



**UNIVERSITY OF
ALBERTA**

Virgin Martyrs and Women Worthies in Post-Medieval Icelandic Poetry

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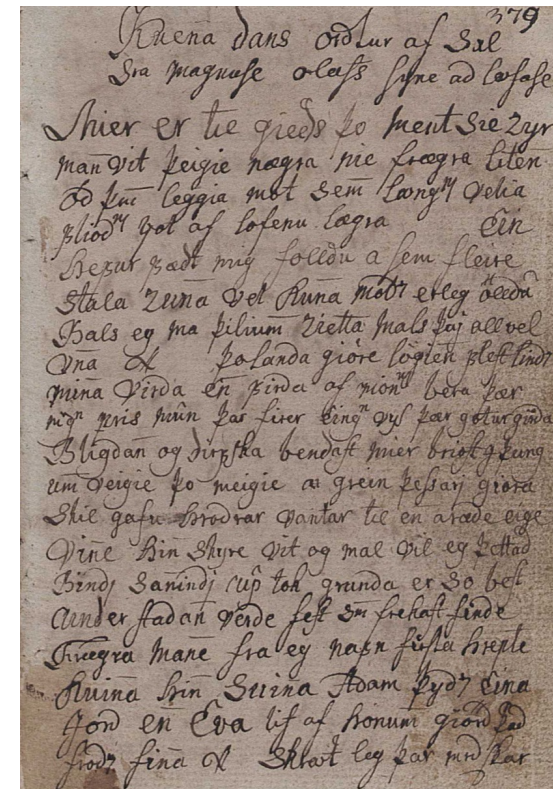
vandeuse@ualberta.ca

Kvennadans (Women's Dance)

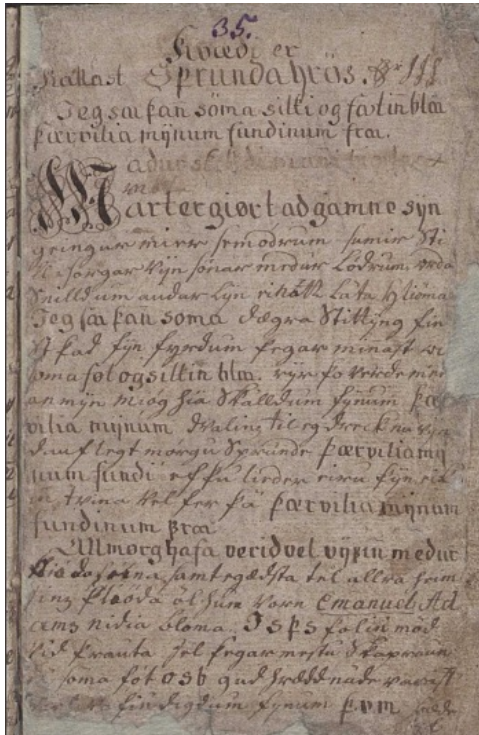
Composed 1619

Magnús Ólafsson á Laufás (ca.
1573-1636)

22 manuscript witnesses



Sprundahrós (In Praise of Women)



Jón Jónsson að Kvíabekk (1739-85)

vikivakakvæði

ÍB 815 8vo (ca. 1800), JS 255 4to and
JS 589 4to (1841)

Kappakvæði

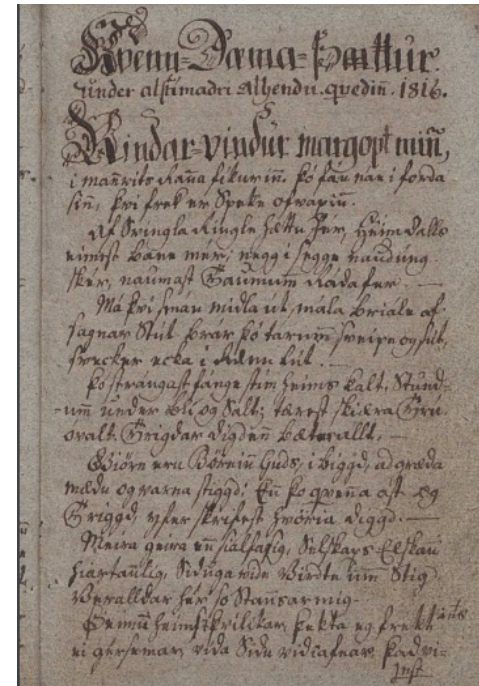
Guðmundur Bergþórsson (ca. 1657-1705)

***Kvendæmapáttur* (A Tale of Model Women)**

Composed 1816

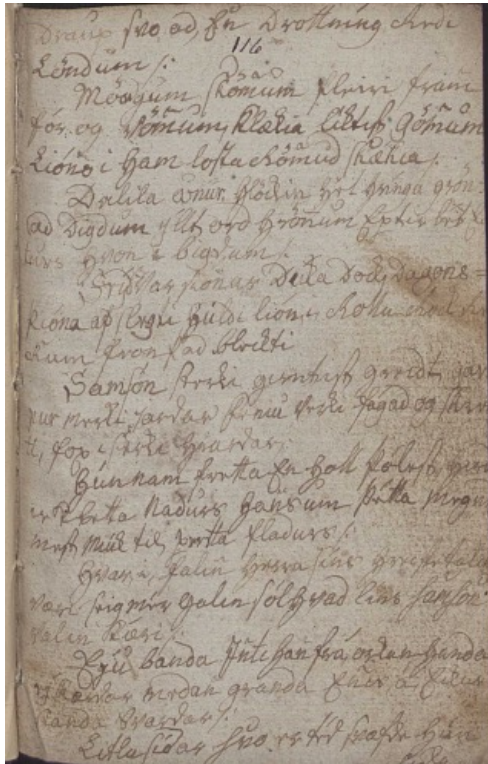
Lbs 4795 8vo (1800-50)

Sigurður Daðason (ca. 1759-1820)



JS 477 8vo (1650-1900)

Kvennaríma (Women's *ríma*)

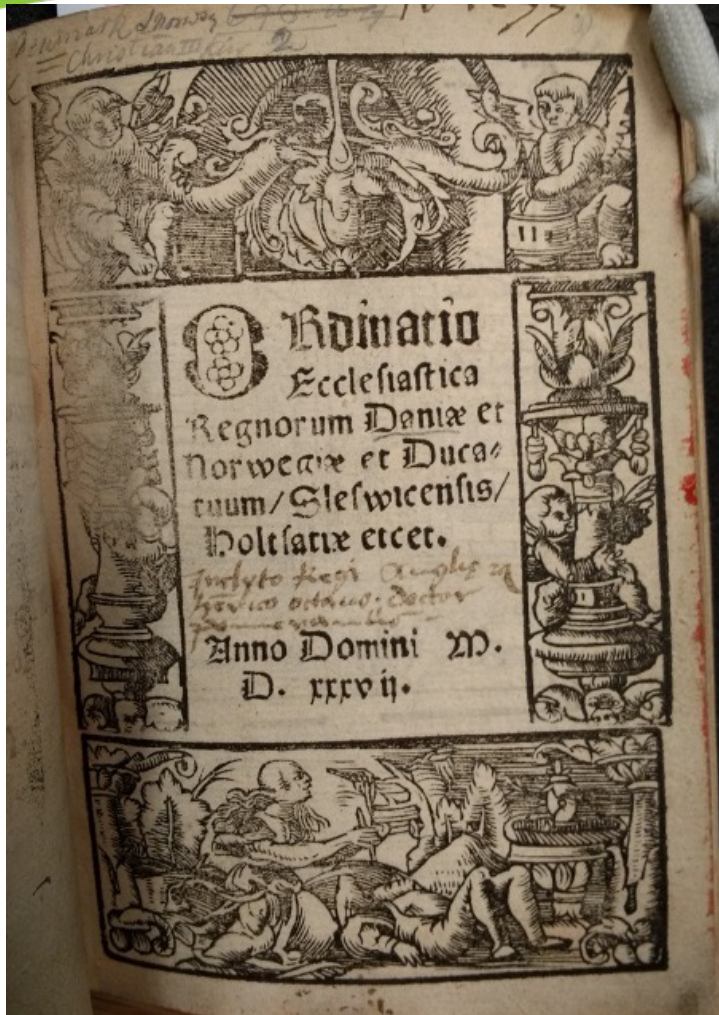


ÍB 816 8vo (ca. 1600-1900)

Þorsteinn Hallgrímsson í Stærra-Árskógi (d. 1791)

Þorsteinn Þorkelsson á Hvarfi (fol. 8v): “hefði hann ætlað að gjöra tvær, og telja flestar hinar vestu konur úr fornum sögum i annari, en hinar bestu úr sögunum i annari, en hefði ekki enzt aldur til að kveða nema þá fyrri.”

Grobbians *rímur* (Grobrianus' *rímur*)



The Saints and the Reformation in Iceland (ca. 1550)

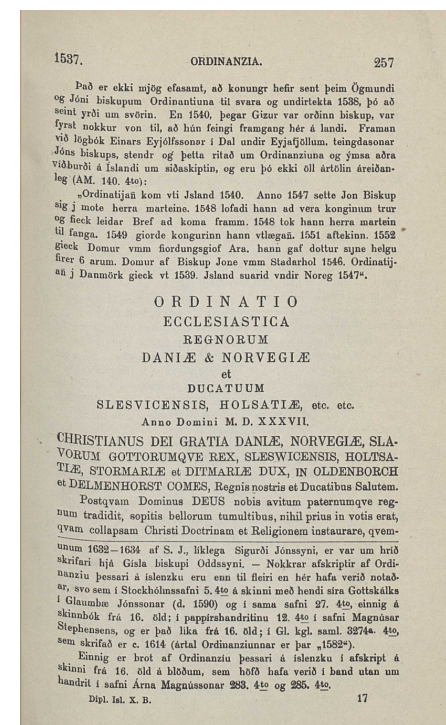
“Doctor Bugenhagen’s *sacra instruction et consilium*, which was appended to the *Ordinance*, prohibited the singing of saints’ Masses in church or any public readings of ‘superstitious’ lessons devoted to the saints, naming the Virgin Mary and a few popular saints as examples: Nicholas, Augustine, Francis, Paul, and Matthew. The reading of legends in privates was not expressly forbidden ‘if someone wishes to waste his time’ (*si quis tempus perdere vult*), though it was strongly discouraged by denigrating the genre as ‘the most idiotic fables’ (*ineptissimae fabulae*) and ‘oceans of untruths’ (*maria mendaciorum*) or by unfavorably comparing it to the ‘erudite’ (*eruditium habent*) Fables of Aesop. [...]



Portrait by Lucas Cranach the Elder
(wikipedia.org)

The Saints and the Reformation in Iceland (ca. 1550)

[...] A loose translation of the *Church Ordinance*, made by the Lutheran Bishop Oddur Einarsson of Skálholt (1559-1630), was printed at Hólar 1635. Here some fresh examples of Scandinavian saints are added to the list, namely Olaf of Norway and Canute of Denmark. An unspecified ‘harsh punishment’ (“vtan hann vilie þar fyrir hardlega Straffast”) is threatened as penalty for violating the ban against perusing saints’ legends” (Gottskálf Jensson, 879-80)



Remnants of Catholicism

“Í meðvitund íslensku þjóðarinnar hafa geymst fjölmargar leifar frá kaþólskri tíð”

[...]

“Margt, sem talist gat til kaþólskrar alþýðutrúar, hvort sem um var að ræða gamlar dýrlingamyndir, kaþólskar bænir, helgiljóð, helgra manna sögur, alþýðlega trúarsíði, svo sem t.d. signingar við ýmis hvunndagsleg tilefni, átti enn sinn samastað í trúarlífi þjóðarinnar, jafnvel þótt áherslur hefðu breyst” (Vilborg Auður Ísleifsdóttir 317-18)

Prose Legends of Saints: The Manuscript Tradition

	1500–1600	1600–1700	1700–1800	1800–1900	1900–2000
Agatha	-----				
Agnes	-----				
Ambrose	-----				
Andrew the Apostle	-----				
Anne	-----				
Anthony	-----				
Augustine	-----				
Barbara	-----				
Barlaam and Josaphat	-----				
Bartholomew	-----				
Blase	-----				
Catherine of Alexandria	-----				
Cecilia	-----				
Christopher	-----				
Dominic	-----				
Dorothy	-----				
Dunstan	-----				
Edward the Confessor		-----			

	1500–1600	1600–1700	1700–1800	1800–1900	1900–2000
Roch	-----				
Sebastian	-----				
Servatius	-----				
Seven Sleepers	-----				
Silvester	-----				
Simon and Jude	-----				
Stephen the Deacon	-----				
Thomas the Apostle		-----			
Thomas Becket		-----			
Three Holy Kings	-----				
Þorlákr of Skálholt	-----				
Vitus	-----				

	1500–1600	1600–1700	1700–1800	1800–1900	1900–2000
Erasmus	-----				
Eustace				-----	
Fides, Spes, and Caritas	-----				
George the Great	-----				
Gregory the Great	-----				
Gregory on the Stone	-----				
Guðmundr the Good	-----				
Hallvard			-----		
Henry and Cunegund	-----				
James the Greater	-----				
James the Less	-----				
Jerome	-----				
John the Baptist	-----				
John Chrysostom	-----				
John the Evangelist	-----				
Jón of Hólar		-----			
Laurence of Rome	-----				
Lazarus	-----				
Magnus	-----				
Margaret of Antioch	-----				
Mark	-----				
Mary the Blessed Virgin			-----		
Matthew	-----				
Matthias	-----				
Nicholas	-----				
Nicholas of Tolentino	-----				
Oswald	-----				
Paul the Apostle	-----				
Peter the Apostle	-----				
Philip the Apostle	-----				

Figure 5.1. Saints whose prose legends have been preserved.

(Van Deusen and Wolf, 107-109)

Table 5.4. Saints whose poetic legends have been preserved.

Saint	Earliest and latest witnesses of poem(s)	Total MSS
Agnes	1: JS 265 4to (c. 1675–1900) and Lbs 2166 4to (c. 1885–1920) 2: Lbs 705 4to (c. 1825–34) 3: <i>ÍB</i> 183 4to (c. 1750) and <i>SÁM</i> 86/700 EF (1973)	132
Amicus and Amelius	AM 609c 4to (c. 1600–1700)	1
Andrew the Apostle	1: AM 194 8vo (1387) and NKS 1598 4to (c. 1750–1800) 2: AM 713 4to (c. 1500–50) and Lbs 2166 4to 3: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 4: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	13
Anne	AM 622 4to (c. 1549) and JS 399a–b 4to (c. 1700–1900)	4
Barbara	JS 487 8vo (c. 1675–1900) and <i>SÁM</i> 85/348 EF (1969)	22
Bartholomew	AM 721 4to (c. 1500–50) and Lbs 2166 4to	3
Catherine of Alexandria	AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	5
Cecilia	1: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 2: AM 429 12mo (c. 1500) and Lbs 2166 4to	11
Christopher	AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	5
Dorothy	1: AM 429 12mo (c. 1500) and Lbs 2166 4to 2: Lbs 1516 4to (1689) and JS 510 8vo (c. 1675–1900) 3: JS 323 8vo (c. 1800–50) and <i>SÁM</i> 85/354 (1969)	24
Eustace	AM 673b 4to (c. 1200)	1
Guðmundr the Good	1: Holm perg 5 fol (c. 1350–65) 2: Holm perg 5 fol 3: Holm perg 5 fol and AM 396 4to (c. 1350–1400) 4: Holm perg 5 fol and AM 396 4to 5: AM 713 4to and AM 398 4to (c. 1600–1700)	9
Hallvard	AM 670i 4to (c. 1760–25) and Lbs 2166 4to	5
Helena	JS 473 4to (c. 1650–1900) and Lbs 2128 4to (c. 1700–2000)	13
Ignatius of Antioch	<i>ÍB</i> 633 8vo (c. 1764–75) and Lbs 201 8vo (c. 1850–70)	4
James the Greater	AM 721 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	3
John the Baptist	AM 717d α 4to (c. 1700) and Lbs 2166 4to	3

Saint	Earliest and latest witnesses of poem(s)	Total MSS
	19: AM 711b 4to (c. 1700–25) and Lbs 2166 4to 20: BL Add. 489a (c. 1700–25) and Lbs 734 8vo (c. 1700–1900) 21: BL Add. 489a (c. 1700–25) and Lbs 2166 4to 22: BL Add. 489a (c. 1700–25) and Lbs 2166 4to 23: JS 189 8vo (c. 1775–1825) and Lbs 2166 4to 24: <i>ÍB</i> 629 8vo (c. 1740) 25: AM 711 4to (c. 1700–27) and Lbs 2166 4to 26: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 27: Rask 21a (c. 1600–1800) and Lbs 1276 4to (c. 1864–70) 28: AM 713 4to and Lbs 1486b 4to (c. 1860–78) 29: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 30: AM 622 4to (c. 1549) and JS 399a–b 4to 31: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 32: BL Add. 11.242 (c. 1540–90) and Lbs 2166 4to 33: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 34: AM 426 12mo (c. 1600–1700) and Lbs 201 8vo (c. 1850–70) 35: Lbs 399 4to (c. 1680–1700) and Lbs 2361 8vo (c. 1700–1900) 36: Bor 113 (20754) (1740) and Lbs 2166 4to 37: AM 720a 4to (c. 1600–1700) 38: <i>ÍBR</i> 28 8vo (c. 1700–1900) and Lbs 201 8vo (c. 1850–70) 39: JS 511 8vo (c. 1675–1900) and Lbs 724 8vo (c. 1800–1900)	
Michael the Archangel	1: AM 242 fol. (c. 1350) and <i>Träj</i> 1374 (c. 1595) 2: AM 622 4to (c. 1549) and AM 710d 4to (c. 1700–25)	10
Nicholas	1: AM 242 fol. (1350) 2: AM 640 4to (c. 1450–1500) and JS 399a–b 4to 3: Holm perg 16 4to (1375–1400) and Lbs 2166 4to 4: AM 721 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 5: AM 622 4to (c. 1549) and JS 514 8vo (c. 1675–1900)	41

Saint	Earliest and latest witnesses of poem(s)	Total MSS
John the Evangelist	1: AM 649 4to (c. 1350–1400) 2: AM 649a 4to (c. 1350–1400) 3: AM 649a 4to (c. 1350–1400) 4: AM 150 8vo (c. 1650–1700) and Lbs 2166 4to	6
Laurence of Rome	1: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 2: JS 471 8vo (c. 1675–1900) and Lbs 3668 8vo (c. 1800–2000) 3: <i>ÍBR</i> 93 8vo (c. 1700–1800) and <i>ÍBR</i> 109 8vo (1829)	27
Magnus	AM 721 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	5
Margaret of Antioch	1: AM 720a 4to II (c. 1500–1600) and Lbs 2166 4to 2: AM 433d 12mo (c. 1500–25) 3: JS 580 4to (c. 1600–1900) and <i>Kvennasögusafn</i> Islands box 27 (1980) 4: JS 477 8vo (c. 1675–1900) 5: <i>ÍBR</i> 45 8vo (c. 1850) and Lbs 2468 4to (c. 1883–84)	59
(Martha and) Mary Magdalen	1: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 2: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 3: AM 148 8vo (c. 1650–1700) and JS 588 4to (c. 1800–1900)	11
Mary the Blessed Virgin	1: AM 242 fol. (c. 1350) 2: AM 757a 4to (c. 1400) and JS 399a–b 4to 3: AM 713 4to and AM 920 4to (c. 1800–1900) 4: AM 81a fol. (c. 1400–1500) and Lbs 2166 4to 5: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 6: AM 243f fol. (c. 1500) and Lbs 2166 7: AM 426 12mo (c. 1600–1700) and Lbs 2178 8vo (c. 1800–1900) 8: AM 242 fol. (c. 1400–1500) and Lbs 754 8vo (c. 1700–1900) 9: Holm perg 64 fol (c. 1650–1700) and JS 122 8vo (c. 1700–1800) 10: AM 426 12mo (c. 1600–1700) and Lbs 1390 8vo (c. 1800–1900) 11: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 12: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 13: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 14: AM 721 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 15: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 16: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 17: AM 622 4to (c. 1549) 18: AM 717h 4to (c. 1650–1700) and Lbs 580 4to (c. 1842–48)	365

Saint	Earliest and latest witnesses of poem(s)	Total MSS
Olav of Norway	1: AM 39 fol. (c. 1300) and Thott 972 fol. (c. 1700) 2: AM 325 2 n. 4to XI (c. 1275–1300) and AM 73a fol. (c. 1700) 3: AM 39 fol. (c. 1300) and JS 406 4to (c. 1800–1900) 4: GKS 1005 fol. (c. 1387–95) and Lbs 438 4to (c. 1800–1900) 5: Holm perg 23 4to (c. 1500–50) 6: AM 714 4to (c. 1600) and Lbs 2166 4to 7: Holm perg 1 fol. (c. 1400–25) and JS 399a–b 4to 8: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 9: AM 720a 4to (c. 1500) and Lbs 2030 4to (c. 1880–1920) 10: AM 319 4to (c. 1700)	1574 ²⁴
Paul the Apostle	1: AM 720a 4to VII (c. 1500) and Lbs 2166 4to 2: AM 158 8vo (c. 1650–1700) and Lbs 2166 4to 3: Lbs 528 8vo (c. 1720)	19
Peter the Apostle	1: AM 621 4to (c. 1450–1500) and AM 920 4to (c. 1800–1900) 2: AM 713 4to and Lbs 2166 4to 3: AM 721 4to and Lbs 2166 4to	8
Seven Sleepers	JS 477 8vo (c. 1675–1900) and Lbs 4540 8vo (c. 1800–1900)	12
Thomas the Apostle	AM 720a 4to VII (c. 1500) and Lbs 2166 4to	4
Thomas Becket	1: AM 242 fol. (c. 1350) 2: AM 713 4to and AM 920 4to	4
Ursula	<i>ÍB</i> 183 4to (c. 1750) and <i>Kvennasögusafn</i> Islands box 27 (1980)	27
Veronica	<i>Eink</i> 397–12 (c. 1670–1740) and <i>SÁM</i> 92/3269 EF (1967)	124

Poetry on Saints: The Manuscript Tradition

St. Margaret of Antioch

Fourteen Holy Helpers

Antioch in Pisidia

d. 304 under Emperor Diocletian

Three separate poems (59
manuscripts)



St. Barbara



Fourteen Holy Helpers

Late 3rd/early 4th century

Heliopolis or Nicomedia

Based on Old Norse-Icelandic
Barböru saga

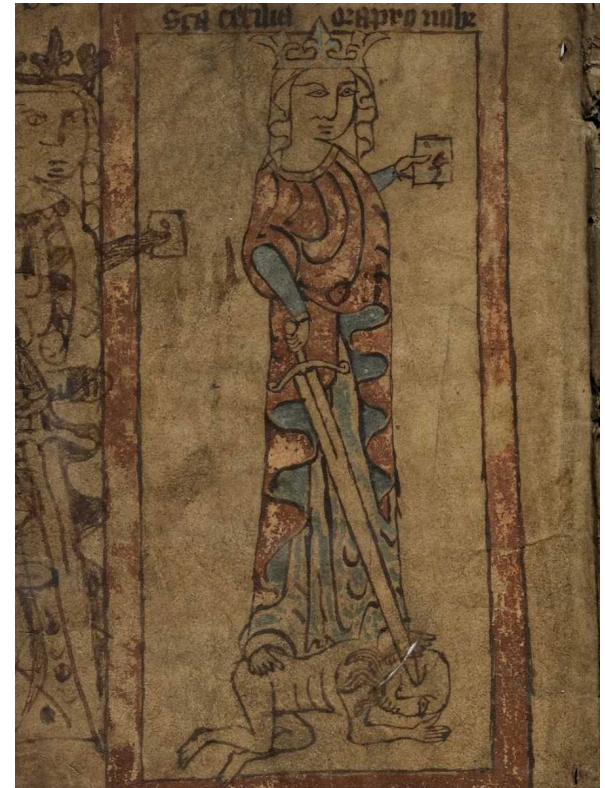
Barbárudiktur (22 manuscripts)

St. Cecilia

3rd-century Roman martyr

Emperor Alexander Severus

Vísur Cecilíu and *Cecilíudiktur*
(10 manuscripts, 7 early
modern)



St. Ursula and her Companions

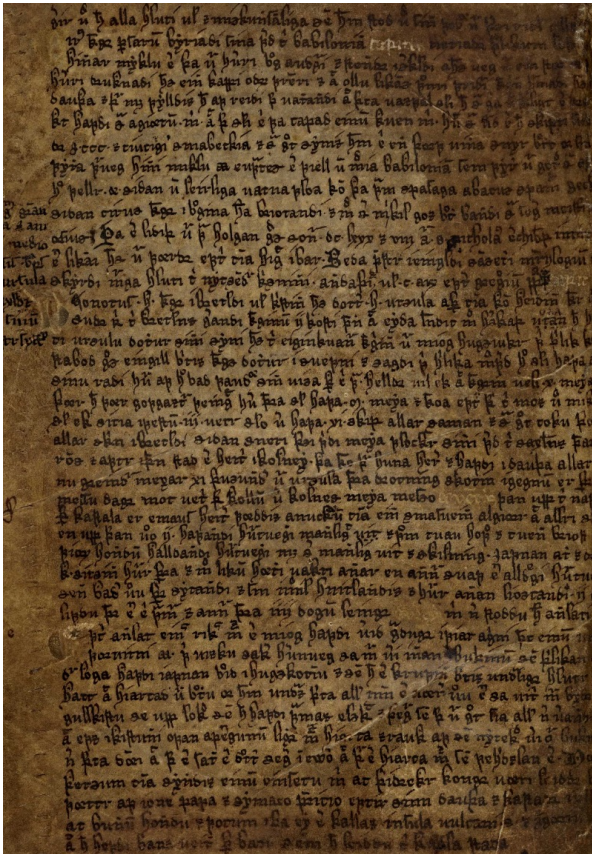
4th century

Princess from Britain

11,000 virgin handmaidens

Killed by Huns *en route* to Cologne

Úrsúluþukvæði (27 manuscripts from ca. 1700)



St. Dorothy

4th century

Caesarea Mazaca

Diocletianic Persecution

3 poetic legends (24
manuscripts; only one dates to
before 1550)



AM 429 12mo (ca. 1500)

St. Agnes of Rome



AM 429 12mo (ca. 1500)

4th century martyr

4 early modern poems (100+ manuscripts)

Vísur af heilagri jómfru Agnesi, Rev. Jósep Loptsson (d. 1683) (JS 207 8vo)

Rímur af Agnesi píslarvotti, Eiríkur Hallsson in Höfði (1614-98) (Lbs 705 4to)

Agnesarvísa (Lbs 2286 4to and ÍB 388 8vo)

Agnesarkvæði, Þorvaldur Magnússon (ca. 100 MSS)

St. Veronica

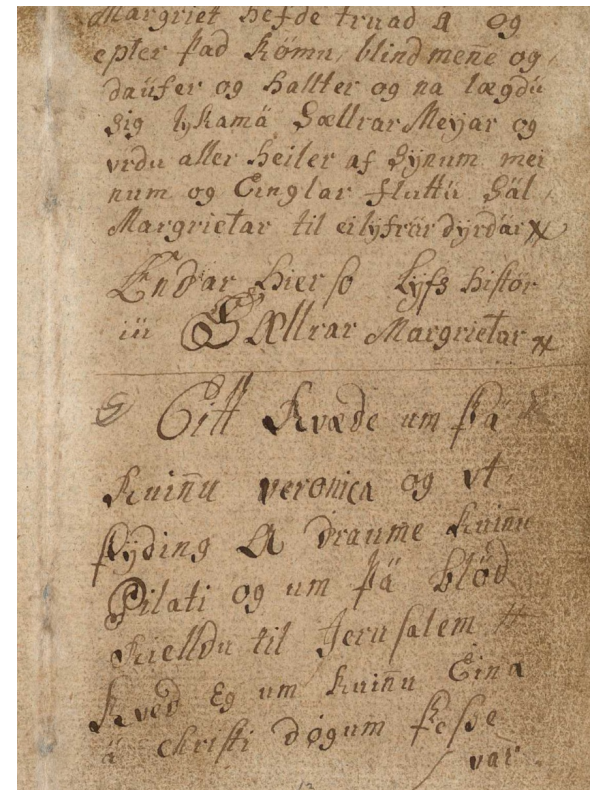
Woman in Gospels with “issue of blood”

Veronica’s veil on the *Via Dolorosa*

Verónikukvæði, Þorvaldur Magnússon

Dream of Pilate’s wife, destruction of
Jerusalem

Lost her life “i flocki margra meýa” and
“pijnslarvættis priydd corónu væri”



Women Worthies: The Broader European Tradition

Plutarch's (ca. 46–120) *Mulierum virtutes*

Querelle des femmes debate of ca. 1400 to ca. 1700

Giovanni Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (ca. 1360)

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* (c. 1385–86)

Christine de Pizan's *La Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405)

Neuf preuses and *neuf preux*

Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles du Chevalier de La Tour Landry (1371-72)

Miroir des Bonnes Femmes (13th cent.)

Women Worthies in Icelandic Poetic Tradition

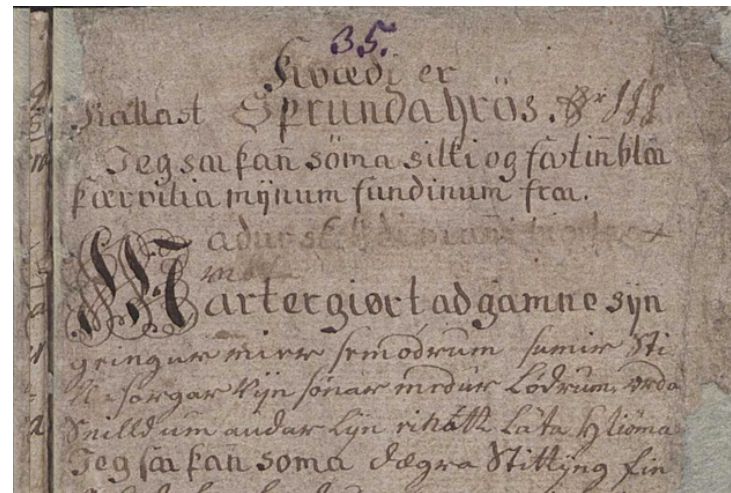
Margrét Eggertsdóttir: “There were many “Mirror for Women” works written in Europe [...] but their purpose was not so much to defend women as to lay down rules for living. Another poetic genre with which “Kvennadans” can be linked is the *Gynæceum*, in which learned women are listed and praised. Such poems were generally the work of male writers, with “Scutum Gynæcosophias” [In defense of learned women] by Anders Bording (1619–1677) the oldest Danish example [...]. In fact Magnús Ólafsson’s “Kvennadans” does more than just discuss learned women: it treats women in world history, in the Bible and, not least, in Iceland” (126).

Women Worthies in Icelandic Poetic Tradition

Sprundahrós: “Frurnar báru fagra mind” [st. 20/1]; “fýngra spaunginn fögur síðs / fröm leg dæminn grunde” (st. 22/14-15)

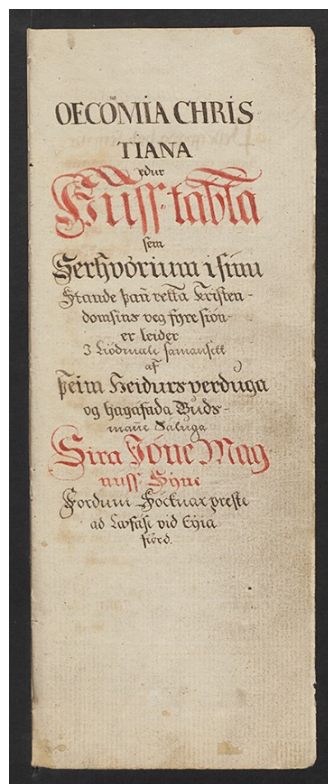
Kvenndæmapáttur: Mætar sætur giæti góds / gilldrar skilldu og snilldar-síóds, /svinnar minnest Jnntak ods / eingri leingi feinge móds (st. 93)

Kvennaríma: “Varist hniuka Eíur orms / yllra brúka Dæme” (st. 62/1-2)



ÍB 815 8vo, fol. 131r
(handrit.is)

Women Worthies in Icelandic Poetic Tradition



Lbs 663 8vo (1772)

Dyggðaspegil (1639), Jón Arason in
Vatnsfjörður

Hústafla or Oeconomia Christiana, Jón
Magnússon in Laufás's (1601–75)

dyggð

Hólfríður Benediktsdóttir (*Agnesarrímur*)

Conclusion



Manuscripts of *Agnesarkvæði* in Landsbókasafn
(Photo by Speaker)

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