elsewhere in Europe, that possibly it is too difficult to present a comprehensive, comparative examination. That is not to say that certain areas cannot be interwoven. Particularly conspicuous is the difficulty of comparing the culture of the newly Christianized North with lands which had converted several centuries earlier, as well as the fact that mainland Europe had kings, whereas Iceland did not at the time of the setting of the sagas.

The contemporary view of the Middle Ages is also one that has changed since the foundation of historical studies of the times. The gaps in information about life during the Middle Ages have made it challenging to understand everyday life. There is no simple remedy for this, which makes inter-textual and interdisciplinary examination crucial to this project.

To sum up, the distinct theoretical frameworks of the groups discussed above need to be incorporated in order to conduct a productive inquiry of disabilities in medieval Iceland. Scholars who helped to create the understanding of impairment and

disability, such as Davis, Shakespeare, as well as organizations like UPIAS, provide the theoretical foundation for this dissertation. They enable an analysis of texts considered in the following chapters. In addition, their frameworks provide impetus for an examination of how law considered people with impairments. Included in this group are also people who help inform the basic understanding of disability studies through their work, but do not work specifically in the field itself. Second, using the theories of disability scholars, who successfully show practices of the study of disability in the Middle Ages, aids in creating a structure that can be of use in the Medieval North. These scholars include Metzler, Wheatley, O'Tool, Weigand, Comber, and Barnes.

Finally, scholars who work specifically with disability in medieval Iceland and in Old Norse-Icelandic literature provide insight into specific examples of impairment and disability. The theoretical structure that the scholars Sexton and Bragg use in their studies does not provide the conclusive information that a linguistic and lexicographical study of terms dealing with impairment and disability could provide. At the same time, analyses of individual cases and descriptions can be incorporated into the discussion and provide for points of comparison. In addition to Sexton and Bragg, are scholars of broader medieval Scandinavian literary and cultural studies, like Jochens, Kellogg, and Clover.

All of the above-listed theories create a configuration, which, when put together, form a mosaic of theories: the various parts and pieces allow me to consider more particular aspects of medieval Icelandic culture and society. The other option would be to try to fit the results and excerpts into contexts used for another place, like medieval France, England, or even modern America. This would be of no help in trying to understand medieval Icelandic society and disability more than what is currently known.

The insights provided from the variety of theories enable a more fruitful examination of literary texts, lexicographical studies, character analyses, and close readings of the Sagas and *Pættir* of Icelanders.

Chapter 2 –Quantitative and Lexicological Analyses of Impairment and Disability in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

Introduction

The best way to understand impairment and disability as represented by the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders from a macro perspective is a thorough a study of the use and frequency of terms relating to impairment and disability in the texts. Accordingly, I have excerpted a list of terms relating to impairment. This involves not only collecting and listing all terms used to describe impairments and possible disabilities, but also any background or speculative information found in the text.

For each term I list a translation as it has been rendered in the authoritative Leifur Eiriksson edition of the *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* (CSoI), unless stated otherwise. In some cases, where translations were not available, I have offered my own. In a number of cases, I disagree with the wording or sense of the translation in CSoI, yet I cite it here as an aid to the reader/researcher dependent on translated versions of the sagas. My tabulation involves counting the number of instances that each word appears, but placing multiple instances of the same term under evidentiary support, when they are found in the same chapter.

The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders contain no fewer than 410 terms and descriptions of impairments. Of these, 49 (12%) are related to cognitive impairments, while the rest are either physical or physical with cognitive attributes. Purely physical and sensory impairments make up the vast majority of terms with over 350 instances (85%), of which 48 (12%) are sensory and 302 (74%) are ambulatory. Included among these are impairments both disabling and not. They are impairments, which were received at birth, in battle, due to degeneration, by accident, or due to unknown circumstances. The list of

impairments found in Appendix III and IV is further divided according to where on the body the impairment presented physically or if it presented cognitively.

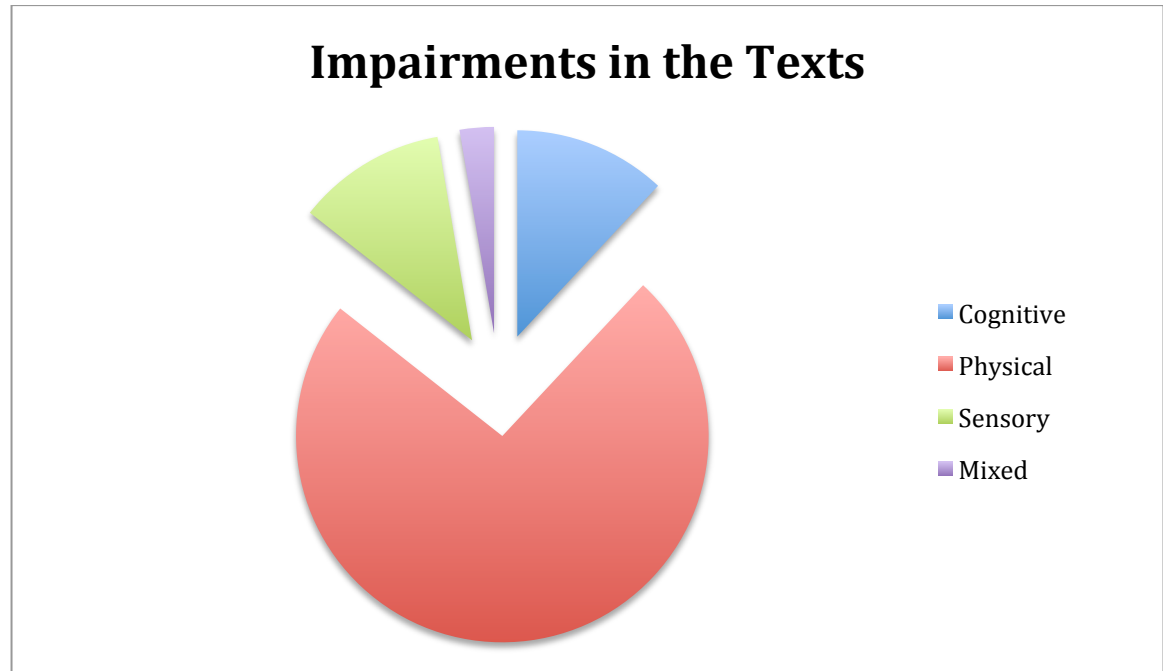
All of the portrayals, which are physical with cognitive attributes, relate to textual examples where it is unclear what kind of impairment, if any, to which the author is referring. For example, terms such as *rísi* (rendered as *risakyni*; giant; noun, 1),²⁹ *dvergr* (dwarf; noun, 6), *tröll* (troll; noun, 53), etc., refer to a person's physicality, but the specific aspects of the person's physique are not understood. One does not know if *tröll* refers to a mythical beast, an ugly person, a stupid person, or a combination of these. One might assume that *dvergr* refers to a dwarf, much as it does today, but what is the difference between *dvergr* and *smáskitlegr* (puny; adjective, 2) or *lítill* (little; adjective, 1)? Are there other physical features or perhaps even cognitive features related to *dvergr*?

The vast majority of the more than 410 references leaves the reader unaware as to whether the terms are simply impairments or if they are disabling. A number of the main characters in the texts are described using more than one term, or at least with substantial background of information.³⁰ These characters' impairments are the easiest to analyze, and 16 of them are discussed in depth in chapter three, and six characters are further analyzed through close readings in chapter four.

²⁹ Here and in the following of all words mentioned for the first time, the number after the definition refers to the number of times it is found in the corpus of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, as well as the part of speech.

³⁰ I count each individual instance of a word, even if they describe the same person. With bynames, I count each instance only once, unless the character is found in more than one text.

Figure I – Impairments Found in the Texts



The register of some terms may seem harsh at times. Terms, such as *tröll*, *haltr* (lame; adjective, 7), and *fiðl* (idiot; noun, 7), would not be used in the more sensitive parlance of today. When translated, they are kept in the original for the following reasons:

- Many times, the reader is unaware of the exact meaning of the term used.
- They are historically accurate depictions of what the recordr meant and should be preserved as they are.
- The analyses conducted on these words need to be done on the original, and the reader of the dissertation needs to understand the true meaning of the words.

The terms excerpted are found at the end of the chapter in three tables. Appendix III, part I, is provided to show the process of the excerption of terms that are included in the complete list of terms found in Appendix III, part II. Appendix IV is a list of bynames/nicknames found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. The list of

bynames/nicknames is excerpted from a list of all characters found in the Leifur Eiriksson edition of the *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*.

The two examples found in Appendix III, part I, illustrate excerpted words with all the information gathered in the process. Included are the paragraphs of text from which the items were taken in the Íslenzk Fornrit edition [ÍF], Svart á Hvítu edition [ÍS] and the Magarøy edition of *Bandamanna saga*³¹ for Old Norse-Icelandic and the Leifur Eiriksson edition of the English translations of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. Because of the sheer magnitude of the information in each entry, it is impossible to include all the information in the tables; the chapter and paragraph numbers have been noted for each term in Appendix III, part II, corresponding to the Old Norse-Icelandic version so that the information may be referenced.

The complete set of terms in Appendix III, part II, includes:

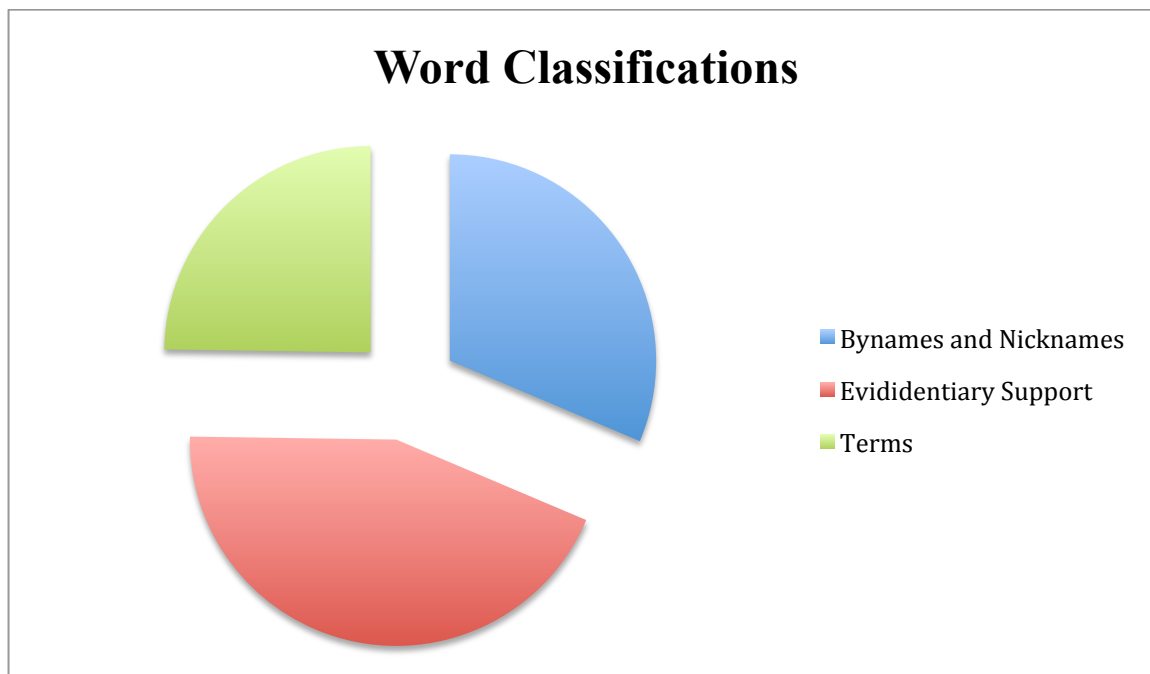
- An identifying number
- The Old Norse-Icelandic term
- The English translation
- The source text (with volume, chapter, page and line number for each item, providing location of the item in the text)
- A keyword (the area of the character affected by the impairment).
- The part of speech and kind of word or description it is.

The classification of terms and descriptions into groups according to similarities to what they portray allows for analysis from different perspectives. The two classifiers are “keyword” and “kind.” “Kind” is included to allow the user to understand what type of word or description is listed. The three possibilities for the label are “evidentiary support,” “nicknames/bynames,” and “terms.” Evidentiary support is the largest group with 239 instances (58% of the total corpus of 410 terms). Nicknames/bynames comprise

³¹ See appendix I for which sagas and þættir are found in which of the three editions.

the second-largest group at 171 items (42% of the total corpus. There are 135 instances (33% of the corpus), which fit into the category of “terms.” Some excerpted terms received more than one label. The percentages below are based on the total of 410 excerpted terms. Instances of evidentiary support generally include situations where a minor character becomes or is already impaired. In this situation, nothing else is mentioned about the nature of the impairment, the quality of the character’s life, or when there is nothing clear enough to establish as a term for an impairment. There are too many instances to include all items in the list, so items that are speculative have been removed. Many speculative terms, however, are included in the commentary of this chapter. They are used in general discussions of impairments and in the section on nicknames/bynames.

Figure II – Word Classifications



Evidentiary support includes instances where the term is speculative and the reader is not entirely able to understand aspects of the impairment. These aspects include

the severity, the degree of impact, and the ability of the character to live with the impairment. The terms designated as evidentiary support provide information about the fact that impairment occurred, that characters lived with such impairment, and how characters are described otherwise. In these situations, the reader does not know if the impairment is disabling or not. Some common examples of such occurrences are impairments of minor characters in battle scenes and nicknames/bynames/epithets given to minor characters. This study recognizes evidentiary support to be a way to show that impairment was a more common event than solely in cases where main characters are impaired or disabled.

The classifier “kind” keeps words and descriptions closely linked to each other in terms of where or how the impairment manifested: age, arm, core, eye, feigning, general cognitive, general physical, head/hearing, healing, foot/leg, mouth/speech, and physicality/disposition. Some of these keywords may seem problematic. An example is age. The fact that a character is older does not guarantee that he or she was impaired or even disabled, but since some were, they are included.³²

Two keywords, foot and leg, are combined in Appendix III; they were originally kept separate because there are many instances where just the foot, ankle or toes were chopped off. During the analysis, it became too difficult to know where in the leg a person was impaired. In this chapter, the classifier “kind” is used solely to collate instances and not to distinguish areas of the leg; both foot and leg appear under leg in the findings later in this chapter.³³

³² The problematics of age and impairment are discussed further in the analysis on age below.

³³ It is noteworthy that sometimes there is also ambiguity. A word like *fótr* (foot) is also sometimes translated as leg, as in the name Qnundr Tréfótr.

The goal of the chapter is to create a precise understanding of the meaning of the terms. Figuring out the nuances of the meaning of the words is not always exact because of the length of time between the time when the sagas were written and the present. In addition, the researcher and the reader cannot always be sure if the terminologies for impairment are considered disabling. For this reason, it is important to examine the context of the word to analyze the descriptions of physical and cognitive/emotional impairments and bynames, nicknames or epithets. While it is impossible to assess if every description or term for an impairment was disabling, it can be determined whether or not the character was considered an insider or an ideal member of society.

Disability and Terms for Disability

As Irene Metzler's quote on page 20 about Latin words for impairment and disability shows, the notion of impairment was not solidified in any comparable way to what it is today. Her observations of Medieval Latin can be applied to Old Norse-Icelandic terms. Comparing Medieval Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic to Modern English is a problematic undertaking, since the two medieval languages were not actively borrowing from each other in the area of sciences and health, so if a notion existed in one language, it may not directly correlate in the other.

One example of a word in Old Norse-Icelandic not found in the Latin lexicon is *orkuml* (a physical impairment/scar leaving one crippled or maimed; noun, 4). The term *orkuml* presents the idea of an entirely physical impairment, as the word means a strengthened or heightened sign, badge or mark. Unlike the words in Latin, *orkuml* cannot mean anything else, like sick or infirm.

In addition, both *ófærr* (incapable; adjective, 8) and *óvigr* (not in a fighting state, not serviceable, incapacitated; adjective, 2) are translated as incapacitated. *Ófærr* refers to the fact that a person is unable (*ó* meaning “not” and *færr* meaning “able”). The word occurs in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, which relates that Gunnlaugr does not go on a journey because he is incapacitated. The injury is not permanent, as he is homebound only for a short while.

Óvigr (*ó* meaning “not” and *vigr* meaning “in a fighting state or serviceable”) describes Þrándr after Grettir sliced Þrándr’s leg open in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*; the term means that the wound left Þrándr incapable of fighting further, (*ÍF*, vol. VII, 715). According to the 1874 edition of *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, there is one instance of a word having been translated as disability; it is listed in the entry *van-*, describing the word *van-færi*.³⁴ The term is found in *Stjórn*, the name given to a text containing three Old Norse-Icelandic translations of the Old Testament. The word is not used about cognitive disabilities, impairments from birth, or impairments that produce no visible scars.

Even more unspecific are terms for concrete cognitive disabilities. They did not exist in the Middle Ages or even up until very recently. The lack of medical science generally caused a grouping of numerous disabilities together. A character with a cognitive disability is often described as having *sótt* (sickness; noun, 155) or being a *fiðl* (idiot; noun, 4), or with some other similar but unspecific term. Sometimes a description of a character’s development or growth is given (usually being slow to grow), typically

³⁴ I do not think that the term refers to the contemporary sense of disability, but it is translated as such.

alongside a physical trait, such as ugly, strong, big, etc. This will be discussed further in the following chapter on analyses of characters with impairments and disabilities.

Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities

Ambulatory impairments and disabilities are usually much easier to identify in texts such as the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders because they manifest physically and are noticeable even from a distance. Even if the reader does not know the precise cause of the impairment, the area affected and the severity is more likely to be mentioned. The following is a discussion of terms for ambulatory impairments as well as some terms that are more evidentiary than describing specific impairments. Because all of the information is found in the tables in Appendices III and IV, citations are not provided for every word treated in the discussions that follow. After the general discussion come arms and legs as limbs; and finally age, which manifests both as ambulatory and sensory; accordingly it serves also to bridge the two sections.

There is no precedence or importance given to one group over another. After discussion of terms relating to ambulatory impairments come those relating to sensory and then cognitive impairments. The reason for putting physical descriptions first is that they are the largest and most frequently found group and therefore help establish an ethos for the more obscure terms found as sensory and most especially cognitive impairments and disabilities.

General Physical Impairments and Disabilities

Terminology referring to non-specific or general physical impairments and disabilities is extensive in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. Terms, such as *sár* (wound; noun, 330), *barðr* (injured, beaten; adjective, 2), *mein* (hurt, harm, pain; noun, 1), *móðr*

(weary, weak; adjective, 1, and *verkr* (pain, ache; noun, 2) are all used to describe various parts of the body, actions or feelings in the body, or the body in general. The terms *meiða* (maim; verb, 2), *meiddr* (maimed; adjective, 2), *brjóta* (break; verb, 1), and *lemjask* (to become lame; verb, 3) are used more specifically to describe the limbs. Although some of these are quite severe and could be impairing, none of these terms are specific enough in severity or quality on their own to warrant an automatic classification of being an impairment.³⁵

The terms *sár* (wound; noun) and *sárr* (sore; adjective) are found no fewer than 330 times. The use of the adjectival phrase *sárr mikill* (literally, very sore), the noun phrases in singular form (*sár mikið*) and plural (*sár mikil*) are found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders seven times. In addition, there are 21 examples of *sár mjök* (greatly wounded) and three examples of *allmikið sár* (very large wound or very much wounded [literally all-great wound or all-greatly wounded]). It is no wonder that with the many battles that are described there were many casualties and many impairments. Despite the fact that these terms are found in many places, they provide little insight into how the characters lived with their wounds, or how society reacted to possible impairment. For this reason, it is impossible to use these instances for anything other than statistical purposes.

As mentioned above, the contemporary concept of disability did not exist in medieval Iceland. The terms *óvígr* (physically impaired; adjective, 2) and *örkuml* (physical impairment; noun, 4) are examples of general physical impairments and

³⁵ Usually these descriptions relay wounds that have no other information, so it is not possible to know the effects that they had. Any exceptions are listed.

possibly disabilities. These words are used only to describe physical impairments that are a result of battle.

Arms

The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders describe many battles, where swords and spears are frequently used, leading to ambulatory impairments. The myriad possible descriptions of striking, cutting, injuring, maiming, breaking, and even severing arms and legs amount to 42 in evidentiary support. In most instances, the person is not a main character, and often the person is dealt the *banahogg* (death blow; noun, 62) afterward. There are, however, instances where a character does not receive a *banahogg*, survives, and is impaired or possibly disabled from the injury.

Of arm impairments, no instances show that the character described was disabled, only that the character was impaired. One can tell that losing an arm or hand can be impairing, but as demonstrated below, there is no reaction or supporting information in the text. In the case of legs, it is easier to tell if a person was disabled, because loss of the use of legs could lead to inability to engage in battle or loss of ambulatory ability. Examples of leg impairments and disabilities are described in the next section.

Arm impairments include the following terms: *handlauss* (handless; noun, 1), *lamdisk*³⁶ (became lame; medio-passive verb, 7) and *ónýtti hǫndina* (was unable to use the hand; noun phrase, 1). The term *handlauss* (handless; noun, 1) is used in the following poem recited by Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*: “Vald eigi þú vígi, / ves þú ótyrrinn, fyrri, / morðs við mæti-Njǫrðu, / mér heitið því, sleitu; / baugskyndir, hjalp blindum, / Baldr, hygg at því, skjaldar, / illt kveða háð ok hǫltum, / handlausum tý,

³⁶ The concept of lameness is not used solely about legs in Old Norse-Icelandic; it is also used for arms.

granda,” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 72-3). [“Do not be the first to kill, nor provoke into fight the gods who answer in battle. Give me your word on this. Help the blind and handless, ring-giver, shield of Balder. Beware, evil resides in scorn shown to the lame and needy,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 28).] The poem shows the disabling of impaired people through pity—those who are lame, blind, handless, and needy.

Another potential impairment is presented in *Laxdæla saga*. The text describes Þórólfr’s pain as follows: “Guðrún lét vel yfir ok var þá bundit um hǫndina Þórólfs. Greri hún seint ok varð honum aldregi meinlaus,” (*ÍF* vol. V, 154). [“Thorolf’s wounded arm was bandaged but took a long time healing and was always a handicap to him,” (*CSoI* vol. V, 79).]³⁷ It is not explained if the pain kept him from being productive, how bad the pain was, or if he was malingerer. This prevents the reader from understanding if it was truly disabling. The fine nuances of what is disabling are so difficult to understand that one sentence cannot explain where Þórólfr’s impairment falls. One can add this to the list of chronic illnesses or problems that become impairing over time.³⁸

In *Bjarnar saga hitdælakappa*, the protagonist is attacked at the end of the saga and just before his death. During the final battle, Björn is struck by Þórðr, who is seeking vengeance for the death of his brother. Þórðr hits Björn’s shield so that Björn’s arm breaks. The term used to describe the broken bone is not the usual *brotna* (break; verb, 43) but rather *ganga í sundr* (go to pieces [asunder]; verb phrase, 7). Björn dies at the end

³⁷ I disagree with the translator here, in that *aldregi meinlaus* (always painful [literally, never painless]) is not the word handicap in the contemporary sense, but rather, specifically “never painless.” This can arguably be a great impairment.

³⁸ A further example of impairments to arms is the description of Þormóðr in *Fóstbræðra saga*, which is discussed in detail in chapter four.

of the saga, so the extent of the impairment is unknown, but one can surmise that if the bone *gekk í sundr* (went to pieces) it was worse than a common break.

The final example is from *Brennu-Njáls saga*: “Grímr segir, at þar liggr øx ein ok horfir upp egginn. Grímr skriðr þangat til; hann getr skorit bogastrenginn af sér við øxinni, en þó fekk hann sár mikil á höndum;” (*ÍF* vol. XII, 222). [“Grim said that an axe was lying there with its edge pointing up. He crawled over to it and used it to cut the bowstring with which he was bound, but cut his arms badly,” (*CSoI* vol. III, 352).] The description details how Grímr received a wound by cutting his arms badly; it does not, however, describe the depth of the wound, the length of time it would take to recover from it, and if it would have any permanent impairing effects. It is impossible to draw any other conclusions, so the term can only be considered evidentiary to a possible impairment.

Legs

Disabilities and impairments to the legs are mentioned six times more often than those dealing with arms. As mentioned above, terms for impairments to the arm of a character are most commonly general physical descriptions relating to those who suffered afflictions during battle. This is also the case for legs, as the terms describe the wound or effect of the blow, not the limb itself.

Terms used to describe impairments to legs and the characters with impairments are *einfættr* (one-footed or one-legged; adjective, 3) *einfætingr*³⁹ (one-foot or one-leg; noun, 4), *haltr* (lame, walking with a limp, one who has been made lame; adjective, 36), *hamlaðr* (inhibited or maimed; adjective, 2), *hnekkja* (wound in battle, limp; verb, 8),

³⁹ The term *fótr* does not have the modern connotation of simply the foot up to the ankle, sometimes it refers to the foot and sometimes to the leg, especially up to the knee.

hrumr (degenerated, lame; adjective, 8), *ófærr* (incapacitated; unable; adjective), *óvigr* (unable to fight; adjective), and *stirðr* (stiff; adjective, 30). Some of these could be applied to arms as well. It must be noted that the nature of these terms does not always point to somebody who has a permanent or even long-term impairment.

Stiffness is an example of a word that may describe a temporary condition. This is not the case, however, in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, where Egill had very stiff legs at the end of his life. The stiffness is not a problem during his whole life, but it becomes permanent. Þormóðr, in *Fóstbræðra saga*, is also described as having legs that seemed to become stiff, when the weather changed, and in his case, the impairment almost cost him his life. In these cases, stiffness is part of a group of terms, much like age as well as the description of the term *mein* above, where chronic illness occupies the same space as impairment.

As mentioned above, problems with legs are difficult to hide, since they are easily seen in the gait of a person even from a great distance. Background information presented in the texts provides insight into many descriptions of leg impairments. One case where background information sheds light on the severity of an impairment is an unnamed man in *Eiríks saga rauða*, who is described as very fast and able to shoot and kill Þorvaldr. It is unclear, however, if this text refers to some mythical beast or a human, who is so fast that one can only see one leg. He is described as *einfaetingr* and not *einfaettr*. In this case, the term describes an impairment that seems to be severe, but a character who is not at all disabled.

In the case of the terms *einfaettr* and *einfaetingr*, the two characters described using these terms are all very able-bodied. The other example is Qnundr Tréfótr in *Grettis saga*

Ásmundarsonar.⁴⁰ He was considered to be a great warrior despite the loss of his leg. Neither of these three characters appears to be disabled.

Having one leg and not being able to walk properly seem to be linked, but the latter is actually more problematic. The terms *haltr*, *hnekkja*, and *hrumr* all describe the function of being unable to walk in a way that society sees as normal, i.e., having a limp, or limping. There are ten instances where the term *haltr* is used or is combined with other words to create words like *málhaltr* (stammer; adjective, 1).

In *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *hnekkja* is used to describe Þorkell, as he walked home after his leg had been broken during a wrestling match. It is clear that this was a permanent impairment because he is called Þorkell *Bundinfóti* (Bound-leg) after this point. *Hrumr* describes staggering or lameness, especially as a cause of age. It is found ten times in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders; *fóthrumr* is used to describe horses in *Ljósvetninga saga*, but it is never used to describe a human in the texts.

Regarding evidentiary support, there are many examples of the removal of legs which would lead to impairment: *höggva fót undan* (chop off leg; verb phrase, 2), *taka af fótinn* (chop off leg; verb phrase, 5 and 5 more with other verbs, such as *höggva*), *ganga í gegnum...ofan af honum þumaltána* (cut off his big toe; verb phrase, 1).⁴¹ In addition, there are some terms that are speculative in that one is not sure about the permanency of what is being described, such as legs that *brjóta* (break; verb) and wounds that *blása upp* (swell up; verb, 2). Note also *blástr* (infection, swelling; noun, 5) and *taka at grafa* (fester; verb, 1).

⁴⁰ Chapter four includes an in-depth analysis of Qnundr Trefót and if he was impaired or disabled.

⁴¹ Although a big toe is not as extreme as a foot, the big toe helps to keep the body stable during walking and without stiff shoes, walking would be seriously impaired without the big toe.

Age

Growing old can be quite difficult, and many times the manifestations of aging can be impairing and disabling. This is especially evident in times when there was little protection from the elements and few devices to help people get around. The Nordic medieval and especially pre-Christian notion of growing old suggests that society idealized dying before becoming a burden on others. There are five prose excerpts of terms for old age. In addition, there are three poems detailing the ills of old age.

All examples pertaining to age are found in three sagas: *Egil saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*. Each of the characters suffering from the effects of aging laments growing old. As mentioned above, old age is not an impairment or disability itself, but aging can cause impairments. In the monograph, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (2006), Irene Metzler clarifies the nuances that separate the effects of old age as being either disabilities or chronic illnesses: “There has been increasing recognition by theorists of disability of the overlap between disability and chronic illness... Most people in old age suffer some kind of chronic illness; hence most people in old age will at some point be disabled,” (Metzler 2001, 5-6). In medieval Iceland, there is no doubt that the effects of old age could be disabling.

The term *elli* (old age; noun, 3) is used to describe Melkorka’s nurse, who is so happy to see Melkorka’s son Óláfr that she rises from her bed, despite being “sick with age and illness.” She was unable to easily rise from bed as an unimpaired person would. This illustrates her impairment by the restrictions caused by old age and illness. In this case, exception is shown in order to describe the limits of the effects of age.

Four of the instances describe Egill at the end of his life in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*.⁴² Egill is described with two terms: *elli* (old age; noun) and *karl afgamall* (a decrepit [from old age] old man; noun phrase). Another term, *þungfærr* (frail; adjective, 2), is also used to depict Egill and his weakness and uselessness because of age. The phrase *hniginn á hinn efra aldr* (infirm with age; adjectival phrase, 5) is found in *Heiðarviða saga*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, and *Laxdæla saga*. The phrase does not describe the impairment of age in all instances.

The example from *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* is problematic on two counts. The specific words used, *hniginn á hinn efra aldr* (infirm with age), are problematic because they don't explain exactly what the issue is. Infirm can mean both that the problem is temporary and that it is a culmination of smaller problems. In addition, the words used in the context come from a part of the text, which was burned in the great Copenhagen fire in the early 18th century. The specific terms come from a retelling of the lost twelve leaves of the saga. The words also appear, however, in the non-burned text. Hávarðr is shown as being weak with age. In the passage, he also is described as being highborn, having a good history in vikingry and fighting. He is injured in battle and walks with a limp afterwards. He mysteriously makes a full recovery when he finally overcomes his son's death, after which he is able to walk unimpaired again.

Höskuldr in *Laxdæla saga* is not suffering from a disability. Since there is no description of what he suffered from in the text, the use of "*hniginn á hinn efra aldr*" is neutral and simply explains his age and the normal wear and tear on a person's body. Another example is Gellir Þorkelsson in *Laxdæla saga*, who at the end of his life prepares

⁴² Egill is one of the subjects of the character analysis in chapter three. See that discussion for more information.

to go on a voyage to Norway and Rome. He is said to be “hniginn mjök á hinn efra aldr,” (very infirm from old age). The plot uses his suffering from the effects of old age to make a point about his pilgrimage, showing that it is an honorable thing for an old man to do. In chapter three, there will be further discussion of the use of impairment as a way of showing a person’s worth.

Sensory Impairments and Disabilities

Sensory impairments and disabilities are not limited to those relating to age, but quite a number can manifest as the effects of old age. That being said, many instances of sensory impairments are found in people who are not old. Terms found in the group of sensory impairments relate to sight, hearing, speaking and implied impairments from head wounds. Impairments related to head wounds, similar to impairments resulting from aging, appear in more than one group; head wounds can cause impairments manifesting in the ambulatory, sensory, and cognitive impairment groups.

There are also many areas of the human ability to sense that are not included in the discussion. There are no instances of an impairment to a character’s ability to smell, taste or feel. The largest group of characters by far is those with impairments relating to the eyes.

Eyes

The impairments to vision fit into three categories: from age and for health reasons, from impairments from battle, and from unknown reasons. Of all eye problems, those that are the result of age and or health are by far the largest group. If more were known about a number of the unclear cases, it would be safe to say that the group describing problems related to age and health would be even bigger. The terms most used

are *sjónlauss* (sightless; adjective, 11) and *blindr* (blind; adjective, 12). Other terms are *eineygr* (one-eyed; adjective, 1), *óskyggn* (dim-sighted; adjective, 2), *súreygr* (blear-eyed; adjective, 1), and *sjónlítill* (poorly sighted; adjective, 1). All the terms related to sight can be determined to be impairing; they are also considered to be disabling, though there are some exceptions. The main exception is Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir in *Laxdæla saga*, who went blind at the end of her life. She is discussed at length in chapter three.

The terms *blindr* (blind; adjective) and *sjónlauss* (blind, literally sightless; adjective) may be synonymous. The two terms are synonymous in contemporary Icelandic and appear to be so in *Old Norse-Icelandic* as well. The 1963 edition of Menningarssjóður's *Íslensk orðabók: Handa skólum og almenningi* defines “blindur” as “sjónlaus, ósjáandi,” (53) [“sightless, not sighted,” translation my own]. There is no entry for “sjónlaus” itself; the word is made up of the root word *sjón*, which is defined as “þat skilningarvit, sem notar augun,” [“that sense, which uses the eyes,” translation my own,] and –laus, a prefix meaning less or without, (575).

Blindness, especially in pre-contemporary society, is often associated with age, as the eyes deteriorate over time, especially when subjected to poor lighting and nutrition. To see if *blindr* or *sjónlauss* specifically relates only to going blind from age, a search was conducted to see how many times *gamall* (old; adjective) was found within 10 words in a string from *blindr*. There are 12 instances of *blindr*, and five of these are used with *gamall*. *Sjónlauss* is found 11 times and all but one have the term *gamall* (old) within ten words of *sjónlauss*. The one instance where *gamall* is not found is in connection with Halli hinn hvíti in *Víga-Glúms saga*. Although it is unknown how he became blind, it is known that he is successful and considered to be wise. The fact he is wise and white-

haired, it is not a tremendous leap to assume that he once had sight. It must be noted, however, that the absence of *gamall* does not mean that the character was not older and might be suffering from age-related blindness.

With all of the gathered evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that *blindr* and *sjónlauss* both describe the inability to see. It is possible to define both terms as describing an impairment, which can be a result of age or ill health. It is impossible to ascertain if there was a difference in the meanings of *sjónlauss* and *blindr* in Old Norse-Icelandic in other situations.

The instances of characters who are described as having their sight taken from them are few, and only two terms are used: *stekka úr* (jab out; verb, 1) and *blinda* (to blind; verb, 5). There are also three instances of characters going blind very suddenly. In these cases, the blindness is not from battle, but rather from some sort of illness. In *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, “[Þorsteinn] tók augnaverð svá mikinn, at þar fyrir missti hann sjónina...,” (*ÍF* vol. XI, 6). [“It so happened that Thorstein the White developed such a serious eye condition that he lost his sight because of it,” (*CSoI* vol. IV, 304).] This “eye pain” is due to an unknown cause, but the root of the problem is not just pain.

Augnaverkr also appears in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, where Gestr suffers from the same pain. In this case, Bárðr causes it by putting his hand roughly on Gestr’s eyes, and as a result, Gestr’s eyes burst out, and he dies. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, it is told that people reported that: “fáar mílur gekk [Þorvarðr] þaðan frá, áðr hann missti auga síns af verk, en andaðisk síðan,” (*ÍF* vol. X, 103). [“[Þorvarðr] went a few miles further before he lost his eyes from pain and then died,” (*CSoI* vol. IV, 253).]

An interesting feature is the use of modifiers with terms related to impairments, and specifically to those relating to vision. *Blindr* is found with such modifiers as *hálf* (half) or *nær* (nearly), where the modifier is prefixed to the term. There is one instance where a modifier, *lítill* (little), is suffixed to *sjón*, to make *sjónlítill* (weak-sighted; adjective). In *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, the term *sjónlauss* also appears with the modifying phrase *með öllu* [completely]. There are no instances of *sjónlauss* having a prefix or an affix added.

Hearing

Like blindness, deafness and hearing impairments are impairments that may show up with age, but the terms can also refer to characters who are born or become deaf. There are three instances of *daufnr* (deaf; adjective, 3), meaning unable to hear. There are other examples, but those describe a situation not involving an impairment.

The medieval impairment of deafness, especially when it was onset from birth or childhood, was most definitely disabling, because of the lack of a unified sign language or other form of communication. Although it would be possible for a family to learn a way to communicate with a person deaf from birth, it would not be possible for the person to travel without a member of the family or language community acting as an interpreter. Interestingly, there are no examples of a deaf character.

In *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, Gísli has a dream in which a woman tells him that he should be kind to people with impairments: “ok vera vel við daufan ok haltan ok fátœka ok fáráða,” (ÍF, vol. VI, p. 70). [“ and to be kind to the deaf and the lame and the poor and the helpless,” (CSoI, vol. II, p. 27).] While the dream description in the saga does use the word deaf, it does not describe a particular person. Instead, it refers to any person

who is deaf. For that reason, it does not provide the same insightful information about a character who is deaf, and how that character interacts with and is treated by others. Another example is in *Fljótsdala Saga*, where the term deaf means stupid or deliberately unaware. Helgi chastises the worship of pagan gods, whom he describes as: “...blind ok dauf ok malleus, ok þat skil ek, at þau megu hvorki gjöra sér gagn né öðrum,” (*ÍF* vol. XI, 292). [“...both blind and deaf and dumb, and I know that they can do no good for themselves or for others,” (*CSoI* vol. IV, 430).] Deaf and dumb are here used as a single description.⁴³ It is not surprising that the two impairments are combined, because it was not until an education system was set up for the deaf that deaf people learned to speak. The final example is from *Laxdæla saga*, which describes Jórunn talking about Melkorka, a princess from Ireland, who had come as a slave, and in this case, her deafness is a result of not being able or perhaps willing to understand or speak with her masters.⁴⁴

The quote also resonates the Christian belief that non-Christian view that prayers to other gods are wholly unable to help people. This is seen in the Book of Psalms 115:5-8 about “other idols” and uses impairment to show that those gods—and by proxy those who make them and worship them—are entirely disabled: “They have mouths, but do not speak; / eyes, but do not see. / They have ears, but do not hear; / noses but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; / feet, but do not walk; / they make no sound in their throats. / Those who make them are like them; / so are all who trust in them” (Metzger and Murphy 1991, OT 775). This is reiterated in the Jerimiah 10:3-5:

⁴³ The emphasis here is mine. The term *bæði* (both) is used in Old Norse-Icelandic to mean both of two, not all of three or more.

⁴⁴ Melkorka and her feigned impairment are discussed at length in chapter three.

For the customs of the peoples are false: a tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an ax by the hands of an artisan, people deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good,” (Metzger and Murphy 1991, OT 978).

A phrase similar in meaning to *dauftr* (deaf; adjective) is the phrase *glapnaði heyrn* (failed hearing; hearing impaired; adjective, 1). In the one case of this, the term seems to be a result of growing old, much as it is today. It is told that, Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* loses his hearing at the end of his life, along with many other abilities. In the case of Egill, the reader cannot discern if it is his deafness or one of his many other impairments that society judges.

Mouth/Speech

Much akin to hearing problems are problems with speech and speaking. Both tend to break down communication, and as stated earlier, without a unified communication form, people, who were unable to hear, usually could not speak. The term *mállaus* is just one of a few impairments related to the mouth and the ability to speak. Other terms found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders are: *málhaltr* (stammer; adjective, 1), *ómáli* (speechless; adjective, 1), and the antonym *almæltr* (perfectly speaking; adjective, 10). Þormóðr in *Fóstbræðra saga* recognizes that he stammers but a stammer is not shown in the text when he speaks, and it was not mentioned by anybody else.⁴⁵ None

⁴⁵ I do not know of any way other than the contemporary way of showing stammering by repeating the sound where the stammer occurs. Further discussion of Þormóðr and his impairment is found in chapter three.

of the listed descriptions is shown as positive in the context. This gives the reader insight to the impairing aspects of stammering.⁴⁶

Head

The final area of the body to be discussed in this section is the head. The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders include a number of descriptions of wounds and blows to the face and head. There is one exception to the physical and outwardly manifested wounds; it is the notion of pain in the head. There is no mention of pain in the head or a headache, except in the phrase *illt í hofuðbeinunum* (a headache; adjectival phrase), which appears once. This exception, however, is part of a rhetorical question, and relates to the result of a physical and outwardly manifested wound to the head.⁴⁷

The only other example of a term or byname/nickname regarding a head-related impairment is that of Hallvarðr in *Ögmundar þáttur dytts*. He is described in the following way: “Hann er nú kallaðr Hallvarðr háls, því at hann var í Jómsvíkingabardaga í fyrra vetr með Hákonu jarli ok fekk þar sár mikið á hálsinn fyrir aptan eyrat ok berr hann síðan hallt hofuðit,” (*ÍF* vol. 9, 109-10). [“He’s now known as Hallvard neck, because he was in the battle against the Jomsvikings along with Earl Hakon last year, and there he received a great wound to the neck beside his ear, and he has carried his head on one side ever since,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 318).] This severe wound was quite evidently impairing, but it

⁴⁶ Another example is found in *Svarfdæla saga*, where Karl the son of Þórgerðr, is described as not speaking. This instance is discussed at length in chapter three.

⁴⁷ This comes from *Þorsteins Þáttur Stangarhöggs*, where Þorstein is trying to hide from his father, Þórarinn, the fact that he was fighting on horses with Þórðr, and that in the fight, he received a blow to the head, which caused the skin over his eye to sag. His father asks if he has a headache to show he knows what happened.

is impossible to tell if it was disabling in that there is no context and no mention of his standing in society.

Cognitive and Emotional Impairments vs. Disabilities

Impairments to the head are not always realized through physical means. Cognitive impairments are found throughout the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. In all cases, these impairments are disabling in their described state. Non-disabling cognitive impairments are ones that society would not have been aware of or are just not mentioned in the text. Most terms in this category are also non-technical. Technical terms, such as autism or dyslexia, did not exist in the Middle Ages. Accordingly, some terms seem interchangeable and do not allow the reader to understand what the technical aspects of the impairment are.⁴⁸ Although almost all are negative, the terms provide insight into the societal norms of medieval Iceland.

General Cognitive

Terms, such as *afglapi* (oaf, fool, simpleton; noun, 12)⁴⁹ and *fiþl* (fool, clown, boor; noun, 20), occur several times and are translated in many ways in English editions.⁵⁰ Other terms, such as *snápr*⁵¹ (dolt, [translated in some texts as charlatan]; noun, 2), *æðikollr* (scatter-brained, literally a rage-head; adjective, 10), *ærr* (mad; adjective, 1), *vitleyss* (silly; adjective, 2), *fól* (fool [offensive]; noun, 8), *sótt* (mental

⁴⁸ To the modern reader, these terms may seem offensive. They still must be gathered and described, in order to understand how impairment and disability worked in Medieval Iceland.

⁴⁹ I include numbers of instances here, but because these seem to be umbrella terms for general cognitive disabilities, it is impossible to say they all mean the same thing.

⁵⁰ The given translations are from Cleasby Vigfusson and do not include other words chosen by translators, such as simple-minded, simpleton, idiot, etc.

⁵¹ According to Cleasby Vigfusson, *snápr* originally meant one who attacks an innocent person, or falsely claims to have dishonored a woman.

illness; noun, also used as physically sick, see above), and *hégómi* (folly, literally false to the taste or touch; noun, 11) are easy to translate, but are not at all exact in describing the impairment. Finally, the terms *óvinsæll* (unpopular; adjective, 40), *mjök illr viðfangs* (quite hard to deal with; adjectival phrase, 1), *mannvitslitill*⁵² (having little wits about; adjective, 1), *óvittr* (unintelligent; adjective, 25), and *grunnúðigr* (shallow-minded; adjective, 1) describe characters who have clearly defined problems, but it is not clear if these problems are impairing and what the severity of the problem is.

One set of terms, which occurs rather often in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, is *öngvit* (swoon; noun, 2) and [*falla í*] *óvit* (fall unconscious, faint; verb phrase, 24). There are instances of a character fainting from pain in battle, but there are also instances of a character fainting from illness or even sadness. An example of a character who faints from hearing bad news, grows ill, and eventually dies of a broken heart is Oddný in *Bjarnar saga hitdælakappa*.⁵³ Another example of a person fainting from bad news is in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, which describes that Njáll's foster-son Þórhallr Ásgrímsson finds out about Njáll's death and reacts in the following way: “Þórhalli Ásgrímssyni brá svá við, er honum var sagt að Njáll, fóstri hans, var dauðr ok hann hafði inni brunnit at hann þrútnaði allr ok blóðbogi stóð ór hvárritveggju hlustinni, ok varð eigi stöðvat, ok fell hann í óvit, ok þá stöðvaðisk,” (*ÍF* vol. XII, 344). [“Thorhall Asgrimsson was so moved when he was told that his foster-father Njal was dead and that he had been burned in his

⁵² Many texts have this term listed as *mannvitull*, which would mean having intelligence, but from the context, as well as what is presented in the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, it makes more sense that it would be *mannuitzlitell* or *mannvitslitill*.

⁵³ Oddný will be discussed further in chapter three.

house that his whole body swelled up and blood gushed from both ears, and it did not stop until he fell in a faint, and then it stopped,” (*CSoI* vol. III, 163).]

Fainting from the stress of bad news does not seem too unreasonable. At the same time, the citation shows notions of gender normativity. In medieval Icelandic society, fainting was considered unmanly—much as it is in contemporary Western society—though the view today is arguably not so severe. This is clear from the next sentence: “Eptir þat stóð hann upp ok kvað sér lítilmannliga⁵⁴ verða,—‘ok þat munda ek vilja, at ek hefnda þessa á þeim, er hann brenndu inni, er nú hefir mik hent.’ Þeir soggðu, at engi mundi virða honum þetta til skammar, en hann kvað ekki mega taka fyrir þat, hvat men mælti,” (*ÍF* vol. XII, 344-5). [“After that he stood up and said that this had not been manly of him – ‘but I wish I could take vengeance against the men who burned Njal in his house for what just happened to me.’ The others said that no one would count his behaviour as shameful, but he said that he could not stop people from talking,” (*CSoI* vol. III, 163).] The reader is aware that fainting is not a common occurrence in Þórhallr’s life. It is clear that if a man fainted, or had a condition in which he fainted, might have been considered disabled.

Hreiðar in *Hreiðars þáttur* exemplifies a character who is disabled, at least in the beginning of his life. He is described as follows: [*hann*] var varla sjálfbjargi fyrir vits *sökum* (he was hardly independent because of his intellect), and *afglapi* (a fool; noun). Accordingly, he is treated badly by the others.⁵⁵ Another character who was obviously

⁵⁴ it should be noted that terms such as *lítilmannlig* and *lítilmenni* are but a few examples of words that use modifiers for lack or negation (*lítill*, meaning small). Other modifiers include *ekki* (not), *ekki mikill* (not great), *ó-* (not), *-lauss* (less/without). Examples of more of these terms are found later in this section and in the appendices.

⁵⁵ Hreiðar is discussed further in chapters three and four.

cognitively disabled is Qlvir/Bjálfi in *Bandamanna saga*. He is described as *hálfafglapi* (half a fool, half-witted) and *afglapi* (a fool).⁵⁶

Not all characters are as easily defined as disabled. The terms *hryggr* (sad; depressed; adjective,⁵⁷ *lítilmenni* (mean-spirited; literally small-hearted; noun, *ekki mikilmenni* (mean-spirited; literally not big-hearted; noun phrase), *harmr* (sorrow; noun, *sótt*⁵⁸ (illness; noun, *mannskræfa* (miserable coward; noun, *óvitandi vits* (unapparent intellect; adjectival phrase, and *vaxa eigi mikit vitsmunir* (the intellect does not grow greatly; verb phrase) warrant mention in that they describe characters who may have had mood disorders. It is impossible to ascertain the severity of these conditions and if the conditions were impairing or disabling.

In *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, there are two words describing the protagonist, Gísli, who feigns cognitive disability to foil his enemies into allowing him to escape. In the scene, he once uses the more benign term *fífl* to describe himself. His enemies, on the other hand, first use the word *fífl* and progress to use *fól* once to describe Gísli and the disability. According to the Cleasby-Vigfusson's *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, “*fól*, ... has often the notion of rage and foul language; *fífl* that of pranks or silliness,” (Cleasby, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, and Dasent 1874, 167). Accordingly, it seems that the use of *fífl* is gentle, and the use of *fóli* at the end is cruel.

⁵⁶ Qlvir/Bjálfi is discussed further in chapter three.

⁵⁷ I do not count terms here and in the following. The terms are so unclear that the number of occurrences does not seem to be productive.

⁵⁸ Although *sótt* means sick in the physical sense, in *Finnboga saga ramma* it refers to a person suffering from a mood related disability.

Usage of different words to describe the same condition appears also in *Qlkofra þátr*, in which Qlkofri first claims that he is *ærr* and then later that he is both *fól* and *afglapi*. Although it is impossible to understand the nuances of each of these words, it is possible to understand their modern translations as: mad (*ærr*, adjective), a fool (*fól*, noun), and a foolish man [vir fatuus] (*afglapi*, noun). At the same time, the fact that *fól* and *afglapi* appear in the same sentence suggests that they have slightly different meanings.

Other Terms Relating to Disability and Impairment

So far, the terms discussed are ones that place the subject within the realm of impairment. There are other terms that warrant discussion as well. First are the terms that deal with wounds that either bring characters out of the possibility of impairment or put them in permanently. Second, there are terms that are confusing or are not understandable to the contemporary reader. Finally, a discussion of the use of bynames is included. Bynames are found in the general discussion, where they describe sensory, ambulatory, and cognitive/emotional impairments, but they do not function in the same way as an adjectival description does, because they are attached to the name of the character. These three groups make up the section of other terms.

Healing

The first subgroup of terms includes those dealing with healing. The notion of healing does not provide information about how society viewed impairments and how it considered disabilities. The texts describing healing usually present the point of time in which an injury heals completely or becomes a permanent impairment. The texts also

provide a fair amount of evidentiary support for the many impairments that occurred during battle.

The verbs *græða* (treat, heal; verb, 23), *binda* [*um sár*] (bind [a wound]; verb, 50), *batna* (recover; verb, 20, the adjectives, *græddr* (healed; adjective, 1), *var orðinn heill maðr* (became complete again, he recovered completely; verb phrase, 3), and *verðr alheill* [*þess meins*] (becomes fully recovered from the pain; verb phrase, 4) show that characters healed after battles and were able to resume their lives, as best they could. On the other side of the spectrum is the term *hafdisk illa* (healed badly; mediopassive verb phrase, 3). Such terms show that not all wounds healed well, and that the character was probably left with some sort of impairment.

A conspicuous term is *lyfsteinn* (healing stone; noun), which appears in *Kormaks saga* and *Laxdæla saga* a total of six times. The stones are used to heal battle wounds, sometimes specifically from a particular sword. Although nothing further is known about *lyfsteinn*, what it was, and if and how it worked, it does provide insight into wounds and healing beliefs from the time.

Physicality/Disposition

The next subgroup of terms is one that presents the idea of possible impairment through otherness in medieval Icelandic societies, as descriptions of physicality.⁵⁹ These terms describe characters considered less than ideal. Some excerpted terms are as simple as *svartr* (dark; adjective), *skegglauss* (beardless; noun), *taðskegglíngur* (dung-beardling; noun), *hrokkinhærðr* (curly-haired; adjective), *skalli* (bald; noun), *aumíngi* (puny; noun),

⁵⁹ I do not list the numbers of these, because of their extremely speculative nature. It is impossible to tell if any of these are impairments, let alone disabling, so I also do not use the terms impairment or disability here. Instead I only use the concept of being an outsider.

lítill (small; adjective), *illmannlegr* (evil in appearance; adjective), *ljótr* (ugly; adjective), or *vǫxtr er afburðamikill* (a build that is uncommonly large; adjectival phrase).

Other terms are bizarre or their meanings less apparent. Terms like *dvergr* (dwarf; noun), *tröll* (troll; noun), *risi* (giant; noun), *purs* (giant; noun), *ekki einhamr* (shape-shifter), *berserkr* (berserk; noun),⁶⁰ *kolbitr* (coal-biter; noun) describe characters in such a way that the real meaning of the words cannot be fully understood in the context of the saga or *þáttr*. This is only if one considers the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders to present a more non-fictional reality. Following this line of thinking, these characters are considered to be outsiders. However, the intricacies of their existence outside the norm cannot be completely understood solely from the descriptions provided.

In several instances, the prefix *hálf-* is added to the term. The prefix suggests a reduced meaning. Perhaps it indicates that the character is different, but still able to have a role in society, and therefore not exactly considered an outsider. An example is found in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, where a man named Hallbjörn is called *hálftröll*. In *Svarfdæla saga*, a man named Moldi is called *hálfberserkr*. In neither of these instances are the characters described in sufficient detail for the reader to understand if they are disabled, impaired, or not.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is presented in one case as being a disabling impairment. In *Króka-Refs saga*, Refr hinn ragi is described by Þórgills in the following way:

⁶⁰ It should be noted that there are 23 instances of the word *berserkr* alone in *Grettis saga*, and none of the characters who are either described as *berserkr* or as going into a berserk fit are described in a positive light, or are native Icelanders. Bragg (2004) presents an in-depth analysis of the culture of the *berserkr*.

Þorgils mælti: "Um slíkt er illt at ræða ok ávallt mætti Grænland rauða kinn bera, er þat heyrði Refs getit því at ek sá þegar hann var hingat nýkominn at öfluð hafði verit áðr Grænlandi in mesta skömm. Því hefi ek fátt við hann átt, at þá er ek var á Íslandi, var hann ekki í æði sem aðrir karlar, heldr var hann kona ina níundu hverju nótt ok þurfti þá karlmanns, ok var hann því kallaðr Refr inn ragi,⁶¹ ok gengu ávallt sögur af hans fádæmum endemlegar. Nú vilda ek því, at þér ættið ekki við hann," (*ÍF* vol. XIV, 134).

[Thorgils said, "It's bad even to speak of such things and Greenland will always have to blush when it hears Ref named; when he first came here, I saw that Greenland had already been affected by a great scandal. I've had little to do with him because when I was in Iceland he was not like other men in his nature. On the contrary, he was a woman every ninth day and needed a man, and for that reason he was called Ref the Gay and stories of his unspeakable perversions went around constantly. Now I'd like for you to have nothing to do with him," (*CSoI* vol. III, 406).]

Þorgils says this to create mindless and slanderous gossip about Refr and Þorgils's sons, and his words then spread widely. It is unclear what could cause Refr to become a woman, or if it was simply a way for Þorgils to explain that he thought Refr took a passive sexual role, was sexually attracted to men, or if there was a hormonal imbalance that made him effeminate. Even if Refr had a hormone imbalance, it would obviously be impossible that he would become a woman every ninth day. The question is the use of the term, not the validity of the claim. This—like the terms listed above—keeps Refr in the realm of the outsider and speaks to the fact that he probably would have been considered an outsider during his time, especially since Þorgils presents what Refr purportedly does as shameful and worthy of gossip. This is further shown by the fact that Þorgills says that he would not want to be seen in Refr's company, nor would he want others to be.

Bynames

As mentioned in chapter one, a common practice in Icelandic society of the Middle Ages is the use of bynames. Bynames are descriptions of people that are used in

⁶¹ The term *ragi* is translated as gay in the *CSoI*, but it literally means coward or craven.

conjunction with given and patronymic names, which help to identify them and clear up any possible doubt about who they were. In the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, many characters have bynames. Some of these are as simple as the color of the character's hair or the size of the character; some describe piety or ability in battle; some describe impairments or disabilities; and some are impossible to explain.

The giving and use of nicknames and bynames are fundamental to medieval Icelandic naming culture, and the practice is still much used. Often the nicknames given to people in literature were used to describe physical or mental features of the named. Some are simple and benign and only describe hair color (Eiríkr the Red) or mental abilities (Auðr the Deep-Minded). Some show irregularities, which might be impairments and even disabling. If the character is part of a genealogy and thus not mentioned other than by name, it is impossible to know the quality or severity of the impairment, but the use of the names still warrants mention. This rich source of terminologies should not be overlooked.

The terms that describe characters with admirable characteristics along with impairments or disabilities allow the reader to understand the full scope of bynames used in the texts. As mentioned above, a list of all characters from the corpus who have bynames describing physical or cognitive attributes is found in Appendix IV. These names were also excerpted, the Old Norse-Icelandic words were added, but the Leifur Eiriksson version of the list was consulted, since it provides the names of the sagas and the location of each character.

John Sexton wrote a chapter-length article, entitled "Difference and Disability: On the Logic of Naming in the Icelandic Sagas" in *Disability in the Middle Ages* (2010).

The article is not a quantitative analysis, but it presents terms that Sexton feels are examples of impairment or disability; these examples are listed below. In chapter three of the dissertation, there is a more detailed discussion of some of the characters presented in Sexton's chapter.

Sexton presents a qualitative study of certain terms for impairment, as well as a discussion of characters with impairments in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. He includes a discussion of impairments and bynames, such as *heljar skinn* (dark-skin; noun), *tréfótr* (wooden-leg; noun), *bægifótr* (twisted-leg; noun), *einfættr* (one-legged; adjective), and *búrlufótr* (club-leg; noun). In addition, he discusses the family tree of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, including his father, Skalla-Grímr (Bald-Grímr) and his grandfather, Kveld-Ulfr (Evening-Ulfr; a possible shape-shifter, Njáll from *Brennu-Njáls saga*; and a discussion of various other minor characters. (Sexton 2010)⁶²

Positive/Neutral

Bynames describing positive or seemingly positive or at least neutral attributes are by far the largest group in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. The term *spakr*⁶³ (wise; adjective, 6), and *víg*⁶⁴ (killer, literally killing/to kill; verb, 5) are most common. Other

⁶² One aspect of bynames and nicknames that must be discussed is the idea that when bynames and nicknames are a reality, the culture surrounding the use of negative attributes is not taken to be insulting in the same way that epithets can be. Much akin to given and surnames themselves, the meaning behind negative attributes used in bynames and nicknames cannot be taken as a constant deluge of an insulting term. This is not to say that it cannot have an effect on a person, but it does not have the same power to cause an immediate and intense feeling of exclusion.

⁶³ In this section either the nominative form of the noun is given, such as *víg* (killer) or the nominative weak form of the adjective is given, in masculine for male characters and in feminine for female, so that it reflects the actual byname of the character.

⁶⁴ I consider *víg* to be positive, as it shows ability to fight.

positive terms are *fagr*⁶⁵ (fair; adjective, 3), *vænn* (handsome; adjective, 2), *oxn* (ox; noun), 2, *rammr* (mighty; adjective, 2), *djúpiúðgr* (deep-minded; adjective, 1), *hald* (bold, in the sense of holding on; noun, 1), *kappi* (champion; noun, 1), *prúðr* (elegant; adjective, 1), and *sterkr* (strong; adjective, 1).⁶⁶

Impairing

One term, which is found in many forms and can be both positive/neutral and negative is that of beard descriptions. *Skegg/skeggi* (beard) is found in seven bynames, where it seems to suggest a sense of manliness. Here the description of the type of beard in five of the seven⁶⁷ emphasize this: *silkiskegg* (silk-beard, *tjúguskegg* (fork-beard, *mostrarskegg* (beard of the man from/in the style of Mostr island, *Blátannarskegg* (beard of the style of Blátann [Blue-tooth]).

An impairment in the Middle Ages, which is not found in the same way today, involves beard growth. Njáll and his sons in *Brennu-Njáls saga* are unable to grow proper beards, and this impairs them. The bynames and descriptions used about Njáll and his sons emphasize their lack of beard growth. Njáll is described as *skegglauss* (beardless) and his sons are referred to as *taðskegglíngur* (dung beardling). These terms are not so much bynames as epithets used by their enemies.⁶⁸ Another character, who is described as being *skegglauss*, is Ásmundur *skegglauss* in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*.

⁶⁵ Here and in the following, the root word is used for counting, e.g., *fagri* for *hárfagri*.

⁶⁶ Although the byname *sterkr* is positive/neutral, it is used in a negative way in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. See chapter four for further discussion.

⁶⁷ In the sixth and seventh examples, the byname is simply *skeggi/skagi* (beard).

⁶⁸ Njáll and his impairment are discussed in chapter three.

Other bynames reflecting impairments or impairing attributes are *skjálgr* (squinter; adjective, 2), *haltr* (lame; adjective, 1), *bundinfótr* (bound-foot; noun, 1), and *æðikollr* (scatter-brained, literally a rage-head; noun, 10 [all describing Ásgeirr æðikollr Auðurason found in *Laxdæla saga*, *Vantsdæla saga*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, and *Dáttir Þorsteins skelks*]). The mention of the nickname or byname does not automatically mean that the character was either disabled by his or her impairment, or that the byname was somehow intended to be an insult. Bynames and nicknames seem to be a normal part of the naming system, just as all the other attributes were.

Unknown

In some instances, it is impossible to tell if the byname is describing an impairment. Because these bynames generally consist of one word, it cannot be ascertained if they were considered negative or positive, or even how they came to be. Among these are *digr* (stout; adjective, 3), *mjór* (slender; adjective, 1), *ormstungr* (snake-tongue; noun, 2), *ormr í auga* (snake-in-the-eye; noun phrase, 1), *troll* (troll; noun, 1), *hálftröll* (half-troll; noun, 1), *hundr* (dog; noun, 1), *hesthoför* (horse-head; noun, 1), *tøðýfill* (dung-beetle; noun, 1), and *sænskr berserkr* (Swedish berserk; noun phrase, 1).

Conclusion

The excerpt, listing, and quantitative analysis of terms for impairments in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders provide insight into the frequency and selection of certain words that were used to describe impairments and disabilities. In addition, by counting their frequency, they provide some insight into the way that they are used in medieval Iceland. Some terms were used so often, while others occur only once. Unfortunately the terms themselves do not provide sufficient information about how society reacted to their

meanings or implications. For this reason, an analysis of the quality of impairments and an analysis of society's reaction to those impairments and characters with impairments must be made. Such an analysis will help bridge the gap of understanding and allow the reader to get a more complete picture. Chapter three provides such an investigation of sixteen characters.

Chapter 3 – Analyses of Characters with Impairments and Disabilities in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders

Introduction

The characters in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders provide examples of various strata of society. There are insiders—or heroes—who are described in idealized ways, and there are outsiders, who are not. No single character fits entirely in one or the other category, and sometimes it is not easy to figure out how specific aspects of each character's personhood were viewed. Due to the amount of time that passed from when the events having taken place to the time when they were recorded, the descriptions of characters tend to follow a pattern of emphasizing either positive or negative attributes in a way that can be perceived as almost hyperbolic rather than being representative of reality. It follows many epic literary patterns, and if viewed only from a genre-wide perspective, it misrepresents how individuals were viewed.

A micro-based analysis of specific characters with impairments and disabilities provides a better understanding of people with impairments and disabilities as well as the reaction of people with impairments and disabilities to those judgments. By examining several characters, who are impaired and disabled in ambulatory, sensory, and emotional/cognitive ways, the reader gets a well-founded understanding of how difference was treated. When this is combined with a macro-analysis of terminologies used to describe the impairments and disabilities as well as those who have them, the study becomes even more conclusive.

As discussed in chapter 1, the concept of Otherness in the societies depicted in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders is well established in scholarship. Each description is binary: one either is or is not part of the ideal of a description, and there is very little

middle ground. Some features are considered more important than others; the following examples caused extreme reaction by society, such as shunning or automatic divorce: if a man engages in homosexual activity, if a man dresses like a woman, or if a woman of child-bearing age dresses like a man.

The ideal of the young, fertile and active, native-born or Norwegian-born, heterosexual male, beset with masculine and stark features, being a good fighter, usually fair in complexion and hair, handsome, well-liked, without being too nice or gullible, and finally having no interest in crossing the boundaries of the ideal established by society, sets the stage for the insider, or the model person. When a person does not fit into this ideal, he is not a true insider. When a person fulfills the idea *too well*, this can also prove difficult: in both *Laxdaela saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, for instance, the most seemingly ideal characters live shorter lives than others around them and die violently. Most characters do not fit wholly into the insider category, but the majority of characteristics do. There are also occasions where a person is considered an ideal, but not considered a hero. This happens very infrequently.

The question that comes to mind is whether a person in a society, where prowess on the battlefield and in vikingry is considered so important, is still considered a great warrior, if he is impaired from birth, on the battlefield, or even elsewhere. This is not so simply answered, but it usually depends on how useful he is after the impairment. In chapter two, cognitive impairments were listed last; in this chapter, they are listed first, because when they are mentioned they seem always to change the nature or quality of a person's life, they are always disabling. This model of disability and disabling helps to

shed light on when an impairment becomes a disability in the other three sections: sensory, ambulatory, and other impairments and disabilities.

Feigning disabilities provides interesting contrasts in analyses of characters with impairments and disabilities.⁶⁹ Feigning disability to escape required interactions provides insight into and allows for a study of the juxtaposition of how the character is described and treated by others while he or she feigns disability and then acts without the feigned disability. It might be that feigning a disability would evoke serious reaction, as is seen in contemporary society. However, this is not the case. As noted later in this chapter, the only place where feigning disability does not exist is in purely ambulatory disabilities. This is discussed in the section on ambulatory impairments and disabilities.

In all three cases in the sections on cognitive/emotional and sensory impairments and disabilities, there is no reaction to the fact that a character is “faking it.” In some of the cases of feigning, the reader is able to get a dual view of the disability from the side of the outsider as well as from the person who is feigning. Not all instances provide complete information, but they do allow for some insight.

Cognitive/Emotional Impairments and Disabilities

The notion of cognitive and emotional disabilities in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders is fundamental to impairments. As mentioned in chapter two, this lack of distinguishing features between impairments and disabilities is due partially to the fact that there was little knowledge of cognitive impairment at the time.⁷⁰ It is also due to the

⁶⁹ I use only the term disability and not impairment here, as none of the characters who feign disability are solely impaired during their time feigning.

⁷⁰ It may have been possible that in reality there was a differentiation between cognitive or emotional impairment and disability. In reading the sagas as they are, in the 21st century, it is not possible to see a difference between the two.

fact that today's reader is unable to understand the finer nuances of certain weaker and more opaque Old Norse-Icelandic terms. Why is one character described as a *fífl*? What does being described as a *fífl* entail? Is only a big person a *fífl*? Is a person who acts or talks a certain way a *fífl*?

A person who is described as cognitively disabled is not always able to be part of the plot, or to be considered heroic. Such a person also does not generally inhabit the role of protagonist. In the one example where a character does have a cognitive disability and is a protagonist, he is oddly healed of his disability at the end of the text, and he becomes a hero. Textual descriptions of four characters with cognitive or emotional impairments or disabilities provide enough background information to warrant analysis in this chapter. They are: Qlvir/Bjálfi in *Bandamanna saga*; Oddný in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*; Hreiðar in *Hreiðars þáttur*; and Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, who feigns cognitive disability to foil his enemies. Hreiðar and Gísli are mentioned only briefly here, since they are treated and discussed in more depth in chapter four.

Qlvir/Bjálfi – *Bandamanna saga*

As mentioned in the Introduction, the first example is found in *Bandamanna saga*. His name is Qlvir, in *Konungsbók* (GKS 2845, 4to.) and Bjálfi in *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132, fol.). He appears briefly in the story and is described only in the following passage. In *Konungsbók*, the text reads: “Qlvir hét bróðir hans, ok var aflaglapi,” (ÍF vol. VII, 361) [“His brother was named Qlvir, and he was an imbecile” Translation, my own.]; in *Möðruvallabók*, it reads: “Bjálfi hét bróðir hans, hálfafglapi ok rammr at afli,” (Magerøy, 35) [“His brother was named Bjálfi, he was half-an-imbecile and strong in power,” (CSoI vol. V, 307).] When the outlaw Óspakr kills Qlvir's/Bjálfi's brother, Már Hildason,

Qlvir/Bjálfi in turn mortally wounds Óspakr. The two manuscripts of the saga explain this event slightly differently: “Ok er hann vill út, þá hleypr hann upp Qlvir ok leggr í gegnum hann knífi miklum. Þat er einn morgin, at men kómu út á bæ þeim, er reift hafði verit málit á hendr Óspaki. Þar váru særð naut tólf til bana,” (ÍF vol. VII, 362-3). [“When he went to go out, Qlvir he drew up and drove a great knife through him. It was one morning that men came out to the farm, being summoned for the matter what Óspakr did. There were twelve nights until the wound led to Óspakr’s death.” Translation, my own.] “Ok í því er hann snýr til duranna, hleypr hann upp Bjálfi ok rekr á honum tálgukníf. Óspakr gengr til þess bæjar er heitir á Borgarhóli ok lýsir þar víginu, ferr síðan á brott, ok spyrsk nú ekki til hans um hrið. Víg Más fréttisk víða ok mæltisk illa fyrir,” (Magerøy, 36). [“As he turned to the door, Bjálfi jumped to his feet and drove a wood-working knife into him. Ospakr walked to the farm called Borgarhol and declared the killing, and then went away, and nothing was heard of him for some time. The news of Mar's killing spread and was widely condemned,” (CSoI vol. V, 307).] At this point, Qlvir/Bjálfi disappears from the plot. The saga continues with a description of what happens to Óspakr. Óspakr reports the killing, subsequently dies of the wounds given to him by Qlvir/Bjálfi, but he is not found for some time. It is not reported whether or not Qlvir/Bjálfi tries to seek retribution in court.

The brief description of Qlvir/Bjálfi and the lack of further commentary suggest that there is no need to make further mention of him, and that his appearance in the plot is solely to avenge his brother’s death. The fact that the author does not mention Qlvir/Bjálfi any more indicates that because of Qlvir/Bjálfi’s mental condition, he could not actively take part in society. This is in accordance with the culture of the time—as

seen in laws—where people who did not have full capacity of their mental faculties were deemed dependents, which was considered as being equal to children. Qlvir/Bjálfi, just like anybody without full mental capacity would be a ward of their relatives and not responsible for their actions. For that reason they would be considered disabled. The use of the names Qlvir and Bjálfi—two very different sounding names—in the two manuscripts, shows that the character was not part of the cultural memory, since he was disabled and overlooked.

Oddný - *Bjarnar saga Hítöelakappa*

An example of the treatment of a character with a disability, and in this case one who suffers from an emotional disability, is Oddný Eykyndill in *Bjarnar saga Hítöelakappa*.

Ok er hon sá, hneig hon aptr ok vissi ekki til manna; ok er af henni hóf öngvit, þá hafði hon þá fengit mikla vanheilsu ok óynði, ok leitaði. Þórðr mjök margs í at hugga hana ok var vel til hennar. En svá gerisk með miklu móti at hon var verkjum borin af þessu, ok var ákafast inn fyrsta vetr eftir. Henni þótti sér þat helzt ró, at hon sæti á hestsbaki, en Þórðr leiddi undir henni aptr ok fram, ok gerði hann þat, at honum þótti stór mein á vera, en vildi við leita at hugga hana,” (ÍF vol. III, 205.)

[When she saw it she sank down and lost all consciousness of those around her; and when the swoon lifted from her she had fallen into weakened health and great restlessness. Þórðr tried many things to comfort her, and treated her well. But her state became so severe that she was overwhelmed with suffering, which was especially painful for the first year. She felt most relief if she sat on horseback while Þórðr led her to and fro. He did this because he thought it a most distressing situation, and wanted to comfort her,” (CSoI vol. I, 301).]

Oddný is comforted by her husband Þórðr, who leads her on horseback. Þórðr’s actions are very dissimilar to the pitiless reactions against other characters, such as Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. When Egill suffers from the effects of age, he is made fun of by servant women for not being able to take a role in the household, and being in

everybody's way. Indifference or ridicule toward Oddný is not seen in evidence in *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*.

Þórðr shows kindness to Oddný despite the fact that he is aware of her love for Björn. Þórðr's attempts to comfort her are mentioned several times in the text and show his ingenuous intent. Clearly, Þórðr loves Oddný, and perhaps he feels guilty about killing Björn.

Kirsten Wolf discusses the description of Oddný and her treatment in her article "A Comment on a Textual Emendation to *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*." Wolf presents an analysis of how varied the textual interpretations and translations were in regard to the kind of impairment Oddný had. Upon hearing of her beloved Björn's death, Oddný fell into a deep depression. The manuscript then reads: "hon mornaði ǫll ok þornaði ok tæði aldri síðan tanna ok lifði þó mjök lengi við þessi óhægindi," (*ÍF* vol. III, 206). ["She withered and shrank, and never afterwards had any joy in life, yet lived for a long time in this discomfort," (*CSoI*, vol. I, 301).] Wolf states: "The expression *tæði tanna* occurs nowhere else in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. Accordingly, editors of *Bjarnar saga Hitdólakappa* have sought to emend it" (Wolf 2010, 98). Wolf subsequently proposes the emendation to 'tjáði' (infinitive: *tjá*)." The possible translations of the impairment Oddný had were: she did not speak much after that; she did not thrive much after that; joy never returned to her; from that point in time, no words came through her lips; she hardly ever spoke since then; she did not show her smile. Wolf discusses the possible clinical diagnoses for the impairment she had, using the descriptions provided and the fact that being led on a horse helped. After looking at a gamut of possibilities, Wolf concludes that it is anorexia nervosa.

Although it is very possible that Oddný had anorexia nervosa, it is difficult to be able to ascribe a particular impairment to a person during a time, when such qualifications for impairments were not present. The composers and tellers of tales during such a time would not have been able to truly describe her illness. What is apparent is that Oddný was impaired, that she was very uncomfortable, and that Þórðr was able to ease her discomfort, but that she could not continue to fully participate in society. Despite Þórðr's attempts to comfort her, she was still disabled because she was not able to take part in society.

Hreiðar – *Hreiðars þáttur*

Hreiðar in *Hreiðars þáttur* is an example of a person with a temporary cognitive impairment. Hreiðar comes from a good family as evident from the description of his brother. Þórðr is described first as coming from a line of two men in a genealogy. Genealogy is absent in Hreiðar's description. He is also described as a short, good-looking man, who was highly regarded. In addition, it is stated that he travels abroad as a merchant and is a follower of King Magnús.⁷¹

Hreiðar, on the other hand, is described as ugly, barely intelligent enough to care for himself, and he always stayed at home. The description of him is not entirely negative; he could run faster than other men, was strongly built, and had a good disposition. The portrayal of Hreiðar as ugly and strong parallels that of Qlvir/Bjálfi in *Bandamanna saga* and descriptions of other people with cognitive disabilities in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.

⁷¹ Hreiðar is discussed in depth in a close reading in chapter four. For that reason, I do not use direct quotes here, as they are provided in that section.

Throughout the tale, Hreiðar shows not only honesty and kindness, but also later on an ability to make things of high quality with his hands. Nevertheless, he is constantly making social faux pas and is not considered socially his brother's equal. At the end of the tale, King Magnús, who has taken a liking to him, gives him an island off the coast of Norway for his loyalty, and later on, King Magnús gives Hreiðar much silver for the return of the island, when Hreiðar goes back to Iceland.

This description is quite confusing. It negates all of the previous descriptions of Hreiðar and puts him into a position where he is brought out of otherness and into the heroic ideal. What first appeared to be a disability in that he was not able to leave home or fully take care of himself, turned out to be nothing in the end, and he was able to run a farm, marry, and have children.

It should be noted that this is the only instance included from a *þáttr*, and the *Þættir* of Icelanders are believed by some to be less realistic than Sagas of the Icelanders, and even perhaps of a different genre.⁷² Nevertheless, even if Hreiðar's cognitive impairment and his recovery are exaggerated, his ability to lead a productive life in medieval Iceland indicates that he did not have a disability.

Feigning Cognitive and Emotional Disabilities

There is only one instance of a character feigning a cognitive disability: Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. However, it is possible and even likely that Hreiðar in *Hreiðars þáttr* also feigns his disability, at least to a certain degree.

⁷² For further discussion on the differences between sagas and *þættir*, (Jakobsson 2013); and Bergdís Þrastardóttir's dissertation (Bergdís Þrastardóttir 2014, 226-229).

Gísli – *Gísla saga Súrssonar*

The reason why Gísli⁷³ feigns disability is that he wants to foil his pursuers, but the reason he chooses to feign cognitive disability could be that a he knows that no “hero” would ever want to make himself appear like an idiot, and indeed the nature of an idiot is quite the opposite of how Gísli is presented in the text. When the scene ends, Gísli returns to having the same cognitive abilities he did before he feigned the disability. He is not disabled; in fact, he is considered even more intelligent because he was able to outwit his adversaries. There is no discussion of him changing back to how he was before. He rows ashore with Bóthildr, the slave woman, and he promises her freedom for herself and her husband because of her help.

Sensory Impairments and Disabilities

In a time when only the poorest of medical knowledge and facilities existed alongside harsh environmental and living conditions, it is no surprise that many characters had sensory impairments. Aside from genetic disorders, poor indoor lighting during the long, cold winters could lead to eventual blindness. Deafness must also have been a reality of the time due to age or illnesses without treatment, which manifested in hearing loss. Interestingly there are no characters who are actually deaf.⁷⁴ On the other hand, there are many characters with vision problems. The three characters with sensory impairments are Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga*, Björn in *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa*, and

⁷³ Gísli is discussed in depth, including the quotations of this scene, in a close reading in chapter four, so I refrain from using quotes from the text here.

⁷⁴ Deafness is found in other saga sub-genres, just not the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. According to by Lise Falsen and Tove Bjørner Lindeberg, deaf characters or deafness are found in the following texts: *Hávamál*; *Sturlunga saga*; *Óláfs saga Heiliga*; *Haralds saga gilla*; and *Manna sögur* in the saga of St. Nicolaus, (2003 p. 3-6).

Stúfr in *Stúfs þáttur*. The two characters who feign sensory disability are Melkorka in *Laxdæla saga* and Karl ómæli in *Svarfdæla saga*. Both characters fall under the umbrella term of deaf and dumb.

Guðrún – *Laxdæla saga*

Laxdæla saga is the only one of the Sagas of the Icelanders with a female protagonist, Guðrún Osvífrsdóttir. It is also unique in the sense that it has a wide variety of female supporting characters. In other sagas, the plot focuses on men and masculine ideals; in these sagas, women are mentioned only in their roles as wives, mothers, daughters, and lovers. Guðrún is among the few women in this genre who exist within the realm of heroes. Although she uses trickery and malice to attain her heroic station, she is not considered an outsider.

At the end of her long life, Guðrún converts to Christianity. After having been married three times (setting up her first husband and divorcing him and then killing or causing the death of two more husbands) she becomes a nun. At this point, she goes blind, and she has an epiphany about whom she loved the most in her life. She is not entirely apologetic, but she feels that she treated her three husbands badly.

This second sight/insight could be attributed to her blindness, since the blindness is found in the same paragraph as the realization that she treated the four men badly. The example is also unique in that it presents the presence of the moral model of disability studies, which is not found elsewhere in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.⁷⁵ Even if this is a nuanced conjunction of blindness and second sight, it is unusual to the genre, even if it is found elsewhere. Chapter 78 states: “Þeim var ek verst, er ek unna mest.” “Þat

⁷⁵ The notion of giving up one ability for another is found in Nordic mythology. One such example is Óðinn giving up one eye, in order to gain knowledge, while at Mimir’s well.

hyggju vér,” svarar Bolli, “at nú sé sagt alleinarðliga,” — ok kvað hana vel hafa gort, er hon sagði þetta, er hann forvitnaði. Guðrún varð gamal kona, ok er þat sagn manna, at hon yrði sjónlaus. Guðrún andaðisk at Helgafelli, ok þar hvílir hon,” (*ÍF* vol. V, 228-9). [“Though I treated him worst, I loved him best.” “That I believe,” said Bolli, “you say in all sincerity,” and thanked her for satisfying his curiosity. Gudrun lived to a great age and is said to have lost her sight. She died at Helgafell and is buried there,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 379).]

Another possibility is that Guðrún loses her sight because of her bad behavior. This also follows the moral model and the blindness then becomes a narrative prosthesis. This implies that she was being punished, perhaps because of her mistreatment of her husbands. In neither of the two possible situations is she disabled for her blindness, even if she is being punished. She is never presented in a negative light, despite her transgressions. Although she is not heralded like other protagonists, the absence of any comment keeps her in a positive light.⁷⁶

Björn – *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*

Björn in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* is an example of the truly opaque nature of protagonists in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. Björn is a very accomplished man in his youth; by the end of the saga, however, Björn is older and could be judged in a way similar to Egill Skallagrímsson.⁷⁷ He is visually impaired and cannot fight well anymore. He is still wealthy, much like Egill Skalla-Grímsson was, but there is a difference.

⁷⁶ For further discussion of the interplay between vision and knowledge as well as possible religious meaning, see (Vance 2008; Müller 2008).

⁷⁷ Egill is discussed later in this chapter.

From the beginning of the saga Björn is presented as a great warrior. He goes off to Norway and then to Russia in search of adventure. He defeats a great Russian warrior, Kaldimar, who attempts to usurp King Valdimar. After the victory, he is described in the following way: “Síðan var Björn fluttr heim til konungs með mikilli virðingu. Konungr gaf honum allt herskrúð þat, er kappinn hafði átt, ok þar fylgði sverðit Mæringr; því var Björn síðan kappi kallaðr ok kenndr við hérað sitt,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 122). [“Later Bjorn was carried back to the king with great honour. The king gave him all the armor the champion had owned, including the sword Maering. Because of this, Bjorn was called “champion” after that, and named after his district,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 261).] This is a typical description of a great warrior in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders.

Later, Björn becomes visually impaired from some sort of eye disease: “Litlu síðar tók Björn augnaverð, ok helzt hann um hríð, ok varð honum at því mein, en þó batnaði, er á leið, ok drap þó heldr fyrir honum, því at hann var síðan þungeygr nokkut ok eigi jafnskyggn sem áðr,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 191-2). [“Soon afterwards Bjorn had a pain in the eye which lasted for some time. It gave him some trouble, but improved as time went by. However, he was somewhat the worse for it: afterwards his sight was rather dim, and not as keen as before,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 294).] The placement of this paragraph is rather odd, in that there is nothing that leads up to his having this pain and impairment, and there is no discussion about the impairment in the text directly after the paragraph—it just happens. Descriptions of Björn in the text make it difficult to ascertain if he is impaired or if he is also disabled.

A series of oscillating descriptions make it hard to understand what society, the narrator and the reader ought to make of Björn. Until chapter 18, he is presented in a

positive way. Then his aunt claims that he has problems with thinking too highly of himself: “Þórhildr, fǫðursystir Bjarnar, ræðir um þat við hann: ‘Bæði er Björn,’ segir hon, ‘at þú ert mikill fyrir þér enda þykkisk þú svá; kann vera þér þykki ek ǫrorð. Mér sýnisk óráðligt at fara við annan mann, svá sǫkótt sem þú átt,’” (*ÍF* vol. III, 157). [“Bjorn's aunt Thorhild spoke to him about his coming. ‘The truth is, Bjorn,’ she said, ‘that you are a mighty man, but you also have a high opinion of yourself. Maybe you think me outspoken, but I think it's unwise to travel with only one other man when you have so many enemies,’” (*CSoI* vol. I, 277).] Similar to Guðrún's blindness, Björn's blindness could be a punishment for his egotism. If that is the case, his blindness should also be viewed though the moral model, and it, too, serves as a narrative prosthesis for his egotism. Although he is just a regular character—neither purely good nor evil—the descriptions above and in the following make it difficult to understand if society disabled Björn.

Despite his impairment, Björn is presented in a positive light. The saga differs from others in that Björn is described twice. When he is introduced, he is described as follows: “Björn var snimma mikill vexti ok rammr at afli, karlmannligr ok sœmilegr at sjá,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 112). [“Bjorn soon grew to be tall and powerfully built, manly and handsome,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 256).] The description is rather normal and fundamental to how characters are introduced. The second time (chapter 32), he is described just before he is about to go to battle with Þórðr and his cronies. It is told that he was: “mikill maðr vexti ok vænn ok freknótt, rauðskeggjaðr, skrúfhárr ok dapreygðr ok manna bezt vígr,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 197). [“a very tall man, handsome and freckled, red-bearded and curly-haired, weak-sighted, but an excellent fighting man,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 297).] This shows that the

impairment does not reduce his value to society. The second description reiterates his high qualities, despite the fact that he is visually impaired. As evident from the two outlaw sagas discussed in chapter four, fate causes him to be visually impaired and it is this fate that causes him to meet his end on the battlefield. The admittance of an impairment is also seen in *Grettis saga* in the description of Qnundr tréfót, where he is described as great even among men with two sound legs. In both situations, this motif seems to be a way of bolstering the value of the character, despite the impairment, and can be seen as a form of narrative prosthesis.

Just before Björn's death, Þórðr misspeaks in a conversation on the battlefield, and in doing so, he shows who is the more righteous of the two. “Sá skal þér þó nú nær standa í dag,” segir Þórðr, ‘ok hoggva þik klækishogg.’ ‘Þau ein muntu hoggva,’ segir Björn, ‘meðan þú lifir.’ Þórði varð mismælt ok vildi hann sagt hafa, aðt sá skyldi hann hoggva klámhoggvi þann dag,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 202). [“‘But that little lad will stand close to you today,’ said Thord, “and strike you a shameful blow.” “Those are the only blows you will strike,” said Bjorn, “as long as you live.” For Thord had made a slip of the tongue; he meant to say that he would strike Bjorn a shaming blow that day,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 299).] This mistake fortifies the fact that Þórðr should not have killed Björn. In fact, he admits that he should not have killed Björn and laments the fact that Oddný has fallen sick because of Björn's death, as cited above in the discussion of Oddný.

The final indication that Björn was considered a hero and not disabled by society is seen in the judgment of wergild and outlawry. The emphasis should not be placed on the laws of the time, but rather on the detailed description of the court settlement. The entire text is two long paragraphs, the first one longer than the second. The second

paragraph here shows the full letter of the punishments given to Þórðr and the other men, who took part in killing Björn:

Þórðr skal gjalda Ásgrími þrjú hundruð silfrs sem hann hafði kœrit sér til handa ok við tekit; önnur þrjú hundruð silfrs skal Þórðr gefa til syknu sér, en in þriðju þrjú hundruð til syknu Kálfi. En frændr Þórðar, er fellu við hraunit, skyldi óhelgir fallit hafa ok svá skógarmenn ok þeir menn allir, er í fyrirsátum höfðu verit fyrir Birni. Nú eru eptir tólf men, þeir er greiðliga váru at víginu; þá gerði Þorsteinn alla sekja, ok skyldi útan fara it sama sumar, ok gefa fé til færingar þeim, mörk fyrir hvern þeirra; en ef þeir kœmisk eigi útan sem mælt var, þá skyldi þeir alsekir ok dræpir, hvar sem þeir fyndisk,” (*ÍF* vol. III, 210-1).

[Thord was to pay Asgrim the three hundreds of silver which Asgrim had already accepted at his hands and taken possession of. A second three hundreds Thord was to give in exchange for his reprieve, and a third three hundreds for Kalf's reprieve. Thord's kinsmen who had been killed on the lava field were judged to have died having forfeited their immunity, therefore as full outlaws; likewise all the men who had died attacking Bjorn. Now there remained twelve men who had actually been present at the killing. All of these Thorstein outlawed, and they had to go abroad that same summer, and pay money for their passage, a mark for each of them. But if they did not go abroad as was laid down, they would be full outlaws, and could be killed wherever they were found, (*CSol* vol. I, 303-4).]

Stúfr – *Stúfs þátr inn meiri*, *Stúfs þátr inn skemmri*

The final example of a character who is blind is problematic on many levels. In the two extant versions of *Stúfs þátr*, *Stúfs þátr inn meiri*⁷⁸ and *Stúfs þátr inn skemmri*,⁷⁹ the reader is presented with two different descriptions of the protagonist Stúfr. *Stúfs þátr inn meiri* begins as follows: “Maðr hét Stúfr. Hann var sonr Þórðar kattar en hann var sonr Þórðar Ingunnarsonar ok Guðrúnar Ósvífursdóttur. Stúfr var mikill maðr ok **sjónfríðr**⁸⁰ ok manna sterkastur. Hann var skáld gott ok djarfmæltur,” (*ÍF* vol. V,

⁷⁸ Literally *Stúfr's Tale, the Greater*. This version is also known as *Stúfs saga*.

⁷⁹ Literally *Stúfr's Tale, the Lesser*.

⁸⁰ All bold words are my own emphasis.

281).⁸¹ [“There was a man called Stuf. He was the son of Tord Ingunson and Gudrun Osvif’s daughter. Stuf was a great man, *beautiful to look at* and very strong. He was a good poet and said things as they were.” Emphasis and translation my own.] *Stúfs þáttur inn skemmri* starts in the following: “Stúfr hét maðr; hann var sonr Þórðar kattar er Snorri goði fóstradi. Þórðr kotttr var sonur Þórðar Glúmssonar, Geirasonar. Móðir Þóðar kattar var Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir. Stúfr Þórðarson var **blindr**, vitur maðr og skáld gott,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2243). [“There was a man called Stuf. He was the son of Thord Cat, whom Snorri the *Godi* had fostered. Thord Cat was the son of Thord Glumsson, the son of Geiri. His mother was Gudrun Osvif’s daughter. Stuf was *blind*. He was an intelligent man and a good poet,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 357).]

Where *Stúfs þáttur inn meiri* uses the term *sjónfríðr*, *Stúfs þáttur inn skemmri* uses the word *blindr*. The term *sjónfríðr* translates to beautiful, but according to the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, *Stúfs þáttur inn meirri* is the only place in medieval prose, where the word is found.⁸² This is suspect and because the word *blindr* is found, Stúfr can be analyzed.⁸³ What is problematic with a description like what is found in this *þáttur* is the temporality of the term. There is no mention of when Stúfr went blind. Because the reader is unaware of when Stúfr went blind, it is possible that he was not blind when the events of the *þáttur* took place. If that is the case, the adjective refers to the fact that Stúfr

⁸¹ In the following two quotes, I do not use the orthography presented in a more modern form of Icelandic, but instead normalize it to keep consistency.

⁸² The idea of a word being only found in one place follows the same suspicious term as is found Kirsten Wolf’s discussion about Oddný and her emotional disability found earlier in this chapter.

⁸³ Björn Magnusson Olsen writes about what he believes is the correct term in his book *Stúfs saga: gefin út í fyrsta sinn eftir handritunum* (1912). He believes that *sjónfríðr* is the correct term. I disagree.

is a character who was blind later in his life. The lack of information makes an analysis of society's reception of Stúfr and his blindness impossible.

Feigning Sensory Disabilities

The two instances of feigning sensory disabilities are quite similar in that both characters seem to want to keep others from having a clear picture of their actual abilities. At the same time, they are different because of the obscurity of their reasoning. The first example is Melkorka in *Laxdæla saga*. It is difficult to judge if Melkorka feigned disability because of her lack of ability to speak Old Norse-Icelandic or because of her reluctance to interact with society. The second example is Karl ómæli in *Svarfdæla saga*, who does not speak from birth, and before he finally speaks, he avenges his father's murder. Both examples have to do with silence instead of deafness or even blindness. Through their silence, both Melkorka and Karl ómæli are able to retreat from society and are treated in such a way that their abilities are considered less than they actually are.

Melkorka – *Laxdæla saga*

Melkorka, who is in reality a princess from Ireland, pretends that she is unable to speak until her child, fathered by Hǫskuldr, is a youth. The reason for her silence is unclear, and she never explains it. Melkorka's master, Hǫskuldr, finds out that she can speak when, after being silent for quite some time in his presence, she speaks to her son in a field:

...sá hann þar tvá menn ok kenndi; var þar Óláfr, sonr hans, ok móðir hans; fær hann þá skilit at hon var eigi mállaus, því at hon talaði þá mart við sveininn. Síðan gekk Hǫskuldur at þeim ok spyr hana at nafni ok kvað henni ekki mundu stoða at dyljask lengr.

Hon kvað svá vera skyldu; setjask þau niðr í túnbrekkuna.

Síðan mælti hon: „Ef þú vilt nafn mitt vita, þá heiti ek Melkorka,” (*ÍF* vol. V, 27).

[“There he saw two people whom he recognised: his son, Olaf, and his mother. He then realised that she was anything but dumb, as she had plenty to say to the boy. Hoskuld went over to them and asked her what her name was, saying that there was no point in pretending any longer. She agreed and they all sat down on the slope. Then she spoke: “If you wish to know my name, it is Melkorka,” (*CSoI* vol. V, 13).]

It is quite possible that Melkorka was not feigning the inability to speak, but that she was unable to speak Old Norse-Icelandic. It is told that she did not need to pretend any longer, but it does not specify if she started out pretending, if she was pretending the entire time, or why she was doing so. She was a foreigner, a slave, but also a princess. When she was a slave and mute, she was treated according to her standing as a slave with a disability. This changed, once she started speaking, and revealed that she was the daughter of a king. Because of status as an outsider, it is impossible to understand the effects of disability on the impairment in this case.

Hoskuldr’s wife, Jórunn, provides the best example of how Melkorka was an outsider. She states: “Eigi mun ek deila við frillu þína, þá er þú hefir flutt af Nóregi, þótt hon kynni eigi góðar návistir, en nú þykki mér þat allra sýnst, ef hon er bæði dauf ok mállaus,” (*ÍF* vol. V, 26) [“I’ve no intention of wrangling with some slave-woman you have brought home from Norway who doesn’t know how her betters behave, least of all since she is obviously both deaf and dumb,” (*CSoI* vol. V, 12).] Not knowing that Melkorka is a princess and probably educated in how to behave properly, Jórunn displays her true disdain for and jealousy of Melkorka. She makes her husband aware that Melkorka is a slave and an outsider, yet she expects that Melkorka should know how to behave, despite her impairment.

Karl ómæli – *Svarfdæla saga*

The final example of feigning is a character who again feigns the inability to speak; however he is regarded as cognitively impaired as well. Karl Karlsson ómæli in *Svarfdæla saga* feigns inability to speak and does not deny being an idiot, so that he is able to exact revenge for the death of his father. Because he is considered an idiot, the men who killed his father do not find him a threat, and do not realize that he is capable of exacting revenge. His manner of remaining silent from birth is unrealistic. Nevertheless he is successful, and this furthers the beliefs of society's reaction to impairment. They are similar to the reactions of Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and Qlvir/Bjálfi in *Bandamanna saga*.

The saga itself needs a bit of clarification. Karl Karlsson is the last of four protagonists in the saga. The manuscript has a lacuna in chapter 10. This lacuna renders the plot unclear, but the lacuna is also so far from the story of Karl Karlsson that it is unlikely that there was any information about him in the missing text. The translator of the Leifur Eiríksson edition of the saga, Fredrick J. Heinemann, made the following comment about the lacuna: "Here occurs the large gap referred to in the introduction above... the saga originally had four parts, each dealing with a generation of the same family, so that two parts deal with a father and son named Thorstein and two parts with a father and son named Karl. Many things now obscure would then have been clear" (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, vol. IV, 149). Heinemann shows that the plot of the saga is unclear. The plot in the tenth chapter is still several generations from the birth of Karl Karlsson.

After the death of Karl Þorsteinsson in chapter 23, his son, Karl Karlsson, is born. His introduction follows: "Nú líðr af sumarit. Frá því er sagt at Þorgerðr kennir sér sóttar,

ok elr hún sveinbarn; er sá sveinn nefndr Karl eptir föður sínum. Hann vex þar upp ok er snemma mikill vexti, en er hann var nokkurra vetra gamall, þá óxu þó eigi mikit vitsmunir hans; hann mælti ekki orð, ok því var hann kallaðr ómáli, ok ekki maðr indæll,” ÍF vol. IX, 192). [“The summer was drawing to a close. It is said that Thorgerd went into labour and gave birth to a boy, who was named Karl after his father. He grew up there, quickly achieving great size, but even when he was only a few years old, his intellectual development lagged behind his physical growth. He never spoke, and for this reason he was called ‘The Speechless.’ He was difficult to deal with,” (*CSoI* vol. IV, 183).]

Karl Karlsson remains silent from birth. An analysis of his silence is very problematic. The problem is whether or not he was actually incapable of speaking. If Karl was capable of speaking in his childhood, did he choose not to speak? How does a child choose not to speak and use that silence to exact revenge on his father’s killer?

Karl is described as having been slow to grow, which could have been a way to keep the readership unaware of his actual ability. Nevertheless, Karl is able to speak and does so when he is about to exact his revenge on Þorkell Skíðason. This kind of impairment whereby a character is impaired until he exacts revenge is seen elsewhere in saga literature. All of these examples can be viewed through the exchange model.⁸⁴

One such example is Hávarðr in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, which was discussed in chapter two. Hávarðr seems to be suffering from the effects of age and walks with a limp. However, he only does so until he is able to avenge the death of his son. After that point, he walks upright again. These impairments could certainly be psychosomatic, or

⁸⁴ A character being impaired until exacting revenge can be viewed through the exchange model of disability studies. The exchange model can also show the way that curses and superhuman ability interplay. For further discussion of the exchange model, see the discussions of *Harðar saga* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* in chapter 4.

they could be similar to other unclear impairments like withering and finally dying of “sadness,” as Oddný did at the end of *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*. Just before he takes revenge, he shows prowess in his ability to take control of a horse in a horse-fight. He shows this ability, despite the fact that he is called *fiþl* (idiot). Although Karl may be considered *ekki maðr indæll* (difficult to deal with),⁸⁵ the reader becomes aware of the fact that Þorkell Skíðason and others in the community do not see Karl as a threat to their well-being. They call him *fiþl*; although the term is not as disparaging as *fól*, it also describes him as being inept and therefore disabled. By disabling Karl, society is unable to consider that he actually has the upper hand.

Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities

Ambulatory impairments pertaining especially to the legs are much easier to understand than sensory or cognitive/emotional impairments—especially in minor characters. It is obvious, when a person walks with a hindered gait. When the impairment involves the arm, it may be less obvious. There is only one character, who has an arm impairment: Þormóðr in *Fóstbræðra saga*. Because he has two impairments, and because of the complexity of those impairments, he is mentioned in the next section, regarding other impairments and disabilities.

Four ambulatory impairments and disabilities are mentioned in this chapter: Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, Þórðr beigaldi in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, Qnundr tréfótr in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and Refr in *Harðar saga*. The discussions of Qnundr and Refr are brief, since they are covered in the close reading in chapter four. There are no characters who feign disability, but the case of Gunnlaugr from *Gunnlaugs*

⁸⁵ Some could even argue that being “difficult to deal with” is an impairment in itself.

saga Ormstungu provides insight into the taboo associated with having a visible ambulatory impairment.

Egill – *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*

The first example of a person with an impairment, also arguably a disability, is found in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. Egill is an accomplished man, who has won both fame and wealth in trading and Viking raids and is also a great skald. He is said to be ugly, hard to deal with, and to have dark features like his father. For his pursuits, he is highly praised until the end of his life, when age-related and perhaps other problems start to manifest themselves. At that point, he loses his standing as a respected citizen. He is sad about his aches, pains and the effects of age. His complaint is registered in the following poems:

58. Vals hefk vøfur helgis; /váfallr em ek skall; / blautr erum bergis fótARBORR, en hlust es þorin.

59. Hvarfak blínDR of branda, \ biðk eirar Syn geira, \ þann berk harm á hvarma
 \ hnitvøllum mér sitja; \ es jarðgøfugr orðum, \ orð mín konungr forðum \ hafði
 gramr at gamni, \ Gerhamðis mik framði.

60. Langt þykki mér, \ ligg einn saman, \ karl aFGAMALL, \ án konungrs vørunum; \
 eigum ekkjur \ allkaldar tvær, \ en þær konur, \ þurfu blossa, (*ÍF* vol. II, 295).

[My head bobs like a bridled horse, \ it plunges baldly in woe, \ my middle leg
 both droops and drips, \ while both my ears are dry.]

[Blind I wandered to sit by the fire, \ asked the flame-maiden for peace; \ such
 affliction I bear on the border \ where my eyebrows cross. \ Once when the land-
 rich king \ took pleasure in my words \ he granted me the hoard/ that giants
 warded, gold]

[Time seems long in passing \ as I lie alone, \ a senile old man \ on the king's
 guard. \ My legs are two \ frigid widows, \ those women \ need some flame,"
 (*CSol* vol. I, 175).]

These poems seem redolent of an old octogenarian at a time without modern medical

science. His complaint poems might be seen as whining, if not for the fact that others in his proximity also complain about the fact that he is not useful. He is considered a menace and is made fun of by people of much lower standing, as evident from the following two passages: “Þat var einn dag, er Egill gekk úti með vegg ok drap fæti ok fell; konur nokkurar sá þat ok hlógu at ok mæltu: ‘Farinn ertu nú, Egill, með ǫllu, er þú fellr einn saman,’” (*ÍF* vol. II, 294). [“One day Egil was walking outdoors alongside the wall when he stumbled and fell. Some women saw this, laughed at him and said, ‘You’re completely finished, Egil, now that you fall over of your own accord,’” (*CSoI* vol. I, 174).] This passage shows the shameful teasing of Egill by servant women. It shows how he has fallen from being a great warrior to being a person teased by one of the lowest members of society. The second quote reads: “Egill varð með ǫllu sjónlauss. Þat var einnhvern dag, er veðr var kalt um vetrinn, at Egill fór til elds at verma sik; matseljan ræddi um, at þat var undr mikit, slíkr maðr sem Egill hafði verit, at hann skyldi liggja fyrir fótum þeim, svá at þær mætti eigi vinna verk sín,” (*ÍF* vol. II, 295). [“Egil went completely blind. One winter day when the weather was cold, he went to warm himself by the fire. The cook said it was astonishing for a man who had been as great as Egil to lie around under people’s feet and stop them going about their work,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 175).] Things go even worse for Egill, and nobody around him shows any compassion. Again a person, who formerly was far below his station, reminds him of his low standing. This is emphasized in the fact that he is seated and lying down, while people of lower standing are moving about on a level higher than his own.

As discussed in chapter two, one could argue that age itself is not a disability in the strict sense—that not everybody is affected in the same way. This makes defining age

as a disability difficult—one can see here the disabling effects that Egill has, once he is unable perform as he did before and starts disturbing the abilities of others to do their work. The effects of age on Egill are for this reason disabling to him.

Þórðr beigaldi – *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*

In contemporary Western society and in societies where the government provides at least some care for people who are impaired or disabled, the attitude toward them is that they ought to work as much and as well as they are able to. This attitude appears in the description of a minor character, Þórðr beigaldi, in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. The saga recounts that, “Maðr hét Áni, bóndi einn auðigr; annarr hét Grani, þriði Grímólfr ok Grímr bróðir hans, heimamenn Skalla-Gríms, ok þeir bræðr, Þorbjörn krumr ok Þórðr beigaldi; þeir váru kallaðir Þórçrnusynir; hon bjó skammt frá Skalla-Grími ok var fjölkunnig; Beigaldi var kolbítr,” (ÍF vol. II, 62). [“There was a man called Ani, a wealthy farmer; another called Grani, and Grimolf and his brother Grim, who lived on Skallagrim's farm, and the brothers Thorbjorn Hunchback and Thord Hobbler. They were known as Thorarna's sons - she lived near Skallagrim and was a sorceress. Hobbler was a coal-biter,” (CSoI vol. I, 60).]

The byname shows that Þórðr is impaired because he walks with a hobble. The author calls him a coal-biter, a word that describes the fact that he sits around the fire and does little to help out. Despite the fact that he hobbles when he walks, society expects that he should do as much work as it was possible for him to do. Because he does not, he is judged for it and given the epithet *kolbítr*.

It is not explained if he is called *kolbítr* because he is incapable of doing work others want him to do, or if he is just lazy. In the case of other characters being called

kolbitr, is is not specified if the character had an impairment. The question of status also comes into play with Þórðr beigaldi. The reader is unaware if others with the same impairment would be judged the same way, if they had the ability to hire servants to do work. The author of the text puts the byname *beigaldi* together with the term *kolbitr*, which suggests that the two are believed to be related in this case. His impairment is a disability, even if this impairment is not his walking with a hobble, but rather a manifestation of something else that makes him lazy. The example shows that a person with an impairment was considered a burden, if unable to do work. It is impossible to ascertain if Þórðr tried his best to work, or if he was in so much pain, that he could not do his work.

Qnundr – *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*

Qnundr in *Grettis saga* is an example of a character with an impairment, who is not disabled. He is impaired because he loses his leg in a battle.⁸⁶ Qnundr recovered from the wound, and for the rest of his life, he wore a wooden leg. It is told that Qnundr was subsequently called *Tréfótr* (Woodenfoot) for the rest of his life. He is described later in the saga as brave and nimble. Despite the fact that he had only one leg, he was even more accomplished than some men with two sound legs. While such a comparison in contemporary literature could be seen as othering or disabling a character, in its time this was a complement.

Qnundr is viewed as an exceptional man, who lived well beyond expectation. The two descriptions of him testifies to this, despite his having only one leg. He was able to live without being disabled, as he used a wooden leg and was able to act in a way that

⁸⁶ The quotes are given in chapter four, in the close reading, so here I give only summaries.

made him as accomplished as, if not more so than, his counterparts. Despite the fact that his lack of one leg is mentioned twice, it was never something for which he was judged. Qnundr was idealized and a hero.

Refr – *Harðar saga*

In *Harðar saga*, the reader is introduced to a character, whose description is considerably at par with Qnundr tréfót in *Grettis saga*. Chapter 39 relates that the minor character Refr loses his legs, while being attacked as an act of vengeance.⁸⁷ The scene following his recovery is described in a very interesting way: in a single sentence, it is told that he healed and was carried on a chair from that day, that he lived for a long time, was called Refr the Old, and was thought by most to be a great man.

Similarly to Qnundr, Refr is also described in such a positive light that it would be impossible to consider him disabled from his impairment. What is especially interesting about the description of him is that the reader gets the impression that his age and wisdom far outweigh his impairment, given his byname *gamli*. In addition, the idea that he would be judged for his impairment is quickly eschewed from the brief and terse description of the rest of his life.

Refr is a minor character, who is introduced in chapter 24 in the saga and not mentioned after chapter 41. His name appears only three times after the wound—in only one passage—and it is not clear why he was held in such high esteem, other than the fact that he was wise and grew old. Nevertheless, he is considered impaired, and not disabled.

⁸⁷ See previous note.

Feigning Ambulatory Disabilities

There is no instance of a character feigning an ambulatory impairment or disability. There seems to be a cultural taboo associated with a character showing weakness in his ambulatory ability, especially when it is not immediately evident. The following text shows how a heroic character refuses to alleviate the pain of a boil by limping.

Gunnlaugr - *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*

In *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, the reader follows the protagonist, Gunnlaugr, to Norway, where he meets an earl. He has an oozing boil, described as follows: “Sull hafði hann á fœtil niðri á ristinni; freyddi ór upp blóð ok vágr,” (ÍF vol. III, 68). [“He had a boil on his foot, right on the instep, and blood and pus oozed out of it when walked,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 314).] The earl takes notice and asks him why he is not limping and his response is: “Eigi skal haltr ganga, meðan báðir fœtir eru jafnlangir,” (ÍF vol. III, 69). [“One mustn’t limp when both legs are the same length,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 314).] This reveals a macho and heroic belief that one should not show weakness. Gunnlaugr can be contrasted to Þórðr beigaldi in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, who seems to have a perceptible impairment and accordingly limps. Perhaps Þórðr is contrarily judged as “faking it” or not needing to limp, which makes him disabled.

Other Impairments and Disabilities

Not all characters with impairments can be placed in one of the three categories of cognitive, sensory, or ambulatory impairment. Sometimes the modern reader cannot fully understand the implications of an impairment, because the impairment does not exist in contemporary society. Sometimes, there is a combination of impairments from different

groups, and so the effects of the impairments are unclear. For this reason, there is a fourth group in this section.

Njáll – *Brennu-Njáls saga*

The first example from the other category is the protagonist Njáll in *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Njáll is impaired and disabled because of his inability to grow a beard. The saga itself is full of interplay on masculinity and femininity. Njáll is not the only character who shows signs of not fitting the norm from a gender perspective. In the beginning of the saga, Hrútr—a man who is later in the blood feud with Njáll, and whose mother insults Njáll—is divorced by his wife Unnr, for not being able to have proper penetrative sex. Unnr’s father, Mǫrðr, is then disgraced and emasculated, when he is unable to get Unnr’s dowry back from Hrútr, because when Hrútr challenges him to a duel, he declines, as he is older and has little hope of surviving a duel with Hrútr.⁸⁸

When Njáll is introduced in chapter ten, he is described as wealthy, handsome, successful, and helpful. His only problem is that he cannot grow a beard. This becomes fodder for insults that lead eventually to a blood feud and his death. The following description shows him—with the exception of his lack of a beard—in a wholly positive light: “Njáll bjó at Bergþórshváli í Landeyjum; annat bú átti hann í Þórólfsfelli. Hann var vel auðigr at fé ok vænn at álitu, en sá hlutr var á ráði, þat er hann réð mǫnnum, hógværr ok drenglyndr, langsýnn ok langmínnigr; hann leysti hvers manns vandræði, er á hans fund kom,” (*ÍF* vol. XII, 56-7). [“Njal lived at Bergthorshvol in the Landeyjar. He had a second farm at Thorolfssfell. He was well off for money and handsome to look at, but

⁸⁸ Bragg (2004) discusses Hrútr and Mǫrðr’s disgrace and lack of manliness. She conflates the lack of manliness with homosexuality. The point is well taken, but it is too unsubstantiated to be included in this chapter.

there was one special thing in his nature: no beard grew on him. He was so well versed in the law that he had no equal. He was wise and prophetic, sound of advice and kindly, and whatever course he counselled turned out well, (*CSoI* vol. III, 25).]

Despite the fact that the description is wholly positive, Njáll is not described in terms traditionally reserved for somebody who is masculine or virile. In contrast, Njáll's friend, Gunnarr, is presented as such, as evident from the following:

“Gunnarr Hámundarson bjó at Hlíðarenda í Fljótshlíð. Hann var mikill maðr vexti ok sterkr, manna bezt vígr; hann hjó báðum höndum ok skaut, ef hann vildi; ok hann vá svá skjótt með sverði, at þrjú þóttu á lopti at sjá, Hann skaut manna bezt af boga ok hæfði allt þat, er hann skaut til; hann hljóp meir en hæð sína með ǫllum herklæðum, ok eigi skemmra aptr en fram fyrir sik; hann var syndr sem selr, ok eigi var sá leikr, at nokkurr þyrfti við hann at keppa, ok hefir svá verit sagt, at engi væri hans jafningi,” (*ÍF* vol. XII, 52-3).

[“Gunnar Hamundarson lived at Hlidarenda in Fljotshlid. He was big and strong and an excellent fighter. He could swing a sword and throw a spear with either hand, if he wished, and he was so swift with a sword that there seemed to be three in the air at once. He could shoot with a bow better than anyone else, and he always hit what he aimed at. He could jump higher than his own height, in full fighting gear, and just as far backward as forward. He swam like a seal, and there was no sport in which there was any point in competing with him. It was said that no man was his match,” (*CSoI* vol. III, 24).]

In addition to having a very masculine friend, Njáll is surrounded by women with strong opinions about his manliness or lack thereof. One of the saga's antagonists, Hallgerðr, attempts to incite Njáll by insulting his masculinity. Njáll's wife, Bergþóra Skarpheðinsdóttir, then incites the men in her family into action and convinces them to do what she wants. In medieval Iceland, this could have been taken to mean that Njáll was even more emasculated, as he was unable to keep the two women from bothering him. Even if this were not the case, Njáll and his sons are enter the blood feud egged on by women on both sides. Hallgerðr's insult is as follows:

“Misvitr er Njáll,” segir Hallgerðr, “þarer hann kann til hversvetna ráð.” “Hvat er í því?” sǫgðu þær. “Þat mun ek til finna, sem satt er,” segir Hallgerðr, “er hann ók eigi í skegg

sér , at hann væri sem aðrir karlmenn, ok kollum hann nú kar inn skegglausa, en son hans taðskegginga, ok kveð þú um nokkut, Sigmundur, ok lát oss njóta þess, er þú ert skáld.” Hann kvezk þess vera alþúinn ok kvað þegar vísur þrár eða fjórar, ok váru allar illar. “Gersimi ert þú,” sagði Hallgerðr, “hversu þú ert mér eptirlátr.” Þá kom Gunnarr at í því; hann hafði staðit fyrir framan dyngjuna ok heyrtr ǫll orðtækin. Ǫllum brá við mjök, er hann sá inn ganga; Þögnuðu þá allir, en áðr hafði þar verit hlátr mikill. Gunnar var reiðr mjök ok mælti til Sigmundar: “Heimskr ertú ok óráðhollr, er þú vill hrópa sonu Njáls ok sjálfan hann, er þó er mest vert, ok slíkt sem þú hefir þeim áðr gort, ok mun þetta vera þinn bani. En ef nokkurr maðr hermir þessi orð, þá skal sá í brautu verða ok hafa þó reiði mína, (*JF* vol. XII, 113).

[“Njal's wisdom is uneven,” said Hallgerd, “although he has advice on everything.” “What do you mean?” they said. “I'll point to what's true,” said Hallgerd, “that he didn't cart dung to his beard so that he would be like other men. Let's call him “Old Beardless,” and his sons “Dung-beardlings” and you, Sigmund, make up a poem about this and give us the benefit of your being a poet.” Sigmund said he was up to this and came up with three or four verses, all of them malicious. “You're a treasure,” said Hallgerd, “the way you do just what I want.” At that moment Gunnar came in. He had been standing outside the room and had heard all the words that had passed. They were all shocked when they saw him come in and they fell silent, but before there had been loud laughter. Gunnar was very angry and said to Sigmund, “You are foolish and unable to follow good advice if you are willing to slander Njal's sons and, even worse, Njal himself, on top of what you have already done to them, and this will lead to your death. And if any man here repeats these words, he shall be sent away, and have to bear my anger besides,” (*CSoI* vol. III, 52).]

Bergþóra becomes enraged when she hears of the insult to her husband and sons and their lack of beards and so she incites them to retaliate. The insult—as seen in the following—creates a perception that not being able to grow a beard is an impairment; the insult and the associated lack of manliness are noted in Gunnarr's response, and because of this and the fact that Njáll succumbs to the incitement of Bergþóra, it results in the blood feud. The lack of ability to grow a beard is therefore disabling.

Sexton comments on the culture behind this insult in “Difference and Disability: On the Logic of Naming in the Icelandic Sagas”: “Masculinity and the potential meaning of deviation from gender-associated norms are regular issues in saga literature. Effeminacy in a man of high stature was intolerable, and among the more volatile insults

recorded in the sagas are those relating to sexual passivity or homosexuality,” (p. 158). The disabling of Njáll in the Middle Ages for his lack of beard is incomprehensible in contemporary times; if a man cannot grow a beard, he simply does not do so. In a society where all men had beards, this was not possible. It is not clear if no hair grew on Njáll’s and his sons’ faces, or if it grew unevenly. It appears to be a genetic problem, since all the men in the family are unable to grow beards.

Þormóðr – *Fóstbræðra saga*

A second character included in the category of other is Þormóðr in *Fóstbræðra saga*. He is one of the two sworn brothers and has two impairments. From the text, it is clear which of the two was considered more impairing. It is told that Þormóðr receives a battle wound, which heals badly and leaves him impaired on the arm: “Sár Þormóðar hafðisk illa, ok lá hann lengi ok var jafnan ǫrvendr síðan, meðan hann lifði,” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 167). [“Thormod's wound healed badly and he had to rest for a long time. For the remainder of his life he was left-handed,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 352).] Despite the fact that the wound impaired him to the extent that he could never use his right as he once did, the impairment is not mentioned again. It suggests that he is able to continue in his productivity, and so it does not warrant further discussion.

The second impairment is revealed as a stammer in the *Flateyrbók* manuscript: “‘Auðkenndr maðr em ek,’ segir Þormóðr, ‘svartr maðr ok hrokkinhærðr ok málhaltr; en ek var eigi í því sinni feigr ok má vera at ek hafa til nǫkkurs undan rekit ok lúti enn fyrri í gras nǫkkurir frændr Þorgríms en ek,’” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 236). [“‘I’m an easy man to recognise,’ said Thormod ‘with my dark, curly hair and my stammer, but it was not my

time to die. Perhaps there was some reason for my being spared. Perhaps some of Thorgrim's kinsmen are fated to be laid low before I am,” (CSoI vol. II, 379).]

The quote shows that the loss of use of his right arm is not an obvious way to recognize him. In the passage, he presents himself as having a stammer. This may be taken as a sarcastic comment, because he is a prolific poet, but nevertheless, he claims that his stammer is one of the easiest ways to recognize him. Unfortunately, the record of the saga does not reflect on his enunciations, so the validity of his claim cannot be substantiated.

The translator of the Leifur Eiríksson edition of *Fóstbræðra saga*, Diana Whaley, records in the foreword: “[The saga] may be divided into three main plot areas: the adventures of the sworn brothers [Þorgeirr and Þormóðr] (in which the former slays 15 men, the love affairs of Þormóðr; and the revenge exacted by Þormóðr for Þorgeirr's death,” (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, vol. II, 329) Even though Þormóðr is wounded in the first section, his adventures are not compromised in the other two; in fact, he is able to take part in two endeavors—battle and love—in both of which he is considered to do very well. It seems that neither of his impairments effect his ability to be considered a hero.

Conclusion

An examination of impairments and disabilities of characters in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders provides insight into different types of impairments and the manner in which society reacted to them. Due to the lack of understanding of characters with cognitive or emotional impairments, they appear to have always been disabled by society. The lack of a systemic understanding of the body and mind at the time also caused textual descriptions of cognitive impairments to be muddled. Accordingly, the reader does not

understand the true nature of a cognitive impairment. When characters move from being cognitively impaired to being able, it allows the character to stop being disabled. Often, when this happens, the healing does not follow contemporary logic.

Sensory and ambulatory impairments are easier to understand in their manifestations, but they are not as easy to analyze in terms of societal perception and whether or not they were disabling. The concept of an impairment becoming disabling seems to require that a person could provide a benefit to the society and him/herself. If a character is able to continue work and not be a burden on others, then he or she is not disabled by society. The societal expectations of different members of that society make understanding society's judgment more difficult. Expectations of women are not the same as those of men. Protagonist heroes, who adhere to cultural and honorific norms, are judged most harshly.

Feigning cognitive and sensory disability appears and allows characters to exclude themselves from interacting with others, whether by desire or by need. There are only a few instances, however. Feigning disabilities is even at times considered an intelligent solution for a character to avoid trouble.

Although the conclusions drawn from the analyses of the characters' impairments provide an understanding of how society reacted to impairments and how it determined which were disabling, there is a lack of understanding in the greater framework of the text. A close readings of the texts will provide further details and a better understanding. In chapter four, four such close readings are conducted to help bridge the gaps that are still left from the quantitative, lexicological, and character analyses conducted so far.

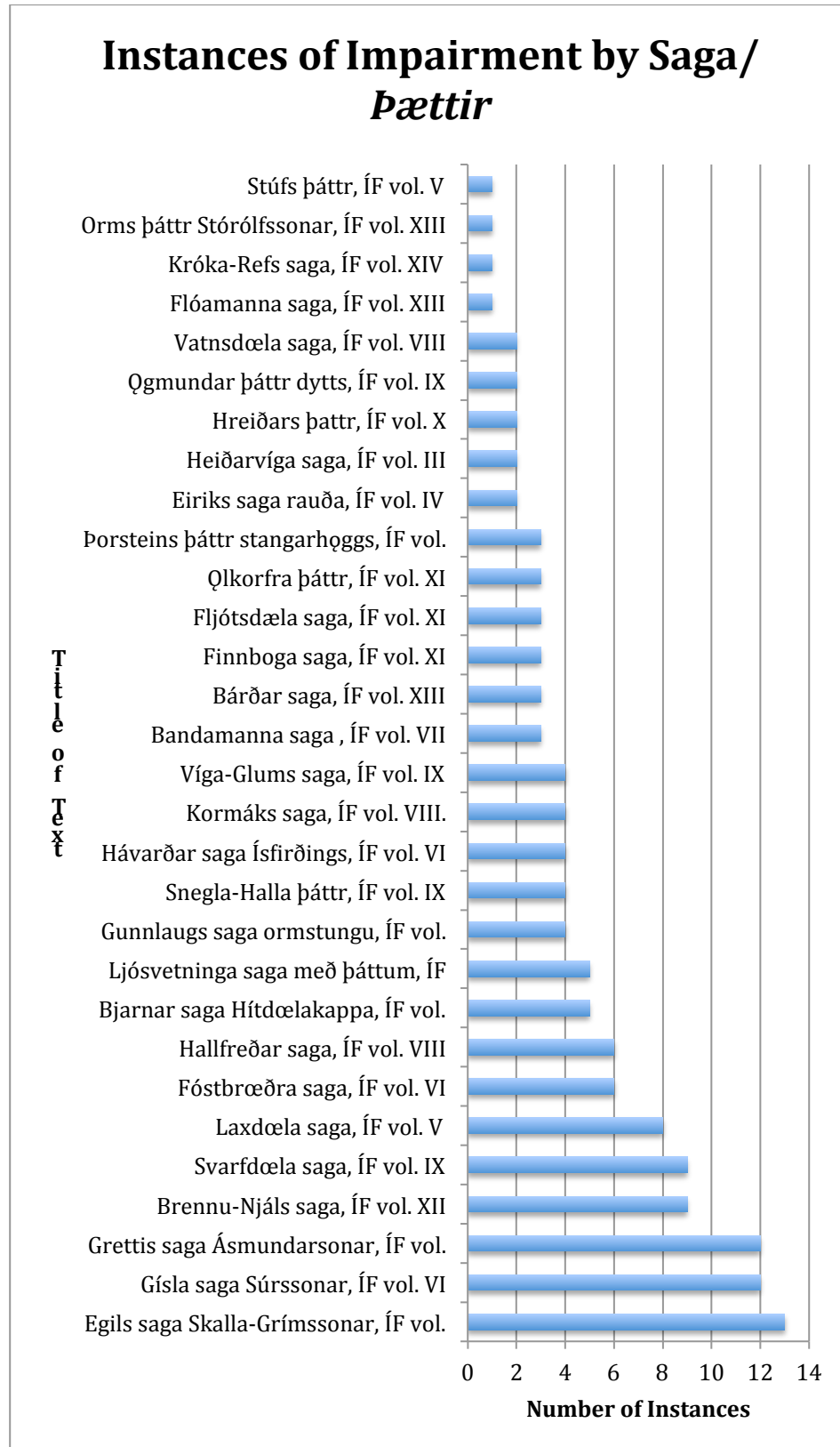
Chapter 4 – Four Close Readings

Introduction

In this chapter, I conduct close readings of four texts: three are sagas and one is a *þáttur*. These close readings will help understand how characters with impairments figure into the plot of the texts. In addition, background information about these characters will help give nuanced interpretations of how and why characters were considered disabled by society, and how characters were able to live with their disabilities. The purpose of this close reading is to show a conceptual plotting of impairment and the character with the impairment within the text. Therefore, I only focus on the parts of the text when the character with an impairment is a part of the plot, or when there is comparative or relevant information pertaining to the character's impairment. In combination with the lexicographic study in chapter two and the character analyses in chapter three, the close readings allow the reader to get a fuller picture of impairments as well as society's reaction to some of them.

It would be ideal to present close readings of all the sagas and *þættir* where characters with impairments are found. However, that would make a dissertation-length project an encyclopedic survey of characters with impairments. To retain the critical purchase of conceptual plotting, I have decided to examine a more manageable number of texts. As Figure 1 on the next page shows, the four sagas with the largest number of disabilities mentioned are *Egils saga Skalla-Grímsönnar* (13), *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (12,

Figure III – Number of Instances of Impairment per Text



Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar (12), *Brennu-Njáls saga* (9). *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* are shorter texts than the other two and are classified as traditional outlaw sagas.⁸⁹ When examining possible texts, I wanted to select sagas that adhered to the same genre, so that they could be more easily compared. In addition, I selected them because of two features that are found in the outlaw sagas: magic and a strong sense of fate. Magic is not prominent in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, but it provides an interesting correlation with impairment and is worthy of mention.

Outlaw sagas are tragedies, because the protagonist, who is also the outlaw-in-name,⁹⁰ dies in the end. In addition to tragedy, another key feature is honor. Adherence to the rules of vengeance and its difficult and almost impossible balance with the rules of honor is often the cause of the downfall of the families involved (Vésteinn Ólason 1998, 167).⁹¹ To make a more complete analysis of the genre, *Harðar saga*,⁹² is also included with *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*.

Before engaging with the sagas, it is fruitful to cast a glance at some of my statistical findings. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and *Brennu-Njáls saga* total 764 pages

⁸⁹ In his book, *Dialogues with the Viking Age* (1998), Vésteinn Ólason discusses that outlaw sagas are situated inside a genre of Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders along with the closely-related feud saga, such as *Bandamanna saga*, *Hrafnkels saga*, as well as *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Erbyggja saga*, which are feud sagas, but lack the “single-stranded plot,” (75). In addition, the preface to the Leifur Eiriksson edition of the Sagas of the Icelanders, *Grettis Saga* is listed as both outlaw saga and a saga of champions and wonders.

⁹⁰ I use the term outlaw-in-name to refer to the fact that the protagonist who is outlawed is also the person after whom the saga is titled.

⁹¹ For further discussion of honor, specifically in the Sagas and *Þættir* as a genre, see (Ibid., 226).

⁹² *Harðar saga* is also known as *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar* and *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*. The title is listed in *Íslensk Fornrit* as *Harðar saga*, so that is the title used here.

(300 and 464 pages respectively).⁹³ The number of terms per page is roughly 0.03 (0.043 and 0.019 respectively). *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* have 408 pages (118 and 290 pages respectively). The number of terms per page is roughly 0.06 (0.102 and 0.041 respectively). *Harðar saga* has only two terms relating to impairment, and one mention of the physical development of a child.

The statistics may seem insignificant, in that both sets of sagas have a vast number of pages with no mention of impairment, but when compared in groups with each other, it becomes clear that *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* contain twice as many instances of impairment per page as *Egils saga Skalla-Grímsonnar* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*. *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Harðar saga*, and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* also show unique instances of impairment among heroes, a hero feigning impairment and a societal critique of both of these impairments. The three sagas are similar, but they are different in terms of the time period in which they were codified. According to the dates provided in the Leifur Eiríksson *Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* was most likely composed around the year 1400, which is rather late in contrast to comparable sagas. *Gísla saga Súrssonar* was composed in the mid-to-late 13th century, and *Harðar saga* was composed in the late 14th century. The three dates of origin allow for an acknowledgment of a perspectival shift over a period of time: *Gísla saga Súrssonar* was composed at a time when most Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders were composed, *Harðar saga* dates from quite a bit later, and *Grettis saga* so much later that it even seems to incorporate non-traditional and continental aspects.⁹⁴

⁹³ Page counts are taken from the *Íslensk Fornrit* editions of each of the sagas in these statistics.

⁹⁴ Vésteinn Ólason discusses the aging of sagas and their stylistic elements from the standpoint of the genre of Sagas and *Þættir* as a whole, in (Vésteinn Ólason 1998, 191-2).

In addition, I have selected *Hreiðars þáttr*, because it provides insight into a protagonist who is deemed cognitively disabled by his peers in Iceland and Norway. He overcomes his disability and becomes quite successful, both in gaining support of a king, but also in terms of his financial circumstances. *Hreiðars þáttr* also differs from the outlaw sagas, in that the hero ends up in a better position at the end of the story.

Hreiðars þáttr is one of six *þættir* containing terms for impairment. Only two terms relating to impairment or disability are found in the tale. Nonetheless, there is much more description of Hreiðar than in any of the other *Þættir*. The attitudes of society, Hreiðar's brother, and King Magnús toward Hreiðar and his disability—something that is very rarely found elsewhere in saga literature—is reason enough that it would be a mistake not to discuss it. The analyses in this chapter cannot be conflated to represent disability in the entire genre, but they do provide a representation within the subgenre.⁹⁵

In *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Harðar saga*, narrative prosthesis is used to establish the superhuman ability and then death by curse of the protagonists. In *Hreiðars þáttr*, narrative prosthesis is used to show the grace and benevolence of King Magnús. Before Hreiðar meets King Magnús, he is disabled. After Hreiðar meets the king and the king sees him as a worthy person, his disability disappears. In *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, there is no solid impairment, so it is too difficult to understand if there is narrative prosthesis.

In all four texts, characters with impairments are heroes. The texts were not selected to show partiality to impaired characters not rejected by society. Instead, the fact that all three characters are heroes is a coincidence of the subgenre and the texts

⁹⁵ The uniqueness of magic in the subgenre was one of the reasons that I felt it warranted further analysis.

discussed in this chapter. Although the characters are all heroes, their impairments are most certainly not well received by society. Qnundr in *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar* is a hero throughout his presence in the plot; Gísli in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* is an unimpaired hero who feigns impairment and is considered disabled by society, but as soon as he stops feigning, his disability disappears. Hörðr in *Harðar saga* is impaired and considered disabled by his mother. The effects of this impairment and the resulting curse follow him for the rest of his life. Finally, Hreiðar goes from being ostracized by society to a hero, or at least being well-accepted by society.

The first text is *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. The analysis of the text shows how protagonist heroes can be represented when they have impairments. *Gísla saga Súrssonar* has two main instances of impairment: it shows a minor character with a cognitive impairment and a protagonist who feigns a disability very similar to that of the minor character. As mentioned earlier, feigning disability appears elsewhere in saga literature, but this is the only case where the reader is aware of the character's intention to feign disability, his reason for doing so, and the ensuing comic effect. The analysis of feigning is important, as it shows how characters were perceived with and without an impairment.

From feigned disability in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, I move to a hero with a real impairment in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. This is Qnundr tréfótr, arguably the most well-regarded one-legged hero in saga literature. Qnundr is a strong man, an amazing fighter, and able to overcome his impairment. Qnundr may only serve as a supporting character who foreshadows aspects of his great-grandson Grettir, but his impairment, along with the impairments found in his family line, provide a way of keeping their super

strength under control. Disability serves as a counterweight for super strength in the case of Qnundr and is juxtaposed to Grettir and his fate.

The third saga is *Harðar saga*, which features a protagonist, who is developmentally impaired and then disabled through a curse by his mother. He outgrows his physical impairment, but he continues to be disabled by his mother's curse for the rest of his life. After his death, his impairment is transferred to another character, Refr, at the end of the saga.

Finally, *Hreiðars þáttur* has a protagonist who is deemed by Icelandic and Norwegian society to be cognitively disabled, and not able to be an active member of society. It is only through Hreiðar's insistence and King Magnús of Norway's grace that Hreiðar is able to overcome his disability and lead a "normal" life. Hreiðar allows himself to be disabled and might even be feigning his disability. In the beginning of the *þáttur*, Hreiðar acts in a way where he appears less aware than he actually is to get what he wants. If Hreiðar is indeed feigning, it is in the severity, instead of creating a disability, as Gísli did.

The four texts contain many parallels and contrasts, which I discuss at the end of this chapter. The results of the close readings of each text yield quite different results, though there are some similarities. One reason for the differences in the results stems from the meaning behind and the reason for the impairment. Understanding what impairment symbolizes and why it is used allows the reader to understand the deeper meaning of the texts.

Gísla saga Súrssonar

According to Vésteinn Ólason in *Dialogues with the Viking Age* (1998), *Gísla saga Súrssonar* is similar in structure to *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Harðar saga*, but it differs, in that there is little adventure in the plot before Gísli is outlawed. In addition, Gísli's problems stem from back before his generation. In the case of the other two sagas, the problems start with the protagonists themselves (75). The saga begins in Norway with Gísli Súrsson leaving Norway to settle in Iceland. Gísli and his brother Þorkell attempt to enter a blood-brother pact with their brothers-in-law, Vésteinn and Þorgrímr. They are unable to complete the pact and things start to fall apart.

Troubles among the four men increase when Gísli's father, as well as Ásgerðr and Auðr, become involved; in addition, jealousies over Auðr's attraction flare. Vésteinn ends up murdered, and Gísli vows to take vengeance. Gísli kills Þorgrímr, whom he believes killed Vésteinn. After the murder of Þorgrímr, Gísli wants to offer peace and end the quarrel. He tries to offer a settlement through relatives of Vésteinn⁹⁶—of the four men, the first to be murdered—at a meeting of the *Þing*. The attempt to make peace is unsuccessful and Gísli is outlawed.

Gísli is a victim of circumstances or fate, and several times he is put in situations where none of the outcomes is beneficial. The reader can identify with Gísli because he is a good man with terrible luck. He is very sharp and quick to think; Martin Regal, the translator of the Leifur Eiríksson edition of the saga, notes: "In his outlaw period Gísli becomes slightly coloured by the medieval trickster figure, so that comic interludes temporarily divert from the tragedy but ultimately serve to intensify it," (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, vol. II, 1). Regal's observation shows that if the story is influenced by mainland

⁹⁶ When Vésteinn is murdered, Gísli pulls the spear from his chest, which means he will take vengeance for Vésteinn's murder.

European literature and Christianity, then so could the notion of disability in this saga. This is evident from the aforementioned dream, where Gísli is told to be kind to people with disabilities, and the resulting view of pity taken on people with disability.

Gísli follows a Christian sense of kindness. Two scenes in particular depict his inherent kindness. The first occurs as a dream, which is explained and then reiterated as a poem⁹⁷ composed by Gísli (chapter 22). The second is in chapter 25 when a character with a severe cognitive disability is introduced and then in the next chapter, when Gísli imitates the character.

Not long after Gísli is outlawed, he has a dream in which a woman appears: “...Þá kom inn draumkona mín in betri ok sagði, at þat⁹⁸ merkði aldr minn, hvat ek ætta eptir ólifat, ok hon réð mér þat, meðan ek lifða, at láta leiðask forna sið ok nema enga galdra mé forneskju ok vera vel við daufan ok haltan ok fátœka ok fáráða. Eigi var draumrinn lengri,” (ÍF, vol. VI, 70), [“Then my good dream-woman came in and said that this signified how many years I had left to live, and she advised me to stop following the old faith for the rest of my life, and to refrain from studying any charms or ancient lore. And she told me to be kind to the deaf and the lame and the poor and the helpless, and that is where my dream ended,” (CSoI, vol. II, 27).]⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Reiteration of scenes through poetry as well as the importance of tying poetry and prose together is discussed by Vésteinn Olsson in *Dialogues with the Viking* (p. 125-9). It is found in *Gísli saga Súrssonar*, *Harðar saga*, and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* when dealing with impairment.

⁹⁸ “*Þat*” here refers to the seven fires that burn near the two women, signifying the seven years until Gísli will die.

⁹⁹ This quote seems to be reflective of biblical passages, such as Leviticus 19:14, “You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind,” (Metzger and Murphy 1991, OT 150) and Matthew 5:5, “The meek shall inherit the earth,” (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 6). They give the general suggestion of being kind to people with impairments and even suggest that God looks kindly upon them because of their impairments.

This quote shows Gísli's good nature, and it shows how post-Christian society felt about the change in the ideal of charity in the process of conversion.

Gísli reiterates what he understands from the dream in a poem he composes. He stresses the importance of being good to people with impairments, when he says the verse: “Vald eigi þú vígi, / ves þú ótyrrinn, fyrri, / morðs við mæti-Njörðu, / mér heitið því, seitu. / Baugskyndir, hjalp blindum, / Baldr, hug at því, skjaldar, / illt kveða háð ok hǫltum, / handlausum tý, granda,” (*ÍF*, vol. VI, 72-3). [“Do not be the first to kill, / nor provoke into fight / the gods who answer in battle. / Give me your word on this. / Help the blind and handless, / ring-giver, shield of Balder. / Beware, evil resides in scorn / shown to the lame and needy,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 28).] From a contemporary standpoint, this is a very typical tragedy or charity reaction to impairment—one should feel sorry—and rather simplistic and outmoded for people with impairments. It must be noted, though, that for its time, when Iceland had little social welfare, this notion is very progressive and idealistic; it follows the true nature of the ideals of Christianity. It is also a cultural response to disability. This is in contrast to the next episode, in which a person with a disability is treated as a savage and called names.

Helgi is so impaired that he is tethered to a stone with a hole in it and left outside to graze like an animal: “Helgi hét sonr Ingjalds ok var aþglapi sem mestr mátti ver ok fífl; honum var sú umbúð veitt, at raufarsteinn var bundinn við hálsinn, ok beit hann gras úti sem fénaðr ok er kallaðr Ingjaldsfífl; hann var mikill vexti, nær sem troll,” (*ÍF*, vol. VI, 79.). [“Ingjald had a son named Helgi, as great and simple-minded an oaf as ever there was. He was tethered by the neck to a heavy stone with a hole in it, and left outside to graze like an animal. He was known as Ingjald's Fool and was a very large man, almost

a troll, (*CSoI*, vol. II, 31).] The episode is offered as an alternative—albeit a cruel one—to having a caregiver take care of a person with an impairment. Given the lack of specific information about Helgi’s cognitive impairment, the severity of the impairment and reason for his disability cannot be ascertained. Nonetheless, the Modern English words, oaf and fool, do not seem to justify the need to tether Helgi.

The reader is aware of the use of the three words *afglapi*, *fífl*, and *troll*, and that the first two could be very negative, but it is not entirely clear. The last word, *troll*, refers generally to a non-human creature that is large and strong. From this description, the word also shows how people with disabilities could be given the status of a non-human. The fact that Helgi grazes like an animal also calls to question whether he was fed like others in the house, if he could not eat what they did, or if they were not financially able to feed him. The text does not explain.

Later, in chapter 26, when Gísli is escaping in a boat with the slave woman Bóthildr, he devises the plan that he will pretend to be cognitively disabled—a description of actions that seems quite like how Helgi might have acted: “‘Þú skalt segja,’ segir hann, ‘at hér sé fíflit innan borðs, en ek mun sitja í stafni ok herma eptir því ok vefja mik vaðnum ok vera stundum útan borðs ok láta sem ek má æriligast, ok ef nokkur berr þá um fram, mun ek róa sem ek má ok leita þess á, at sem skjótast skili með oss,’” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 83). [“‘You will say,’ Gisli told her, ‘that this is the fool on board, and I’ll sit in the prow and mimic him. I’ll wrap myself up in the tackle and hang overboard a few times and act as stupidly as I can. If they go past us a little, I’ll row as hard as I can and try to put some more distance between us,’” (*CSoI* vol. II, 32).] Gísli’s enemies seem to be amused: “‘Þeir svöruðu: ‘Gaman þykkir oss at fíflinu’—ok horfa á þat—‘svá sem þat

getr ærilega látið,” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 83). [“They said it was tragic that she should have to look after this fool,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 33).] The type of character that Gísli feigns is not totally useless. Despite the fact that he behaves so madly, he rows quickly, while he is still under disguise, which suggests that he, acting as the fool, would have great strength.

Gísli’s reason for feigning disability is to foil his pursuers, but the reason he chooses to feign cognitive disability could be that he knows that no hero would ever want to make himself to appear like an idiot. Perhaps he thinks that pursuers would find a person with a cognitive disability so repugnant that they would want to leave quickly. Gísli’s trick works, and the pursuers leave after making a few remarks.

The passage also provides the reader with some comic relief in a very tense situation.¹⁰⁰ Tension and comedy are quite often intertwined, though this is the most obvious example in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. However, comic relief is not usually tied to insulting those with an impairment. Accordingly, instances of comic references to disability cannot be relied on authoritatively to evidence the societal view of people with cognitive impairments. In fact, Gísli acts in such a way that his dreams and his word choice show that he is not directly insulting Helgi or another character with such an impairment.

This is not the case in terms of others in the saga, however. As discussed in chapter two, the *Cleasby-Vigfusson Dictionary of Icelandic* makes the claim that the term *föll* is considered more offensive than *fífl*. When the sagas use the term *föll*, they verify the disabling nature of Gísli’s feigning. The attitude toward cognitive disabilities, at least

¹⁰⁰ Gísli feigning disability, is quite similar to the use of caricature in Saga Literature. Vésteinn Ólason discusses the use of caricature with characters who are “miserably insignificant.” For further discussion, see page 161 in *Dialogues with the Viking Age*.

that of insensitive characters, is seen in the following: “Þeir sǫgðu, at hon var hǫrmuliga stǫdd, er hon skyldi fylgja fólá þessum,” (*ÍF* vol. VI, 83). [“‘We’re having fun with the idiot,’ and looked towards him. ‘Look at how madly he’s behaving,’” (*CSoI* vol. II, 33).]

This passage presents the reader with insight into how others perceive a person with a cognitive disability. The use of *fóll* makes the reader aware of the antagonists’ lack of empathy and charity. It shows that at least some people considered such a person to be a child or even an animal. Akin to my discussion of Egill in chapter three, in this specific case too, the passages exhibit how society viewed a person with a disability as a burden on their caretakers.

An episode in which a character feigns disability like this either portrays a person who is either looked down upon for not facing up to his enemies or provides comic relief: the latter is the case here. Despite the fact that Gísli feigns disability to avoid his enemies, he is still considered a hero, as he was called a good and honest man after his eventual and well-foretold death in the final battle of the saga.

Gísla saga Súrsonnar presents a very progressive—and almost foreign to the genre—ideal of how to treat people with impairments, namely with kindness, as seen in Gísli’s dream and in his words. Although Gísli’s kindness may be questioned in his mimicry of Helgi, the function of comic relief and the use of more neutral words show that he remains somewhat true to his belief. This kindness is juxtaposed by the treatment of Helgi by his family as well as the words used by the men pursuing Gísli. This contrast provides a societal commentary on the sagas’ contemporary view of pre- and post-Christian treatment of the less fortunate.

Gísla saga Súrssonar differs from *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Harðar saga* in two ways: there is no impairment in addition to the magic curse, and Gísli kills himself by throwing himself over a cliff to kill Eyjólfur's kinsman instead of being killed in a battle scene. Although Gísli is wounded at the end of the saga, the narrative of the death differs from the two sagas. In addition, Gísli's death comes at the end of the saga, instead of several chapters beforehand, as it does in the other two sagas.

From the standpoint of disability studies, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* presents two views of disability. The first view is the Tragedy/Charity Model, as seen in Gísli's dream, his reaction to the dream, and his choice of terms to describe how he will act. This view is very idealized and shows a benign but patronizing view of how people with disabilities should be treated.

The second view is the Moral Model. Although Helgi and Gísli (while he is feigning) are not blamed, there is no compassion shown to them, and Bóthildr is pitied for having to put up with an idiot. It is more difficult to parse the blame surrounding Helgi; needless to say, he is treated like an animal, and no mention is made of his needs, desires, or his welfare. The author is making a judgment in an indirect way.

An Economic Model is seen in both passages relating to the impairment. There is no mention in the dream and the reaction to the dream of helping people with disabilities to become independent or do any sort of labor. Instead, people with disabilities are presented in such a way that they should be helped without helping themselves. Bóthildr is pitied because she has to care for a burden to society, even though she is a slave. Because he is an economic burden, Helgi's family does not attempt to care for him. They tie him up so they can go about their own lives and work.

Harðar saga

Of the three outlaw sagas examined, *Harðar saga* is the least famous and least discussed. The entry for the word “Saga” in the *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, for example, lists *Gisla saga Súrssonar* and *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, but *Harðar saga* is absent, (Cuddon 1992, sub verbum 76).

Hörðr¹⁰¹ is the protagonist and one of two characters considered impaired. His life may be examined in three periods: birth and childhood, young adulthood, and adulthood and time in outlawry. During his childhood, he is most obviously impaired because of his inability to walk. He grows up to be a man described in positive terms, yet he ends up dying because of his inability to move.

When Hörðr is introduced in chapter seven, he is presented in an ambivalent way as “mikill vexti ok vænn at álit” and at the same time “ekki dálíga bráðgerr fyrst í því,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 16) [“big and promising”; “not especially well-developed at first,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 197)]; people consider it “kynligt ok eigi bráðgerviligt,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 16) [“strange and inauspicious,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 197).] because he was “frágerðamaðr at öllu öðru,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 16). [“outstanding as he was in every other respect,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 197).] How is it possible to be big, promising and outstanding as a three-year-old without being able to walk by oneself? Why is this inability inauspicious? What do promising and outstanding three-year-olds look like? These questions cannot be answered without comparing this to descriptions of stations in Hörðr’s earlier and later life.

Hörðr takes his first steps by himself, when he is three years old. This happens during preparations for a sacrifice—an event that should be holy and auspicious. Because

¹⁰¹ The *Íslensk Fornrit* edition of *Harðar saga* lists the name as Hörðr, not Hqrðr, so it is used this way here, as well.

he is unable to walk easily, he stumbles into his mother Signý's lap and breaks her pendant into three pieces. The number three is found several times in the text. There are three phases of his life. He is three years old, when he starts walking, and there are three pieces of Hörðr's mother's pendant. The number three continues to be of importance throughout his life; those instances are noted.

When Hörðr falls causing the pendant to break, Signý predicts and even curses his life to end badly. She intensifies the curse right away when she recites a poem about how grave it was that he destroyed her pendant and how he will suffer: “Braut í sundr fyr sætu / Sírnis hljóða men góða; / ýta, trú'ek, at engi bæti / auðar hlíði þat síðan; / gangr varð ei góðr ins unga / gulls lystis inn fyrsti, / hvern man heðan af verri, / hneppstr mun þó inn efsti,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 17). [He broke before the woman / the fine pendant of giant's speech. / I doubt that any man can / ever compensate the lady. / The young gold-yearner's first /walk went not well. Worse / will be each one after, / although harshest the last,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 198).] The words disable Hörðr, and despite the fact that his impairment is only temporary, the disability lasts his whole life. Hörðr's father, Grímkell, hears the poem, and recites his own, in which he states that Signý is not a good mother for cursing her son: “Auðs hefir átta beiðir / ógóða sér móður; / hann nam first at finna fljóðs nýgenginn jóða / bræðiorð, þau er beiðir / brennu sjós mun kenna; / atkvæði lifa lýða / lengr en nökkurr drengja,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 17-8). [“The reacher for riches / has possessed a poor mother. / The woman's first child, / new walking, has suffered / from the hateful words / a sea-fire's seeker will feel. / People's censure lives longer / than some peerless men,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 198).] It seems that neither Hörðr nor his father have a chance to

stave off the curse. Apart from defending Hörðr and stating that his wife is not a good mother, Grímkell shows that he can do nothing else to ameliorate the effects of the curse.

After this point, there is no mention of Hörðr's inability to walk or any other weakness during his childhood or early adulthood. When next he is described physically in chapter eleven, he is at his prime: “Þá var Hörðr tólf¹⁰² vetra, er hér var komit sögunni; han var þá jafn um afl inum sterkustum mönnum þar í sveitum,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 32). [“Hord was twelve years old at this point in the story. He was then the equal in strength of the strongest men in the neighbourhood,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 198).] The time period in the text jumps immediately from when Hörðr is twelve to when he is fifteen years old. He is described as follows:

Hann var þá höfði öllu hæri en aðrir men flestir; honum mátti öngvar sjónhverfingar gera í augum, því at hann sá allt eptir því sem var; hann var hærðr manna bezt ok ramr at afli, syndr manna bezt ok um alla hluti vel at íþróttum búinn. Hann var hvítr á hörund, en bleikr á hár; han var breiðleitr ok þykkleitr, liðr á nefi, bláeygr ok snareygr ok nökkut opineygr, herðibreiðr, miðmjór, þykkur undir höndina, útlímasmár ok at öllu vel vaxinn, (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 32).

[“He was then a head taller than most other men. He could not be deceived by illusions because he saw everything just as it was. He had a superb head of hair, great bodily strength, was a fine swimmer and endowed with every kind of skill. He had a light complexion and fair hair. His face was broad and full, with a hooked nose, keen blue eyes that were somewhat staring, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, deep-chested, with small hands and feet and well-proportioned in every way,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 205).]

Hörðr has very positive attributes, which are then compared with those of Geirr: “Geirr var nökkuru ósterkari, en þó váru þá nálíga öngvir hans jafningjar; hann var inn mesti íþróttamaðr, þótt hann kæmist eigi jil jafns við Hörð,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 32). [“Geir was somewhat less strong, although almost no one was his equal. He was a great athlete, though he could never be a match for Hord,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 205).]

¹⁰² Twelve is four times three.

By the time of the third part of his life described in chapter 36, Hörðr is 36 years old and an outlaw.¹⁰³ At this point, he is still very physically able. When Refr, Indriði, and their men attack him, he jumps over a ring three men deep, but he suffers from a *herfjöturr* (war fetter). Cleasby Vigfusson defines *herfjöturr* as follows: “a mythical term, ‘war-fetter:’ a valiant man who in the stress of battle feels himself spell-bound, and unable to stir, was in old lore said to be caught in a ‘war-fetter;’ this was attributed to the weird sisters of battle (the Valkyries), as is shown by the fact that one of them was called Herfjöturr” (Cleasby, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, and Dasent 1874, sub verbum herfjöturr). This is the disabling curse of Hörðr’s mother coming to fruition. Three times, Hörðr is able to overcome the *herfjöturr*. The third time he overcomes them, he is even able to jump again over a ring of men three deep, and kills three men. The fourth time, the *herfjöturr* overcome him, he is caught.

It is obvious that the *herfjöturr*—with its source somewhere in his mother’s curse—is disabling Hörðr. As he states, “Mikil tröll eiga hér hlut í, en ekki skulu þér þó hafa yðvarn vilja um þat, sem ek má at gera,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 87). [“Strong sorcery is involved in this. But you shall not have your way about anything that I can still control,” (*CSol*, vol. II, 232).] The combination of his strength and ability and the power of the curse are seen in Hörðr’s death scene. The text reads:

Í því hjó Þorsteinn gullknappr á hnakkann með hásképtri öxi, því at engi þeira þorði framan at honum at ráða, þó at hann væri slyppr. Af því sari fekk Hörðr bana. Þá hafði hann drepit af þeim þrettán menn, með þeim fjórum, sem hann drap við skip, áðr en hann var fangir, ok þykkir eigi honum samtíða á alla hluti röskvari maðr verit hafa ok vitrari en Hörðr, þó at hann væri eigi auðnumaðr; ollu því ok hans fylgdarmenn, þó at hann stæði í slíkum illvirkjum, ok þat annat, at eigi má sköpunum renna, (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 87-8).

¹⁰³ Thirty-six is 12 times three.

[At that moment Thorstein Gold-button struck him on the nape of the neck with a long-shafted axe, because none of them dared to come at him from the front or to attack him, although he was unarmed. That wound was fatal. By then he had killed thirteen men, including the four he killed by the ship before he was captured. Everyone praised his valour, both his friends and his enemies. They thought that among his contemporaries no one had been in all respects more heroic or more intelligent than Hord, although he had not been a lucky man. His followers were the cause of his life of crime and also the fact that no one escapes his fate, (*CSoI*, vol. II, 232).]

The belief that nobody is able to escape his fate explains Hörðr's father's reaction to the curse. By virtue of the fact that nobody dared attack Hörðr from the front, the power of the curse shows itself. Under usual circumstances, it would be considered rather shameful for Þórsteinn gullknappr to deliver a blow to Hörðr behind his back, while he stood still. Unlike *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*, the shamefulness of the blow is not mentioned in the text, but it can be surmised from the description.

After the death of Hörðr, Þórbjörg voices her disapproval to her husband Indriði and his men, and she plots vengeance for her brother's death. She first asks her husband to kill Þórsteinn gullknappr, which he does. She then supports her husband again, and also asks a worker named Þórolfr to kill Refr in his sleep. Refr was at the final battle with Hörðr. He was on a horse, but at first unable to catch up with Hörðr. When finally he did, "...þorði hann eigi at ráða á Hörð," (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 87-8). ["...he did not dare to attack Hord," (*CSoI*, vol. II, 231).]¹⁰⁴ Þórolfr made his way into the house, but Refr's mother warned him, and Þórolfr can only managed to cut off one of Refr's legs at the calf and the other at the ankle. Þórolfr was then killed rather violently by Refr's mother. The saga continues: "Refr varð græddr ok borin á stóli all stund síðan, því at hann mátti aldri

¹⁰⁴ Other than chasing him, and being present, the text makes no mention Refr of taking part in the killing of Hörðr, which leads the reader to believe that vengeance on Refr is by association alone.

ganga, ok lifði þó lengi upp frá þessu, svá at hann var kallaðr Refr inn gamli, ok þótti æ inn mesti mætamaðr,” (*ÍF*, vol. XIII, 95). [Ref recovered and was always carried in a chair afterward, because he was never able to walk. However he lived for a long time after this, so that he was called Ref the Old and was always considered a most excellent man,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 235).]

By losing his ability to walk, Refr ends his life from an ambulatory standpoint, just as Hörðr begins his. Despite an impairment that is similar to Hörðr’s, Refr cannot be regarded as disabled. The difference is the reaction of society to Hörðr’s and Refr’s impairments: society considered Hörðr’s impairment inauspicious and he was then handicapped by magic via his mother’s curse.¹⁰⁵ He was still praised for his valor, as well as for being heroic and intelligent, but none of those virtues could prevent his death. Society heralded Refr for being an excellent man, despite his inability to walk and his dependence on others to carry him around in a chair. Refr’s byname was “the old,” despite the fact that he was impaired before he was at the end of his life.¹⁰⁶ Hörðr and Refr were both considered great men. Hörðr, however, was unable to overcome the curse, and the actions of Hörðr’s impairment lead to his death. For this reason, the curse disables him.

The case of Hörðr combines the Moral Model and the Exchange Model. Hörðr causes his mother’s pendant to break, which is inauspicious because the family is about

¹⁰⁵ The concepts of handicapped by magic and disabled merge here, in that the disability continues on in a way through the handicap by magic. Despite the fact that Hörðr no longer has an ambulatory disability, he is still at a disadvantage. And had it not been for his ambulatory disability, he would never been cursed, and therefore handicapped by magic.

¹⁰⁶ This is another example of the problem of understanding exactly when bynames were used. In this case, however, it is clear that Hörðr was considered to be a great man from the point of his impairment and up to his old age.

to attend a religious ceremony. His mother blames him for having destroyed the pendant and curses him. This is the Moral Model. The curse leads to his eventual death. His strength and agility could be accepted as a superhuman ability that is bestowed on him without his consent in exchange for his eventual demise, which follows the Exchange Model. The exchange of superhuman ability is certainly a form of narrative prosthesis, and the effects of the Exchange Model keep him alive until he is fated to die.

Refr is seen entirely through the Economic Model. He is a successful man who benefits society. After he is impaired, he continues to benefit. Society does not change in its view of Refr, and is even able to overlook his need to be carried in a chair, because his benefit outweighs the burden he places on society.

Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar

Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar follows the life and eventual killing of the outlaw Grettir. As in many Sagas and *Pættir* of Icelanders, the first part of the saga focuses on the patrilineal genealogy of the protagonist. In this case there is a combination of both seemingly real and symbolic impairments over the generations. The focus of my close reading is the patrilineal genealogy and descriptions of Grettir's forefathers, because they foreshadow the difficulties that Grettir—a character without a visible impairment—has. The first sentence of the saga hints at the physicality of Grettir's patrilineal line, and none of the descriptions—especially the bynames—is particularly positive. The first person to be introduced from Grettir's family is Qnundr, who is Grettir's great-grandfather. Qnundr is introduced as follows: “hann var Ófeigssonar burlufótar, Ívars sonar beytils.¹⁰⁷ Qnundr

¹⁰⁷ I take the Ivar *beytill* [Horse-cock's] situation to be similar to Hrútr in *Brennu-Njáls saga*: both men are deemed to be very masculine and powerful because of their large phalluses, but the fact that they are called out for them is not a positive thing, in fact in Hrútr's case, he is not even able to perform in a way that is sexually pleasing as a result of his size, and because of this, his

var bróðir Guðbjargar, móður Guðbrands kulu, fæður Ástu, móður Óláfs konungs ins helga,” (*ÍF*, vol. VII, 3). [“He was the son of Ofeigr Hobbler whose father was Ivar Horsecock. Onund's sister Gudbjorg was the mother of Gudbrand Lump, whose daughter Asta was the mother of King Olaf the Holy,” (*CSoI*, vol. II, 49).] Although no explanation is given about the bynames, all men listed, except for King Óláfr, have bynames, and they are descriptions of non-positive¹⁰⁸ physical phenomena.¹⁰⁹

Of the bynames, the most obviously impairing one is Ofeigr *burlufótr* (hobbler). The byname *burlufótr*, too, foreshadows what will become of Qnundr *tréfótr*. The irony lies in the fact that what causes Qnundr's impairment is by no means genetic. The phenomenon of bynames continues to Qnundr's son, Þorgrímr *hærukollr* (grey-head), and Þorgrímr's son Ásmundr *hærunlangr* (grey-locks) or *hærunlagðr* (grey-fluff), all of which are physical descriptions, and although not impairing, their premature greying is described with aging too quickly. In addition to their bynames, Qnundr, Þorgrímr, and Ásmundr are all described as being very strong.

Of the four generations of Grettir's family that are described in detail—that is Grettir, Ásmundr, Þorgrímr, and Qnundr—it is only Qnundr *tréfótr* who clearly has an

wife divorces him. Thomas DuBois discusses Hrútr in his article “Anatomy of the Elite: ‘Learned’ vs. ‘Folk’ in the Analysis of Avowedly Pre-Christian Religious Elements in the Sagas.” There he presents the idea that Hrútr could be under a curse from the nymphomaniac Queen Gunnhildr. The motif of a spell causing a large phallus or hypersexuality is an intriguing concept. In the case of Ivar, there is not enough information to provide comparison.

¹⁰⁸ I use the term non-positive to refer to the fact that the description is hard to judge, so it could be taken as either negative or neutral. It does, however, not have the positive attributes that some bynames have, such as deep-minded, keen-sighted, wise, old [in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders, all instances of the byname old are positive].

¹⁰⁹ The only other people listed without bynames are Qnundr, himself, and his sister, Guðbjörg. It is notable that the two of them are described in their childhood in this scene, and so perhaps are too young to have a byname yet.

impairment. Qnundr loses his leg during a battle. The story relays that, “Qnundr stóð út á borðit qðrum fœti ok hjó til manns, ok í því var lagit til hans; ok er hann bar af sér lagit, kiknaði hann við. Þá hjó einn af stafnbúum konungs til Qnundar, ok kom á fótinn fyrir neðan kné ok tók af fótinn; Qnundr varð þegar óvígr,” (*ÍF*, vol. VII, 6.) [“Qnundr was standing with one foot on the gunwale, striking a blow, when someone lunged at him, and as he warded off the attack he buckled at the knees. At that moment one of the men in the prow of the king's ship struck at him, hitting him just below the knee and chopping off his leg. Qnundr was put out of action immediately...,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 50).] Qnundr recovered from the wound, and for the rest of his life he wore a wooden leg. Accordingly Qnundr was called *tréfótr*, or wooden-foot for the rest of his life.

Later in the saga it is told that: “Qnundr var svá frækinn maðr, at fair stóðusk honum, þótt heilir væri; hann var ok nafnkunnigr um allt land af forellrum sínum,” (*ÍF* vol. VII, 23.) [“Onund was so brave that few men were a match for him, even if they were completely able-bodied. He was well known all over Iceland because of his ancestry,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 58).] Finally at the end of his life, in chapter 11, he is described as follows: “hann hefir fræknastr verit ok fimastr einfœttr maðr á Íslandi,” (*ÍF* vol. VII, 25-6). [“He was the bravest and nimblest one-legged man ever to live in Iceland,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 59).] These two descriptions reiterate the fact that by no means can Qnundr be considered disabled.¹¹⁰

Qnundr’s success makes him as a hero. He was able to exist without being disabled, as he used a wooden leg and was able to act in a way that made him as accomplished as others, if not more. For this reason, Qnundr was idealized. The

¹¹⁰ The mention of him having an impairment, has a disabling effect, in that it echoes his difference, and places emphasis on the impairment, but it never shows any kind of judgment.

following passage from a battle scene in chapter 4, well after he has lost his leg, shows the esteem in which he was held:

...þeir skutu tréstubba nokkurum undir kné Qnundi, ok stóð hann heldr fast. Víkingrinn sótti aptan eptir skipinu, allt þar til er hann kom at Qnundi, ok hjó til hans með sverði, ok kom í skjöldinn ok tók af þat, er nam; síðan hljóp sverðit í stubbann, þann er Qnundr hafði undir knénu, ok varð fast sverðit. Vígbjóðr laut, er hann kippði at sér sverðinu; í því hjó Qnundr á oxlina, svá at af tók höninda; þá varð víkingrinn óvígr. Þá er Vestmarr vissi, at félagi hans var fallinn, hljóp hann á þat skip, er ýzt lá, ok flýði ok allir þeir, er því náðu. Eptir þat rannsökkðu þeir valinn. Vígbjóðr var þá kominn at bana; Qnundr gekk at honum ok kvað:

3. Séðu hvárt sör þín blæða; / sóttu nokkut mik hrökkva; / auðslöngvir fekk enga / einfœttr af þér skeinu; / meir es mörqum, snerru, / málskalp lagit, Gjalpar / brjótr esat þegn í þrautir / þrekvanðr, en hyggjandi, (*ÍF* vol. VII, 12-3.)

[They wedged a log under Onund's knee so that he would stand quite firmly. The viking moved along the ship from the aft until he reached Onund, and struck at him with his sword, hacking his shield away where the blow struck. His sword rebounded into the log below Onund's knee and stuck there. As Vigbjod leaned over to jerk the sword back, Onund aimed a blow at his shoulder, cutting off his arm and putting him out of action. Once Vestmar knew that his companion was felled, he rushed for the outermost ship and fled, as did all his men who could make their way there. Afterwards, Onund and his crew examined the casualties. Vigbjod was on the verge of death by then. Onund went up to him and spoke a verse:

3. See if your wounds bleed. / Did you see me flinch? / You did not deal a scratch to me, / the one-legged slinger of riches. / Many breakers of battle-axes / are more brag than brains. / That man was not generous / With his strength when challenged,” (*CSoI* vol. II, 54).]

Like his great-grandfather Qnundr, Grettir is described as being very strong; his strength is so important that it becomes his byname. Does his strength outmatch any in his patrilineal line? Does it signify something else?

Grettir is the first in his line to have a byname that is not immediately identifiable as non-positive. Strength in saga literature is considered to be a very positive trait, and Grettir's strength allows him to stay alive for much of his time in outlawry. If it weren't for sorcery, Grettir would not have been wounded. His wounds are so severe that they

make it imperceptibly easy for Qngull and his men to catch and kill Grettir. Strength is what makes Grettir able to keep away from his enemies; lack of strength is what makes him lose in the end. At the same time, Grettir's fatal flaw seems to be his strength combined with his bad temper. The combination of the two attributes is what causes him to be outlawed in the first place.

Despite the fact that Qnundr is never disabled, his great-grandson is handicapped by magic much like Hörðr in *Harðar saga*. In the chapters before he is killed, Grettir receives a wound similar to that which impairs his great-grandfather. Grettir loses his temper while trying to cut down a tree described as evil: “Gretti varð skapfátt við þrælinn ok tvíhendi øxina til rótarinnar, ok eigi geymði hann, hvat tré þat var. Ok jafnskjótt sem øxin kom við tréit, snerisk hon flöt ok stókk af trénu ok á fót Grettis inn hœgra fyrir ofan kné, ok svá at stóð í beini, ok var þat sár mikit,” (*ÍF*, vol. VII, 251). [“Grettir lost his temper and swung his axe at the tree with both hands, without bothering to see what tree it was. And the moment the axe struck the tree it slid flat and glanced off into Grettir's right leg above the knee, delivering a deep wound right to the knee,” (CSoI, vol. II, 171).] The effects of the wound impair him until his death.

The impairment caused by the curse on Grettir may be seen as the embodiment of the physical impairments that all the men in his patrilineal line had; it also is the handicap by magic that leads to his death. If Grettir had not cut himself, he would not have been so easily captured and killed by his enemies. Grettir is disabled by this curse. Grettir's strength, like Hörðr's strength and agility, serve as a narrative prosthesis. Again this works only until he is wounded, weakened, and eventually caught and killed.

Grettir can be examined from the point of view of the Exchange Model, where a magical curse leads to his disability and death. There is nothing he can do to stop the curse or its effects. Similar to the situation with Hörðr, judgment is placed on Grettir, but in a different way. Grettir loses his temper, which makes him overlook the evil in the tree. By losing his temper, blame is placed on Grettir for causing his own wound and impairment.

Qnundr can be viewed in an entirely Economic Model just like Refr in *Harðar saga*. He was considered to be a great warrior and was considered as successful before he was impaired. This view does not change after he is impaired. Like Refr, he is able to become mobile with the aid of an instrument. But unlike Refr, his prosthetic wooden leg allows him to continue his duties without the aid of others.

Hreiðars þáttur

Hreiðar is an example of the complex nature of disability and impairment in medieval Western Scandinavia.¹¹¹ The acceptance of his impairment provides particularly interesting insight into the view of disability. The *þáttur* is quite unique, in that it shows the complexities of Hreiðar's personality, which are at par even with those of the most famous protagonists in full-length sagas, such as the other protagonists in this chapter. Because of the terse style of the *þáttur*, the reader is never fully able to grasp the depth of Hreiðar and his true abilities.

At the opening of *Hreiðar's þáttur*, the reader must rely on the author's words to understand Hreiðar's impairment: "Hann var ljótr maðr ok varla sjálfbjargi fyrir vits

¹¹¹ As discussed in chapter three, the *þættir* of the Icelanders represent a different form and narrative style than the Sagas of Icelanders. Accordingly, impairment may be presented in a different light. A study of such differences cannot be provided here, and likewise, the results of what is found in the close reading of one *þáttur* are not at all definitive.

sökum. Hann var manna frávastur ok vel at afli búinn ok hógværr í skapi ok var hann heima jafnan,” (*ÍS* vol. II p. 2165). [“He was ugly and barely intelligent enough to care for himself. He could run faster than other men, was strongly built, had a good disposition, and always stayed at home,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 375).] It is not until he travels to Norway that the reader sees actions that exemplify his inability to fit in. From the opening chapter, Hreiðar shows curiosity toward the outside world and tries to convince Þórðr to allow him to go abroad and interact with different people. Although the judgment of society is noticeable, it is Þórðr who personifies the antagonistic attitude of Hreiðar’s desire.

Hreiðars þáttur is comparable to a moral fable, in that it shows the holy right of a king and the redemption of Hreiðar, who, because of his disability, is considered to be a burden on his family and a nuisance. Hreiðar is disabled in the tale from the beginning; his brother, Þórðr, is introduced before him. Protagonists are not always introduced first, but the pattern of introduction typically goes from parental lineage, not from a sibling. The description of Þórðr sets the standard and describes exactly what Hreiðar is not: “Þórðr hét maðr. Hann var Þorgrímsson, Hreiðarssonar, þess er Glúmr vá. Þórðr var lítill maðr vexti ok vænn... En Þórðr var í fõrum ok var hirðmaðr Magnúss konungs ok mazk vel,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2165). [“There was a man named Thord. He was the son of Thorgrim, the son of Hreidar whom Glum killed. Thord was a short good-looking man... Thord travelled abroad as a merchant. He was a follower of King Magnus and was highly regarded,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 375).] Hreiðar is introduced soon thereafter. Whereas Þórðr is short, good-looking, and a merchant, as mentioned above Hreiðar is ugly and barely intelligent enough to care for himself. Hreiðar’s description is not wholly negative. He is

strong, fast, and does have a good disposition. However, in medieval Icelandic society, in which being independent is highly valued, he remains someone who has just enough mental ability to care for himself.

Þórðr's relationship with Hreiðar is complex, much like that of typical siblings. Þórðr sees Hreiðar as a burden, and he agrees with society's judgments of his brother's intellect, nature, and grace. As mentioned above, Þórðr epitomizes what Hreiðar is not, but Þórðr does not exactly represent all that is good and Hreiðar all that is not. Although he accepts the responsibility of caring for his brother, he does so very begrudgingly and criticizes him at almost every step during his journey. Nonetheless, Þórðr does not indiscriminately adhere to society's view; he takes Hreiðar to Norway.

Þórðr's words seem to serve as an antagonistic presence in the plot, even if his actions do not follow. He is present to critique Hreiðar and to tell others how incapable he is, but once he introduces Hreiðar to King Magnús, and the king sees that Hreiðar is more capable than Þórðr presents him to be, Þórðr disappears from the plot. Without Þórðr, the disabling of Hreiðar is not as strong, but the larger question is: Why would Icelanders object to Hreiðar going abroad?

Some of the legal texts of the time might help answer this question. If Hreiðar was considered sufficiently disabled to be a dependent, it would be against the laws of *Grágás* for Þórðr to take him abroad:

Ef maðr fœrir þaN omaga ut hingat er hann fær eigi ser mat tuav missere með þat heilende er þa hafðe hann er han toc við honom. þa ræðr hann þaN omaga ser a hendr. oc scal lysa ahendr honom oc quðia til xii. quiðar at bera vm þat hvart hann hefir farðan ut þaN omaga þa a at dœma ahendr honom..., (Vilhjálmur Finsen 1852, vol. II, 20-1).

[If someone brings and incapable person here, one who with the state of health he had (p. 21) when he took him over cannot earn food for himself for a year, he

makes himself responsible for him as a dependent, and his maintenance is to be published as a suit against him and a panel of twelve called for to give a verdict on whether he gave that incapable person out to Iceland, and he must then be judged his responsibility...., (Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 1980, vol. II, 45).

Although the law does not stipulate anything for taking dependents out of Iceland,¹¹² it provides insight into the fact that Icelanders of the time believed that dependents should be kept at home and under somebody's care. *Grágás* is quite unique in this respect. This may be due to the fact that Iceland is the only place in the Nordic context exclusively settled by new residents.¹¹³ In addition, during the settlement period there was no codified regulation to decide who was permitted to enter the country and who was not.

Despite legal and cultural convention, it is clear that despite Þórðr's attempts to keep him at home, Hreiðar is able to convince Þórðr to take him to Norway. Hreiðar does so—rather cleverly, one might add—by disabling himself: he states that he is not able to manage their shared inheritance and that he will be tricked out of losing it for both of them.

Once in Norway, Hreiðar tricks Þórðr into allowing him to get close to King Magnús and finally to have an audience with him. During Hreiðar's time at the court of the king, he becomes Hreiðar's helper and an interpreter of Hreiðar's true nature. Although King Magnús sees Hreiðar's good qualities, he is still critical of his weak points. One might think of Hreiðar's disability as being that of a *kolbíttr*. The king believes that Hreiðar needs to be more active and participate in society.

¹¹² The law only discusses the fact that dependents should be brought in with a defined guardian; it says nothing about taking people out of Iceland.

¹¹³ Greenland can also be considered part of this, but because the European settlements disappeared, and no legal texts remain, it is impossible to understand them in the same way as Iceland.

Laziness, as viewed through the Economic and the Moral Models, is cause for severe judgment. The term *kolbíttr* is the term often used to describe lazy characters. They are always looked down on, which puts laziness within the Moral Model. For this reason, Hreiðar might fit in that category. There is no explanation or acceptance of the fact that Hreiðar cannot work or do anything beneficial for society; this is seen through the Economic Model. As with Hreiðar, all instances of the term *kolbíttr* give no further explanation of the reason that a character is lazy, with the possible exception of Þórðr beigaldi in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, whose byname implies that he hobbles.

Through the king's insight, Hreiðar is able to “overcome” his status as a character with a disability and become one who is highly regarded. Hreiðar's interaction with the king is not the only interaction in the *þátttr*, but it is the only one where Hreiðar is treated well. In addition, King Magnús is the only person, who sees Hreiðar in a positive light. Hreiðar's interactions with his brother, Þórðr, and three societies: those of Iceland, King Magnús' supporters, and King Haraldr and his supporters are all negative.

In the beginning of the *þátttr*, Hreiðar's abilities are never fully explained. The only information provided is a description focusing on his physical characteristics—a common structure in saga literature—and the fact that he could not take care of himself. Accordingly, it difficult to ascertain the nature of his disability. Only at the end of the first chapter is a specific term used to describe Hreiðar: “Ok fírna allir Þórð um ef hann flytr utan afgangla,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2165). [“And everyone blamed Thord for taking a fool abroad,” (*CSol* vol. I, 376).] It is society, not Þórðr or Hreiðar's other family or friends who use the term *afglapi*.¹¹⁴ Hreiðar is labeled as being an *afglapi*, but it is unclear what

¹¹⁴ It is unclear what the other family or family friends think of Hreiðar's cognitive state, or if there is a difference between the views of those who know Hreiðar well, and those who do not.

that actually means. What is clear is that he cannot take care of himself, and that is impairing and disabling.

Þórðr serves two simultaneous purposes: he is critical of Hreiðar, much like Icelandic and Norwegian societies, but he also does offer some soft support in finally allowing him to see King Magnús and mentioning his finer qualities to the king. Þórðr criticisms are seen in the following quotes: “Ekki þykir mér þú fallin fõrin,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2165). [“I don’t think you are suited for travelling,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 375)]; “Ekki er hann mér líkr,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2167). [“He is not like me,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 377)]; “Hann er mikill maðr vexti. Hann er ljótr ok heldr ósýknlegr,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2167). [“He is a very big man, ugly, and somewhat criminal in looks,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 377)]; “Ekki, ekki var hann kallaðr viskumaðr á unga aldri,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2167). [“He wasn’t called a genius when he was young,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 377)]; and the rather uncaring, “en brottu er hann nú rjáðr nokkr,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2167). [“but just now he is somewhere else being treated roughly,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 377)]. Þórðr’s soft support is seen in him taking Hreiðar to Norway and in the following passage: “[Hann er] sterkr at afli ok lundhægr maðr,” (*ÍS* vol. II, 2167). [“He is a strong man, but with a good disposition,” (*CSoI* vol. I, 377)]. After he meets the king is the point when Hreiðar seems to lose his disability.

For a person to overcome such an intellectual disability completely would be almost impossible, if there were actually something standing in the way of his cognition. It might be that he was not cognitively a “fool” or an “idiot,” that the plot is a moral lesson and that his disability is not a disability, but rather a hyperbolic description of his laziness. In this case, the reader might consider Hreiðar a *kolbíttr*. Obviously, this does not take away from the nature of disability—society still rejects and judges him as an

outsider—but it explains the reason why he is able to overcome the disability by the end of the *þáttur*.

Narrative prosthesis in *Hreiðars þáttur* is attributed to the grace of King Magnús. Hreiðar is no longer disabled after the king recognizes his abilities and accepts him. Before he meets the king, Icelandic and Norwegian societies judge him. After his meeting with the king, only the antagonists in King Haraldr's group continue to judge him.

Hreiðar can be viewed both through the Economic Model and the Moral Model. From an economic standpoint, Hreiðar is viewed as a burden by his brother and by society. It is only with the help of King Magnús that Hreiðar realizes his use to society and the disabling effects of society's judgment ends. From the Moral Model point of view, Hreiðar is made fun of, and his family is blamed for allowing him to travel abroad. The reception of Hreiðar by both the Icelandic and Norwegian societies is to judge and critique him for not being normal.

Conclusion

Through close readings of the four texts, the reality of impairment and disability and the difference between the two become palpable. The six characters analyzed are wholly disabled. The reader is able to discern how society viewed their impairments. These close readings also reveal that there are fictional aspects, at least from a contemporary view.

For one, the use of magic keeps the non-fictional attributes of the sagas at bay. Successful curses, which seem to follow the idea of being fated to die, are actions that cannot be undone or altered in any way. Gísli, Hörðr, and Grettir are all cursed, and the

curses lead to their downfall. Curses, however—quite like the understanding of disabilities at the time—were something not fully comprehensible. Both disabilities and curses could be seen as an explanation of the unknown.

Failed curses in texts like *Hreiðars þáttur*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, and other sagas also exist and even bolster the idea that the hero is in the right, when he is fated to die.¹¹⁵ Moreover, they reinforce the idea of destiny or fate and that the prescriptive idea of success or failure cannot be changed, no matter who tries to intervene—and nobody does. This follows both the pre- and post-Christian notions of fate.

The notion of the Christian ideal is present in the way Gísli and King Magnús feel people around them should be treated, even if society judges them to be disabled. Even though both Gísli and Hreiðar seem to be feigning to some degree, the text describes a kinder ideal. These ideals are in juxtaposition with regard to how others in the text react, which is exclusive and cruel, showing a bias against pre-Christian belief. This is seen through the Tragedy/Charity Model of disability studies.

The Moral Model shows that blame is placed in many places where disability exists. Although blame is not related to sin, it presents a judgment of the person for not being able to actively live up to the expectations of society. The family of the person with the disability is judged for not conforming to standards or rules that society has to deal with the persons with disabilities.

Independence and the lack thereof is a theme recurrent in the Sagas and *Þættir* of the Icelanders and is key to understanding the disabling of characters with impairments.

¹¹⁵ In *Hreiðars þáttur*, Haraldr's men curse Hreiðar. They say that trolls and devils should take him. This is unsuccessful, as it has no effect on Hreiðar or his outcome at the end of the saga. The same is the case with Qnundr in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, where Vikings say that the trolls should swallow Qnundr whole.

If the character is able in impairment—that is to take care of himself or herself financially, cognitively, and sometimes physically—he or she is able to exist as impaired but not disabled. This is the case in all four of the texts presented here. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, despite his use of a prosthetic wooden leg, Qnundr is able to continue his Viking quests, and is even complemented twice by the narrator for being able to do so. Gísli, on the other hand, is made fun of by his pursuers, not only because he acts “foolish,” but also because a woman has to care for him. It is only through feigning that he managed to survive. Both Hörðr and Grettir are damned and even possibly disabled by their fate, but it takes magic for the antagonists to kill them. Refr is heralded as a great man, even if he is unable to walk after his legs have been chopped off, because he was successful before he was impaired. Hreiðar moves from being disabled by society to being accepted through the beneficence of King Magnús.

The disabling of the dependent was discussed in other characters of saga literature mentioned in chapter three: Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, who is disabled because he is unable to care for himself due to maladies associated with age; Karl ómæli Karlsson in *Svarfdæla saga*, who is overlooked because of his inability to speak, but can take vengeance as a result; Bjørn in *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*, who is impaired due to his blindness, but is able to use his intelligence to give Þórðr a shameful blow just before Þórðr kills him. The three examples suggest that dependence is at the root of society’s disabling characters with impairments.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This dissertation started as an investigation of words pertaining to impairments and disabilities and the social meanings they generate in the Sagas and *Pættir* of Icelanders. In Chapter one, I set the background for understanding disability studies and how it fits into Iceland and Norway. The first task was to establish that there is no umbrella concept for impairment or disability in these societies, in the way it exists today. Because of this, I chose to examine differences in characters who are depicted as impaired or disabled. I presented six models of disability: the Social Model, which I use in chapters two and three; the Medical Model, which, as I argue does not fit in very well in the dissertation; and the Moral, Tragedy/Charity, Economic, and Exchange Models, which I use in chapter four.

Certain phenomena, such as magic curses and familial associations with impairment, as discussed specifically in chapter four, make this study unique. The introduction of narrative prosthesis enabled me to focus on the way characters are presented with superhuman abilities, and how the characters are able to lose their disabilities through the grace of a king. Although the study does not claim to be representative of the entire corpus in the second and third chapters provide insight into the culture of disability. In many of the cases discussed in chapters two and three, economic factors play the largest role in the attitudes toward a character with an impairment or the prejudicial treatment leading to the othering and marginalization of the character.

Terminology for Impairments

As evident in chapter two, the terminology for impairments is quite sizeable. A large number of characters with impairments and terms for impairments are found in textual descriptions and bynames. The terms include impairments that were disabling and those that were not. Some terms are disabling from a modern perspective, but not from a medieval perspective, and vice versa.

The vast majority of terms do not provide any more information about the quality of the impairment and the character with the impairment. However, terms provide information about the frequency of the word. Words that do not provide any further information may also be quite effective when the word is used elsewhere at least once with more information. An example is the effects of losing a leg. Because Refr and Qnundr are presented in such high regard, it is apparent that it would be possible for other characters to be as well. In such cases one can at least loosely associate the meaning and societal reaction to other instances of the term. This, however, does not allow for a concrete understanding of a large number of terms.

Studies of terms in reference to other terms provide some insight into words, which may be synonymous. Terms like *blindr* (blind) and *sjónlauss* (sightless) and their proximity to the word *gamall* (old) show that both words describe impairments that a character can have at an old age. It is not clear if one or the other term refers to a degree of blindness. In some cases, the severity of the impairment will not be understood.

A quantitative study of terms found in the corpus of texts shows that terms for impairment cover the gamut of ambulatory impairments, as well as a large percentage of sensory impairments. Cognitive and emotional impairments are conspicuously vague and

provide little information. The physical manifestation of ambulatory impairment and the simple way of being able to describe or test a person with a sensory impairment allow for a cultural understanding of terms found under these two classifications. This is not the case regarding cognitive and emotional impairments: knowing the difference and being able to test for differences between manifestations of cognitive and emotional impairments did not exist in the Middle Ages in the way that it does today.

Terms describing such impairments leave little understanding of the specific nature of the impairment. The fact that the authors were not aware of the symptoms of specific impairments further obfuscates any possible understanding of a specific term. As a result, it will never be possible to understand what cognitive or emotional impairments a character suffered from.

There are many impairments not found in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders. There is no discussion, for example, of a character losing the ability to smell or taste, or losing the ability to feel. This may be due in part to the fact that in comparison to blindness in the Middle Ages, there were very few people, who would have lost sensory abilities.

A conspicuous absence is of characters who are deaf. Among terms for sensory impairments, there is only peripheral mention of deafness and/or inability to speak; without sign language or another mode of communication, the two impairments went together. No one character is wholly unable to hear or never able to hear. There is evidence of losing one's hearing in the corpus, as well as instances of deaf characters elsewhere in saga literature. The texts of the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders do not say anything about how specific characters were treated, but from the general discussions

found in the texts, deaf people were to be pitied in idealized situations. This provides firm grounding that the Tragedy/Charity Model was elemental to medieval Iceland's perception and reception of people with impairments. The timing of this view is more grounded in the period after Christianization. This is evident from the fact that almost all examples that refer to Christianity and Christian ideals in the same passage show pity and kindness to people with impairments.

Cognitive and Emotional Impairments and Disabilities

Throughout the dissertation the examined and excerpted impairments have been divided into four groups: cognitive/emotional, sensory, ambulatory, and other impairments. An analysis of each of these groups—viewed in each of the different approaches of the four chapters—provides insight into the culture of the reception of impairments and the disabling of characters. Cognitive and emotional impairments are the most difficult to understand from a lexicographic standpoint, but they are the easiest to understand when it is analyzed whether or not they were disabling. Terms for cognitive impairments do not explain at all the true nature or the scientific classification of the impairment. There are terms, which are found to be less offensive, but due to insufficient background, it is impossible to understand finer nuances of the impairments. All terms and analysis for cognitive and emotional impairments are considered disabling because of the lack of background information. It is understood that if an impairment was not disabling, it was probably not mentioned with a direct term.

Sensory Impairments and Disabilities

Sensory impairments consist entirely of blindness and peripheral mention of deafness. Blindness results for the most part from the effects of age or illness. It is

mentioned frequently and affects people from all ages and social standings. The ability of the character to meet societal expectations shows whether the character is impaired or also disabled. Although deafness does exist as a term, it is impossible to understand how society reacted to it. To understand the implications fully, an analysis must be conducted on medieval texts that contain characters with deafness.

Ambulatory Impairments and Disabilities

Ambulatory impairments and wounds associated with possible impairments are by far the largest group of terms. In situations where a character is able to continue life as before, or how he or she is expected to do so, society does not disable the character. Those characters, who do not meet the expectations, are disabled by society. In the analyses in chapter three, there are two characters who do not achieve this: Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* and Þórðr beigaldi also in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. The two characters have other impairments: Egill has numerous impairments relating to age and manifesting in many categories; Þórðr has an impairment, which seems to limit his ability to move. He is also called *kolbítr*, which is impossible to categorize. These other impairments interfere with the reader's ability to ascertain if they would have still been disabled had it not been for their non-ambulatory impairments.

Other Impairments and Disabilities

Akin to cognitive and emotional impairments and disabilities, other terms for impairment and disability are nearly impossible to understand. In the section on character analysis, there are characters who are placed in a general "other" category, due to multiple impairments. The section does not refer to those combinations; rather, it points to terms that could be categorized under several areas, but because they are unclear, they

are placed here. Words depicting physicality like *troll*, *berserkr*, *illmannlegr*, and those that depict potential emotional or cognitive traits, like *kolbíttr*, are all words that could describe impairments, but it is not possible to know for sure. Unlike words categorized as cognitive and emotional impairments, it is impossible to know for sure if they are disabling, because it is hard to know the cause of the impairments.

Missing Terms

The impairments excerpted are not exhaustive in terms of language and time. There are many impairments are not found in the corpus. Analyses of Old Norse-Icelandic texts shows that there are deaf characters in other genres of sagas from the same time.

Gender

Gender plays an important role in determining whether or not a character is disabled. First and foremost is the fact that there are very few female characters in active roles. Second, the genre uses manliness as the true definition of a hero. For that reason, it is easier to understand how society reacted to men, because they had farther to fall. Over all, impairments that show weakness in the definitions of manliness are more disabling for men than for women. Oddný in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* can be compared to Njáll's foster-son Þórhallr Ásgrímsson in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, who faints when he hears the bad news of Njáll's death. Both characters faint, but no comment is made about society's reaction to Oddný; in fact Oddný is presented in such a way that the reader feels pity or sorrow for her. Þórhallr, on the other hand, becomes embarrassed when he faints and even comments this is unmanly of him.

Another example is the difference between Melkorka's nurse in *Laxdæla saga* and Egill in *Egils saga Skallgrímssonar*. Both characters suffer from effects of age, albeit the nurse is less vocal about her problems in the text. The fact that the nurse gets up to see Óláfr is portrayed as a way of showing her true joy of the moment. Egill is contrarily presented as being so pitiful that even servants can make fun of him. The nurse is also said to lie in bed, whereas Egill stays near the fire, and in others' way.

Egill can also be compared—along with Björn in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*—with Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga*. When Guðrún becomes blind at the end of her life, the description is neutral. It is simply stated that she lost her sight. Björn is critiqued a bit for being unable to see properly. Egill's loss of sight is judged more harshly and is part of the extreme criticism he receives in the text.

Impairments Specific to Medieval Iceland

The Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders comprise terms that are unclear to the contemporary reader. They either come close to disabling or disable characters. These words can refer to non-contemporary types of people, like the *berserkr*. They may also include non-human creatures found in their full form, like *troll*, or with prefixes like *half-* added to the front of the word. These terms are inconclusive, because there is no way of knowing exactly what the composer was referring to.

Similarly, the surreal use of magic and curses plays a role in handicapping characters. In *Harðar saga*, Hörðr is not only handicapped by a curse from his mother, but because he was disabled through his mother's reaction to his ambulatory impairment, he also continues to be disabled even after the impairment disappears. Not all curses and magic are disabling, but when they are successful, they can handicap a character.

Fate and Foreshadowing

Fate plays a large role in the trajectory of characters' lives. Passages discuss fate directly in several places and create a culture where characters have no control over what will happen. Most of the times when fate is discussed, it has nothing to do with impairment; instead, it refers to the eventual death of a character. A conspicuous discussion of fate, disability, and eventual death is in *Harðar saga*. Hörðr's father knows that his son has been cursed by Hörðr's mother and is not happy about it, but he also knows that he can do nothing about it. The end of the saga also shows that society understood that Hörðr was fated to die.

In *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*, Björn's wife dreams that Þórðr will ambush Björn. Although there is no curse involved, Björn is fated to be ambushed. He does not pay heed to the warning and lets fate be his fate. It is interesting that in this case there is no discussion of the fact that it is impossible to change fate. Björn simply states that he will not change plans because of some dream.

Overcoming and Feigning

Like Hörðr, a number of characters overcome impairments. Some characters even overcome disabilities. Two examples of are Hreiðar in *Hreiðars þáttr* and Karl ómæli in *Svarfdæla saga*. In both instances, the description of the characters' impairments or disabilities is not sufficiently clear to understand why they regained their abilities.

Some characters—especially but not limited to those who overcome impairments and disabilities—feign their impairments and disability in order to avoid having to interact with certain groups, or in order to trick their opponents. Gísli in *Gísli saga Súrssonar* and Karl ómæli in *Svarfdæla saga* are both able to feign impairments, so that

they can outwit their antagonists. In some cases, it is not clear whether the characters are feigning, or if they have some other reason to be called impaired.

Multiple Perspectives

There is really no discussion outside of the models presented. When Christianity or its ideals are presented, the presentation is accompanied by the less-common idea of a Tragedy/Charity Model. Beyond that, the Economic Model becomes more productive to examine if specific characters are disabled or not. The pre-Christian world is much more mysterious than the post-Christian one. Egill is the only character whose story could show the pre-Christian notion that it is better to be dead than old and impaired. In *Egils saga Skallgrímssonar*, the reader is unaware if the view of Egill is purely Pre-Christian, or if there is something else at work that causes a once-great warrior and most probably wealthy man to become disabled and mocked.

The moralistic idea that impairment is a result of somebody's sin or bad action is not directly present at all. Even though society blames the person with the disability, the sin is not necessarily the cause for blame. The aforementioned Tragedy/Charity Model toward impairment is found in a few places. All of the examples in the Tragedy/Charity Model represent especially Christian ideals and not realities. There is discussion of pity for people who are blind, deaf, handless, and a few other impairments.

The specific impairments mentioned are always used as examples of whom should be pitied, but they do not refer to the specific impairments and their manifestations. Rather, the recommendation of pity is on people who are simply less fortunate, listing different impairments as examples of people who inhabit the pitiable. The Tragedy/Charity Model that is seen in the examples is also not the only view shown

to represent the way society reacted to impairment; in fact, it is very much a minority of the views that are presented.

As discussed in chapter four, the Exchange Model is found in outlaw sagas. This model is similar to the way that Nordic gods give up one ability for a superhuman ability. In the case of the outlaw sagas, the characters are cursed and don't give up one thing for another of their own will. Instead, they are cursed and receive superhuman ability in a more passive manner. The superhuman ability allows them to survive longer during their outlawry. Where the Exchange Model can be used, the outlawed protagonist dies as a result of the curse coming true.

The largest model of evaluation of characters who have impairments comes through a model based on their economic ability to live and work without being a burden on others: the Economic Model. Generally the burden refers to a character's ability to be able to economically support family and, if the impairment happens during the lifetime, that the standing of the character remains the same. Characters who become a burden on their household, like Egill at the end of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, not only lose their previous standing, but also risk the criticism of others.

Characters highly praised after they are impaired not only show that they are not disabled; the descriptions of them also tend to show their ability to continue as active and productive members of society. Two of these characters are Qnundr tréfótr in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and Refr gamli in *Hardar saga*. They can be juxtaposed to characters, who are judged by society for not taking an active enough role, such as Egill in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and Hreiðar in the opening of *Hreiðars þáttur*.

The study of words about impairment and disabilities and their social meanings in the Sagas and *Pættir* of Icelanders—with all the limitations posed by the genre and the time difference of about a thousand years—is far from complete. But it is meant as a contribution to a dialogue and discussion about this important topic, especially in what are some of the foundational cultural documents of the European North. As time goes on, and more studies of medieval impairments are conducted, new models of disability studies will be created. It is my hope that at the same time, more studies of impairments found in texts from the medieval North will be conducted. These studies will allow for an even more nuanced and well-founded understanding of the lives of outsiders during the Nordic Middle Ages.

Appendix I – Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders in the Íslenzk Fornrít [ÍF] and Svart á Hvítu [ÍS] editions (exceptions noted):

The texts analyzed comprise the complete Sagas and *Þættir* of the Icelanders found in Íslenzk Fornrít's first 13 volumes, less volume I: *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* (ÍS II), *Bandamanna saga* (Magerøy and ÍF VII), *Bárðar saga* (ÍF XIII), *Bergbúa þáttur* (ÍS II), *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* (ÍF III), *Bolla þáttur* (ÍS II), *Brandkrossa þáttur* (ÍS II), *Brands þáttur örva* (ÍS II), *Brennu-Njáls saga* (ÍF XII), *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar* (ÍS II), *Droplaugarsona saga* (ÍF XI), *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (ÍF II), *Egils þáttur Síðu-Hallssonar* (ÍF XIII), *Einars þáttur Skúlasorar* (ÍS II), *Eiríks saga rauða* (ÍF IV viðauki), *Eyrbyggja saga* (ÍF IV), *Finnboga saga* (ÍF XIV), *Fljótsdæla saga* (ÍF XI), *Flóamanna saga* (ÍF XIII), *Fóstbræðra saga* (ÍF VI), *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (ÍF VI), *Gísls þáttur Illugasonar* (ÍF III), *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* (ÍF VII), *Grænlandinga saga* (ÍF IV), *Grænlandinga þáttur* (ÍF IV), *Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttur* (ÍS II), *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* (ÍF XIV), *Gunnars þáttur Þiðrandabana* (ÍS II), *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (ÍF III), *Grænlandinga þáttur* (ÍS II), *Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar inn fyrri* (ÍS II), *Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar inn síðari* (ÍS II), *Hallfreðar saga* (ÍF VIII), *Harðar saga* (ÍF XIII), *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (ÍF VI), *Heiðarvíga saga* (ÍF III), *Hænsa-Þóris saga* (ÍF III), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* (ÍS II), *Hrafn's þáttur Guðrínarsonar* (ÍS II), *Hreiðars þáttur* (ÍS II), *Hrómundar þáttur halta* (ÍS II), *Íslending's þáttur sögufróða* (ÍS II), *Ívars þáttur Ingimundarsonar* (ÍS II), *Jökuls þáttur Búasonar* (ÍS II), *Kjalnesinga saga* (ÍF XIV), *Kormáks saga* (ÍF VIII), *Króka-Refs saga* (ÍF XIV), *Kumlbúa þáttur* (ÍS II), *Landnámabók* (ÍF I), *Laxdæla saga* (ÍF V), *Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum* (ÍF X), *Mána þáttur skálds* (ÍS II), *Odds þáttur Ófeigssonar* (ÍS II), *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar* (ÍS II), *Óttars þáttur svarta*

(ÍS II), *Reykðæla saga ok Vika-Skútu* (ÍF X), *Sneglu-Halla þátr* (ÍS II), *Stjörn-Odda draumr* (ÍS II), *Stúfs þátr* (ÍS II), *Svaða þátr ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs* (ÍS II), *Svarfdæla saga* (ÍF IX), *Valla-Ljóts saga* (ÍF IX), *Vápnfirðinga saga* (ÍF XI), *Vatnsdæla saga* (ÍF VIII), *Víga-Glums saga* (ÍF IX), *Víglundar saga* (ÍF XIV), *Ögmundar þátr dytts* (ÍF IX), *Ölkorfra þátr* (ÍF XI), *Þátr Þormóðar* (ÍF VI), *Þátr Þorsteins skelks* (ÍS II), *Þiðranda þátr ok Þorhalls* (ÍS II), *Þórarins þátr Nefjólfssonar* (ÍS II), *Þórðar saga hreðu* (ÍF XIV), *Þorgríms þátr Hallasonar* (ÍS II), *Þorhalls þátr knapps* (ÍS II), *Þórleifs þátr jarlsskálds* (ÍS II), *Þorskfirðinga saga* (ÍF XIII), *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (ÍF XI), *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* (ÍF XI), *Þorsteins þátr Austfirðings* (ÍS II), *Þorsteins þátr forvitna* (ÍF XIII), *Þorsteins þátr sögufróða* (ÍF XI), *Þorsteins þátr Síðu-Hallssonar* (ÍS II), *Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs* (ÍS II), *Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings* (ÍF XIII), *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* (ÍS II), *Þorvalds þátr tasalda* (ÍS II), *Þorvalds þátr viðförla* (ÍS II), *Þorvarðar þátr krákunefs* (ÍF VI).

Appendix II – Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders in the Leifur Eiriksson Editions

The translations analyzed comprise the complete Sagas and *Þættir* of the Icelanders found in the five volume Leifur Eiriksson Edition of the *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*: *Bard's Saga* (CSoI II), *Bolli Bollason's Tale* (CSoI V), *Brandkrossi's Tale* (CSoI IV), *Egil Sidu-Hallsson's Tale* (CSoI IV), *Egil's Saga* (CSoI I), *Einar Skulason's Tale* (CSoI I), *Eirik the Red's Saga* (CSoI I), *Gisl Illugason's Tale* (CSoI III), *Gisli Sursson's Saga* (CSoI II), *Gold-Thorir's Saga* (CSoI III), *Hen-Thorir's Saga* (CSoI V), *Hrafn Gudrunarson's Tale* (CSoI III), *Hreidar's Tale* (CSoI I), *Ivar Ingimundarson's Tale* (CSoI I), *Jokul Buason's Tale* (CSoI III), *Killer-Glum's Saga* (CSoI II), *Kormak's Saga* (CSoI I), *Njal's Saga* (CSoI III), *Odd Ofeigsson's Tale* (CSoI V), *Olkofri's Saga* (CSoI V), *Orm Storolfsson's Tale* (CSoI III), *The Saga of Bjorn, Champion of the Hitardal People* (CSoI I), *The Saga of Droplaug's Sons* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty* (CSoI III), *The Saga of Grettir the Strong* (CSoI II), *The Saga of Gunnar, the Fool of Keldugnup* (CSoI III), *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue* (CSoI I), *The Saga of Hallfred the Troublesome Poet* (CSoI I), *The Saga of Havard of Isaffjord* (CSoI V), *The Saga of Hord and the People of Holm* (CSoI II), *The Saga of Hrafnkel Frey's Godi* (CSoI V), *The Saga of Ref the Sly* (CSoI III), *The Saga of the Confederates* (CSoI V), *The Saga of the Greenlanders* (CSoI I), *The Saga of the People of Eyri* (CSoI V), *The Saga of the People of Fljotsdal* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the People of Floi* (CSoI III), *The Saga of the People of Kjalarnes* (CSoI III), *The Saga of the People of Laxardal* (CSoI V), *The Saga of the People of Ljosavatn* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the People of Reykjadal and of Killer-Skuta* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the People of Svarfadardal* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the People of Vopnafjord* (CSoI IV), *The*

Saga of the Slayings on the Heath (CSoI IV), *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* (CSoI II), *The Saga of Thord Menace* (CSoI III), *The Saga of Thorstein the White* (CSoI IV), *Star-Oddi's Dream* (CSoI II), *Stuf's Tale* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Arnor, the Poet of Earls* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Audun from the West Fjords* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Brand the Generous* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Gold-Asa's Thord* (CSoI III), *The Tale of Gunnar, the Slayer of Thidrandi*(CSoI IV), *The Tale of Halldor Snorrason I* (CSoI V), *The Tale of Halldor Snorrason II* (CSoI V), *The Tale of Hromund the Lamé* (CSoI V), *The Tale of Mani the Poet* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Ogmund Bash* (CSoI II), *The Tale of Ottar the Black* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Sarcastic Halli* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Svadi and Arnor Crone's-Nose* (CSoI V), *The Tale of the Cairn-Dweller* (CSoI II), *The Tale of the Greenlanders* (CSoI V), *The Tale of the Mountain-Dweller* (CSoI II), *The Tale of the Story-Wise Icelander* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thidrandi and Thorhall* (CSoI II), *The Tale of Thorarin Short-Cloak* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thorarin the Overbearing* (CSoI II), *The Tale of Thorhall Knapp* (CSoI II), *The Tale of Thorleif, the Earl's Poet* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thorstein Bull's-Leg* (CSoI IV), *The Tale of Thorstein from the East Fjords* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thorstein Shiver* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Struck* (CSoI IV), *The Tale of Thorstein Tent-Pitcher* (CSoI V), *The Tale of Thorstein the Curious* (CSoI I), *The Tale of Thorvald Tasaldi* (CSoI II), *The Tale of Thorvald the Far-Travelled* (CSoI V), *The Tale of Thorvard Crow's-Beak* (CSoI I), *Thorarin Nefjolfsson's Tale* (CSoI I), *Thorgrim Hallason's Tale* (CSoI III), *Thormod's Tale* (CSoI II), *Thorstein Sidu-Hallsson's Dream* (CSoI IV), *Thorstein Sidu-Hallsson's Saga* (CSoI IV), *Thorstein Sidu-Hallsson's Tale* (CSoI IV), *Valla-Ljot's Saga* (CSoI IV), *Viglund's Saga* (CSoI II).

Appendix III – Lists of Terminologies, Part I – Two Full Terminologies

No	Keyword	English Word	ON-I Word	Kind	Source
00001 ¹¹⁶	leg	one-legged	einfœtingr	Term	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i> (Early 13th c.), vol IV viðauki, ch. 12, p. 431, l. 14.

English Paragraph

One morning Karlsefni's men saw something shiny above a clearing in the trees, and they called out. It moved and proved to be a one-legged creature which darted down to where the ship lay tied. Thorvald, Eirik the Red's son, was at the helm and the one-legged man shot an arrow into his intestine. Thorvald drew the arrow out and spoke: "Fat paunch that was. We've found a land of fine resources, though we'll hardly enjoy much of them." Thorvald died from the wound shortly after. The one-legged man then ran off back north....(*CSoI* vol. I, p. 17).

Old Norse-Icelandic Paragraph

Þat var einn morgin. Sjá Karlsefni fyrir ofan rjóðrit flekk nokkurn, svá sem glitaði við þeim, ok æpðu þeir á. Þat hrærðisk, ok var þat einfœtingr ok skýzk ofan þangat sem þeir lágu. Þorvaldr son Eiríks hins rauða sat við stýri, ok skaut einfœtingr or í smáparma honum. Þorvaldr dró út orina ok mælti: "Feitt er um ístruna. Gott land höfum vér fengit kostum, en þó megum vér varla njóta." Þorvaldr dó af sári þessu litlu síðar." Þá hleypr einfœtingr á braut ok norðr aptr....

No	Keyword	English Word	ON-I Word	Kind	Source
00010	leg	hobbler	beigaldi	Nickname	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>IF</i> vol. II, ch. 25, p. 62, l. 8.

English Paragraph

Skallagrim prepared for this journey and chose the strongest and boldest of his men and neighbours to go with him. There was a man called Ani, a wealthy farmer; another called Grani, and Grimolf and his brother Grim, who lived on Skallagrim's farm, and the brothers ThorBjörn Hunchback and Thord Hobbler. They were known as Thorarna's sons - she lived near Skallagrim and was a sorceress. Hobbler was a coal-biter. Other men in the band were Thorir the Giant and his brother Thorgeir Earth-long, a hermit called Odd and a freedman called Gris, (*CSoI* vol. I, p. 60).

Old Norse-Icelandic Paragraph

Skalla-Grím bjósk til ferðar þeirar, er fyrr var frá sagt; hann valdi sér menn af heimamönnum sínum ok nábúum, þá er váru sterkastir at afli ok hraustastir, þeira er til váru. Maðr hét Áni, bóndi einn auðigr; annar hét Grani, þriðji Grímólfr ok Grím bróðir hans, heimamenn Skalla-Gríms, ok þeir bræðr, Þorbjörn krumr ok Þórðr beigaldi; þeir váru kallaðir Þórarnusynir; hon bjó skammt frá Skalla-Grími ok var fjölkunnig; Beigaldi var kolbítr. Einn hét Þórir þurs ok bróðir hans Þorgeir jarðlangr. Oddr hét maðr einbúi, Grís lausingi.

¹¹⁶ Note that the numbers here refer to the original list. In the other tables in this chapter, the numbers are solely there for reference from the analysis.

Part II – List of Shorter Terminologies

Section 1 – Terms for Cognitive/Emotional Impairments/Maladies

Table I – Terms for General Cognitive Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
1	hringsnyrtir	[crazy] sword polisher ¹¹⁷	<i>Kormáks saga</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 21, p. 279, poem 66, l. 24.	general cognitive	byname term
2	hefja ǫngvit	swoon	<i>Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 33, p. 205, l. 21.	general cognitive	verb term
3	varla sjálfbjargi fyrir vits sökum	hardly independent because of [his] intellect	<i>Hreiðars þattur</i> , <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch.1, p. 2165, l. 12-3.	general cognitive	noun phrase term
4	afglapi	fool	<i>Hreiðars þattur</i> , <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch.1, p. 2165, l. 36.	general cognitive	noun term
5	afglapi	simple-minded	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 25, p. 79, l. 6.	general cognitive	noun term
6	fífl	oaf	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 25, p. 79, l. 6.	general cognitive	noun term
7	fífl	oaf	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 26, p. 82, l. 13.	general cognitive	noun term
8	fífl	oaf	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 26, p. 83, l. 13.	general cognitive	noun term
9	fóli	idiot	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 26, p. 83, l. 17.	general cognitive	noun term

¹¹⁷ Note that here and in the following the literal translation is given. If there is a different translation found in the Leifur Eiríksson Edition, it is provided in brackets.

10	halda eigi vítinu	go [went] out of their minds	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. <i>VII</i> , ch. 32, p. 113, l. 5.	general cognitive	verb phrase term
11	snápr	idiot	<i>Ögmundar þátr dytts</i> (Flateyjarbók), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 1, p. 103, l. 17.	general cognitive	noun term
12	vitleysingr	witless, insane person, idiot	<i>Ögmundar þátr dytts</i> (AM 564), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 1, p. 103, l. 30.	general cognitive	noun term
13	œrr maðr	madman	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 24, p. 49, l. 2.	general cognitive	noun phrase term
14	sótt	sickness	<i>Finnboga saga</i> (Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIV, ch. 29, p. 300, l. 23.	general cognitive	noun term
15	mannvitull	simpleton	<i>Króka-Refs saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIV, ch. 5, p. 129, l. 1.	general cognitive	noun term
16	mannskræfa	good-for- nothing, miserable coward	<i>Orms þátr Stórolfssonar</i> (Flateyjarbók), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch. 3, p. 2191, l. 8.	general cognitive	noun term
17	óvittr	dimwit	<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i> (Late 13th or Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 44, p. 116. l. 1.	general cognitive	adjective term
18	grunnúðigr	slow-witted	<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i> (Mid 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 22, p. 278, l. 12-3.	general cognitive	adjective term
19	vaxa þó eigi mikit vitsmunir hans	intellectual development[s] lag [lagged] behind	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 23, p. 192, l. 19-20.	general cognitive	verb phrase term

20	fífl	idiot	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 23, p. 193, l. 1.	general cognitive	noun term
21	afglapi	simpleton	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 23, p. 194, l. 4.	general cognitive	noun term
22	fóli	idiot	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 23, p. 194, l. 5.	general cognitive	noun term
23	hafa tortímt sér af óyndi	committed [commits] suicide	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 28, p. 206, l. 27.	general cognitive	verb phrase term
24	hryggvari	more depressed	<i>Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. X, ch. 6 (17), p. 41, l. 30.	general cognitive	noun term
25	œrr	crazy	<i>Olkorfra þátr</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XI, ch. 2; p. 88, l. 5.	general cognitive	adjective term
26	fól	fool	<i>Olkorfra þátr</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XI, ch. 2; p. 88, l. 11.	general cognitive	noun term
27	afglapi	simpleton	<i>Olkorfra þátr</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XI, ch. 2; p. 88, l. 12.	general cognitive	noun term
28	afglapi	simpleton	<i>Bandamanna saga</i> (<i>Konungsbók</i>), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 12, p. 361, l. 10.	general cognitive	noun term
29	hálfafglapi ok rammur at afli	half imbecile and extremely strong	<i>Bandamanna saga</i> (Late 13th c., <i>Möðruvallabók</i>) <i>Magerøy</i> , ch. 12, p. 35, l. 15-6.	general cognitive	noun term
30	armi	simpleton, wretch	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i> (15th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 3, p. 300, l. 11	general cognitive	noun term

Table 2 – Terms Describing Feigning Cognitive Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
31	hryggvari	more depressed	<i>Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. X, ch. 6 (17), p. 41, l. 30.	general cognitive	noun term
32	œrr	crazy	<i>Ólkorfra þátr</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XI, ch. 2; p. 88, l. 5.	general cognitive	adverb term

Section 2 – Terms for Sensory Impairments/Maladies

Table 1 – Terms for Visual Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
33	glapnaði... sýn	failed sight	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 294, l. 3-4.	eye	noun term
34	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 295, l. 1.	eye	adjective term
35	sjónleysi	blindness	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 296, l. 5.	eye	noun term
36	sjónleysi	blindness	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 296, l. 16.	eye	noun term
37	blindr	blind	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.) vol. VI, ch. 22; poem 19, p. 73, l. 1.	eye	adjective term
38	óskyggn	dim-sighted	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Olafs saga</i> , <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 4, p. 145, l. 24.	eye	adjective term
39	súreygr	blear-eyed	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Olafs saga</i> , <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 4, p. 145, l. 24.	eye	adjective term

40	blinda	blind	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Mǫðru, ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 6, p. 163, l. 11.	eye	verb term
41	blinda	blind	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Mǫðru, ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 6, p. 166, l. 8.	eye	verb term
42	dapureygðr	weak-sighted	<i>Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 32, p. 197, l. 13.	eye	adjective term
43	blindr	blind	<i>Stúfs þátr</i> (<i>Morkinskinna</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, p. 2243, l. 9.	eye	adjective term
44	eineygr	one-eyed	<i>Bárðar saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIII, ch. 18, p. 163, l. 6.	eye	adjective term
45	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Viga-Glums saga</i> (Early or Mid-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 11, p. 39, l. 3.	eye	adjective term
46	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Viga-Glums saga</i> (Early or Mid-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 17, p. 58, l. 3.	eye	adjective term
47	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Viga-Glums saga</i> (Early or Mid-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 26, p. 91, l. 2.	eye	adjective term
48	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Viga-Glums saga</i> (Early or Mid-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 28, p. 92, l. 2 (both)	eye	adjective term
49	blindr (borinn)	(born) blind	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 98, p. 248, l. 17.	eye	adjective term
50	heileygr báðum augum	sound in both [my] eyes	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 106, p. 273, l. 11-2.	eye	adjectival phrase term
51	blindr	blind	<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i> (Late 13th or Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 22, p. 60. L. 23.	eye	adjective term

52	blindr	blind	<i>Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum (Late 13th c.), ÍF vol. X, ch. 10 (20), p. 54, l. 8.</i>	eye	adjective term
53	missa auga síns af verk (en andaðisk)	lose one's [his] eyesight from infection (and died)	<i>Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum (Late 13th c.), ÍF vol. X, ch. 20 (30), p. 103, l. 7.</i>	eye	verb phrase term
54	sjónlítill	poorly sighted [saw poorly]	<i>Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs (AM 162 C fol., AM 256 fol and AM 496 4to.), ÍS vol. II, p. 2293, l. 23.</i>	eye	adjective term
55	sjónlauss	blind	<i>Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs (AM 162 C fol., AM 256 fol and AM 496 4to.), ÍS vol. II, p. 2293, l. 29.</i>	eye	adjective term
56	blindr	blind	<i>Fljótsdæla saga (14th or 15th c.), ÍF vol. XI, ch. 25, p. 292, l. 14.</i>	eye	adjective term
57	verða sjónlaus	[lost her sight] become blind	<i>Laxdæla saga (Mid 13th c.), ÍF vol. V, ch. 77; p. 228, l. 25.</i>	eye	verb phrase term

Table 2 – Terms for Mouth, Speech and Hearing Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
58	málhaltr	stammer	<i>Fóstbræðra saga (Late 13th c.), ÍF vol. VI, ch. 23, p. 236, l. 2.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term
59	mállaus	dumb	<i>Fljótsdæla saga (14th or 15th c.), ÍF vol. XI, ch. 25, p. 292, l. 15.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term
60	mállaus	dumb	<i>Laxdæla saga (Mid 13th c.), ÍF vol. V, ch. 13; p. 26, l. 25.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term
61	ómáli	speechless	<i>Svarfdæla saga (Late 14th c.), ÍF vol. IX, ch. 23, p. 192, l. 19-20.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term
62	daufr	deaf	<i>Fljótsdæla saga (14th or 15th c.), ÍF vol. XI, ch. 25, p. 292, l. 14.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term
63	daufr	deaf	<i>Laxdæla saga (Mid 13th c.), ÍF vol. V, ch. 13; p. 26, l. 25.</i>	mouth, speech and hearing	adjective term

64	glapnaði... heyrn	failed hearing	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. II, ch. 85, p. 294, l. 3-4.	hearing and head	noun term
----	----------------------	----------------	---	-------------------------	-----------

Section 3 – Terms for Ambulatory Impairments/Maladies

Table 1 – Terms for Leg Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
65	af fótrinn	without a foot	<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i> (Mid 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 30, p. 303, l. 20.	leg	adjective term
66	lamdr	lame	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 11, p. 149, l. 24.	leg	adjective term
67	einfœtingr	one-legged	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IV viðauki, ch. 12, p. 431, l. 14.	leg	adjective term
68	einfœtingr	one-legged	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IV viðauki, ch. 12, p. 431, l. 20.	leg	adjective term
69	fótstirðr	stiff in the legs [very stiff legs]	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. II, ch. 85, p. 294, l. 4.	leg	adjective term
70	eigi verða sér [mér] hógstýrt fótunum	cannot control [my] one's legs	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. II, ch. 85, p. 296, l. 4.	leg	verb phrase term
71	drepa fœti ok falla	stumble and fall [stumbled and fell]	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. II, ch. 85, p. 296, l. 5.	leg	verb phrase term
72	hoggva undan	chop off	<i>Kormáks saga</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 1, p. 204, l. 16.	leg	verb phrase term
73	sull	boil	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 6, p. 68, l. 16.	leg	noun term
74	haltr ganga	limp	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 6, p. 69, l. 9.	leg	verb phrase term

75	ófærr	incapacitated	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 10, p. 87, l. 6.	leg	noun term
76	fóthoggva	foot cut off	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 6, p. 105, l. 18.	leg	adjective term
77	mikit sár	great wound [wounded]	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 27, p. 86, l. 4.	leg	noun phrase term
78	taka af fótinn	take [took] off his leg	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 11, p. 6, l. 5.	leg	verb phrase term
79	óvígr	incapacitated	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 11, p. 6, l. 7.	leg	adjective term
80	tréfótr	wooden-leg	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 11, p. 6, l. 16.	leg	noun term
81	einfættr	one-legged	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 11, p. 26, l. 1.	leg	adjective term
82	óvígr	incapacitated	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 60, p. 197, l. 2.	leg	adjective term
83	mikinn áverka	great wound	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 60, p. 197, l. 3.	leg	noun term
84	ørkuml	impairment	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 60, p. 197, l. 7.	leg	noun term

85	ganga í sundr	break	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 78, p. 248, l. 15.	leg	verb phrase term
86	brotnaðr (stiðr)	broken	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 78, p. 249, l. 13.	leg	adjective term
87	brotnat	broken	<i>Bárðar saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIII, ch. 5, p. 118, l. 5.	leg	adjective term
88	hnekka	limp	<i>Bárðar saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIII, ch. 5, p. 118, l. 6.	leg	verb term
89	haltra	limp	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 24, Flateyrbók, p. 252, l. 30.	leg	verb term
90	verkr í sári	pain in the wound	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 24, Flateyrbók, p. 253, l. 23.	leg	noun term
91	haltra	limp	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 24, Flateyrbók, p. 254, l. 24.	leg	verb term
92	þrúttinn	swollen	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 135, p. 359, l. 13.	leg	adjective term
93	hann ... tók af ... tána mestu (þumaltána).	cut off his big toe	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 145, p. 403, l. 11-12.	leg	verb phrase term
94	allmikít sár	big wound	<i>Finnboga saga</i> (Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIV, ch. 32, p. 308, l. 3.	leg	verb phrase term
95	haltr	lame	<i>Flóamanna saga</i> (Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIII, ch. 17; p. 263, l. 24.	leg	adjective term
96	fóthrumir	lame	<i>Ljósvetninga saga með þáttum</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. X, ch. 8 (18), p. 49, l. 32.	leg	adjective term

97	hækilbjúgr	bent at the knees	<i>Bandamanna saga (Möðruvallabók), Magerøy, ch. 8, p. 18, l. 16. (Not found in Konungsbók.)</i>	leg	adjective term
98	haltr	limp	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings (15th c.), ÍF vol. VI, ch. 1, p. 292, l. 7.</i>	leg	adjective term
99	ganga staflaust	hobble	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings (15th c.), ÍF vol. VI, ch. 13, p. 332, l. 16.</i>	leg	verb phrase term

Section 4 – Terms for Other Impairments/Maladies

Table 1 – Terms for Age Related Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
100	elli	old age	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 24, p. 60, l. 7.</i>	age	noun term
101	elli	old age	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 294, l. 2.</i>	age	noun term
102	karl afgamall	senile	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, poem 60, p. 296, l. 8.</i>	age	noun phrase term
103	lá í kqr ok sótti bæði at stríð ok elli (noun)	bedridden with old age and illness	<i>Laxdæla saga (Mid 13th c.) vol. V, ch. 21; p. 58, l. 14</i>	age	noun phrase term

Table 2 – Terms for Arm Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
104	handlauss	handless	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar (Mid- or Late-13th c.) vol. VI, ch. 22; poem 19, p. 73, l. 4.</i>	arm	adjective term
105	qrvendr	left-handed	<i>Fóstbræðra saga (Late 13th c.) vol. VI, ch. 10, p. 167, l. 9.</i>	arm	adjective term
106	fá sár mikil í hqndum	receive great wounds in the arms	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga (Late 13th c.) vol. XII, ch. 89, p. 222, l. 13-4.</i>	arm	verb phrase term
107	ónýt hqndin um daginn	arm was useless for the day	<i>Laxdæla saga (Mid 13th c.) vol. V, ch. 49; p. 152, l. 32.</i>	arm	verb phrase term

Table 3 – Terms for General Physical Impairments/Maladies

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
108	þungfær	frail	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.) vol. II, ch. 85, p. 294, l. 3.	general physical	adjective term
109	sár	wound	<i>Kormáks saga</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 11, p. 240, l. 7.	general physical	noun term
110	í sárum	ill of wounds	<i>Kormáks saga</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 12, p. 252, l. 12.	general physical	noun term
111	meiddr	maimed	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Olafs saga</i> , <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 6, p. 166, l. 25.	general physical	adjective term
112	meiddr	maimed	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (Early 13th c.) <i>Möðru</i> , <i>ÍF</i> vol. VIII, ch. 11, p. 195, l. 6.	general physical	adjective term
113	liggja í sárum	lay wounded	<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 4, p. 122, l. 11.	general physical	verb phrase term
114	óvígr	disabled	<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 32, p. 201, l. 28.	general physical	adjective term
115	óhætt	unwell	<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. III, ch. 32, p. 201, l. 28.	general physical	adjective term
116	sárr ok móðr	wounded and weary	<i>Gisla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 35, p. 113, l. 20.	general physical	adjective term
117	qrkuml	crippled	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 78, p. 248, l. 24.	general physical	noun term

118	mega ekki hjúskaparfar eiga við	not able to have sexual intercourse	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 7, p. 24, l. 17-8.	general physical	verb phrase term
119	ørkuml	mutilation	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 59, p. 151, l. 10.	general physical	noun term
120	ørkumlalauss	without wound	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 145, p. 404, l.11.	general physical	adjective term
121	sár mikit	great wound	<i>Brennu-Njáls saga</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XII, ch. 145, p. 404, l. 20.	general physical	noun term
122	liggja lengi í sárum ok verða þó heill	lay ill from [his] wounds for a long time but neverthe- less recovers [recovered]	<i>Finnboga saga</i> (Early 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. XIV, ch. 36, p. 317, l. 11-2.	general physical	verbal phrase term
123	beinbrot	broken bones	<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i> <i>með þáttum</i> (Late 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. X, ch. 11 (21), p. 59, l. 2.	general physical	noun term
124	...verða honum aldregi meinlaus.	...was always a handicap to him.	<i>Laxdæla saga</i> (Mid 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. V, ch. 49, p. 154, l. 14.	general physical	verb phrase term
125	hniginn á hinn efra aldr	infirm with age	<i>Laxdæla saga</i> (Mid 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. V, ch. 49, p. 49, l. 5-6.	general physical	adjectival phrase term

126	hniginn á hinn efra aldr	infirm with age	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i> (15th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 1, p. 292, l. 2-3.	general physical	adjectival phrase term
127	illr í höfuðbeininum	headache	<i>Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs</i> (<i>AM 162 C fol.</i> , <i>AM 256 fol</i> and <i>AM 496 4to.</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, p. 2294, l. 17.	general physical	adjectival phrase term

Table 4 – Terms for Impairments/Maladies of Disposition or Physicality

No	ON-I Word	English Word	Source	Keyword	Kind
128	kolbitr	coalbiter	<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar</i> (Early 13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. II, ch. 25; §1	disposition/physicality	noun term
129	dvergur	dwarf	<i>Sneglu-Halla þátr</i> (<i>Flateyrbók</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch. 4; p. 2219, l. 18.	disposition/physicality	noun term
130	dvergur	dwarf	<i>Sneglu-Halla þátr</i> (<i>Flateyrbók</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch. 4; p. 2220, l. 7.	disposition/physicality	noun term
131	dvergur	dwarf	<i>Sneglu-Halla þátr</i> (<i>Flateyrbók</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, ch. 4; p. 2219, l. 10.	disposition/physicality	noun term
132	dvergur	dwarf	<i>Sneglu-Halla þátr</i> (<i>Morkinskinna</i>), <i>ÍS</i> vol. II, p. 2208, l. 8.	disposition/physicality	noun term
133	tröll	troll	<i>Gisla saga Súrssonar</i> (Mid- or Late-13th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VI, ch. 25, p. 79, l. 10.	disposition/physicality	noun term
134	berserkr	berserk	<i>Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar</i> (ca. 1400), <i>ÍF</i> vol. VII, ch. 2, p. 5, l. 16. (This term is found 22 more time in the saga; see note 38 of this chapter.)	disposition/physicality	noun term

135	hálfberserkr	half-berserk	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 7, p. 142, l. 19.	disposition/ physicality	noun term
136	berserkgangr	berserk fit	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (Late 14th c.), <i>ÍF</i> vol. IX, ch. 17, p. 171, l. 14.	disposition/ physicality	noun term

Appendix IV – Chart of Nicknames and Bynames¹¹⁸

No	Name	Name (ON-I)	Referring Saga
1	Aevar the Old	gamli	Vatn 47, Hallfred 2
2	Arnor (Bjarnason) Crone's-Nose	kerlingarnefr	BolliT 1 ff., Glum 16, 20, 21, Ljos 28, Reyk 24
3	Arnor (Thoroddsson) Hairy-nose	heynefr	Bard 11, Grettir 30
4	Arnor Redcheeks	rauðkinn	
5	AsBjörn Cliff	vegghamar	GunnT 1, 2, Fljot 15, 16
6	Asgeir (Audunarson) Scatter-brain	æðikollr	Lax 40, 44-46, Vatn 29, Grettir 11, 26, 28, ShiverT 1
7	Asmund (Thorgrimsson) Grey-locks	hærulangr	Eyri 62, Lax 40, Brothers 7, Conf 2, Grettir 13 ff.
8	Asmund Ash-side	eskisíða	Kormak 1, 26, Njal 82
9	Asvald (Ulfsson) = (Ox-Thorisson)	oxna	Eirik 2 = Bard 5, Vopn 1
10	Atli (Eilifsson) the Mighty	rammi	ThorvFT 1, 7, Ljos 13, Njal 113
11	Aud (Ketilsdottir) the Deep-minded = Unn the Deep-minded	hin djúpúðga	Eyri 1, 5, 6, Eirik 1, Grettir 10, 26 = Lax 1, 3-7, Njal 1
12	Audun (Bjarnarson) Shaft	skøkull	Bard 12, 14, Lax 40, Grettir 11, ShiverT 1
13	Audun Halter-dog	festargramr	Gunnlaug 5, 6, Lax 51
14	Avaldi (Ingjaldsson): Beard-Avaldi	Skagi	Vatn 44, 45, Hallfred 1-4
15	Bardi Gudmundarson: Killer-Bardi	Víg	Egil 79, Eyri 65, Heath 13 ff., Bard 12, Lax 31, 53, 54, Vatn 27, ThorvFT 1, Grettir 28, 31, 34
16	Berg (Skidason) the Bold	haldi	Vatn 31-35, Finnbogi 33-36, 43
17	Bessi (Ozurarson) the Wise	spak	Drop 2 ff., BKrossT 1, Fljot 7 ff., ThSid 5
18	Bjarni (Thorsteinsson) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Grettir 6, Floi 24 ff
19	Björn - Skin-Björn, son of Skutad-Skeggi	Skinna	Bard 5, Thord 2, Njal 138
20	Björn (Arngeirsson) Champion of the Hitardal People	Hítðælakappi	Egil 56, Björn 1 ff., Grettir 58, 59, 61

¹¹⁸ The names included in this list are in English as they are taken from the list at the back of volume V of the Leifur Eiríksson edition of the *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*. This list is modified only to include names found with physical or mental attributes described. For the key to the saga abbreviations, please see the original list in volume V.

21	Bjorn (Ragnarsson) Iron-side	járnsiða	Njal 113, SvadiT 2
22	Bodvar (Ondottsson) the Wise		ThorvFT 4, SvadiT 1 ff.
23	Bolli (Bollason) the Elegant	prúði (hinn)	Eyri 65, Lax 56 ff., BolliT 1 ff., HalliT 10
24	Bork (Thorkelsson) Black-tooth-beard	blátannarskegg	Bard 5, Njal 57
25	Bork (Thorsteinsson) the Stout	digri	Eyri 11-15, 65, Lax 7, 18, Gisli 5 ff., Thorir 10, Kormak 7, 12, Grettir 68
26	Broddi - Beard-Broddi (Bjarnason)	Skegg	Conf 7 ff., Ljos 25 ff., StaffT 1, ThSid 5
27	Brynjolf the Old	gamli (hinn)	TWhite 2, ThSid 5
28	Eilif (Atlason) Eagle = Eilif (Bardarson) Eagle	ørn	ThorvFT 1 = Njal 113
29	Einar (Hareksson) Fly	fluga	OddT 1 ff., HalliT 7, 8, 10
30	Einar Paunch-shaker		HSno1T 1, HrafnT 5, BullT 3, OrmT 11, ThSidT 2, 3
31	Eirik (Haraldsson) Blood-axe	blóðøx	Egil 36 ff., Kormak 2 Thord 3, Njal 3, Floi 8
32	Eirik (Thorvaldsson) the Red	rauði (hinn)	Eyri 24, 25, Eirik 1 ff., Green 1 ff., Bard 5,
33	Eyjolf (Gudmundarson) the Lame	halti (hinn)	Heath 38, 39, 41, Grettir 34, Finnbogi 38, 42, Glum 10, Ljot 1, 2, Ljos 22 ff., ThorOverT 1, ThSid 7
34	Eyjolf (Ingjaldsson) the Lump	hrúga	OgmundT 1, Glum 1 ff.
35	Eyjolf (Thordarson) the Grey	grái (hinn)	Eyri 13, Lax 7, Gisli 15 ff., Olkofri 1, 3,
36	Eystein (Ivarsson) Glumra	glumra	Eirik 1, Njal 85, 96
37	Eyvind (Finnsson) the Plagiarist	skáldaspillir	Egil 22, TentT 3
38	Eyvind the Proud		HromT 1, Vatn 17, 23, 29, 44, Hallfred 2
39	Finn (Eyvindarson) the Squinter	skjálgi	Egil 22, TentT 3
40	Finnbogi (Asbjarnarson) the Mighty	rammi (hinn)	Vatn 31-35, Finnbogi 9 ff., Ljos 23
41	Finni (Thorgeirsson): Dream-Finni	Drauma	Finnbogi 9, Ljos 2, 21
42	Flosi (Thordarson): Flosi the Burner	Brennu	Drop 9, ThSid 1, 7, Njal 95 ff.
43	Geirmund (Hjorsson) Dark-skin	heljarskinn	Egil 78, Grettir 2, 3
44	Gest (Oddleifsson) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Lax 33 ff., Gisli 6, 23 ff, Havard 4, 6, 7, 22, 23, Ref 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, Njal 103

45	Gizur (Teitsson) the White	hvíti	Eyri 47, 49, 55, Lax 41, 42, Glum 5, 9, 25, ThSid 7, Hord 11, Njal 46 ff., Floi 31, 32
46	Glum (Eyjolfsson): Killer-Glum	Víg	OgmundT 1, Glum 5 ff., TasaldiT 1, Ljot 1, Reyk 23-26, HreidarT 1
47	Grettir (Asmundarson) the Strong	sterki (hinn)	Björn 19, Eyri 62, Bard 11, Lax 40, Gisli 22, Brothers 7, Conf 2, Grettir 14 ff., Ljos 1, ThorOverT 1
48	Grim (Ketilsson) Hairy-cheeks	loðinkinni	Egil 62, Njal 105, 119
49	Gudmund (Eyjolfsson) the Powerful	gamli/ríki	Eyri 65, Heath 37-39, 41, Lax 41, BolliT 5, 8, Brothers 18, Vatn 10, 44, ThorvFT 1, Grettir 67, 69, Glum 25 ff., Svarf 19, Ljot 1 ff., Ljos 2 ff., ThorOverT 1, Olkofri 1 ff., Vopn 6, 10, 12, 14, ThSid 7, Njal 113 ff., ThorNefT 1
50	Gunnlaug (Hromundarson) Serpent-tongue	ormstunga	Egil 56, Gunnlaug 4
51	Gunnlaug (Illugason) Serpent-tongue	ormstunga	Egil 82, 90, Gunnlaug 4 ff., Eyri 56, Bard 11, Lax 6, Hallfred 11
52	Hakon (Sigurdarson) the Powerful, earl of Lade	ríki/illi/blótjarl (hinn)	Egil 4, TWhite 1, Vopn 1, Njal 29, Floi 1, 4
53	Halfdan (Gudrodarson) the Black, king	svarti	Egil 3, 8, 26, Viglund 1, Grettir 2, Hrafinkel 1, Floi 1
54	Halfdan (Olafsson) White-leg, king of Oppland	hvítbeinn	Egil 71, Eirik 1
55	Hallbjörn (Ulfsson) Half-troll	hálftröll	Egil 1, Njal 105, 119
56	Hallgerd (Hoskuldottir) Long-legs	langbrók	Lax 9, Njal 1 ff.
57	Halli, berserk from Sweden	sænskr beserkr	Eyri 25, 28, Heath 3, 4
58	Harald (Halfdanarson) Fair-hair: Tangle-hair, king of Norway	hárfagri/lúfa (hárlúfa?)	Egil 3 ff., Eyri 1, 2, Bard 1, 2, Viglund 1, 4, 5, 6, 18, Lax 2, Thorir 2, Vatn 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, Kormak 1, 2, Grettir 2, 3, 7, Svarf 1, Hrafinkel 1, Kjal 11-16, 18, Hord 1, Njal 3, 29, Floi 1, 4, 6, OrmT 1, TentT 2, 3

59	Harald (Hraereksson) War-tooth, king of Denmark	hilditönn	Njal 25, ShiverT 1
60	Harald (Sigurdarson) the Stern, king of Norway		GislT 2, HSno1T, HSno2T 1 ff., StufT 1, BrandT 1, Lax 50, AudunT 1 ff., BeakT 1, Brothers 24, Conf 10, OddT 1, Grettir 88, 90, 91, HalliT 1 ff., Ljos 29-31, HreidarT 3 ff., Ref 10 ff., StoryWiseT 1, ArnorT 1, CuriousT 1
61	Hauk, two berserks, namesakes	beserkir samnefndir	Vatn 46, ThorvFT 4
62	Helga (Thorsteinsdottir) the Fair	fagra (hin)	Egil 82, 90, Gunnlaug 3 ff., Hallfred 11
63	Helgi - Sleitu-Helgi - sleit, betrug	Sleitu	HromT 2 ff., Grettir 30
64	Helgi (Eyvindarson) the Lean	magri (hinn)	Eyri 1, Eirik 1, Lax 1, 3, 4, 6, Grettir 3, 8, Glum 1, 5, 27, Svarf 13, Ljos 6, 13, Njal 95, 113
65	Hlenni (Ornolfsson) the Old = (Ormsson)	gamli/skakki (hinn)	ThorvFT 4, Glum 10, 19, 25, Ljos 20, 22, 24, Njal 105
66	Hogni (Otryggsson) the White	hvíti (hinn)	Thorir 1, Brothers 2, Njal 100
67	Horda-Kari = Ketil (Aslaksson) Horda-Kari	Hǫrða-Kári	Eyri 13, Thord 1, 8, 12 = BullT 1
68	Hrodgeir (Hrafnsson) the White	hvíti (hinn)	TWhite 1, Njal 87
69	Hrolf (Ox-Thorisson) the Walker		Lax 32, TWhite 1
70	Hrolleif (Ljotarson) the Tall	mikli (hinn)	Vatn 18-27, Thord 6
71	Hromund (Eyvindarson) the Lamé	halti (hinn)	HromT 1 ff., Vatn 23, 29
72	Illugi (Aslaksson) the Mighty	rammi (hinn)	Eyri 44, Eirik 2
73	Illugi (Hallkelsson) the Black	svarti	Egil 56, Gunnlaug 4 ff., GislT 1, Eyri 17, 56, Heath 7, 10, 32, 35, 37, Bard 10, 11, Lax 6, Vatn 10, Hord 13
74	Ingimund (Thorsteinsson) the Old	gamli (hinn)	HromT 1, Vatn 7 ff., Grettir 13, 31, Finnbogi 28, 30, 35. . 43
75	Ingolf (Thorsteinsson) the Handsome	væni (hinn)	Vatn 29, 37-41, Hallfred 2, 3, 10, Fljot 3
76	Jorund (Thorisson) Neck	háls	HromT 1, Vatn 13, 16
77	Jorunn (Ketildottir) Manvitsbrekka	manvitsbrekka	Eyri 1, Lax 1
78	Kari (Solmundarson) = Kari the Singed	Sviðu	Njal 84 ff. = Grettir 10

79	Karl (Thorsteinsson) the Red	rauði (hinn)	ThorleifT 2, Svarf 10 ff., Ljot 1, 4
80	Ketil (Bjarnarson) Flat-nose	flatnefr	Eyri 1, 2, 5, Eirik 1, Lax 1-4, 8, 32, Kjal 1, Njal 1, 113
81	Ketil (Hallbjarnarson) Haeng	hængr	Egil 1, 7, 23, 62, Bard 5, Njal 105, 119, OrmT 1
82	Ketil (Ormsson) the Large	raumr	Vatn 1-6, Grettir 13, Drop 1
83	Ketil Stout-Ketil from Fljotsdal = Ketil the Stout	Digr	Vopn 5 = ThSid 7
84	KetilBjörn the Old	gamli (hinn)	Glum 9, Njal 26, 46, 47, Floi 18
85	Kjallak (Bjarnarson) the Old	gamli	Eyri 7, Lax 3, Thorir 6, 15
86	Klaufi (Snaekollsson) Boggvir (the Mauler)	boggvir	ThorleifT 2, Svarf 12 ff.
87	Kleppjarn the Old	gamli (hinn)	Eyri 56, Heath 7, 10, 12, 14, 15
88	Leif (Eiriksson) the Lucky	heppni	Eirik 5 ff., Green 1 ff., Bard 5
89	Magnus (Olafsson) Bare-leg, king of Norway	berfættr/berbeinn	GislT 1 ff., GoldT 1
90	Magnus (Olafsson) the Good, king of Norway	góði (hinn)	HSno1T 1, Lax 78, HrafnT 2 ff., Grettir 90, ThorgrimT 1, HalliT 1, HreidarT 1 ff., ThSid 2, EastT 1 ff., ArmorT 1, ThSidT 1 ff.
91	Odd (Onundarson): Tungu-Odd	tungu	Egil 28, 82, 84, 85, 87, Hen 1 ff., Gunnlaug 1, 11, Bard 10, Lax 7
92	Olaf (Asgeirsson) Knuckle-breaker	vølubrjótr	ThorleifT 2, 8, Svarf 11, 17, 19
93	Olaf (Einarsson) the Broad = (Olvisson)	breiður	Grettir 3 = Njal 56
94	Olaf (Hoskuldsson) Peacock	pái	Egil 79, Gunnlaug 3, Lax 13 ff., BolliT 1, Brothers 1, Kormak 12, 16, Grettir 52, Njal 1, 34, 59, 66, 70, 75
95	Olaf (Ingjaldsson) the White	hvíti	Eyri 1, Eirik 1, Lax 1, Brothers 2, Njal 1, 114
96	Olaf (Thorsteinsson) Feilan	feilan	Egil 29, 82, Eyri 9, Lax 5, 7, 11, 13, Gisli 5, Grettir 10, 26, Njal 114, 138
97	Olvir (Thorbergsson) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Reyk 17, 30, Vopn 12
98	Olvir Child-sparer	barnakarl	Grettir 3, Njal 56
99	Ondott Crow	kráka	Grettir 3, 6, 7, Njal 26
100	Onund (Ulfarsson) Broad-beard	beiðskeggr	Hen 1, Bard 10
101	Orm (Thorisson) Box-back = Ornolf Box-back	toškubak	Njal 105 = Glum 10

102	Orm the Slender	mjóí	Eyri 15, Thorir 1
103	Ospak, a viking	vikingr	ThSid 2, Njal 155, 156, 157
104	Osvif (Helgason) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Egil 81, Gunnlaug 5, Eyri 7, Lax 32 ff.
105	Ozur Toti - nose, schnauze	tóti, toti	Egil 37, 49, Njal 3
106	Ragnar (Sigurdarson) Shaggy-breeches	loðbrók	Egil 51, Eyri 1, Njal 1, 114, 138, Floi 1, SvadiT 7
107	Saemund (Sigfusson) the Learned	fróði (hinn)	GreenT 1, ThSid 7, Njal 25, 26
108	Sighvat the Red	rauði	Egil 22, Njal 1, 19, 34, 41, Floi 8, TentT 3
109	Sigtrygg (Olafsson) Silk-beard, king in Dublin	silkiskegg	Gunnlaug 8, 11, Njal 154, 155, 157
110	Sigurd (Eiriksson/Gunnhildarson) Snake		Thord 1-3, 5, 14, BullT 3
111	Sigurd (Eysteinnsson) the Mighty	ríki (hinn)	Egil 33, Eirik 1
112	Sigurd (Ragnarsson) Snake-in the-Eye	ormr í auga	Eyri 1, Brothers 2, Njal 1, 114, Floi 1
113	Sigurd (Sigmundarson) Fafnisbani: slayer of the serpent Fafnir	Fafnisbani	Brothers 2, HalliT 3, Njal 14, Floi 1, ShiverT 1
114	Skidi (Bardarson) the Old	gamli (hinn)	ThorvFT 1, Njal 113
115	Skuta (Askelsson): Killer-Skuta	Víg	Glum 16, Reyk 1 ff., Njal 138
116	SteinBjörn (Refsson) Kort	kortr	TWhite 1, Vopn 1, 3
117	Steinolf (Hrolfsson) the Short	lági/litli (hinn)	Eyri 7, Thorir 1 ff.
118	Sturla (Thjodreksson): Killer-Sturla	Víg	Eyri 57, 61, 62, 65, Havard 8 ff.
119	Styr (Thorgrimsson): Killer-Styr = Arngrim (Thorgrimsson)	Víg	Eyri 12 ff., Eirik 2, Heath 1 ff., Lax 3, 25, Brothers 1, Grettir 52
120	Svein (Haraldsson) Fork-beard, king of Denmark	tjúguskegg	Gunnlaug 10, HSno1T, ThorvFT 2, ThorleifT 4, 6, Njal 81
121	Thidrandi (Ketilsson) the Old = the Wise	gamli/spaki (hinn)	TWhite 8, Drop 2, Fljot 3 = Njal 96, 134
122	Thoralf (Skolmsson) the Strong		Bard 9, Grettir 58, OrmT 1, 4
123	Thorarin (Thorgilsson) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Heath 14 ff., Bard 12, Grettir 28, 31
124	Thorarin (Thorvaldsson) the Overbearing	ofsi	Brothers 16, 17 = ThorOverT 1
125	Thorbjörg (Gilsdottir) Ship-breast	knarrarbringa	Eirik 2, Bard 5, Thorir 1
126	Thorbjörg (Olafsdottir) the Stout	digra (hin)	Egil 79, Lax 28, 31, Brothers 1, Grettir 52
127	ThorBjörn (Thorkelsson) Sur	súr	Eyri 65, Gisli 1, 2, 3, 4

128	Thord (Hrappsson) Beard	skeggi	BullT 1, Njal 26, 46
129	Thord (Olafsson) Bellower	gellir	Egil 29, 82, Hen 10-14, Eyri 9, 10, 13, 24, Eirik 2, 7, Bard 11, 14, Lax 7, 11, 16, 19, 40, Grettir 26, 77, Reyk 21, Olkofri 1, Njal 138
130	Thord (Snorrason) Horse-head	hesthöfði	Green 6, Heath 37
131	Thord (Snorrason) Kitty - Born of a Bondwoman	kausi	Eyri 55, 65, Heath 12
132	Thord (Thordarson) Cat	köttur	StufT 1, Lax 36, 62-64
133	Thordis (Brodd-Helgadóttir) Todda - Generous	Todda	GunnT 6, Vopn 3, 18, Drop 3, 12, 13, 15,
134	Thorfinn (Einarsson) Skull-splitter, earl of Orkney	hausakljúfr	Eirik 1, Lax 4, ThSid 1, Njal 85
135	Thorfinn (Seal-Thorisson: son of Seal-Thorir)	sel	Gunnlaug 5, Eyri 12, 56
136	Thorgeir (Thorolfsson) Gollnir		Vopn 14, Njal 134
137	Thorgest the Old	gamli (hinn)	Eyri 9, 24, Eirik 2,
138	Thorgrim (Einarsson) Troll	trölfi	Brothers 16 ff., ThorOverT 1
139	Thorgrim Dung-beetle	tordýfill	Drop 3, 4, Fljot 11-13
140	Thorhild (Skinna-Bjarnardóttir)	skinna	ThorleifT 2, Svarf 16
141	Thorir - Ox-Thorir, hersir	Qxna	Bard 5, Eirik 2, Lax 32, TWhite 1, Vopn 1
142	Thorir (Ingimundarson) Goat-thigh	geitleggr	Vatn 13 ff., Finnbogi 28. . .35
143	Thorir (Thorisson) Dog from Bjarkey	hundr	Eyri 65, Heath 43, OddT 1
144	Thorir (Thorsteinsson) Leather-neck	leðurhals	Bard 3, Reyk 1
145	Thorir Long-chin, king of Agder	haklangr	Egil 9, Vatn 8, Grettir 2
146	Thorir Stamper		Hen 1, Bard 10
147	Thorkel (Ketilsson) the Fully-wise	fullspakr	GunnT 1, 3, 6, Fljot 6, 18, Njal 134
148	Thorkel (Raudfeldsson) Bound-leg	bundinfóti	Bard 2 ff., Njal 57
149	Thorkel (Red-Bjarnarson: son of Björn the Red) Scarf	kuggi	Egil 81, Hen 1, 10-13, Lax 10, 18, 24,
150	Thorkel (Thorisson) the Black	svarti	Njal 105, 119, Bard 3
151	Thorkel Moon (Thorsteinsson), lawspeaker	máni	Grettir 12, Hord 10
152	Thorkel Skin-swathed	skinnvefja	Bard 3 ff., Viglund 12
153	Thorkel Thorgrimsson Krafla		Vatn 37 ff., Hallfred 10, Grettir 13, 16, 25
154	Thormod (Olafsson) Skafti		Grettir 3, 6, 10, Njal 56, Floi 30
155	Thorodd (Arnorrson) Poem-piece	dráputúfr	Bard 11, Grettir 30 ff.
156	Thorodd (Eyvindarson) the Wise	spaki (hinn)	Egil 78, 79, Gunnlaug 5, Bard 7, Grettir 6, 32, Reyk 25, 30, Njal 56, Floi 20, 30, 31, 35

157	Thorodd (Hjalmsson) Helmet	hjálmr	Vatn 10, Glum 26, Njal 113
158	Thorolf (Ornolfsson) Moster-beard	mostrarskegg	Eyri 3-9, 13, Lax 7, Gisli 5, Thorir 1, Njal 114
159	Thorstein (Hallsteinsson) Surt		Eyri 7, 11, Lax 6, 10, 17, 18, Thorir 1
160	Thorstein (Olafsson) the Red	rauðr, rauði (hinn)	Eyri 5, 7, Eirik 1, Lax 4-8, Thorir 1, Brothers 2, Grettir 26, Njal 1, 114
161	Thorstein (Olvisson) the White	hvíti	TWhite 1 ff., Vopn 1-3, Njal 134
162	Thorstein (Thorolfsson) Cod-biter	þorskabítr	Eyri 7, 9-12, Lax 7, Gisli 5, Njal 114
163	Thorunn (Ketilsdottir) Hyrna		Eyri 1, Lax 1, 3, Njal 113
164	Thorvald (Steingrimsson) Tasaldi		Glum 5, 22, 23, 27, OgmundT 1, TasaldiT 1
165	Thorvard Crow's-beak	krákunef	BeakT 1, ThSid 7
166	Ulf (Hognason) the Squinter	skjálgi (hinn)	Lax 6, Thorir 1, 10, 19, Brothers 2, Grettir 27, Njal 100
167	Valthjof (Orlygsson) the Old	gamli (hinn)	Hen 1, Bard 10, Hord 2
168	Vemund (Thorisson/Fjorleifarson) Fringe	køgr	Eyri 12, Bard 3, Reyk 1 ff.
169	Vermund (Thorgrimsson) the Slender	mjóí (hinn)	Egil 79, Björn 27, Eyri 12 ff., BrandT 1, Heath 3, 4, Lax 3, 31, 40, Brothers 1-6, Grettir 52
170	Viglund (Thorgrimsson) the Fair	væni (hinn)	Bard 3, Viglund 7 ff.
171	Yngvild (Asgeirsdottir) Fair-cheek	fagrinn	ThorleifT 2, Svarf 11 ff.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:¹¹⁹

Björn K. Þórólfsson, ed.¹²⁰ *Vestfirðinga sögur*. Vol. 6. Reykjavík: Íslenska fornritafélag.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed. *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Vol. 12. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954.

———. *Laxdæla saga*. Vol. 5. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1934.

———. *Vatnsdæla saga*. Vol. 8. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1939.

Guðni Jónsson, ed. *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. Vol. 7. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936.

Guðni Jónsson, and Sigurður Nordal, eds. *Borgfirðinga sögur*. Vol. 3. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1938.

Jónas Kristjánsson, ed. *Eyfirðinga sögur*. Vol. 9. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956.

Jón Jóhannesson, ed. *Austfirðinga sögur*. Vol. 11. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1950.

Jón Torfason, Sverrir Tómasson, and Örnólfur Þorsson, eds. *Íslendinga sögur*. Reykjavík: Svart á Hvítu, 1987.

Magerøy, Hallvard, ed. *Bandamanna Saga*. London; Oslo: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London ; Dreyers Forlag, 1981.

Ólafur Halldórsson, ed. *Eiríks saga rauða: Texti Skálholtsbókar AM 557 4to*. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1985.

Sigfússon, Björn, ed. *Ljósvetninga saga*. Vol. 10. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1940.

Sigurður Nordal, ed. *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. Vol. 2. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1933.

Sveinnsson, Einar Ól, and Matthías Þórdarson, eds. *Eyrbyggja saga*. Vol. 4. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935.

¹¹⁹ For a full list of the sagas and *þættir* contained in each of these volumes, consult Appendices I and II.

¹²⁰ For Icelandic patronymic names, I use the accepted convention of placing the given name first. For Icelanders with non-patronymic surnames, I place the surname first.

Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*. 5 vols. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Pub, 1997.

Pórhallur Vilmundarson, and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, eds. *Harðar saga*. Vol. 13. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991.

Secondary Sources:

Barnes, Colin. 2010. "A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J Davis. London: Routledge.

Bergdís Þrastardóttir. 2014. "The Medieval Matter: Þættir in the Medieval Manuscripts Morkinskinna and Flateyjarbók." Aarhus: Aarhus University.

Birni Magnússini Olsen. 1912. *Stúfs saga: gefin út í fyrsta sinn eftir handritunum*. Reykjavík: Prentsmíðjan Gutenberg.

Bragg, Lois. 1997. "From the Mute God to the Lesser God: Disability in Medieval Celtic and Old Norse Literature." *Disability & Society* 12 (2): 165–78. doi:10.1080/09687599727317.

———. 2004. *Oedipus Borealis: The Aberrant Body in Old Icelandic Myth and Saga*. Madison, [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Cleasby, Richard, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, and George Webbe Dasent. 1874. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Clover, Carol J. 1993. "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe." *Speculum* 68 (2): 363–87. doi:10.2307/2864557.

Comber, Abigail Elizabeth. 2010. "Medieval King 'Disabled' by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of Richard III." In *Disability in the Middle Ages: Rehabilitations, Reconsiderations, Reverberations*, edited by Joshua R Eyler. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

Cuddon, J. A. 1992. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin.

Davis, Lennard J. 2000. "Dr. Johnson, Amelia, and the Discourse of Disability." In *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body*, edited by Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

———. 2010. "Constructing Normalcy." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J Davis. London: Routledge.

———. 2013. "The End of Identity Politics: On Disability as an Unstable Category." In

- The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J Davis. New York, NY: Routledge.
- “Definitions of The Models of Disability.” 2015. *Disabled World*. Accessed April 15. <http://www.disabled-world.com/definitions/disability-models.php>.
- Dennis, Andrew, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins, eds. 1980. *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás, the Codex Regius of Grágás, with Material from Other Manuscripts*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Winnipeg, Canada: University of Manitoba Press.
- Falsen, Lise, and Tove Bjørner Lindeberg. 2003. *Hørselshemmede i norsk litteratur*. Statped Skriftserie 11. Trondheim: Møller kompetansesenter.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ganguly, Debjani. 2016. *This Thing Called the World The Contemporary Novel As Global Form*. Duke Univ Pr.
- Goodley, Dan. 2011. *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. Los Angeles, Calif; London: SAGE.
- Jakobsson, Ármann. 2013. “The Life and Death of the Medieval Icelandic Short Story.” *JEGP, Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112 (3): 257–91.
- Jochens, Jenny. 1995. *Women in Old Norse Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Jón R. Hjálmarsson. 1988. *A Short History of Iceland*. Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið.
- Larsen, Karen. 1974. *A History of Norway*. Princeton: Princeton University Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation.
- Metzger, Bruce M, and Roland E Murphy. 1991. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Metzler, Irina. 2001. *Disability in Medieval Europe Theoretical Approaches to Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, C. 1100 - C. 1400*. University of Reading.
- Mitchell, David, and Sharon Snyder. 2013. “Narrative Prosthesis.” In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J Davis. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk. 2008. “Blinding Sight: Some Observations on German Epics of the Thirteenth Century.” In *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames*, edited by Stephen G Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- O'Tool, Mark P. 2010. "Disability and Suppression of Historical Identity: Rediscovering the Professional Backgrounds of the Blind Residents of the Hôpital Des Quinze-Vingts." In *Disability in the Middle Ages: Rehabilitations, Reconsiderations, Reverberations*, edited by Joshua R Eyler. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- O'Tool, Mark Polking. 2007. "Caring for the Blind in Medieval Paris: Life at the Quinze-Vingts, 1250--1430." Ph.D., United States -- California: University of California, Santa Barbara.
- Ravaud, Jean-François, and Henri-Jacques Stiker. 2001. "Inclusion/Exclusion: An Analysis of Historical and Cultural Meanings." In *Handbook of Disability Studies*, edited by Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Rose, Martha L. 2013. *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Schalick, Walton O. III. 2006. "History of Disability: Medieval West." Edited by Gary L Albrecht. *Encyclopedia of Disability*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Sexton, John. 2010. "Difference and Disability: On the Logic of Naming in the Icelandic Sagas." In *Disability in the Middle Ages: Rehabilitations, Reconsiderations, Reverberations*, edited by Joshua R Eyler. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Shakespeare, Tom. 2013. "The Social Model of Disability." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J Davis. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shakespeare, Tom, Jerome E. Bickenbach, David Pfeiffer, and Nicholas Watson. 2006. "Models." Edited by Gary L Albrecht. *Encyclopedia of Disability*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Stiker, Henri-Jacques. 1999. *A History of Disability*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Turville-Petre, Gabriel. 1953. *Origins of Icelandic Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Vance, Eugene. 2008. "Seeing God: Augustine, Sensation, and the Mind's Eye." In *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames*, edited by Stephen G Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Vésteinn Ólason. 1998. *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders*. Reykjavík: Heimskringla, Mál og Menning Academic Division.
- Viðar Hreinsson, ed. 1997. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*. 5 vols. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Pub.

- Vilhjálmur Finsen. 1852. *Grágás, Islændernes lovbog i fristatens tid*. II vols. København: Brødrene Berlings bogtrykkeri.
- Weygand, Zina. 2009. *The Blind in French Society from the Middle Ages to the Century of Louis Braille*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Wheatley, Edward. 2010. *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.
- Wolf, Kirsten. 2010. "A comment on a textual emendation to Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa." *Maal og Minne* 102 (2010): 98-105.