

Augustinus saga:
A Learned and a Popular Version
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If by a quirk of fate the Icelandic legend of St. Augustine were preserved solely in the oldest extant fragment, we would nevertheless still be able to propose a defensible thesis about the interests of the author and his implied audience. The fragment of *Augustinus saga* in AM 221 fol. (4vb-5vb), dated ca. 1275-1300,¹ transmits information about the origin of the Icelandic legend: "Her hefr saugu hins myckla Augustíni sva sem herra Runólfr aboti Sigmund[arson] af Veri snaraði af latino."² Runólfr had been consecrated abbot of the Augustinian monastery of Þykkvabær in 1264 and served until his death in 1306 (or 1307). It is hardly surprising that Runólfr undertook to translate a Latin legend of the saint whose Rule he and his fellow monks observed.

The fragment transmits an anecdote about Augustine's encounter with the heretic Faustus, the Manichean bishop of the African town of Mileve (died sometime before A.D. 400). Accordingly, the heretic came one time to Carthage. He was renowned "af mykille kunnasto oc fröðleic oc hann hafði yfir lesit allar höfuð iþrottir" (149:19-20). For his part, Augustine had read many books written by wise men and committed their contents to memory. Therefore he decided to compare what he had read with the words and the teachings of Faustus. He concluded that they lacked all rational foundation (149:24-25 "vitan alla skynsemd"). The two men confronted each other and Augustine challenged Faustus to demonstrate the validity of his teachings. The heretic was incapable of doing so and finally had to admit "at kenning hans var eigi sævnn oc sva sigraðr fór hann i brott" (150:1-2).

¹Stefán Karlsson writes "at the end of the thirteenth century or about 1300" (*Sagas of Icelandic Bishops. Fragments of Eight Manuscripts*, ed. Stefán Karlsson, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile, VII (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1967), p. 56. Stefán considers the manuscript Icelandic and certain Norwegian peculiarities "the result of the general influence of Norwegian scribal practices" (p. 57). Stefán suggests that 221 "was written in Skálholt, given the circumstances that the translator of *Augustinus saga* had close contact with the episcopal seat there and that 234, which belonged to the cathedral, was copied from it" (p. 57). Stefán furthermore suggests that 234 might be identical with the "Helgra manna Historia í Íslenzku upp á kalfskinn," mentioned in Bishop Oddur Einarsson's list of books belonging to the cathedral church in 1604 (p. 57). Facsimiles of AM 221 fol. 4vb-5vb are on pp. 82-84 of the edition. A year after the publication of the facsimile edition, Mattias Tveitane published his study of the Norse version of the Lives of the Fathers, in which he reached a different conclusion, namely that *Augustinus saga* in AM 221 fol. should be considered "en norsk avskrift av en (ifølge sitt forord) islandsk helgensaga" (*Den lærde stiel. Oversetterprosa i den norrøne versjonen av Vitæ Patrum*, Årbok for universitetet i Bergen, Humanistisk serie, 1967, No 2 [Bergen and Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1968], p. 27; cf. 33-34).

²Cf. "Augustinus saga," *Heilagra Manna sögur. Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1877), p. 149.

The anecdote may be understood as an exemplum on the nature of scholarship. Pitted against each other are the impostor, who makes wild claims in his writings, and the scholar who defies him to demonstrate the truthfulness of his assertions. Augustine realizes that the books written by Faustus are full of fables (*skrac.sögum*) and that they transmit error (*oc þeir tala með falsi*). With his own learning Augustine is able to defeat the charlatan. The point of a story like this would have been instantly understood by those dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the truth, namely the monks at Þykkvabær.

The story of the battle of wits between Augustine and Faustus is exemplary for the tenor of the legend that Runólfr translated from the Latin. The *vita* is characterized by a notable attention to the significance of learning and its transmission through teaching, disputation, and the writing of books. Both the translator of the legend and the author of the Latin original were fully aware of the needs of a monastic audience, the recipients of both the original Latin text and its Icelandic translation. Indeed, the author of the Latin version was quite self-conscious. His voice is repeatedly heard and he himself divulges the nature of the implied audience, as he addresses his listeners and readers as "hinir klærustu bræðr" (143:16-17). His Icelandic translator is in full agreement with the sentiments expressed in the *vita*, but he is also scholarly enough to let us know that the "I" of the text is not his own. The Latin author attests Augustine's intolerance of gossip at table by remarking "Ok þetta sama profodum vær a sialfum oss, er þa satum yfir bordinu," but Runólfr quickly adds, "segir sa er sôguna hefir dictat" (142:16-18). The author claims first hand knowledge of Augustine's last hours—"Ok at oss hiaverandum ok siandum ok biðjandum"—but again the translator interjects his voice, "segir sa er sauguna hefir dictat" (146:34-147:1).³

That a Latin life of St. Augustine should have been translated into Icelandic in an Augustinian context is in itself not surprising. What we know about the translator suggests, however, that the composition was more than just another monastic task, for to judge by contemporary testimony Runólfr seems to have been a man after St. Augustine's own heart. Brandr Jónsson, Runólfr's teacher and immediate predecessor as abbot of Þykkvabær (1247-64), himself attested that among his students there was no one "er jafnkostgæfinn var ok jafngóðan hug lagði á nám sitt sem Runólfr."⁴ He certainly must have attempted to emulate the founder of his order.

Augustinus saga draws attention to the saint's unusual intellect. Whatever subject Augustine investigated, whether geography, music, or rhetoric, "skilði hann

³Cf. other such remarks by the translator: 125:23; 131:21; 138:20; 142:24; 144:24; 147:19 (Runólfr refers here explicitly to the Latin author: "segir sa er sauguna hefir dictat a latinu"; 147:30-31.

⁴Árna biskups saga," *Biskupa sögur* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1858), I:681.

utan alla talman eða torveldi, sva at engi maðr kendi honum" (125:22-23). The author of the legend gives credit, however, where it is due, as he addresses God:

Heyrðu, guð drottinn, segir sá, er sauguna hefir dictat, þu veiztt, at skiot skilning ok hvass næmleikr er þin gíof. (125:23-24)

The anecdote about Augustine's disputation with Faustus now follows and establishes a pattern for the *vita*. Those for whom the legend was intended, the monastic community, were thus reminded that learning, both secular and sacred, has its origin in God. Moreover, no matter how learned, the individual must realize that study alone does not lead to God, as a later incident in Augustine's life illustrates. St. Ambrose had suggested to him that in his search for God he read the Prophet Isaias, but when Augustine proceeded to do so, he could not understand a word. He therefore decided to approach the task of reading Sacred Scripture as would a scholar—"ok fyrir því dvalði hann at studia meirr i hinu sama en giarnara at lesa sialfs drottins orð" (135:14-15)—forgetting momentarily that there is a difference between the word of God and the word of Cicero, whom he revered, but in whose work "kristz nafnn var þar eigi" (123:25-26). The implied audience of monks would not have missed the point.

A monastic audience would have understood Runólf's translation on a level obscured for the layman. Intertextuality plays a role here, for only someone living according to the Rule of St. Augustine would have realized that the *vita* also contained a reminder—in the form of a quotation from the Rule—of communal obligations:

Allra mest var þat boðit, at engi hefði nockut eiginligt i þeira safnaði, helldr væri þeim allir lutir sameignir, ok skiptizt hverium til handa, sem þaurf beiddi. (139:5-7)

The ideal of monastic poverty, to which the above also alludes, was practiced by the saint, so that on his deathbed a last will was unnecessary, "þvi at hann hafði sig fatækan gert fyrir Kristz ast ok hafði af eingu ath giðra" (146:13-14). In Augustine's life, which was characterized by moderation (141:25-27), the monks found a model for daily conduct, even in such mundane activities as eating, which was accompanied by reading aloud: "Ok er hann sat yfir matborði, elskaði hann meirr lesning heilagra boka eða þess hattar tal en fæðzlu eða dryk" (142:3-4). The monastic orientation of the older redaction is reflected, as is the implied audience, in a request made by Augustine on his deathbed:

Heilaga bok kirkiunnar bibliotecam ok adrar helgar bækr bad hann, at iafnan væri vandliga geymdar eptir hans dag; hvat sem kirkian atti i skrudi eda fiarmunum feck hann i hendr tralyndum prestí, þeim er geymt hafði kirkiunnar goz um hans daga. . . . Klerka ok klaustr karla ok kvenna, er hreinlifi helldu med sinum formonnum, gaf hann fullkomliga i kirkiunnar valld, svo ok þær bækr, er hann hafði dictat eda adrir helgir menn, med sinum hirdzlum. (146:14-18; 23-26)

The medieval Icelandic translation of the life of St. Augustine was undertaken by an Augustinian, intended for an Augustinian audience, and understood in the context of a communal life devoted to study and teaching, and above all the contemplation of God.

More than two centuries after Runólfur rendered a Latin life of St. Augustine into Icelandic, one of the wealthiest Icelanders of his time, Björn Porleifsson, wrote down a different version of the legend in the manuscript (Sth. 3 fol.) known today as *Reykjahólabók*. "The life of St. Augustine is a very complicated affair,"⁵ Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen had commented in 1962 concerning the 16th-century legend. Their remark is an understatement at best, and at first blush the fact that a *vita* already exists in the older Icelandic redaction only seems to have complicated matters. The two scholars proposed that *Augustinus saga* is one of four sagas--the others being the legends of Sts. Ambrose, Lawrence, and Stephen--that the compiler rewrote under the influence of the style of the Low German *Passionael*, on which he also drew for supplementary matter (p. 251). They concluded that the chief source of *Augustinus saga* was "a now unknown version of the older saga," which was "rewritten and modernized in style, for otherwise it cannot be explained that long passages in the surviving *Augustinus saga* [i.e., the older redaction] run parallel to the narrative in *Holm 3*" (p. 251). In 1960, the two scholars had suggested that the compiler drew on matter from more than one source and that those sections of the legend that do not correspond to matter in the *Passionael* must derive from a now lost legend of St. Augustine.⁶

The occurrence of "long passages in the surviving *Augustinus saga*" that "run parallel" to the legend in *Reykjahólabók* constitutes no problem, if one recalls that Augustine's life is a historical and an autobiographical given, and that some of the matter in the legend derives from Augustine himself, from his *Confessions*. No matter who recounts his *vita*, be it in Latin, German, or Icelandic, certain hagiographic traditions cannot be omitted or changed, such as the role played by his mother Monica in his conversion or Augustine's baptism by St. Ambrose. Such narrative elements are shared by the older and the younger redactions. Not common to the two redactions, however, are discourse and emphasis, with the result that two different types of legend are transmitted in Iceland, the one a "learned," the other a "popular" version.

An analysis of all the texts in *Reykjahólabók* reveals that Björn Porleifsson, the copyist and presumably also the editor and translator of the legends deriving from Low German, was a careful compiler who did not "create" new texts in the sense of rewriting his sources. It can be shown that he was both a good copyist and a fairly

⁵"Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography," *The Germanic Review*, 37 (1962), 251.

⁶Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, "En senmiddelalderlig legendesamling," *Maal og Minne* (1960), 119-20.

good translator, whose major "failing" was his weakness for Low German loan words. Some of these loans, and occasionally even German syntax, appear to have been unintentional, the result of thoughtlessness. In some instances Björn had access to more than one redaction, however, and then he chose to incorporate deviating or additional matter into his main text, thereby composing a "new" redaction. When he proceeded in this fashion, his objective seems to have been to produce as complete a legend as possible. When he deleted matter, it was to avoid repetition. At all times Björn seems to have kept in mind the legendary as a whole, and even a second compilation he either intended to produce or had already finished, namely an anthology of lives of the apostles.⁷ Consequently, matter and incidents that he knew to be contained in one legend, he dropped from another to avoid duplication. On such occasions, however, he provided a cross reference.⁸

One of the idiosyncrasies legendaries share with certain secular types of narratives, for example, the *Íslendingasögur* or the Arthurian romances, is the appearance of individuals in more than one text. The reception of a particular text by a reader or listener is thus determined in some part by one's acquaintance with other texts in which a figure also plays a role. In *Reykjahólabók* several saints interact with one another either historically, by virtue of having been contemporaries, or supernaturally, through posthumous miracles and apparitions. This interaction affected the formation of individual legends, for an incident involving two saints or more can be related from the perspective of the one or the other or be attached now to one legend, now to another. Such an intertextuality plays a role in the legend of St. Augustine, which is best understood if one also reads the legends of Sts. Ambrose and Jerome.

The legend of St. Ambrose in *Reykjahólabók* is a copy of the same older Icelandic redaction from which the text of Sth. 2 derives. There we are told that St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, fell asleep one day during the celebration of Mass while the emperor was present. The latter was rather annoyed and woke up the bishop. Thereupon Ambrose explained what had happened while he allegedly slept: St. Martin of Tours had died and he, Ambrose, had attended the funeral service, but one prayer remained yet to be said because he had been awakened prematurely. Ambrose orders the emperor to leave Milan and never come back. Subsequently it is learned that Bishop Martin of Tours indeed had died and that a bishop had led the procession at the funeral

⁷See Agnete Loth, ed., *Reykjahólabók. Íslandske helgenlegender*, Editiones Arnemagnæanzæ, A, 15 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969), LXXI. Subsequent references to *Augustinus saga* in Sth. 3 fol. are to this edition, vol. II (1970), pp. 95-128.

⁸See Marianne Kalinke, "Reykjahólabók: A Legendary on the Eve of the Reformation," *Skáldskaparmál*, 2 (1992), 239-69. A clear case of editing—both by excluding repetitive matter and including new material—occurs in *Stefanus saga*. In a forthcoming article on *Stefanus saga*, to be published in *Gripplá*, I discuss this type of revision further.

but had disappeared close to the end of the service. In Sth. 2 this anecdote constitutes the end of ch. 21 (I:46) and the next chapter (22) is devoted to St. Augustine and his conversion by St. Ambrose. The chapter opens with the observation that the citizens of Milan (*Melansborgar* I:46,37) asked the Romans to send them a teacher of rhetoric and this turned out to be Augustine. In *Reykjahólabók*, however, there is no new chapter, and a noteworthy error occurs in the first sentence of the Augustine episode (with which ch. 22 in Sth. 2 opens). In the account of Ambrose's bilocation in Sth. 3, we are told that the people of Tours had seen St. Ambrose—"Thvrons borgar menn saú þar biskvplegann mann" (II:86,1)—and these same citizens now request a rhetorician: "Þa hafde en verit at Thvrons borgar menn hofdv sentt ord romverivm. at þeir skyllidv sennnda einn meistara til at kenna þeim rethorikam. þat er malsmildar jþrott" (II:86, 4-6). The remainder of the chapter relates the same matter as the corresponding chapter in Sth. 2, but then breaks off at the point where Ambrose and Augustine join in singing the Te Deum:

og hafe þa bader ortt the devm lavdamvs et cetera og hverrsv at enda lygt vard fyrer þeim gvdz astvine Avgvstinvm vmm qvenna malen edr vmm villvna þa finzt þat j hans sialfs historia sem hier næst er efter a. (II:86, 12-15)

The textual intervention is Björn's and is typical of his method. Instead of including the synopsis found in the Sth. 2 redaction of Ambrosius saga about the life of St. Augustine, he informs his reader where to look for the deleted matter. Presumably his decision to omit the story of Augustine's conversion in favor of a cross reference generated the error "Thvrons borgar menn" for "Melans borgar menn."

The Sth. 3 redaction of *Augustinus saga* contains an account of an apparition of St. Jerome to St. Augustine. This does not exist in the older saga, but in the Low German *Passionael* the incident is found in the life of Jerome rather than Augustine. Widding and Bekker-Nielsen thought that the compiler had chosen to remove it from the legend of Jerome and instead incorporate it into the life of Augustine. Whereas such an explanation is possible, in this case it seems unlikely to me, because elsewhere, when Björn Þorleifsson similarly augments legends, he is quite scholarly in his methodology and provides a cross reference. There is no such annotation in the legend of St. Jerome and it is likely that Björn's Low German source itself contained the story of Jerome's apparition as part of the legend of St. Augustine.

Augustinus saga does contain an unusual preface to the legend, namely a geographical tract that summarizes—thus the narrator—geographical matter known from earlier scholarship, including St. Augustine himself. The legend opens with a lengthy topographical description of the world, the continents, rivers, and countries (II:95,1-97,21), and this prefatory matter concludes with the statement:

og mæn eg nú so fyrst latha hier við bjóða enn seigia heilkr nokkvat af gvdz vin og heilogvæn biskvpe sancte Avgvstino. en hverr sem gímnízt at vitha og at heyrna meira af þessvæn fyrer greindvæn /hlvtvæn\ sem nú vorv frá horfen. þá leidhe saá j ívær bækvat er þessi gvdz vinn sanctvns Avgvstinvns er þessa historia at hefvr samsettar og heiter avnnr þeirra libro de civitate dei. en avnnvr. avrvæn gemma⁹ og líka víða j heidinna manna bokvæn. (II:97,21-28)

The narrator above, presumably the author of Björn's source—is quite right, when he observes that the geographical matter can be located in many sources. Much of this can also be found in other extant Old Norse-Icelandic texts, but none of this corresponds exactly to the information transmitted in *Reykjahlólabók*.¹⁰

Instead of arguing that *Augustinus saga* in Sth. 3 derives from an older Icelandic redaction, as proposed by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, I would like to posit that the saga, with the possible exception of the introductory geographical matter, is a translation of an as yet unidentified Low German redaction. This redaction was related in structure and matter to the legend in the Low German *Passionael*, but like the other legends translated from Low German, *Augustinus saga* derives from a version that was much longer than the one in the *Passionael*, a version that contains deviating and additional matter also found in the *Legenda aurea*. That the source of *Augustinus saga* in *Reykjahlólabók* was Low German is suggested by the consistent appearance of Low German loans, although with variable frequency from chapter to chapter. Moreover, whenever passages in the Icelandic and Low German redactions correspond, the verbal relationship is clearcut.

At the outset the complicated textual history of the prose *Passionael* should be kept in mind. It contains Low German translations of High German legends, presumably compiled in a Dominican environment at the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries. The original legendary, *Der Heiligen Leben*, contained 251 texts, but the compilation underwent continuous revision through excision and addition of legends, and substitution of one redaction for another. Among the sources were the *Legenda aurea*, the High German *Märterbuch* and *Vers-Passional* as well as individual redactions of legends. The compiler rewrote his sources with a view to providing

⁹The attribution of this work to St. Augustine seems to be in error. *Aurea gemma* is the collective title given to a group of three anonymous treatises, composed between 1126 and 1136, dealing with the *Ars dictaminis*. Cf. "Aurea-Gemma-Gruppe" in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, I (Zürich and München: Artemis, 1979), col. 1241.

¹⁰Cf. Rudolfs Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie. Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1990). Editions of 30 related texts, together with German translations, may be found on pp. 396-595.

nothing but the bare plot.¹¹ The legend of St. Augustine derives from legend nr. 49 in the *Vers-Passional* (Williams-Krapp, p. 285). This monumental legendary, consisting of some 110,000 vv. and composed around 1300, together with the *Väterbuch* ('Vitae patrum'), presumably composed by the same compiler, is the most significant Middle High German compilation in respect to artistry and size. Its chief source was the *Legenda aurea*.¹²

The development of medieval German hagiography is germane to a discussion of *Reykjahólabók*. Time and again, details that appear to have been added by Björn turn out to be matter already contained in the legends that ultimately were the sources of the *Passional*. Moreover, recall that the *Legenda aurea* itself, which underwent a constant process of revision like the *Heiligen Leben*, was both a source for German legends and was translated into German eight times, of which one such translation was into Middle Low German, a redaction containing texts contaminated with matter drawn from additional sources.¹³ In light of the complicated history of the German legends and their great number it should not be surprising that it is no easy matter to trace the Low German texts that were translated into Icelandic by Björn Porleifsson.

In content, and therefore also structure, the older and the younger *Augustinus saga* represent two different hagiographic traditions, what may be considered a learned, primarily monastic tradition, and a popular tradition. Each redaction contains matter not found in the other, and the nature of the additional—or lacking—matter determines the distinctive tendency of each. On the whole, the emphasis in the older Icelandic redaction is on Augustine's learning and scholarship. Runólf's redaction contains two disputations between Augustine and heretics, the above-mentioned encounter with Faustus, extant in the oldest fragment, and a subsequent meeting with the heretic Fortunatus (139:29-140:5), which is also found in *Reykjahólabók* (111:7-24). The duplication of the disputations in the older saga reinforces the emphasis in this redaction on Augustine's superior learning. There are repeated references to the books Augustine composed (125:13-17; 145:5-24; 147:14-25) and his name is etymologized on the basis of his scholarly production (143:4-9). Augustine is depicted as the consummate scholar who sought all his life to improve what he had written. He reviewed his earlier publications, "at hann mætti þær glogliga skynia ok ranzsaka ok

¹¹Cf. Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters. Studien zu ihrer Überlieferungs-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986), pp. 188-279, esp. 271-72.

¹²Hellmut Rosenfeld, "Legende," *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, 2nd ed., ed. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1965), II:20-21.

¹³Konrad Kunze, "Jacobus a Voragine," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd rev. ed. Kurt Ruh (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), IV:459-60.

retta, þar sem honum þotti þurfa" (145:6-8), and warned implicitly against premature publication, for he "harmadi ok nockurar bækr fra ser teknar ok braut bornar af nockurum bræðrum, adr en hann hefði þelat eða emendat, þott hann hefði þær sidan rettar gervar" (145:15-18).

The older redaction is characterized by chapters devoted to the testimony of fellow saints regarding Augustine's intellectual gifts and scholarship. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) attests that "hann diktadi ok ritadi svo marga ok mikla hluti, at því sidr fær nõkkurr madr ritad hans bækr allar æ sinum alldri, at engi vinzt til þær allar at lesa" (143:2-4). The elderly Jerome considered Augustine his successor; the scriptural scholar "dæmði ongum odrum vidrkvæmiligra æ hendi at fela vanda ok ahyggju at bera fyrir heilagri kristni almenniligri en þessum hinum sæla Augustino" (143:18-20). St. Prosper of Aquitaine (d. after 455) summarizes Augustine's intellectual gifts and scholarship: "Heilagr Augustinus var hvass i hugviti, blidr i mafi, frodr a þessa heims ritningar, starfsfullur i erfvidum fyrir kristinni, biatr i hversdagligri disputan, forsiall i allri sinni athófn, sannkristinn i skyringu truar varrar, glóggv i losan vandra spurminga, athugasamr i sigran villumanna, viss ok varr i pydingu laugsamligra ritinga" (143:24-28). Finally, a certain "virduligr ok viss meistari" compares Augustine to other Doctors of the Church and declares him the victor "bædi at bokfræði ok briostviti alla kennifedr heilagrar kristni" (144:1-2).

The above matter is not only characteristic of Runólf's redaction but also unique to it. The pervasive learned spirit and discourse of the older *Augustinus saga* are notably absent in Björn Porleifsson's legend. Instead, the 16th-century version is a popular redaction—which is not to say that the source could not have found favor in a monastic environment—that favors amusing anecdotes over the dry facts of intellectual and ecclesiastical history. In place of the testimony of learned men, we are presented with a series of posthumous miracles, one of them quite titillating, narrative gems that exemplify the redaction's popularizing tendency. Whereas Runólf's *Augustinus saga* is primarily edifying, Björn's version combines the didactic with the gossipy and entertaining, with the latter frequently predominating.

A striking example of the different orientations of the two redactions is evident in the manner they report the events associated with the Translation of St. Augustine. The older redaction briefly notes his death—"ok milli bænarorða sofnaði hann með feðrum sinum i goðri elli til himinrikis af þessum heimi" (146:33-34)—and burial (147:2), and then launches into a disquisition on Augustine, the writer, teacher, and paragon of Christian behavior (147:2-148:2). The subsequent chapter is brief (148:4-14) and explains, after one more reference to Augustine's oeuvre, that because of unrest in Sardinia, his body was removed from Hippo:

Virðuligr hans likarni var i fyrstu fluttr or sinni borg Yppon fyrir sakir utriðar i Sardinarey, er liggir fyrir Affrica, en síðan var hann fluttr af Leobrando Langbarða konungi i þa borg, er Pavia heitir, ok Ticinum kallaz oðru nafne, ok vegsamliga varðveitir i Petrs kirkiu með micklum fekostnaði, aðr konungrinn fengi helgan dominn. (148:9-14)

This laconic notice of the Translation by the Lombard king, Liutprand (r. 712-44), contrasts sharply with the version in *Reykjahólabók*, where ch. 21 contains an account punctuated by a series of miraculous obstacles. Björn's anecdote corresponds to that found in the *Passionael* (Cxxxii, a-b) and the *Legenda aurea* (ch. CXXIV)¹⁴; according to the latter the Translation took place in 718. Liutprand had sent messengers for the body, and the king himself met the remains in Genoa. When he ordered the body to be taken to Pavia, it became so heavy that it could not be moved. The saintly king understood what was happening and promised to have a church built in Genoa. Thereupon the body could be moved. The miracle of the immovable relics recurs and Liutprand, fearing that he may not be able to get the sacred remains to Pavia after all, finally promises to have a church built in St. Augustine's honor in each place where they spend the night. In this fashion the procession finally reaches its destination.

The Translation is followed in Björn's redaction by an anecdote that one could interpret as a case of saintly one-upmanship. Ch. 22 contains the account of a pilgrimage from Germany and France undertaken in 912--so the *Legenda aurea* (p. 565), which also contains the story, as does the *Passionael* (Cxxxii, b-c)--by a group composed *inter alia* of lepers and cripples. Their intention was to visit the graves of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome to seek healing. Near Pavia St. Augustine appears to them, however, and reroutes their pilgrimage by suggesting that they visit his church instead. After consulting among themselves, the pilgrims follow the saint's advice. They call upon him and many are cured. News of the healings spreads far and wide with the result that the sick throng to Pavia, leaving behind their crutches and staffs as testimony of their healing. The upshot was that "þetta varð opt so miklit at þat varð at brenna upp og snara vt wr kirkivnne saker orymes og þreynnnginngar" (125:29-31). Jacob a Voragine does not go quite as far; he merely reports that the monks were forced to remove the implements left behind because they prevented entry into and exit from the church.

The longest miracle tale in *Reykjahólabók* is also found in the *Passionael* (Xcccii, c-d) and the *Legenda aurea* (pp. 562-63). It attests the less savory practices involving the acquisition of relics. In short, the anecdote relates what happens when devotion to a saint and avarice intersect (126:24-128:11). A pilgrim, deeply devoted to

¹⁴Th. Graesse, ed., Jacobi a Voragine. *Legenda Aurea, vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta*, 3rd ed. 1890 (rpt. Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969), p. 561.

St. Augustine, visits his grave, and longs for a relic of the saint. He bribes the monk in charge with a sum so large he cannot resist. The monk cuts a finger off an unidentified corpse, wraps it in silk, and gives it to the pilgrim, who thereupon wears it around his neck, believing it a relic of the saint. Realizing the purity of his heart and the pilgrim's devotion to the saint, God works a miracle: the anonymous finger turns into Augustine's own and many miracles ensue. News of the wonder-working relic reaches Pavia, and the monk confesses how he had tricked the foreigner. It turns out that the saint indeed is missing a finger. In consequence, "settv sidan mvncken er geyrnde af sinv emmbætte og straffv dv hann storlega fyrer þetta og fiengv avdrvm efiera at geyrna helgan domen" (128:9-11).

Not only the miracle tales reveal a raconteur's pleasure in story, but also other accounts, notably the popular anecdote of St. Augustine's encounter with a child while meditating on the mystery of the Trinity (116:3-117:9). Not all redactions of the legend of St. Augustine contain the charming story of the saint's encounter with the child who is attempting to empty the ocean into a little hole he has dug in the sand. The tale is not found in the *Legenda aurea*, the *Vers-Passional*, or Runólf's version, but it occurs in two Low German versions, the *Passionael*, and the so-called *Niederrheinisches Augustinusbuch* from the fifteenth century.¹⁵ The latter attests the late medieval tendency to augment legends with matter drawn from a variety of sources in the interest of producing a vernacular compilation transmitting the hagiographic tradition in its entirety (cf. Obhof, p. 107 and passim). A comparison of corresponding passages from the episode in the *Passionael* and the *Augustinusbuch* immediately reveals a significant discrepancy of discourse. In the *Passionael* the first half of the anecdote reads as follows:

To ener tijt ghink sunte Augustinus bi dem mere. vnde betrachtete mit grottem ernste. wo he de hyllighen dreuoldicheit vth grunden mochte. do sach he eyn schone kind sitten by dem mere. vnde id goeth alletijd vth deme mere myt eneme clenen lepele. in eyn clene kuleken. Do sede he. Wat menstu dar mede. dat kynt sede. Ik wil dat grote meer in de clenen kulen gheten. Do sede he. kynd dat machstu nicht doen. wente dat is vnmoghelik to doende. (Cxxxi,c)¹⁶

¹⁵Ute Obhof, ed., *Das Leben Augustins im Niederrheinischen Augustinusbuch' des 15. Jahrhunderts. Überlieferungs- und Textgeschichte. Teiledition* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991). It is not clear when the tale entered the prose legends. Söder's comment, "Der Gesamthalt und selbst die Anordnung der einzelnen Episoden stimmen in V[ers] P[assional] und P[rosa] P[assional] genau überein" (p. 159), suggests that the episode relating St. Augustine's meeting with the child by the seashore did not exist in Koberger's 1488 imprint, which Söder used as the basis of his investigation.

¹⁶One time St. Augustine was walking by the ocean and earnestly contemplating how he might be able to fathom the Holy Trinity. Whereupon he saw a beautiful child sitting by the ocean and it kept pouring water from the ocean into a little hole with a small

Here, as throughout the *Passionael* the text is characterized by a paratactic style, devoid of descriptive detail, and transmitting merely the barest essentials of action and dialogue. The skeletal discourse above becomes even more pronounced if one draws on the *Augustinusbuch* for comparison:

Vp eyn tzijt, de wijle dat hey de boiche van der heilger drijueldicheit maichde, so gynck hey alsus vyss na synre gewoynden, ind as hey alleyn vurgynck, betraichende van der heilger drijueldicheit, so vant hey da vp deme oyuer des meers eyn kyntgyn sitzen van alze wonderlicher suerheit. Ind dat kyntgyn hatte eyn kuylgen gemaicht in de erde vp deme oyuer, as de spelende kyndergyn vp der straissen pleynt. Dat kyntgyn hatte in synre hant eyn silueren leffelgyn ind schepde dat wasser vis deme meer in dat kuylgyn. Ind doe der heilge eirsam buschoff dat kyntgyn also ernstlich sach sitzen, so vestgede hey synen ganck ind bleyff ewenich stayn. Ind hey geynck tzo hantz vort ind groitte dat kyntgyn myt mynlicher goederteirenheit ind vragede it, wat dat it dede. Dat kyntgin antwerde eme mit groisser ernsticheit ind saicht: 'Ich wil dyt gantze meer vyss scheppen, ind mach ich, so wil ich it alzo male in myn kuylgyn geysssen.' Van deser antwerden des kyndes wart der heilge man verweckt tzo alze zeymlichen ind eirsamen lachen ind antwerde eme goiderteirlichen ind saichte: 'O goide kynt, we souldes du dat mogen doyn, want dyt meer is grois ind dyn leffelgyn, da du myt schepes, ys cleyn ind dat kuylgyn, dair du in schepes, is ouch cleyn.' (pp. 191-93)¹⁷

The most striking difference between the two Low German versions is St. Augustine's response to the child's wish to pour the ocean into the hole. Whereas in the *Passionael* the saint categorically informs the child of the impossibility of the undertaking, he is a much more appealing interlocutor in the *Augustinusbuch*. His implicit skepticism, revealed by his amusement at what the child has told him, is masked by a kind inquiry

spoon. He then said: What are you trying to do? The child said: I want to pour the large ocean into the little hole. Then he said: Child, you can't do that because that is impossible.

¹⁷One time, while he was writing the books on the Holy Trinity, he was taking a walk, as he was wont to do, and as he was walking alone, contemplating the Holy Trinity, he came across a child of wondrous beauty sitting by the sea shore. And the child had dug a hole in the ground by the shore, as children playing on the street are wont to do. The child had a silver spoon in his hand and ladled water from the ocean into the hole. And when the holy worthy bishop saw the child sitting there so earnestly, he went over and stood still for a while. And he stepped forward and greeted the child with friendly kindness and asked it what it was doing. The child answered him very seriously and said: 'I want to empty the entire ocean, and I want to pour all of it into my hole.' The child's answer aroused the holy man to considerable honest laughter and he answered the child kindly and said: "Dear child, how are you going to be able to do that, since the ocean is big but the spoon with which you are ladling is small, and the hole into which you are ladling it is also small."

as to how the task is to be accomplished. Through descriptive detail, both of the figures and their actions, the redactor of the *Augustinusbuch* has achieved a dramatic scene that engages the reader.

The Icelandic version of this account is a translation of a redaction that was related to that in the *Augustinusbuch*. It is approximately the same length, while some details from the Low German text are missing, others are additional to it. The italicized passages below represent text corresponding to that in the *Augustinusbuch*, but not found in the *Passionael*:

<Svo> finnst og skrifat af þessum fyrer greindum herra sancte Avgvstino. *at hann hafde eina bok af heilagre þrenningv. Og þa eitt sinne æ medan at hann var þvi vercke. at hann gieck j bvrty wr stadnum Yponensi einn fraz ollum monnum saker divplegrar ahyggiv og hvgsann er hann hafde sett j sitt hiarta hverssv at hann matthe na at skilia allann grvndvoll gvddomsenns vmm nockvra partta er heilagre þrenningv thil kæme. og gieck langs med einne siafar strondv. og þa er hann hafde med þessare hvgsun geingit nockvra stvnd. þa fieck hann at sia hvar at eitt vng menne sath æ sandenum allt vid sioen og hafde eina silfvr skeid j herndenne og hafde giortih nidr j sann denn lithla grof med spænenum. en þa sem hann hafde giortt grofina so divpa sem hann villde. þa thok /hann\ at avsa med spænenum vatnet vpp j grofina er þat hafde giortt. Þetta vndrazt gvdz vinvr Avgvstinvs og geingvr at barnnenv og horfer at þat nockvra stvnd. og mællte sidan med heilsvnar ordum so seigiande. heill þv vngvr sveinn sagde hann. eda hvat æ þat at þyda er þv giorer. barnit svarade. Sier þv ecki hvat eg giorer. eg ætlar at avsa allt þetta vatnith er þv sier med spæne minum vpp j grofina þessa hina lithlv. þa broside Avgvstinvs at pillthenum og sagde. Sier þv ecki ath sannvrenn dreckvr jafn opt sem þv eys. og er þetta þier omavgvlegh at giora. þviat siorenn sem þv eys er mikill enn grofen lihel. (116:3-24)*

The saint's response to the child's explanation of what he is doing diverges slightly from that in the *Augustinusbuch*. As happens in the *Passionael*, Augustine informs the child that he cannot do what he proposes, but he also gives the explanation for his statement—found in neither Low German version—that the sand swallows up the water as quickly as he pours it in. Whereas both longer versions agree in having the saint observe the child for a while, the Icelandic legend lacks the comparison of the young boy's activity with that of other children.

The striking similarity, partly in content but especially in length, between the Icelandic account and that in the *Augustinusbuch* is further evidence that Björn Porleifsson's Low German sources of the translated legends, while related to the texts in the *Passionael*, were nevertheless on the whole characterized by a verbosity notably

absent in the Low German legendary. Consequently, one can confidently posit Björn's translated legends as faithful renderings--rather than re-creations--of his Low German sources.

The distinction between a learned (Runólfur) and a popular (Björn) redaction of *Augustinus saga* is here introduced as a means of focussing on what differentiates the two texts, in the former the emphasis on Augustine's learning, which derives from written sources, in the latter the inclusion of matter, primarily the miracles, that presumably were transmitted orally before they came to be written down in the High Middle Ages. Björn's redaction ultimately derives from a Low German text that was closely related to the source of the legend in the *Passionael* and that itself presumably had drawn on the *Legenda aurea* for some of its matter. Björn's redaction follows the text of the *Passionael*, except for the additional introductory geographical matter and two visions involving St. Jerome (118:17-122:8). Furthermore there are two changes of sequence (Monica's dream and Augustine's flight; Augustine's way of life and habits at table). The additions and the slightly different order presumably had existed in Björn's source, which was on the whole quite verbose. Only once in the younger *Augustinus saga* are we permitted a glimpse of the spirit that informed the vita composed by Augustine's contemporary, which is still so evident in Runólfur's redaction. At the conclusion of the anecdote about Augustine's aversion to gossip at meals, we read in the younger redaction that he threatened to leave the table when such happened:

"... og bad þa þegia eda skyllde hann ganga j bvrtrv frá þeim. eda latha bera mathan bvr af favtvnm. og segir at þeir vrdv honvm hlydoger og so vikvr vppa at saa sem fyrst hefvr samsett þessa historia. mæler so. O þv gode gvdz vinvr hvat optlega mætter þv oss strafa ef þv sæter med oss vnder bordvm æ hverivm deige þar sem vær eige at einns synndgvm sialfer. oss. vid vora navnnga. vtan jafn vel fyrer alla sem heyra til slikra ræda. (114:11-17)

A corresponding passage exists in the *Passionael*, although, as is generally the case, the text is much shorter:

Swyghet vnde spreket den mynschen nicht to na. anders ik gha van der tafelen. edder ik wil de versche vth doen. de vp deme discke staen. O leue Augustine. scholdestu myt vns ouer der tafelen sitten. wo vaken mostestu de versche vth doen. (Cxxx, a-b)¹⁸

Here, as throughout *Augustinus saga*--as well as the other texts deriving from Low German sources--we have an example of some of the differences between the two legendaries: greater verbosity in *Reykjahólabók* versus "Sprunghaftigkeit" in the

¹⁸Be silent and do not malign others, else I shall leave the table or I shall have the food on the dishes taken away. O dear St. Augustine, if you were to sit with us at table, how often would you have to have the food taken away.

Passionael; indirect discourse in the one--usually this is the case in the *Passionael* redactions--but direct discourse in the other.

The text above brings us to the final point, that is, the source of Björn's *Augustinus saga*. On the one hand, the divergences in matter between the older and younger redactions are too great to posit that Björn "has rewritten and modernized in style" an unknown version of the older Icelandic saga" (Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 1962:251), even if one ignores the fact that Björn demonstrably does not rewrite, that is, revise the discourse of his sources. On the other hand, the correspondence between the structure and matter of *Augustinus saga* and the legend in the *Passional* is too great and Björn's saga contains too many loans from Low German not to postulate a Low German redaction as source, a redaction that ultimately resembled the source of the *Passionael*, namely the Middle High German text of the *Vers-Passional*.

Although the frequency of Low German loans varies from chapter to chapter, they recur throughout the saga, the prefatory geographical matter excluded, and in cases of corresponding text, the congruity between Björn's redaction and that in the *Passionael* is striking. To be sure, many Low German loan words already existed in the Icelandic of his time, for example, *ærlegr* (cf. 98:12; 101:23; 115:13; 117:10, etc.), but others were unusual, in one instance enough so that Björn added a definition. In the chapter devoted to "einn kettare er Fortvnatvs hiel" he immediately explains: "enn kettare er skilia ssa madr er bodar ranngann atrvnad og fer med fiolkynge og dyrkar anndskothan fyrer gyd og hans reglv" (111:7-9). The technique also occurs in other legends, and as elsewhere the loan words in *Augustinus saga* mimic the usage of the *Passionael*. Björn Porleifsson's *Augustinus saga*, for all its correspondence in language, structure, and content with the legend of St. Augustine in the *Passionael*, is nevertheless not a translation of the same. Björn's source was a "popular" Low German redaction that resembled in discourse and leisurely narrative--but was not identical with--the text known as the *Niederrheinisches Augustinusbuch*. Björn's source exemplified a late medieval tendency in the Low German language area to present in a leisurely discourse the totality of a legend that was the product of centuries of transmission. Björn's *Augustinus saga* appears to be the sole witness to a remarkable Low German version of the legend.