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Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, Volume 6, Number 2, Fall 2021, pp. 300-337 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mns.2021.0018>



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Title Pages in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Icelandic Manuscripts: The Development and Functions of Print Features in Manuscript Form

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INTEREST IN POST-MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS from the Western world has increased in recent decades, following the material turn in the humanities.¹ In many cases the interest seems, however, somewhat one-sided. Scholars often focus on post-Gutenberg manuscripts that were copies of printed works because prints were unavailable or unaffordable, or on manuscripts that were created for a specific person or a small group of readers, or even on manuscripts that tried to evade censorship.² The development

This study is based on the project “Old and New: How Old and New Media Influenced Each Other and Society in Iceland during the 16th and 17th Centuries,” which was hosted by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna between June 2015 and May 2017 and has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie-Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 658813. Partner institutions were the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík and the National and University Library of Iceland. I would like to thank all my colleagues for their invaluable help.

1 Seminal works include Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), and Stephen Nichols, “Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1–10.

2 E.g., Curt F. Bühler, *The Fifteenth-Century Book: The Scribes, the Printers, the Decorators* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960); Albert Derolez, “The Copying of Printed Books for Humanistic Bibliophiles in the Fifteenth Century,” in *From Script to Book*:

of manuscript and print is also often presented as rather linear; the earliest printed books imitated, or rather emulated, manuscripts until features and layouts specific to the new technology emerged, whereupon post-Gutenberg manuscripts in turn imitated books.³ In this article I argue that manuscript culture did not cease after the advent of print or after the incunabula period, but, rather, that manuscript production increased. I will show that this development was not linear, but that the respectively old and new media of handwriting and print influenced each other. I also argue that there were various strategies that scribes of post-medieval manuscripts used when copying manuscripts and printed material. In doing so I emphasize the important role of post-medieval manuscripts in Western society and provide a deeper understanding of early modern media and a more nuanced view of textual culture.⁴ Icelandic post-medieval manuscripts serve as an appropriate case study because of their large number and the relatively well-documented status of Icelandic manuscript culture. I hope that this study will encourage scholars to examine the interdependencies and interrelations between post-medieval manuscripts and prints in other textual cultures, thereby adding to our understanding of the development of media, the written word, and our shared past.

A Symposium, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Marianne Børch, and Bengt Algot Sørensen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 140–60; Hans Lülfi, “Die Fortdauer der handschriftlichen Buchherstellung nach der Erfindung des Buchdrucks—ein buchgeschichtliches Problem,” in *Buch und Text im 15. Jahrhundert: Arbeitsgespräch in der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel vom 1. bis 3. März 1978*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and Helmar Härtel (Hamburg: Hauswedel, 1981), 17–26; François Moureau, *La Plume et le plomb: Espaces de l’imprimé et du manuscrit au siècle des Lumières*, with a preface by Robert Darnton (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

3 Margaret Smith, “The Design Relationship Between the Manuscript and the Incunable,” in *A Millennium of the Book: Production, Design and Illustration in Manuscript and Print, 900–1900*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1994), 23–43.

4 Notable studies focusing on post-medieval Irish and English manuscripts that offer a deeper understanding of literature and textual culture include Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Motivations and Milieu* (Münster: Nodus, 2000), and Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

Iceland had a particularly rich manuscript culture that extended over many centuries. Evidence suggests that documents and manuscripts in Latin and the vernacular were produced during or shortly after the Christianization of the country in the year 1000, with the oldest extant manuscripts and manuscript fragments dating from the twelfth century.⁵ Today there are approximately 20,000 manuscripts and fragments extant, the bulk of which date from after the Protestant Reformation of 1541–1552; manuscript production did not cease until the early twentieth century, and remained closely connected to printing.⁶

Iceland's first printing press was established around 1530 in Hólar, the island's northern episcopal see.⁷ Until the late seventeenth century, the printing press operated from the see in Hólar, although for some years it was kept at the Breiðabólstaður farm, a few dozen kilometers west of Hólar, and also at the Núpufell farm, at a more considerable distance from Hólar. The press came into the private possession of Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (ca. 1542–1627) and his descendants, several of whom became bishops as well.⁸ In 1648, Brynjólfur Sveinsson (1605–1675), bishop of Iceland's southern diocese Skálholt and one of the most erudite men of his time, asked the Danish authorities for permission to establish another

5 Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, "Manuscripts and Palaeography," in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 245–64 at 245–46, 249.

6 The Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík and the Arnarnagænan Institute in Copenhagen together house approximately 2,600 manuscripts and fragments. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Manuscripts on the Brain: Árni Magnússon, Collector," in *66 Manuscripts from the Arnarnagænan Collection*, ed. Matthew James Driscoll and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (Reykjavík: Arnarnagænan Institute, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, and Museum Tusculanum, 2015), 9–37 at 35, and the National and University Library of Iceland houses approximately 15,000 (<https://landsbokasafn.is/index.php/efni/handrit>, accessed 1 September 2019); the remainder is my estimate based on holdings in other collections, such as the British Library in London.

7 Klemens Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga prentlistarinnar á Íslandi* (Reykjavík: Félagsprentsmiðjan, 1930), 3–6; Halldór Hermannsson, introduction to *Icelandic Books of the Sixteenth Century (1534–1600)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 1916), i–xii at i.

8 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 3–52; Hermannsson, introduction to *Icelandic Books of the Sixteenth Century*, i–ix; Halldór Hermannsson, introduction to *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century (1601–1700)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 1922), i–xiii at i–v.

printing press to print historical texts and sagas alongside religious books; alas, his northern colleague intervened to halt this initiative, and nothing became of the plan for a second press nor of the printing of historical subject-matter for the moment.⁹ After Þórður Þorláksson (1637–1697), great-grandson of Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, became bishop in 1674, he gained a royal privilege to print historical works and had several sagas and historical treatises printed in 1688 and 1689.¹⁰ But neither he nor his episcopal successors who oversaw the press printed other historical works. The printing press remained the sole press in Iceland until 1773. It operated under the auspices of the Icelandic bishops, who issued religious, edifying, and liturgical books almost exclusively.¹¹ Furthermore, books (a term I will henceforth use to denote printed and bound texts, as opposed to manuscripts) remained unaffordable for the majority of Iceland's inhabitants into the nineteenth century.¹² Because of this, nonreligious matter, particularly entertaining worldly or profane literature, was copied by hand well into modern times.¹³ In contrast to common belief, however, the manuscript form was not restricted to worldly texts; religious and edifying texts were hand-copied, too, despite existing in print.

Although the earliest printed books emulated medieval manuscripts, they soon developed their own distinctive features.¹⁴ As time went on, they in turn influenced manuscripts. Icelandic post-Gutenberg manuscripts were not free of these influences and show a great number of features that are

9 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 43–45; Hermannsson, introduction to *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century*, vi–vii.

10 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 51–58; Hermannsson, introduction to *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century*, viii–x. During his time, the printing press was in Skálholt.

11 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 59.

12 Davíð Ólafsson, “Sagas in Handwritten and Printed Books in 19th Century Iceland.” Unpublished article available at <https://academia.edu> (accessed 1 September 2019).

13 A recent awakening of interest of post-Gutenberg manuscripts has led to particularly insightful studies; see, for example, Margrét Eggertsdóttir and Matthew Driscoll, eds., *Mirrors of Virtue: Manuscript and Print in Late Pre-Modern Iceland* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2017).

14 Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976), 57, 77–108.

more commonly connected with books, such as title pages, which are a true innovation of the printing press.¹⁵

In this article I will first give an overview of title pages in Icelandic manuscripts and a short description of the oldest such title pages. I will compare them to the general development of books and manuscripts and offer an analysis of the social background of the scribes and patrons responsible for the earliest title pages. I will then give examples of title pages in two textual genres: collections of metrical psalms or hymns, which were transmitted in both print and manuscript form; and sagas (Icel. *sögur*), which were almost exclusively transmitted in manuscript form at that time. These examples will illuminate various approaches used in combining a feature of the new medium of print—namely, title pages—with the old medium of handwriting, and show how individual scribes adapted this new feature to their own purposes.

This analysis includes manuscripts dated between around 1500 and 1709, but excludes manuscripts written by scholars and those written outside Iceland. Each shelfmark was counted as a single manuscript, resulting in a corpus of circa 2,000 manuscripts. For this study, I have applied methods drawn from several fields: close reading, particularly the analysis of semantic fields, from literary studies; iconographic and iconological analysis from art history; manuscript analysis from quantitative codicology; and socioeconomic analysis of scribes and patrons from the sociology of literature.

Overview: Oldest Title Pages and Genre

For the purposes of this article, I will use a modified version of the definition of title pages provided by Margaret Smith, namely: “Title pages are separate pages that divide meta-text from the text proper in both content

15 Other features, such as text endings written in half-diamond indentation, are found in manuscripts that pre-date the printing press (E. A. Lowe, “Some Facts about Our Oldest Latin Manuscripts,” *Classical Quarterly* 19 [1925]: 197–208) and are thus less suitable for such a study.

and space: meta-text, such as title, author, year or place of production, is separated from the text proper, and this meta-text and text are on separate pages. Title pages contain at least some form of a title or another reference to the content of the text.”¹⁶

The appearance of title pages in books was preceded by blank pages, often referred to as blank title pages; their numbers declined in the 1480s when the frequency of title pages increased.¹⁷ The earliest title pages contained information about the book’s content and the name of the author only, sometimes accompanied by the name of the printer; these so-called label-titles were prevalent in the 1480s.¹⁸ The earliest illustrations on title pages stem from that period, too, although they did not become very numerous during the incunable period.¹⁹ A full title page, including information on the production of the book and the name of the bookseller, became more common in the 1490s.²⁰ In general, title pages had become common features of books by 1500.²¹ Blank title pages were presumably used to protect the unbound book or perhaps to separate text from meta-text; label title pages of schoolbooks and illustrated title pages were presumably used to enable easier identification of the books, and full title pages were presumably used for promotion and advertisement of the author, editor, or printer.²²

One in eight Icelandic manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contains one or more title pages: I found 331 title pages in 244

16 Margaret Smith, *The Title-Page: Its Early Development, 1460–1510* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 15.

17 Ursula Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchtitelblatts in der Inkunabelzeit in Deutschland, den Niederlanden und Venedig,” *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 62 (2008): 1–105 at 24–26, 34–36. Rautenberg also offers a detailed overview of previous scholarship on title pages.

18 Smith, *The Title-Page*, 59–74.

19 Smith, *The Title-Page*, 109–121; Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchtitelblatts,” 48, 52–98.

20 Smith, *The Title-Page*, 91–108.

21 Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchtitelblatts,” 95.

22 Smith, *The Title-Page*, 16–22; Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchtitelblatts,” 96–98, who refuses the argument of protection. On meta-text, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

manuscripts, and 41 of these manuscripts contain two or more title pages.²³ Originally these numbers must have been different, however. Nearly 300 of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts in the corpus are either fragmentary or damaged at the beginning and might once have contained a title page. At least 350 manuscripts were originally part of different manuscripts or were rebound, divided, or rearranged with a possible loss of title pages.²⁴

A closer look at the age of manuscripts with title pages reveals some striking developments, particularly in comparison to the overall development of book and manuscript production in Iceland (table 1).²⁵ The percentages are certainly distorted to some extent due to some vague datings of manuscripts, such as *ca. 1700*, which I include in the row for *ca. 1700–1709*. Some general developments are nevertheless perceptible. In terms of book production, few books were printed in the sixteenth century; however, we must bear in mind that the printing press arrived in Iceland only around 1530 and even so was inactive for a number of years later in the century.²⁶ There was a great deal of activity in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, followed by a dip in production in the 1620s and a second dip in the 1640s. Book production increased continuously in the second half of the seventeenth century, particularly in the last decade, when we can see almost a twofold increase in comparison with the previous decade. Some of these developments parallel developments in manuscript production, such as low production rates in the sixteenth century and the 1620s, as well as a steep increase in production during the 1690s. Title page production increased in

23 According to my latest count on 22 September 2017.

24 This number is an estimate based on catalogue entries and might be too low in light of Stegmann's conclusions that 896 of the *ca. 1700* extant manuscripts from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the Arnarnagðan Collection in Copenhagen were rearranged. Beeke Stegmann, "Árni Magnússon's Rearrangement of Paper Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., University of Copenhagen, 2017), 128.

25 I have counted editions based on Halldór Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Sixteenth Century* and *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century*. Each edition is counted as one book. The catalogues end with 1700, leaving no count of books available for the years *ca. 1700–1709*. The numbers are based on extant manuscripts and provide a useful estimate for this study, even though the number of manuscripts produced originally must be different.

26 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 11–14.

TABLE 1. Books, manuscripts, and manuscripts with title pages.

<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Number of books</i>	<i>Number of MSS</i>	<i>Number of MSS with title pages</i>	<i>Percentage of MSS with title pages</i>
vaguely dated		25	–	–
1500–1599 (incl. 1300–1600 and 1500–1699)	39	204	7	ca. 3%
1600–1699	158	1,453	197	ca. 14%
ca. 1600–1609	16	65	5	ca. 8%
ca. 1610–19	19	6	1	ca. 17%
ca. 1620–29	6	8	3	ca. 38%
ca. 1630–39	12	35	11	ca. 31%
ca. 1640–49	7	41	15	ca. 37%
ca. 1650–59	11	88	17	ca. 19%
ca. 1660–69	12	64	31	ca. 48%
ca. 1670–79	17	58	25	ca. 43%
ca. 1680–89	19	73	30	ca. 41%
ca. 1690–99	39	172	36	ca. 21%
ca. 1700–1709		307	40	ca. 13%
Total	197	1989	244	ca. 12%

a similar manner, although few title pages survive from before the second half of the seventeenth century, and there is a continuous increase in their number from the 1680s onward. The percentages, however, indicate that the increase was not as steep as the increase in general book and manuscript production.

Of the seven manuscripts with title pages from the sixteenth century, two contain law texts, two contain rhetorical texts, one contains theological texts, one contains administrative texts, and one contains administrative and legal texts—in short, all contain nonliterary texts and texts that existed in print at the time.²⁷ Such texts are closely connected with highly educated people in high governmental positions who would certainly have

27 The *Jónsbók* law-book was printed in 1578 and 1580 and possibly again in 1582; Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Sixteenth Century*, 22–23, 26–28.

been familiar with books and title pages. The connections to the upper spheres of Icelandic society become more apparent when we analyze the identity of the scribes, when they are known to us.

The oldest manuscript with a title page is Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (Icel. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*, henceforth SÁM), AM 264 fol, dating from between 1548 and 1553. It comprises 216 leaves and contains administrative texts concerning the Bessastaðir royal farm.²⁸ One of these texts, bearing three title pages, concerns the accounts of Eggert Hannesson (ca. 1515–ca. 1583) during his time as governor of Iceland, between 1551 and 1553. Hannesson was among the wealthiest men of his time and came from one of the most influential families; his father was a Norwegian nobleman and governor, his sister was married to a bishop, and he himself was an assistant to two consecutive bishops during his early years, which brought him to Norway and Germany.²⁹ After his return to Iceland he held high political and administrative positions and lived for most of the time at the Saurbr farm, or Bær á Rauðasandi, in the Westfjords, before moving to Hamburg in 1580, shortly after which he passed away.³⁰ The title pages in AM 264 fol divide the various accounts into annual parts. The second oldest manuscript is Copenhagen, Royal Danish Library, Thott 2102 4to, written in 1568 by Grímur Skúlason in Skálholt, the seat of the southern bishopric of Iceland.³¹ It contains legal texts on 247 leaves. Skúlason († 1582) was pastor and a scribe of Bishop Gísli Jónsson, and therefore must have had access to the diocese's large library, including both manuscripts and books.³² The title page appears not at the beginning of the law manuscript but toward the end, dividing the

28 Kristian Kålund, ed., *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889–94), 1:239–40.

29 Páll Eggert Ólason, Jón Guðnason, and Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson, *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnáms tímum til ársloka 1940*, 6 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1948–76), 1:319–20.

30 Ólason, Guðnason, and Kristjánsson, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1:320.

31 Kristian Kålund, ed., *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter i Det store kongelige bibliotek og i Universitetsbiblioteket (udenfor Den arnamagnæanske samling) samt Den arnamagnæanske samlings tilvækst 1894–99* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1900), 354.

32 Ólason, Guðnason, and Kristjánsson, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 2:105.

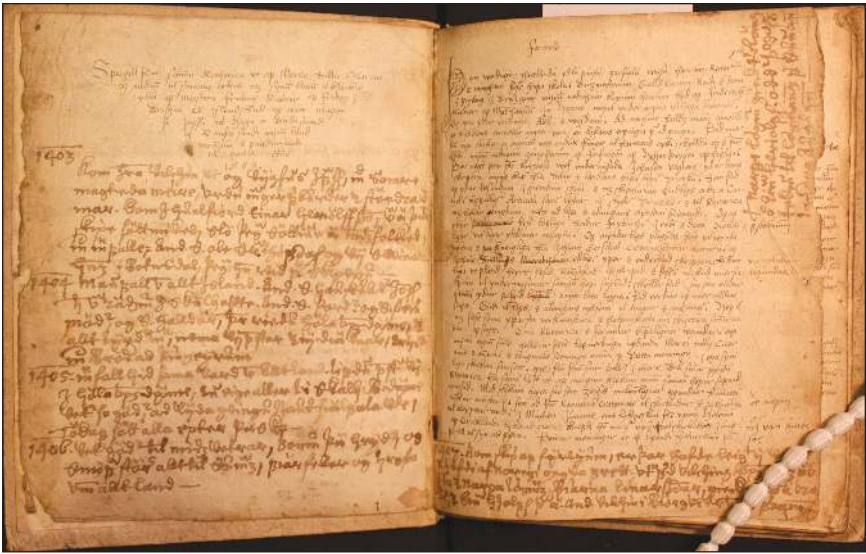


FIGURE 1. Copenhagen, Arnarnagænan Institute, AM 702 4to, fols. 1v–1 bis r. The annalistic notes on 1v and the margins of 1 bis r are later additions. © the author, with friendly permission of the Arnarnagænan Institute.

law text proper from the register. The third oldest manuscript is Thott 57 8vo, written around 1575. It contains four theological texts in Latin, also on 247 leaves, as well as two title pages for the first two of the four texts.³³ According to the information on the second title page (fol. 79r), the manuscript was written for the Latin school in Skálholt. Copenhagen, Arnarnagænan Institute, AM 702 4to (1589; fig. 1), and Trinity College Dublin, MS 1029 (former L.4.4, ca. 1590), were both written by Magnús Jónsson *prúði* (the Polite, 1530–1591) and contain Icelandic translations of the German *Spiegel der waren Rhetoric* (*Mirror of the True Rhetoric*) by Friedrich Riederer, which was first printed in 1493 in Freiburg im Breisgau.³⁴

33 Kålund, *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter*, 359.

34 For AM 702 4to, see Kålund, *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2:119. For MS 1029, see Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., “Typewritten Catalogue,” 59–60.

Joachim Knappe and Stefanie Luppold, introduction to Friedrich Riederer, *Spiegel der wahren Rhetorik* (1493), ed. Joachim Knappe and Stefanie Luppold (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), xi.

Magnús Jónsson the Polite was a member of the Law Council and son-in-law of the aforementioned Eggert Hannesson; he presumably studied in Germany and was a talented poet.³⁵ He translated the *Mirror* himself, most likely with the aim of presenting it to a broader Icelandic audience.³⁶ The title pages of both AM 702 4to and MS 1029 are on the verso side, creating a visual unit of title page and textual beginning when the manuscript is opened. The sixth manuscript is SÁM, AM 68 8vo, and contains administrative and legal texts on 161 leaves. The title page refers only to the manuscript's first part, which contains information on Magnús Jónsson's taxes for the year 1590.³⁷ London, British Library, Add. MS 11088, which dates from the sixteenth century, contains legal texts on eighty-seven leaves but no information on when or by whom it was written.³⁸ A Bible verse is cited on the title page, a phenomenon adapted from books in Iceland in which verses are used instead of printer's devices, presumably as a means of edification and as an expression of the scribe's devotion.³⁹ The rest of the earliest manuscript title pages are used for purposes similar to those of the earliest printed title pages, too: to divide text and meta-text and to make the identification of the contents easier and faster for the reader.⁴⁰

The earliest manuscripts with title pages are all connected with highly learned men from the upper echelons of society who surely were familiar with

35 Ólason, Guðnason, and Kristjánsson, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 3:431.

36 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque: Poetic Art and Erudition in the Works of Hallgrímur Pétursson*, trans. Andrew Wawn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 2014), 89.

37 Kålund, *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2:373–74.

38 Anon., ed., “Skrá um íslenzk handrit í British Museum,” n.p.

39 Silvia Hufnagel, “Iceland’s Lack of Printer’s Devices: Filling a Functional and Spatial Void in Printed Books during the Sixteenth Century,” in *Typographorum emblemata: The Printer’s Mark in the Context of Early Modern Culture*, ed. Anja Wolkenhauer and Bernhard F. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 255–64.

40 More detailed analyses and descriptions with photographs are found in Silvia Hufnagel, “Projektbericht ‘Alt und neu’: Isländische Handschriften, Bücher und die Gesellschaft des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts,” in *Quelle und Deutung III: Beiträge der Tagung Quelle und Deutung III am 25. November 2015*, ed. Balázs Sára (Budapest: Eötvös-József-Collegium, 2016), 111–38. Descriptions and digital images of many manuscripts from SÁM and NULI can be found at <https://www.handrit.is>.

title pages in books, proving that the development of Icelandic manuscript title pages was a “top-down” phenomenon. It is furthermore striking that the Westfjords and the South played such an important role in this regard. Considering that the sole printing press was located in the North, we might expect manuscripts with title pages to have been produced there, but instead we find Skálholt and the royal farms at Bessastaðir in the South as the predominant places of production. This is perhaps a sign of the innovative powers of the South, where the Reformation took place a decade earlier than in the North.⁴¹ The important role played by the Westfjords in Icelandic manuscript production is well known among scholars, but more so with respect to the seventeenth century, making the region’s earlier importance particularly noteworthy.⁴²

A statistical analysis of genre among manuscripts with title pages argues compellingly for connections to printing (table 2). These numbers show that considerably more nonliterary manuscripts have a title page than do literary ones. Bearing in mind that, prior to the nineteenth century, the printing press in Iceland issued nonliterary texts almost exclusively, and in particular texts for religious edification, we can corroborate our conclusions about the printing press’s influence upon title pages in manuscripts. Such findings are further supported when we analyze the manuscripts of a textual genre that were transmitted in both print and handwriting—metrical psalms, or hymns—and compare them to manuscripts of a textual genre that did not exist in print—sagas.

Both hymns and sagas had a broad general audience and a tradition of aural reception. Sagas were read aloud to household members during the *kvöldvaka* (lit. evening wake) to keep people entertained and awake during

41 The southern diocese of Skálholt officially accepted the Reformation in 1541 with the signing of King Christian III’s Church Ordinance, while the northern diocese of Hólar did so ten years later; Jón Þórarinnsson, *Íslensk tónlistarsaga 1000–1800* ([Reykjavík]: Tónlistarsafn Íslands, 2012), ix.

42 Peter Springborg, “Nyt og gammelt fra Snæfjallaströnd: Bidrag til beskrivelse af den literære aktivitet på Vestfjordene i 1. halvdel af det 17. århundrede,” in *Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar 30. júní 1969*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson et al. (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1969), 288–327; Peter Springborg, “Antiqvæ historiae lepores,” *Garðar* 8 (1977): 53–89.

TABLE 2. Manuscripts with title pages according to textual genre.

<i>Textual genre</i>	<i>All MSS</i>	<i>MSS with title pages</i>	<i>Percentage of MSS with title pages</i>
Literature	943	63	ca. 7%
Prose literature, incl. sagas	630	28	ca. 4%
Poetry, incl. hymns	313	35	ca. 12%
Nonliterary texts	1,030	178	ca. 17%
Jurisprudence	493	57	ca. 12%
Theology/Religion/ Edification	177	50	ca. 28%
History	146	13	ca. 9%
Administration	58	13	ca. 22%
Computistics	57	22	ca. 39%
Other nonliterary texts	99	23	ca. 22%
No information	13	–	–
Total	1,986	241	ca. 12%

their household chores, such as wool spinning or knitting.⁴³ Hymns were sung during church services and at the beginning and end of the private devotions of families and households, which followed the *kvöldvaka*.⁴⁴ Manuscripts containing hymns and sagas comprise more than a quarter of all extant Icelandic manuscripts of this period. An analysis of title pages in hymn and saga manuscripts therefore offers a more general insight into Icelandic culture than, say, legal or medical manuscripts that were relevant only to a small, professional group. But while hymnals were available in print, too, saga manuscripts were almost exclusively available in manuscript form. The earliest Icelandic sagas that were printed were the legendary

43 Matthew Driscoll, *The Unwashed Children of Eve: The Production, Dissemination and Reception of Popular Literature in Post-Reformation Iceland* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik, 1997), 38–46.

44 Þórarinnsson, *Íslensk tónlistarsaga*, 299.

sagas *Gautreks saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, printed in Sweden in 1664; eight more legendary sagas were printed in Sweden prior to 1700.⁴⁵ A compendium of historical works, including texts that we would today classify as sagas, such as *Grænlands saga* (the saga of Greenland), was printed in Iceland in 1688, and *Ólaf's saga Tryggvasonar*, the saga of the tenth-century Norwegian king Ólafur Tryggvason, was printed in 1689.⁴⁶ However, these editions exerted very little influence over the Icelandic manuscript tradition.⁴⁷ Affordable, printed copies of sagas were not available to Icelanders until the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Thus, most Icelanders had to employ manuscripts to read or listen to sagas.

Title Pages in Hymn Manuscripts

The English word *psalm*—like the German *Psalm* and Icelandic *sálmur*—derives from the Greek word *psalmos*, connoting a song accompanied by a plucked instrument.⁴⁹ Strictly speaking, metrical psalms are defined as “paraphrases of the biblical psalms in verse translation, often designed for singing to tunes of a simple popular type.”⁵⁰ In the present analysis, I have

45 Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century*, 28–29; Matthew James Driscoll, “Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda: The Stories That Wouldn't Die,” in *Fornaldarsagornas struktur och ideologi: Handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala, 31.8.–2.9.2001*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, and Agneta Ney (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2003), 257–67 at 259–60.

46 Jónsson, *Fjögur hundruð ára saga*, 52–54; Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century*, 82–83.

47 Driscoll, “Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda,” 260–61; Steingrímur Jónsson, “The Handwritten Book in Iceland After the Invention of Printing: Why Not Printed?,” *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 73 (1998): 17–23 at 23.

48 Ólafsson, “Sagas in Handwritten and Printed Books.”

49 Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5; Inka Bach and Helmut Galle, *Deutsche Psalmdichtung vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer lyrischen Gattung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 19.

50 Nicholas Temperley, Howard Slenk, Jan R. Luth, Margaret Munck, John M. Barkley, and R. Tosh, “Psalms, Metrical,” Grove Music Online, updated 16 October 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22479> (accessed 1 September 2019).

included Christian hymns based on biblical texts other than the psalms, and for the sake of easier reading, I have used the more common term *hymns* to refer to them. While the tradition of hymns extends back to Apollinaris in the fourth century CE and continued through the Middle Ages, the Reformation instigated an enormous increase in hymn composition.⁵¹ In Martin Luther's (1483–1546) view, hymns served to proclaim God's word and ought therefore to be simple, easily understandable, and easily memorable, so that non-learned members of the congregation might also understand and memorize them with ease.⁵² Thus, Luther composed hymns to be sung with well-known melodies of popular folk songs and substituted choral with congregational singing.⁵³ His hymns were mostly printed as broadsheets and distributed by tradesmen, which suggests that they were used in private devotion rather than in church.⁵⁴ In the Calvinist Church, hymn singing became immensely popular and spread from Francophone Switzerland to the Low Countries, Great Britain, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia.⁵⁵ Accordingly, hymns were an international phenomenon, and they were a particularly prolific textual genre in Protestant Iceland, where they were closely connected to household private devotion that began and ended with the singing of hymns.⁵⁶ Iceland's first hymn book or hymnal was printed in 1589, followed by a gradual in 1594. Both were published by Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, who used foreign, particularly German, hymn books as a model.⁵⁷ His hymn book was reprinted several times, and more hymns were printed in numerous other books.

51 Temperley et al., "Psalms, Metrical," n.p.

52 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmdichtung*, 90.

53 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmdichtung*, 59; Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through Centuries*, vol. 1 (Chichester: Blackwell-Wilby, 2012), 140.

54 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmdichtung*, 91; Temperley et al., "Psalms, Metrical," n.p.

55 Temperley et al., "Psalms, Metrical," n.p.

56 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, "Barokken í íslensk salmediktning," *Hymnologi* 35 (2006): 71–78; Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 330; Þórarinnsson, *Íslensk tónlistarsaga*, 299.

57 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Upptök sálma og sálmalaga í lútherskum sið á Íslandi*, special issue of *Árbók Háskóla Íslands* (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1924). A hymn book by Gísli Jónsson was

The influence of books on manuscripts can be gleaned by comparing the number of hymn manuscripts with and without title pages. Today, there are 98 hymn manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries extant, 31 of which contain one or more title pages.⁵⁸ I count these as literature, or more precisely as poetry. If we were to consider these as nonliterary genres (theology/religion/edification), the ratio would change considerably. Literature would drop to 31 out of 845 manuscripts (4 percent) and poetry would drop to 5 out of 215 (ca. 3 percent), whereas nonliterary texts would rise to 209 out of 1,128 manuscripts (ca. 19 percent) and theology/religion/edification would rise to 81 out of 274 (ca. 30 percent), which would be the second-highest ratio of all nonliterary manuscripts, surpassed only by computistic manuscripts, and the highest absolute number of title pages within nonliterary manuscripts.

The *Passion Hymns* (Icel. *Passíusálmar*) by the Rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–1674) are arguably the most popular and well-known hymns in Iceland. They have been printed more than eighty times since their first edition in 1666 and are still broadcast on the national radio station RÚV during Lent.⁵⁹ Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland (Icel. *Landsbókasafn Íslands–Háskólabókasafn*, henceforth NULI), JS 337 4to (fig. 2), is an autograph that Pétursson completed in 1659 and sent to Ragnheiður Brynjólfsdóttir, daughter of his supporter Brynjólfur Sveinsson, bishop of the southern diocese of Skálholt.⁶⁰

published in Icelandic in Copenhagen in 1558; Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Sixteenth Century*, 11.

58 I have determined which manuscripts contain such hymns or metrical psalms based on information from catalogue entries, which might not conform to the narrow definition cited above.

59 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Prentlist og Passíusálmar: Printing and the Passion Hymns,” trans. Margaret Cormack, <https://landsbokasafn.is/uploads/syningarskrar/Passiusalmar.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2018).

60 Páll Eggert Ólason, “Ferill Passíusálmahandrits sira Hallgríms Péturssonar,” *Skírnir* 101 (1927): 183–94 at 188–89. Digital images are available at <https://www.handrit.is>.

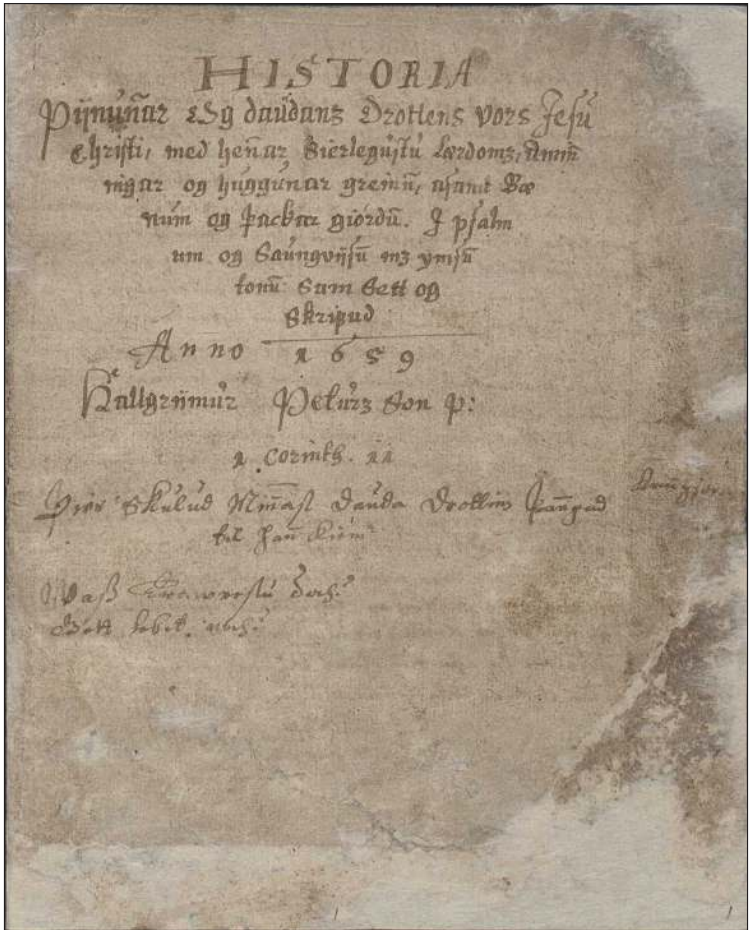


FIGURE 2. NULI, JS 337 4to, fol. 1r. © NULI, with friendly permission.

The title page bears the following text:

HISTORIA
Pijnunnar Og daudanz Drottens Vors Jesu
Christi, med hennar Sierlegustu Lærdomz, Aminn
ingar og huggunar greinum, asamt Bæ
num og þackar giórdum. J psalm

um og Saungvijs^{um} með yms^{um}
tonum Sam Sett og
Skrifud
Anno 1659
Hallgriimur Peturz Son prestur⁶¹

([THE] STORY of the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, with its most special knowledge, admonition, and consolation, as well as prayers and thanksgivings. Composed and written as hymns and songs with various melodies in the year 1659. Hallgrímur Pétursson, pastor.)

The text on the title page is placed on the top half of the page and is written with half-diamond indentation, with the year of production and the name of the author included below. The first line, “HISTORIA” (History or Story), is written in Antiqua-style capitals, while the rest is in Textura (*Fraktur*), which is in line with the Icelandic tradition of printing and writing Latin in Antiqua and the vernacular in Textura.⁶² The text is written in graded scripts, although the differences are barely visible apart for the first line. The layout and script visually emphasize the main title, the year of production, and the name of the author. The title page is unusually plain and simple, bearing a strong resemblance to the earliest title pages, which are similarly plain and often feature text in half-diamond indentation in the top half of the page, such as AM 702 4to (see fig. 1). The question arises as to why Pétursson chose to create such an atypical title page for his autograph manuscript. As a pastor with access to printed material, Pétursson must have been aware of the typical layout of hymn-book title pages. He

61 JS 337 4to, fol. 1r.

62 The change from black letter to Antiqua for printing vernacular texts was made in Iceland between 1835 and 1851. Loftur Guttormsson, “Fra fraktur til antikva: Vidnesbyrd fra 1800-tallet Island,” in *Vernacular Literacies: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Ann-Catrin Edlund, Lars-Erik Edlund, and Susanne Haugen (Umeå: Umeå University and Royal Skyttean Society, 2014), 165–79.

was familiar with current literary tastes, as becomes apparent from the form and content of his *Passion Hymns*: they can be interpreted according to the fourfold Christian exegesis of literal-historical, allegorical, moral, and anagogical meaning; they show influence from German and Danish Passion hymns; they contain many rhetorical techniques found in classical and baroque rhetoric, such as *gradatio* and *similitudo*; and they feature typical baroque literary elements more prominently than any other Icelandic Passion hymns.⁶³ The reasons for this specific title page design might thus be found in the author's peculiar biography.⁶⁴

Hallgrímur Pétursson was born in 1614 in Gröf near the northern episcopal see of Hólar, where he moved as a young man, owing to the fact that Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson was his cousin once removed. Pétursson went abroad early, either to Denmark or to Germany, and became apprenticed to a blacksmith around 1630. It was likely two years later that he began his formal education at a Latin school in Copenhagen, presumably arranged by the aforementioned Brynjólfur Sveinsson, bishop of Skálholt. Pétursson, however, abandoned his education and the prospect of receiving an official position in Iceland upon meeting Guðríður Símonardóttir (1598–1682). He returned with her to Iceland in 1637, and the two married shortly thereafter. The couple faced hard times in Iceland, not least due to Símonardóttir's own biography. She had been captured and abducted, to be sold on a slave market in Algiers, but was released years later. Their first child was born out of wedlock, which led to a fine. Despite all this, Pétursson was ordained as pastor by Bishop Sveinsson around 1644. His and Símonardóttir's first years were characterized by financial and social hardships; they lost several children, their income was modest, and society was hostile to them. Soon, however, the pastor proved himself worthy of the support of his powerful friends and received a sought-after parsonage at Saurbær on Hvalfjarðarströnd in 1650/51. It was there that he composed his most famous literary works, among them the *Passion Hymns*. At the time “learning was

63 Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 387–446.

64 This biographical information is drawn from Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 194–219.

considered a prerequisite for any ambitious poet, as Pétursson appears to have recognized.”⁶⁵ We can therefore assume that he planned the layout for his title page in JS 337 4to carefully, as a clear testament to his erudition, despite having no formal education. In this sense he used his title page as a form of self-advertisement. When printed title pages were used to advertise the author or book, this advertisement was typically done by third parties, in contrast to Pétursson’s title page. His is more similar to the printed title pages used as advertisements of publishers or booksellers who, like Pétursson, produced the advertising title pages themselves. These commercial groups would have had slightly different intentions than Pétursson, though, for they aimed to increase sales, while Pétursson’s self-promotion efforts aimed to increase his social standing or perhaps to remind officials that he was a well-suited candidate for future positions. This argument of self-advertisement is further supported by the fact that the Bible verse on the title page is a later addition. It seems that Pétursson later conceded to the tradition of filling blank space on title pages with Bible verses, thereby expressing his personal devotion.⁶⁶

The title page of the *Passion Hymns*’ first print edition (fig. 3) is in stark contrast to Pétursson’s title page in JS 337 4to. Printed in Hólar in 1666—during the author’s lifetime—it is a typical example of the conventional title pages found in seventeenth-century Icelandic books for religious edification.⁶⁷

This octavo-format book, extending over 120 pages, contains two sets of *Passion hymns*, the first one by the Rev. Guðmundur Erlendsson (1595–1670) and the second one by Pétursson. The text on the title page is divided into four paragraphs. The first paragraph refers to Erlendsson’s hymns, the second to Pétursson’s; the third contains a Bible verse, and the fourth the imprint. The text is set in black letters in graded typography. The first two paragraphs are set in half-diamond indentation, the third is nearly aligned, and the fourth is centered. The second line, “Pijnunnar og” (*Passion and*),

65 Eggertsdóttir, *Icelandic Baroque*, 38.

66 Hufnagel, “Iceland’s Lack of Printer’s Devices.”

67 Digital images are available at <https://www.baekur.is>.

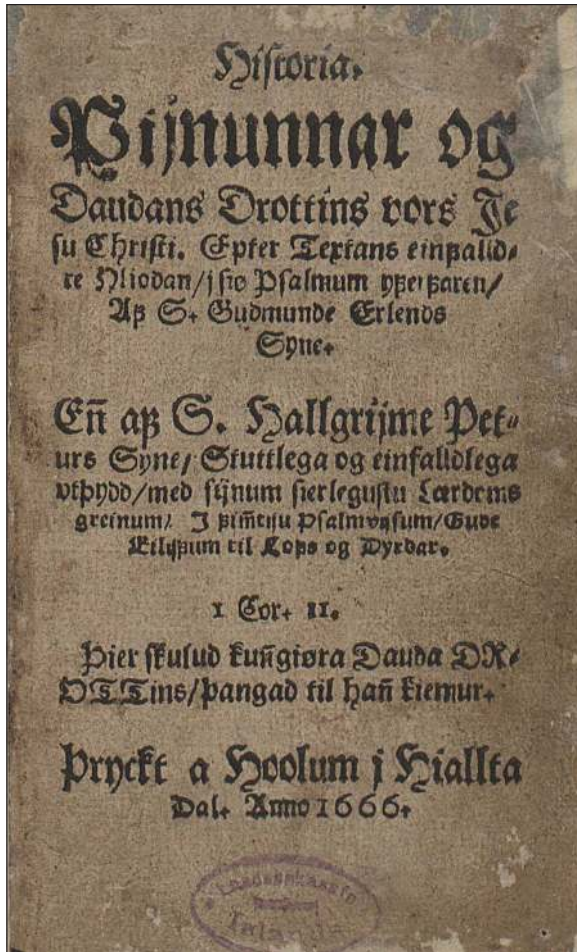


FIGURE 3. *Historia Pijnunnar og Daudans Drottins vors* (Hólar, 1666). © NULI, with friendly permission.

is the largest of all, as was common at the time. The larger font size makes that part of the title, the name of the second author, and the imprint stand out as the most important elements. The text agrees with very little of the text in Pétursson's autograph; only the title, *The Story of the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ*, is the same, as well as "sierlegustu lærdómsgreinum" (most special knowledge) and the Bible verse. JS 337 4to was certainly not the exemplar of the printed edition, and titles were in

general not as fixed and stable as they are now, which may account for the differences.⁶⁸ However, the erudition and the poetic prowess of Pétursson are not expressed in the printed title page. Instead, the text, layout, and typography of the printed title page put Pétursson's *Passion Hymns* out of the sphere of learned poetry and into the tradition of printed Icelandic post-Reformation religious and edifying texts. While advertisement was unnecessary for Icelandic imprints due to the quasi-monopoly of the Church's printing office, the citation of a Bible verse serves as an expression of religious devotion, and the title page as an identification of the book's contents. The printed title page is therefore in line with the identifying function of continental printed title pages.

NULI, Lbs 3006 8vo (see fig. 4) contains Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passion Hymns*, too. The manuscript was written by Sigurður Jónsson *lögréttumaður* (member of the Law Council, 1633–1717) at Saurbær á Kjalarnesi in southern Iceland between 1699 and 1701 and contains hymns on 220 pages.⁶⁹ It has two title pages; however, we can assume that it originally contained another title page at the beginning, which is now lost. The title page referring to Pétursson's hymns is on fol. 58r (fig. 4); it repeats the title page from the 1666 print edition verbatim, apart from the imprint which the scribe changed to "Skrifad j Saurbæ a Kjalarnese af Sigurde Jonssyne Anno Saulutis [*sic*] 1699" (Written in Saurbær on Kjalarnes by Sigurður Jónsson Anno Salutis 1699).⁷⁰ Even the layout is copied. Several Icelandic manuscript title pages are copied from books, but only a few of them cite their printed exemplar directly, and Jónsson followed this tradition of ignoring the medium of his exemplar.⁷¹ However, he also clearly followed the conventions of content

68 Pétursson sent autograph copies of his *Passion Hymns* to the wives and daughters of some of his supporters, and the exemplar of the printed edition must have been very similar to one of these. Ólason, "Ferill Passíusálmahandrits," 187–89; Páll Eggert Ólason, "Athuganir um Passíusálmahandrit," *Skírnir* 113 (1939): 176–79 at 177, 179.

69 Lárus H. Blöndal, ed., *Handritasafn Landsbókasafnsins: II. Aukabindi* (Reykjavík: Félagsprentsmiðjun, 1959), 122–23.

70 Lbs 3006 8vo, fol. 58r.

71 Silvia Hufnagel, "Projektbericht 'Alt und neu': Titelseiten von isländischen Psalmliedhandschriften," in *Quelle und Deutung IV: Beiträge der Tagung Quelle und Deutung IV am 23. November 2016*, ed. Balázs Sára (Budapest: Eötvös-József-Collegium, 2018), 51–87 at 64–67.

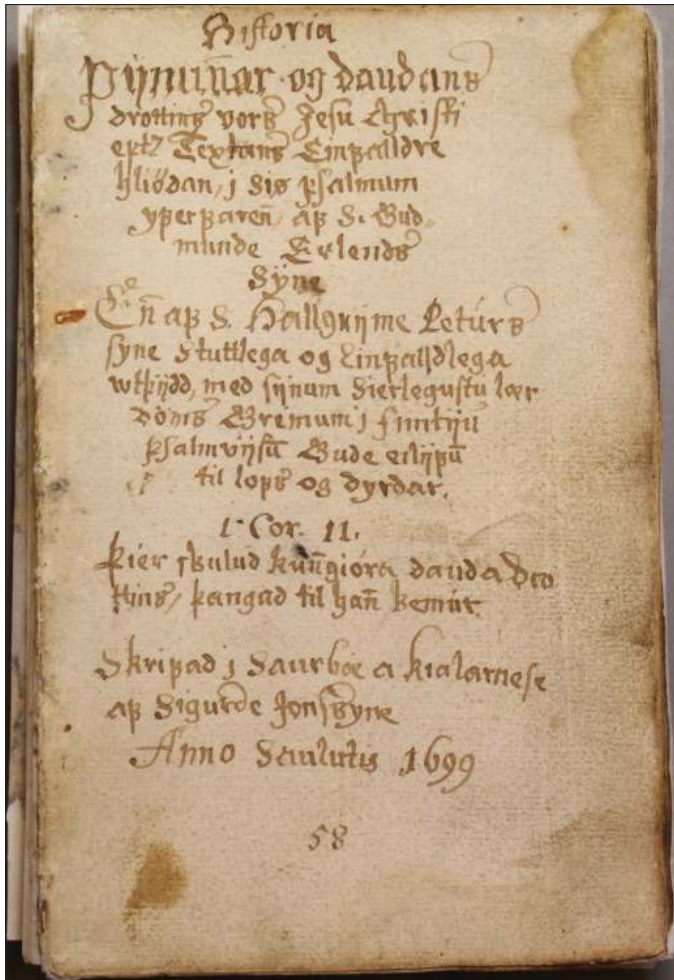


FIGURE 4. NULI, Lbs 3006 8vo, fol. 58r. © the author, with friendly permission of NULI.

and layout for printed title pages of religious works, associating in this instance his copy of the *Passion Hymns* with the 1666 imprint.

NULI, ÍBR 133 8vo (fig. 5) contains hymns on 168 leaves by an anonymous scribe, but is defective at the end.⁷² It begins with Hallgrímur

72 Páll Eggert Ólason, ed., *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1918–37), 3:251. Digital images are available at <https://www.handrit.is>.

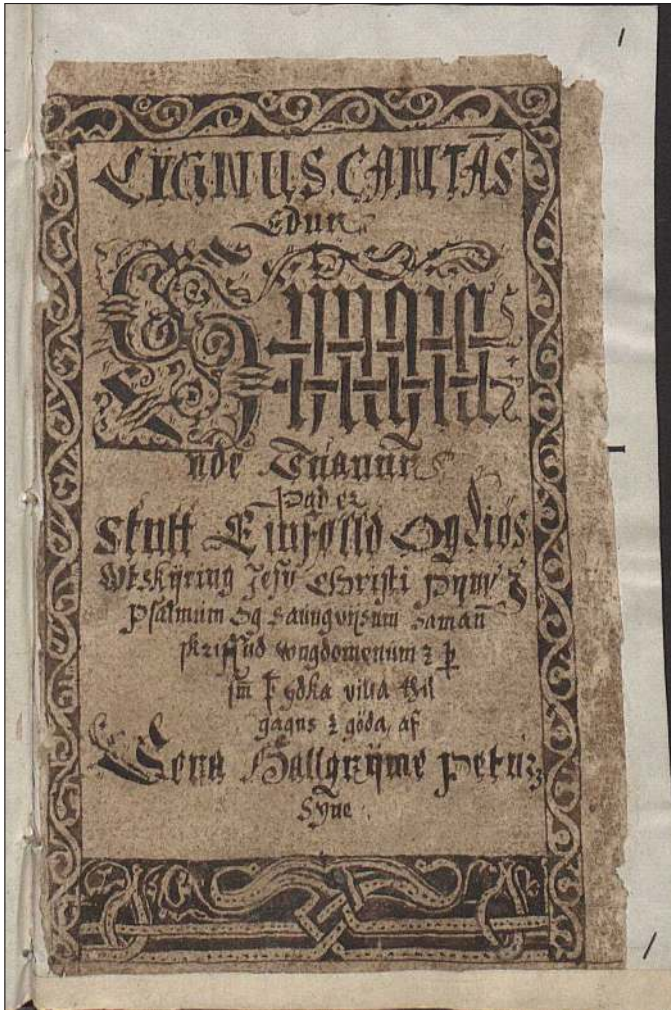


FIGURE 5. NULI, ÍBR 133 8vo, fol. 1r. © NULI, with friendly permission.

Pétursson's *Passion Hymns* on folios 1r–88v. This part was finished in 1669, during the poet's lifetime. It is a lavishly decorated manuscript, with large pen-flourished initials at the beginning of each hymn and titles written in display script. The title page is framed, which is rather rare for hymnal title pages. The bottom part of the border is very similar to the frame first encountered in the *Barnapredikaner* (*Sermons for Children*) by Veit Dietrich,

printed in Hólar in 1603, and in various subsequent Icelandic books. Several script types and sizes are used; the first line, which is in Latin, is written in Antiqua capitals, the third line is written in a display script with interlaced letters, and the rest is written in Textualis of various sizes. The first letter of the third line is a large cadel with pen flourishes and three clasp motifs. Some letters sport pen flourishes or other simple forms of decoration. The lower text is centered and in half-diamond indentation. The lines that contain the title, a short description of the text, and the name of the author—elements that the modern reader would deem most important—are written in the largest letters and thereby demand the attention of the reader first.

The title page reads:

CYGNUS CANTANS
 edur
 SYNGIA
 nde Suanur
 Þad er
 stutt Einfølld Og Liös
 Vtskijring Jesu CHristi Pynv J
 Psalmum Og saungvijsum samann
 skriffud wngdomenum og þeim
 sem þad ydka vilia thil
 gagns og göda, af
 Sera Hallgrijme Peturz
 Syne⁷³

(CYGNUS CANTANS or singing swan. This is a short, simple and clear commentary of the Passion of Jesus Christ in hymns and songs composed for the youth and those who wish to practice them for their gain and their good by the Rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson)

73 ÍBR 133 8vo, fol. 1r.

This text features several elements common to hymnal title pages, such as alliteration, with which ÍBR 133 8vo starts: *Syngjandi svanur* (Singing swan). Across these title pages, the book's function is often mentioned, particularly with the phrase *til gagns og góða* (for the gain and the good), likewise present in ÍBR 133 8vo. The hope of spiritual gain is often combined with wordly entertainment—for example, with *til gagns og gamans* (for gain and amusement)—in accordance to the duality of *prodesse et delectare*. This duality inherited from Antiquity and the Middle Ages was still an important aspect of baroque hymn poetry on the continent.⁷⁴ It was important in Icelandic baroque poetry, too. The target group is usually rather vaguely addressed—for example, with *þeir sem það iðka vilja* (those who wish to practice them [hymns]). Authors and poets are hardly ever mentioned on title pages, presumably because hymn manuscripts are private and individual works, often tailor-made for a specific person, and because they are usually anthologies in small formats that do not have the space to list numerous poets.⁷⁵ Only in a few cases are the authors mentioned—for example, when anthologies of a single poet's works, such as Pétursson's *Passion Hymns*, are copied. The acoustic rendering of hymns, recited, read aloud, and sung, was much more important than the visual rendering prominent on the European continent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷⁶ The semantic field of music and singing is frequently touched upon in Iceland, as in the title *Singing Swan*. Bible verses cited on hymnal title pages also often refer to music, as in Psalms 104:33: "Jeg vil lof sijngia Drottne Myna lyfdaga og minn Gud lofa æ so leinge sem eg er" (I will sing praise of my Lord all my life and praise my God as long as I am).⁷⁷ The numerous references to music confirm that the medium of performance was much more important than the textual medium of the exemplar. Even

74 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmdichtung*, 153.

75 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, "Undersøgelse af den kulturelle og sociale rolle efterreformatoriske islandske håndskrifter med religiøs og verdslig poesi har spillet," *Hymnologi* 42 (2013): 164–73 at 168. Approximately three-quarters of all hymnal title pages are in octavo or smaller formats; Hufnagel, "Projektbericht 'Alt und neu': Titelseiten," 61.

76 Gillingham, *Psalms Through Centuries*, 167.

77 NULI, JS 232 4to, fol. 1r.

though hymnal title pages are by their very existence proof of the influence of print on the handwritten medium, the content and often the layout do not betray this influence. Although the title page of ÍBR 133 8vo does not contain a Bible verse expressing the scribe's devotion nor his wish to instill such devotion among readers and listeners, it is, like its printed counterparts, an advertisement for the author and for the manuscript's content.

Title Pages in Saga Manuscripts

In comparison to hymn manuscripts, many fewer saga manuscripts have a title page. In fact, sagas serve as an example of how little connection there was between printed and handwritten media in Icelandic prose literature. Sagas are long prose narratives that were composed in the Middle Ages. There are several subgroups, based on differences in the time and place of the narrated action, the ancestry and social status of the hero(es), and the temporal distance between saga author or compiler and the events described. The subgroup best known today consists of Icelandic family sagas, such as the famous *Njáls saga*, which deals with feuds and conflicts in early medieval Iceland. They, as well as legendary sagas, were particularly popular in post-Reformation Iceland. The latter deal with bridal quests and supernatural beings or common Nordic-Germanic subject matter such as *Völsunga saga*, which shares content with the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*. Kings' sagas deal with the history of Scandinavian kings. Chivalric sagas and sagas on saints, Icelandic bishops, contemporary conflicts, and European antiquity are examples of other saga genres that appear in manuscript form.⁷⁸

Legendary sagas and kings' sagas were used as historical sources in Danish-Swedish historiography. After the dissolution of the Kalmar Union in 1523, Denmark and Sweden tried to present their pasts as equal in

78 For concise introductions to the saga tradition see: *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), and *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdóttir (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020).

magnificence to those of other European nations.⁷⁹ Danish and Swedish scholars believed that they would find information on the history of their respective countries in Old Norse–Icelandic sources.⁸⁰ Legendary sagas were of particular interest, as they were set mostly in pre-Christian mainland Scandinavia, and many saga heroes were Scandinavian princes. Icelanders were furthermore known as the chroniclers of the North in the Middle Ages, and Saxo had used Icelandic sagas as source material for his *Gesta Danorum* as early as the late twelfth century.⁸¹ Several scribes within and outside of Iceland, such as Jón Eggertsson (1643–1689), catered to the needs of Danish and Swedish scholars.⁸² And indeed, more than two hundred manuscripts (approximately one-tenth of all manuscripts here considered), thirty-seven of which bear title pages, are today preserved in the national and royal libraries in Copenhagen and Stockholm. Such scholarly engagement also led to the production of the oldest printed sagas (see above). In Iceland, printed sagas first became available more broadly through Carl Christian Rafn’s three-volume legendary saga edition *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda* (Copenhagen, 1829–30). Until then, and even later, Icelanders had to resort to handwritten copies.⁸³ Today there are 630 extant nonscholarly

79 Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, “The Literary Feud Between Denmark and Sweden in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Development of Danish Historical Writing,” in *Renaissance Culture in Context: Theory and Practice*, ed. Jean R. Brink and William F. Gentrup (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 114–20; E. C. Werlauff, “Ole Worms Fortienester af det nordiske Oldstudium,” *Nordisk tidskrift for Oldkyndighed* (1832): 283–368; Henrik Schück, *Kgl. Vitterhets Historie och antikvetets Akademien: Dess Förhistoria och Historia*, 6 vols. (Stockholm: n.p., 1932–33), 1:68–68, 1:123–45, 1:186–87, 2:5.

80 For example, Anna Wallete, *Sagens svenskar: Synen på vikingatiden och de isländska sagorna under 300 år* (Malmö: Sekel, 2004), 85–99; Sabine Blocher, *Altertumskunde und Sammlungswesen in Schweden von den Anfängen im Mittelalter bis zur Regierungszeit Gustavs II. Adolf* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1993), 135–220.

81 “Chronik” and “Historiographie,” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, ed. Robert Auty and Robert-Henri Bautier (Munich: Artemis, 1983–99), 2:1954–2028 at 1994, 5:45–54 at 52.

82 Regina Jucknies, *Der Horizont eines Schreibers: Jón Eggertsson (1643–1689) und seine Handschriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2009).

83 *SAGA þess Haloflega Herra OLAFS TRYGGVASONAR Noregs Kongs* (1689: Skálholt) is, as stated above, the only saga printed in Iceland during our timeframe. Only very few individuals had the connections to scholars abroad and the deep pockets necessary to secure printed editions.

saga manuscripts from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iceland, including a small number of manuscripts containing fables and chapbooks. This increased interest in Icelandic sagas might stem from the hope for financial gain from the production of manuscripts intended for purchase by Danish and Swedish scholars. Alternatively, perhaps said scholars' interests triggered a more general awareness of historiography in Iceland, and consequently an increase in manuscript production. But although Icelanders were familiar with books and title pages produced by hand and in print, as can be seen in the previous section on hymnal title pages, there are hardly any saga manuscripts with title pages.

Out of the 630 extant saga manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, only twenty-eight—fewer than one in twenty—have title pages. Evidently, it was not the mere existence of books and printed title pages alone that led to the creation of manuscript title pages. Generic conventions and individual choices must have played an important role, too.

In general, saga manuscripts with title pages are rather recent, with SÁM, AM 446 4to (between circa 1600 and 1640) and Stockholm, National Library of Sweden, Stock. papp. isl. 4to nr 16 (1654–59) being the oldest and the only to pre-date the oldest printed saga texts. Most of the other manuscripts with title pages are from the 1660s, 1680s, and 1690s. The title of the title page in AM 446 4to is a so-called incipit title; it reads “Hier Bijriar EijrBijggiu Edur Þorsnesinga Saugu” (Here begins Eyrbyggja or Þorsnesinga saga).⁸⁴ Its conciseness is, however, extraordinary, and only two other saga title pages are similarly short. SÁM, AM 217 a fol (seventeenth century) displays a title page that could best be described as a table of contents, since it first gives the short title “Saugubök lagmansens Herra Sigurdar Jöns sonar” (Sagabook of the lawspeaker Mr Sigurður Jónsson) and then lists the works that the manuscript contains.⁸⁵ NULI, Lbs 4613 4to only lists the title of its first item and states how the saga starts; as such, the title page is relevant only for the first part of the manuscript. Usually, however, saga title pages refer to the contents of the whole manuscript

84 AM 446 4to, fol. 1r.

85 AM 217 a fol, fol. 1a r.

miscellany. Additionally, almost all other title pages are much more verbose, and more decorated.

Most title pages are framed and, compared to hymnal title pages, rather lavishly decorated, often with interlaced ornaments and colored ink. Large and elaborately pen-flourished initials also appear frequently, and while there is usually only one pen-flourished initial on hymnal title pages, there are commonly several of them on saga title pages. The text is rather verbose, which must be seen in connection with the common large format, as more than half of the manuscripts are of folio format, with the rest being quarto. Alliteration, such as *fróðlegar fornmannasögur* (informative stories of the ancients), is a particularly common stylistic element. Other rhetorical elements are abundant in saga title pages, too, such as *accumulatio* and *gradatio*. The stories are usually written down for entertainment and merriment, often denoted with expressions such as *gaman* (pleasure, amusement). More educational benefits are commonly described as well, through adjectives such as *fróðligur* (informative). These notions of information and entertainment prove that the duality of *prodesse et delectare* was not only valid for hymn manuscripts, but also for sagas, today considered literature.

Nevertheless, there are several manuscripts that focus clearly on history. The abovementioned Lbs 4613 4to contains, apart from a saga on an English saint, a pseudo-historical work labeled as a “Chronika” (chronicle).⁸⁶ NULI, Lbs 3505 4to (1698) contains Icelandic family sagas, sagas of Icelandic bishops, and name registers. Its title page states that it is a “Fróðlig Sagna Bök Jnnehalldande Eptertecktaverdar Historiur Nockra Nafn=frægra Jslendskra Manna, huorier Fordumm tijd þessa lands Jnnbiggiarar Hafa uppteiknad” (Instructive saga book containing notable histories of some famous Icelanders that inhabitants of this country recorded in the past) and that it was copied “epter þeim ordriettustu gómlu Bökum, er menn meina fillstar og Sannferdugastar vera” (from the most correct, old books that men believe to be the most comprehensive and trustworthy).⁸⁷ SÁM, AM 407 4to (ca. 1700) contains sagas of bishops, too, as well as annals and other historical

⁸⁶ Lbs 4613 4to, fol. 1r.

⁸⁷ Lbs 3505 4to, fol. 1r.

matter. The scribe labeled the manuscript as annals on the title page and thus clearly perceived its content as historical source material. While scholars agree that the bishops' and family sagas were to some degree historical accounts, the status of legendary sagas is different, as today these are considered pure fiction. Connections between history and legendary sagas may thus come as a surprise, but they give valuable insight into earlier perceptions of genre. NULI, Lbs 157 4to and JS 1 fol both contain *Hversu Noregur byggðist*, a legendary saga on the origins of Norway, as well annalistic material and *Crymogæa*, a highly learned work on the history of Iceland by Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648). The title page of Lbs 157 4to labels the manuscript as “Bækur ANNALAR FRA Heimsins Vpphæfe Og tilil [sic] þessu Tijma Anno 16<66>” (Annalistic books from the origin of the world until this year anno 16<66>).⁸⁸ In contrast to other saga title pages, it is visually plain, its only form of decoration of any sort being an ink-drawn, single-line frame and a small number of lombards. The title page of JS 1 fol, written presumably in or shortly after 1696, is more in line with the rest of the saga title pages in terms of decoration, as it contains an elaborate double frame with a colored interlace ornament and white vine scrolls. But the title page, written partly in red ink, labels the manuscript as “PANDECTA ANNALIUM Þat er Eirn frodleiksrykur Annala fiesioodur” (Pandecta annalium: This is a treasure trove of annals rich in knowledge) compiled for “Froodleiks Athuga ok Eptertekta” (information, heed, and attention).⁸⁹ These two title pages are perhaps a testament to influence from Danish and Swedish historiographers and thus of the international dimensions of Icelandic manuscript production. By explicitly labeling these two manuscripts as annalistic material and by placing the legendary saga alongside annals and *Crymogæa*, it becomes clear that the saga was considered a historical source in these specific manuscript contexts. Thus, the two title pages give us conclusive evidence that *Hversu Noregur byggðist* was not thought to belong to our analytical category of legendary sagas.⁹⁰ It bears no

⁸⁸ Lbs 157 4to, fol. 1r.

⁸⁹ JS 1 fol, fol. 1r.

⁹⁰ Analytical categories are modern scholarly constructions intended to help organize, categorize, and analyze texts, whereas ethnic genres are expressions of textual communications

resemblance to other legendary sagas, in fact; there are no magic creatures other than berserks, there are no quests, and there is no real plot, only a list of rulers and their offspring with their respective places of settlement, which makes its very classification as a saga questionable. In these two cases, the title pages function not only to identify the manuscript content, but also to allow for the generic identification of the texts. An analysis of the title pages allows the modern reader to place the text into a broader category of historiography. The classification of *Hversu Noregur byggðist* within the modern analytical categories of legendary saga and of literature, is therefore highly questionable, and arguments based on manuscript and title page evidence strongly support a reconsideration of the text's current categorization, towards one based more closely on the perceptions of early modern Icelandic readers.

In several instances, the patron of a saga manuscript is acknowledged on the title page, and in each of these cases the patron was one and the same: Magnús Jónsson *digri* (the Stout, 1637–1702), from Vigur in the Westfjords. Thirteen, or nearly half, of the saga manuscripts with title pages were written or commissioned by him: the aforementioned, second-oldest saga manuscript with a title page, Stock. papp. isl. 4to nr 16, as well as SÁM, AM 426 fol; NULI, Lbs 235 fol, Lbs 3505 4to, JS 12 fol, JS 43 4to, and ÍBR 5 fol; Copenhagen, Royal Danish Library, NKS 2405 fol; and London, British Library, Add. MSS 4865, 4868, 4869, 4857, and 4859.⁹¹ This group

bound to a certain place, time, culture, and society. Dan Ben-Amos, "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," *Genre* 2 (1969): 275–301. Legendary and chivalric sagas are often found together in Icelandic manuscripts, and it can thus be argued that these two analytical categories composed at least to a certain extent one ethnic genre.

91 When Jónsson commissioned Stock. papp. isl. 4to nr 16, he was only sixteen years old; the title page is the most verbose title page by far and contains an abundance of alliterative doublets—presumably the scribe, with or without the order from the patron, strove to prove his or his patron's poetic prowess, perhaps even with the help of a poetic dictionary. NULI, JS 12 fol was perhaps written for another patron. Tereza Lansing, "Permissible Entertainment: The Post-Medieval Transmission of *fornaldarsaga* Manuscripts in Western Iceland," in *Mirrors of Virtue: Manuscript and Print in Late Pre-Modern Iceland*, ed. Margrét Eggertsdóttir and Matthew Driscoll (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2017), 320–62 at 330, 333. Short descriptions and digital images of this and other manuscripts from SÁM and NULI are available at <https://www.handrit.is>.

of manuscripts is an indication of the extraordinary role that Jónsson played within Icelandic manuscript production. He, as well as his parents and siblings, compiled, commissioned, and penned many other manuscripts as well.⁹² Jónsson came from one of the leading families of Iceland and was considered one of the wealthiest Icelanders of his time.⁹³ He was exceptionally learned, despite not graduating from school; he spoke several foreign languages and was a talented poet.⁹⁴

The title page of British Library, Add. MS 4857, written for Magnús Jónsson in 1669–70, is a typical example of such saga title pages. It reads:

Agiætar Historiur
Af
Jmsum kongum kongasonum og
Velbornum frægðar Mönnum
Vtann Landz, þeirra Hreyste Ve=
rkum og margfölldum ma=
nndöms Gjørningum Sem þe=
ir ä synum Dögum fr=
ømdu, Miøg skiemt=
elegar Ad lesa og
Heira, Ei Sydur
Nitlamlegar
Sier Göð dæ=
me af ad
draga.

92 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, “Vestfirskur ‘aðall.’ Mótun sjálfsmyndar í bókmenntum á 17. öld,” *Ársrit Sögufélags Ísfróinga* 43 (2003): 201–13; Hufnagel, “Projektbericht ‘Alt und neu’: Psalmliedhandschriften.”; Hufnagel, “Projektbericht ‘Alt und neu’: Titelseiten,” 63–64, 67–68, 80; Jóhann Gunnar Ólafsson, “Magnús Jónsson í Vigur,” *Skírnir* 130 (1965): 107–26; Lansing, “Permissible Entertainment”; Sheryl McDonald Werronen, “The Working Practices of Magnús Ketilsson: An Icelandic Scribe at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” *Scandinavian Studies* 92 (2020): 39–61.

93 Ólafsson, “Magnús Jónsson í Vigur,” 107–8, 113–15.

94 Ólafsson, “Magnús Jónsson í Vigur,” 107–9, 116–18.

Ad Nyu yfer siednar og
forbetradar Med stoorre Kostgiæf
ne af Erugøfigum Vysum og Vir=
duglegum Høfdings manne Ma=
gnuse Jonssyne ad Vigur
og Sydann ad Hanns forlæ=
ge Vppskrifadar.
Anno 1669⁹⁵

(Excellent stories of various kings, princes, and famous high-born men abroad, their valiant deeds, and manifold deeds of prowess that they did in their days; very amusing to read or listen to, not least useful for providing good examples. Again looked over and improved with great expense by the honourable, wise, and venerable nobleman Magnús Jónsson at Vigur and then copied with his means in the year 1669.)

The title page is framed with a negative border consisting of interlaced ornaments at the bottom, a rhombus pattern at the left-hand side, a step pattern at the top, and a white vine scroll at the right-hand side. A simple band of graphic symbols, reminiscent of ditto marks, is drawn between the second and third lines of the first paragraph. There are several lombards. The text is written in two paragraphs, both in half-diamond indentation. The first line of each paragraph is written in a particularly large *Fraktur*, and the whole first paragraph is seemingly written in graded letter size. The functions are listed as entertainment and education. We find several rhetorical elements, most often alliteration, as in “margföldum ma=nndöms Gjørningumm” (manyfold deeds of prowess). An example of *accumulatio* is “kongum, kongasonum og velbornum frægdar Mønnumm” (kings, princes, and famous high-born men); “Erugøfigum Vysum og Vir=duglegum” (honourable, wise and venerable) proves of *gradatio*.⁹⁶ The second paragraph

95 London, British Library, Add. MS 4857, fol. 1r.

96 London, British Library, Add. MS 4857, fol. 1r.

emphasizes the noble lineage of the manuscript patron, as well as the high costs of producing this manuscript. The medium of reception of the manuscript's texts is stated: "lesa og Heira" (read and listen to). There is a reference to a continuous and iterative process of manuscript production: Jónsson surveyed and improved the stories "Ad Nyu" (again). There is no mention of print, but at the very end of the title page we find a reference to the handwritten medium of this manuscript: "Vppskrifadar" (copied, written). A lack of reference to print can be expected, even if the title pages ultimately derive from print. It has been suggested that Magnús Jónsson modeled his title pages after German or Danish books, and there was a considerable library at Jónsson's family home.⁹⁷ Anders Sørensen Vedel's Danish book of ballads, for example, bears a title page with similar phrases and layout, including red ink, half-diamond indentation, and different font size and type.⁹⁸ It is, however, much shorter and less decorated than Jónsson's title pages, and furthermore there are no extant books that can be traced to Jónsson's ownership, to my knowledge. We can conclude that Jónsson or his scribes knew both printed and handwritten title pages well, and that they created their own highly elaborate and decorative versions, based on the prevailing literary and artistic taste of the time and their own personal preferences. Jónsson's title pages describe the ensuing manuscript content as both entertaining and educational, and thus emphasize the sagas' value, but they also function as advertisement, or perhaps even as self-promotion, for the patron.⁹⁹ As such, they are aligned with the function of printed title pages, but are in stark contrast to other saga title pages that do not mention the patron at all. Although the praise of a patron could stem from a new and modern sense of individuality and could be interpreted neutrally, in these cases it nonetheless has the character of an advertisement, not least with

97 Springborg, "Antiqvæ historiæ lepores," 71–81.

98 Anders Sørensen Vedel, *It Hundrede vduallde Danske Viser / Om allebaande Merckelige Krigs Bedriff / oc anden feld som Euentzr / som sig her vdi Riget / ved Gamle / Kemper / Naffnkundige Konger oc ellers forneme Personer begiffuet haffuer / aff arilds tid indtil denne neruærendis Dag*. (Ribe: Liljeberget, 1591).

99 According to Werronen, several of the title pages found in Jónsson's manuscripts are later additions by one of Jónsson's scribes, made in order to facilitate access to the contents and to attract readers; Werronen, "The Working Practices of Magnús Ketilsson."

regard to the reputed Vatnsfjörður haughtiness: Jónsson's family, particularly his mother, was infamously labeled as arrogant and haughty. Additionally, such praise might serve as means to establish and display cultural capital.¹⁰⁰ The advertisement function of title pages is corroborated by findings from hymn manuscripts. The only title pages for hymnals from before the late 1680s that state the name of the scribe and patron, apart from those of Hallgrímur Pétursson, were written for the Vatnsfjörður family.

Summary and Conclusions

This article has shown that the development of formal, distinctive title pages in Icelandic manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was due to influence from the print medium. The earliest title pages are found in manuscripts containing the same textual genres that appeared in print, as well as texts that were written for or by highly educated men in high official positions: religious-edifying, legal, administrative, and rhetorical texts. The South and the Westfjords were the most important areas for such activity.

Title pages are found more commonly in nonliterary manuscripts, particularly those containing computistics and metrical psalms, or hymns. The latter were very popular in Iceland, as in other European countries, and were printed from 1558 onward. Hymns formed an important part of the private devotional activity of families and households, too, and approximately one-third of all extant hymn manuscripts contain one or more title pages. We can detect various strategies employed in hymnal title pages. Some scribes followed the standard of printed title pages closely, though often without reference to printed exemplars. Others created new title pages within the hymnal tradition with specific references to the medium of

100 Sigurðardóttir, "Vestfirskur 'aðall,'" 201; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, "Constructing Cultural Competence in Seventeenth-Century Iceland: The Case of Poetical Miscellanies," in *Mirrors of Virtue: Manuscript and Print in Late Pre-Modern Iceland*, ed. Margrét Eggertsdóttir and Matthew Driscoll (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2017), 277–320. Cf. Lansing, "Permissible Entertainment," 339, 341.

reception: singing. Still others created title pages that differ significantly from tradition. The famous Baroque poet Hallgrímur Pétursson, for example, seemed to use the title page in his autograph manuscripts as a form of self-advertisement; by emulating the title pages of learned works he could highlight his own erudition.

In contrast to hymnal title pages, saga title pages are considerably less frequent, not least because this genre was hardly ever printed at the time. Fewer than one in twenty saga manuscripts contain a title page. Of the few that exist most were produced in the Westfjords for or by wealthy, well-educated men; Magnús Jónsson at Vigur was a particularly avid patron and scribe. Saga title pages show more decoration than hymn title pages. The erudition of the scribes finds its expression in the numerous applications of rhetorical elements, such as *accumulatio*. In parallel with hymnal title pages, the medium most often commented upon is not that of production but that of reception: reading and listening.

It should come as no surprise that manuscript title pages were adapted from the world of print. After all, title pages were an invention of the printing press, and in some fifteenth century-catalogues no distinction was made between manuscript and print.¹⁰¹ Icelandic manuscript title pages, however, hardly ever refer to their origins; instead, the medium of reception—singing and reading aloud to an audience—is often commented upon. And while the earliest title pages were to some extent influenced by printed title pages, they later developed their own characteristics and served different purposes, depending on various factors, such as scribal intentions and conventions within textual genres. Title pages of books were thought to have been first used to protect the bookblock, or perhaps to separate text from meta-text, and then to ease and speed up the identification of the book's content, as well as to advertise the book. Icelandic manuscript title pages were used as a division between text and meta-text as well; however, title pages of manuscripts pursued other, more diverse strategies, too. While the citations of biblical verses on hymnal title pages are in line with Icelandic

101 Smith, *The Title-Page*; Lülfiing, "Die Fortdauer der handschriftlichen Buchherstellung," 20; Bühler, *The Fifteenth-Century Book*, 40.

print tradition as an expression of the strong personal devotion of the scribe and audience, they usually refer only to the mode of reception but not to the medium of their exemplar. Some hymnal title pages were used as a form of scribal self-advertisement. Similar to the latter, saga title pages often proffer lengthy praise of their owner or patron, and are used for advertisement or self-promotion. Thus, the creation of manuscript title pages depended on several factors: the existence of printed models, traditions within a genre, the medium of reception, and the individual choices of scribes and patrons.

Title pages in Icelandic post-medieval manuscripts testify to Icelanders' participation in international literary trends, their willingness to take up new features into already existing media, and their ability to adapt new features to their own needs and purposes. Analyses of manuscript title pages therefore allow us to gain a detailed and nuanced insight into Iceland's cultural and social past. And while the existence in manuscripts of a feature originating in print is itself noteworthy, this study demonstrates that manuscript culture did not cease after the advent of print but, conversely, that manuscript and print coexisted and influenced each other. The hope is that this study might encourage others to examine the longevity of Western manuscript culture, and the coexistence and interrelationships of print and handwriting in the early modern period.