

***The Saga of Ambrosius and Rosamunda:* A Parallel Translation of the Oldest Icelandic Version in AM 576 b 4to**

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the first English translation of any version of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, an Icelandic chapbook translation that survives in 20 manuscripts, the oldest being an abridged version of the narrative in AM 576 b 4to, dated to c. 1700. This abridged and oldest witness is translated here, accompanied by an edition of the early modern Icelandic text. The romance recounts the adventures of the young merchant Ambrosius, his bride Rosamunda, and his friend Marsilius, and includes motifs that circulated widely in pre-modern European literature such as the pound of flesh motif and Whittington's cat. The text was very likely translated into Icelandic from a Danish chapbook in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article présente la première traduction anglaise d'*Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*. Cette saga est une romance islandaise qui survit dans 20 manuscrits, dont le plus ancien est une version abrégée de l'histoire au manuscrit AM 576 b 4to, daté du c. 1700. Cette version de la romance (abrégée mais aussi la plus ancienne) est traduite ici, accompagné d'une édition du texte islandais. L'histoire raconte les exploits du jeune marchand Ambrosius, de sa fiancée Rosamunda et de son ami Marsilius. L'histoire contient aussi motifs littéraires qui circulait dans la littérature européenne prémoderne, y compris ceux de la livre de chair et du chat de Whittington. L'histoire a été traduite ou adapté en islandais presque sûrement d'un chapbook danois dans la dernière moitié du XVIIe siècle.

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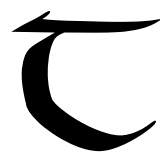
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Introduction

he oldest known Icelandic attestation of the post-Reformation chapbook translation *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* appears in the manuscript AM 576 b 4to, found today in the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík.¹ It is a small paper manuscript of 36 leaves, including several additional slips of paper preserving notes written by the manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (1663–1730).² The texts contained in AM 576 b 4to are short summaries and excerpts (some of them extremely brief at only a few lines long) of fifteen Old Norse and post-Reformation Icelandic texts. Most of these summaries and excerpts are of *riddarasögur* (translated or original Icelandic romances), while others are translations of chapbooks, *exempla* (short tales illustrating a moral or doctrine), and *rímur* (narrative poetry).³ While multiple scribal hands are present in the manuscript, the majority was copied by Árni Magnússon himself (Loth 162), including *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*. As the first text in the manuscript on fols 1r–v, 3r–4v, and 6r–v, it is interrupted at fols 2 and 5 by two small AM slips.

As a whole, the manuscript AM 576 b 4to has been dated to around the year 1700 (Kålund), making this the oldest witness of an Icelandic version of the story of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*. At approximately 1,600 words, this summary version is just over a quarter of the length of the oldest copies of the full narration of the story, which survives in nineteen other manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in two distinct versions. One of the two versions of the full saga (in London, British Library Add. MS 24,969) has recently been edited with an introduction that provides a more detailed account of the saga's different versions, manuscripts, and relationships among them (McDonald Werronen and Kapitan).

As mentioned, there are two AM slips bound into the manuscript in the midst of the saga. The first of these is fol. 2, with only six short lines of text that do not refer to *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, but to *Parcivals saga*, a saga which is not preserved in the manuscript. The note reads: “Partsifal, Gamure|tis filius erat | Antiqvissimi Rhythmi | Germanici de eo | impressi in Bibl. hps. | á Witteb.” [Parsifal, the son of Gamuret: there was a most ancient Germanic rhyme about it printed in the library in the capital city at Wittenburg].⁴

The second AM slip bound between leaves of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* and comprising fol. 5 does pertain to this text, with speculations about how the story may have arrived in Iceland:

Sagann af Ambrosius | oc Rosamunda | er mjög nyleg i stylnum, |
 translaterud öfæd sidla | i seculo 17.mo Eg true | af Jone
 Þorlákssyne. | Er nockud lík því æfin|tire um 4. kaupmenn, sem | til
 er þryckt i Dönsku. | Það sem ä mille ber, | mun vera ur cerebro
 translatoris.⁵

The saga of Ambrosius and Rosamunda is very recent in its style, translated undoubtedly late in the seventeenth century by, I believe, Jón Þorláksson. It is somehow similar to the story of four merchants, which is printed in Danish. That which is different between them must be an invention of the translator.

The translator mentioned, Jón Þorláksson (c. 1643–1712), was a sýslumaður (county magistrate) educated at Hólar and known to have translated King Christian V's Norwegian law code into Icelandic; he also composed younger *fornaldarsögur* such as *Ármanns saga ok Þorsteins gála* and commissioned *rímur* based on *Trójumanna saga* (Ólason III: 315). Given Jón's apparent interest in literature and ability to translate from Scandinavian into Icelandic, the idea that he also translated *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* from Danish is not far fetched.

However, although Árni Magnússon's note suggests that the saga is a translation, Seelow in his study of Icelandic translations of German chapbooks disagrees, stating rather that "hier hat Árni Magnússon nicht erkannt, daß es sich nicht um eine Übersetzung, sondern um eine Neuschöpfung im Stil der übersetzten Volksbücher handelt" [here Árni Magnússon did not recognize that it is not a translation, but a recreation in the style of translated chapbooks] (269–70). Seelow also notes that *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* has more in common with the Danish chapbook *Historie om den dyrekøbte Isabella* (*Story of the Dearly-Bought Isabella*) than it does with the Icelandic *Saga af fjórum kaupmönnum* (*Tale of Four Merchants*) that Árni Magnússon suggests as a point of comparison (193–94, n. 399).⁶

Further research into the saga's transmission history and connections to other similar texts such as *Marsílius saga og Rósamundu*, will undoubtedly shed further light on the question of its origin (see also McDonald Werronen and Kapitan 180–81). In addition, considering the context of both the text's reception and popularity in Iceland and its printed source material from (likely Germany via) Denmark, the literary motifs featured in this story merit critical examination and consideration in themselves — not least among them the pound of flesh motif, and its antisemitic overtones,⁷ and the Whittington's cat motif in which the protagonist sells a cat to the ruler of a mouse-infested foreign country to increase his wealth.⁸ It is hoped that the present translation, together with the previously edited text of one of the full versions of the story, will facilitate such much-needed further studies.

The summary in AM 576 b 4to contains two passages that have been underlined — almost certainly by the scribe — to indicate quotations. These appear to be direct transcriptions from a now lost manuscript that preserved a full prose version of the saga in Icelandic. The first passage is the opening of the saga: “J Nordtumbra lande er nu liggur under Fracklands vellde, riede fyrir einu hierade burgeys sa er Marus hiet” [In Northumbria, which now lies under the power of France, a burgess called Marus ruled a certain district].

The second underlined passage also occurs early in the story. This time it is placed in parentheses and introduced as “formalia ur Sögunne eru þesse hier” [these are quotations from the saga]. Two sentences follow this, connected by “og” [and]: “haf þig j stad frä minum augum þu beisevikt med þina skammarfulla dækiu, og komed mier alldreí fyrir augu vondsleg kvikende” [get away from my eyes, you villain, with your shameful hussy], and [never come before my eyes, disgraceful creature]. These, like the opening quotation, can be found preserved in exactly the same form in two other manuscripts: Add. 24,969 (c. 1733) and Lbs 423 fol. (dated broadly to the early eighteenth century). All other manuscripts preserving the full version of the saga omit the reading “þu beisevikt,” with three exceptions from nineteenth-century manuscripts. The first, in Lbs 1495 4to gives an alternate reading “þú illi af glapi” [you evil fool] (301v). The copy in Lbs 678 4to, closely related to Add. 24,969, gives the reading “þú veisi výt” (194v), which is very likely a scribal error resulting from the misreading of the initial “b” (i.e. “beisi výt”) in an earlier exemplar, suggesting the word was unfamiliar to the scribe. The fragmentary, and at times illegible, ÍB 215

8vo, contains an unclear reading “þú [0000]sette” (5r), which still hints at a reading related to the others. The earliest and probably original reading from the summary version presented here in AM 576 b 4to contains the form *beisevikt*.⁹ This word can be traced to Middle Low German *bôsewicht* [villain] (cf. Middle High German *bæsewicht* and Modern German *Bösewicht*), though it is most likely to have arrived in these Icelandic manuscripts through a Danish intermediary. Therefore, this reading can be considered a *lectio difficilior*: it was not in common use when most of the manuscripts were written, it appears in two of the likely oldest manuscripts of both versions of the unabridged saga, and it is miscopied and disappears altogether later in the tradition.

Assuming that the underlined passages are direct transcriptions from a lost earlier witness of the saga, it is also interesting to analyze the distribution of variants in the first reading, with which the summary opens: “J Nordtumbra lande er nu liggur under Fracklands vellde, riede fyrir einu hierade burgeys sa er Marus hiet.” Beyond this summary, the phrase *Francklands vellde* is used in seven manuscripts preserving full versions of the saga: Lbs 423 fol., Lbs 354 4to, JS 632 4to, Lbs 998 4to, Lbs 4852 4to, Rask 32, SÁM 131; it is probably also used in an eighth, ÍB 215 8vo, although the reading there is unclear. The word *vellde* is omitted in six further manuscripts of the saga (Add. 24,969, ÍB 224 8vo, Lbs 678 4to, Lbs 2318 4to, Lbs 3936 4to, and Westin 105). One manuscript omits the geographical reference entirely (Lbs 1977 4to).

Another notable geographical reference is found in the place name Genidien, where Ambrosius spends the winter on his way home from his trading expedition after his ship is blown off course: “kemur ä andvidre, og hrekur þa afleidis til genidien, nærre höfudborg landsins” [there came a headwind that blew them off course to Genidien, near the capital of that country] (3v). The identity of this place in the real world, if it is meant to correspond to one, is unclear based on the text in both this version of the text and in others. While the place name Genidien clearly begins with “g” in this manuscript, and in fact is written in a more formal and legible script than the script used throughout the rest of the text, it may actually be a scribal error for Fenidien/Fænidien [Venice].¹⁰ Such a reading also appears in each of the manuscripts in one of the two main groups of younger manuscripts of this text (McDonald Werronen and Kapitan 190, 201).¹¹

The text of the summary version of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* is edited here for the first time, alongside an English translation — the first translation of any version of this Icelandic story. To present the summary version of the saga is particularly valuable for scholars as it is the oldest iteration of the story; especially the present edition will thus be of interest in relation to McDonald Werronen and Kapitan's previously published edition of the saga.

For the edition, I have transcribed the text semi-diplomatically and therefore largely reproduced the original orthography. Some of the irregular features have been standardized, but the text has not been normalized. Various accents on vowels are retained as they appear in the manuscript, with the exception of the hairline stroke on “u” as it is a common feature in early modern Icelandic manuscripts that was not used to indicate length.

Word division and capitalization, as well as punctuation, have been normalized to improve the text's readability. For example, only proper nouns and sentence-initial words are capitalized. Abbreviations are expanded following the orthography of the scribe and indicated by italics for both suspensions and contractions. Breaks or shifts of perspective in the story (indicated by white space spanning approximately 3–8 graphemes in the manuscript) are identified in both the edition and translation with a line break, while indented paragraphs have also been added in the translation to aid readability.

Unclear readings are in square brackets [], additions by the scribe appear between insertion marks ` ', and supplied text is given in angle brackets < >. Emendations are identified in footnotes to the edition. Underlining and parentheses are retained in the edition where they are used in the original manuscript, and in the translation, the underlining has been rendered in *italics* to indicate when the summary quotes from a full version of the saga. Folio breaks in the manuscript are shown between two straight bars || in the edition and indicated by a single straight bar | in the translation.

For the translation, I have standardized verb tenses to the past tense to create a narrative flow that is more natural in English than the original text's switching between present and past would allow. Character names have in some cases been used in the translation where the original text uses a pronoun, in order to minimize the potential for confusion; I have aimed to do this sparingly. For person and place names, I have generally used their nominative form from the text (less accented vowels), with

the exception of Rosamunda's alias *Mikill*, which I have normalized to the Danish name Mikkell, following the form suggested by the first mention of the name (*Mickil*). It should also be noted that, rather than using a declined form of the name *Rosamunda* in the title of the saga (i.e. the expected dative form ending in -u), I have retained the normalized form *Rosamunda*, which is found both in the title of the summary on fol. 1r (though here as *Rosemunda*) and in Árni Magnússon's note on fol 5r (see also McDonald Werronen and Kapitan 195–96). Finally, the word *borgmeistari* is translated as “burgermeister” (rather than “mayor”).¹² While this word choice is somewhat archaic, the concept that it points to — an executive college of three Bürgermeisters governing certain early modern German towns and city states — matches the sense of the title held by the four otherwise nameless characters in the Icelandic text. And while the saga is not set in Germany, retaining the concept of a town governance system that is hinted at in the loan word *borgmeistari* is likewise reasonable given the source text for the Icelandic saga likely comes from Germany via Denmark.

Edition & English Translation

[1r]

Extract ur Sögunne af Ambrosio og
Rosemunda

Excerpt from the Saga of Ambrosius and
Rosamunda

I Nordtumbra lande er nu liggur under Fracklands vellde, riede fyrir einu hierade burgeys sa er Marus hiet,¹³ sonur þess manns¹⁴ var Ambrosius. Honum feck fader hanns skip og kaupeýre til Jndialands, þar sa hann vœna meý ad nafne Rosamunda, hveria hann keypte af fôður hennar sem Johan het fyrir 10000. gyllene. Og med því hans kaupeýrer ecke tilhrôck, þá lânade hann af einum gidinge 30. gyllene sem hann vantade, med þeim kostum ad þau skýlldu betalast innan þriggia ára,¹⁵ og j leiguna skyllde Ambrosius gefa gidinginum 3. merkur af sinu eigin holde. Fôr svo Ambrosius felaus med Rosamundam heim til Nordtumbrelandz. Fader hanns Marus vard vid þetta æfa reidur, rak Ambrosium frâ sier og villde hverke kannast vid hann nie konuna (formalia ur sôgunne eru þesse hier: haf þig j stad fr(ä)¹⁶ minum augum þu beisevikt med þina skammarfulla dækiu, og komed mier alldrei fyrir augu vondsleg kvikende).¹⁷ Þau voru nu rädalaus, töku sier svo fyrir til lifs uppheldis, ad Rosamunda sông fyrir dyrum rikra manna, og forþienade þar med ølmosu j fyrstu. Enn sidan leigdu þau sier litid hus, og toku ad selia drýck, og

In Northumbria — which now lies under the authority of France — there was a burghess called Marus who ruled a certain district. The son of this man was Ambrosius. He received from his father a ship and cargo for India. There, he saw a beautiful maiden by the name of Rosamunda, whom he bought from her father (who was called Johan), for 10,000 guilders. But since his cargo was not sufficient to cover the cost, he borrowed from a certain Jew the 30 guilders that he lacked — on the condition that they should be repaid within three years, and that Ambrosius should give the Jew three marks of his own flesh as interest.

So Ambrosius travelled with Rosamunda home to Northumbria, penniless. When his father Marus found out about this, he got very angry, drove Ambrosius out, and refused to acknowledge either him or his wife (these are quotations from the saga: *get away from my sight, you villain, with your shameful bussey; and: never come back to my sight, disgraceful creature*).

They were now at a loss what to do. At first, they took to supporting themselves such that Rosamunda sang at the doors of wealthy people and earned alms from that.

nærdu sig þar með. |1v| Unnu og smäm saman svo ä, ad þau gätu keypt hused. J borgenne er þau j biuggu, voru fiörer borgmeistarar ögipter, þeir felldu hug til Rosamundam aller. Visse þa einge þeirra af annars huga. Nockru sidar giörde einn af þeim borgmeisturum, sinum Collegis þad forslag, ad senda Ambrosium til Jndialandz kaupferd, og meinte j hans fraveru ad nä äst konunnar. Hiner þrir fiellust strax ä þetta räd, og þeinkte sier hver, ad vinna þetta hid sama vid burtför Ambrosii. Sagde þo eingenn ödrum hvad underbiö. Þessu næst reiddu þeir ut skip, og feingu hann för heiman. Recommenderadi hann sina konu vin sinum ad nafne Marsilius, og sem þeir skildu feck Marsilius Ambrosio kött einn, og bad hann veria honum fyrir peninga. Ambrosio þotte þetta kynlegt, tök þö köttenn med.

Strax epter burtreist Ambrosii kemur einn af borgmeisturunum um kvöld j hus Rosamundæ, og talar til vid hana. Hun telst undan ä allar lunder, enn ad sidustu hötar borgmeistarenn henne öllu illu ef hun sinie, enn býdur henne 500. göllene ef

Later they rented a small house for themselves, took to selling ale, and survived on that. | They gradually saved so much, that they were able to buy the house.

In the town where they lived were four unmarried burgermeisters. They all lusted after Rosamunda, but none of them knew of the other's desire. Some time later, one of these burgermeisters suggested to his colleagues that they send Ambrosius on a trading voyage to India, and intended, in his absence, to get the woman into bed. The other three immediately agreed with this idea. Each of them imagined themselves achieving the same goal at Ambrosius's departure, but none of them said to the others what they were preparing. After this, they readied a ship and got him to leave home.

Ambrosius introduced his wife to a friend of his named Marsilius. As they parted, Marsilius gave Ambrosius a cat and asked him to trade it for money. Ambrosius thought this odd, but he brought the cat along.

Immediately after Ambrosius's departure, one of the burgermeisters came to Rosamunda's house in the evening and spoke with her. She declined him in every way, but in the end the burgermeister threatened her wickedly if she refused him,

hun vilie sinn vilia giðra. Hun þýkest vandt vidkomen, og lofar honum þessu, og stefner honum til annars kveldz med peningana um niundu stund. Hann geingur svo burtu gladur. Strax þar epter er¹⁸ |3r| annar borgmeistarenn, og fer allt ä sömu leid. Byður hann henne 1000. gyllene, og stefner hun honum til tiundu stundar. Vid honum burtgeingnum kemur sä þridie, lofar hann 1500. gyllinum, og ä ad koma um elleftu stund. Hinn fiörde byður 2000. gyllene, og stefner hun honum til tölfstu stundar. Villdu þeir fyrir eingann mun ad þetta uppkæmest. Þess ä milli kaupir Rosamunda af smid einum ad smida sier einn störan skäp med 4um hvolfum rammlega læstum og flýtur hann skäpinn j husid til hennar.

Ad äkvedenne stefnu kemur hinn fyrste borgmeistarenn til Rosamundam, telur henne peningana, og vænter svo þess er vid atte ad giefä. Dröst svo þetta til tiundu stundar, þa var barid ad dýrum. Þeim vard illt vid, og villdi borgmeistarenn leita til sins. Liet hun hann j eitt hvolfid ä skapnum, og læste aptur. Ä sömu leid för um hina þria. Medan sä fiörde er vid hana blidlega ad ræda, er äkaflega ad dýrum

and offered her 500 guilders if she would do his will. Rosamunda realized she was in a bad situation. She agreed to his offer and arranged for him to come with the money the next evening at the ninth hour. With that, he went away happy.

Immediately after this, | the second burgermeister arrived, and everything went the same way. He offered her 1,000 guilders and she arranged for him to come at the tenth hour. With his departure came the third: he promised 1,500 guilders and was to come at the eleventh hour. The fourth offered 2,000 guilders, and she asked him to come at the twelfth hour. Under no circumstances did any of them want this to be discovered.

In the meantime, Rosamunda commissioned a certain craftsman to build a large cabinet for her with four drawers with sturdy locks, and he brought the cabinet into the house for her.

At the appointed time, the first burgermeister came to Rosamunda, paid her the money, and then expected to get what they agreed on. This went on until the tenth hour, when there was a knock on the door. They were startled, and the burgermeister looked for an escape. She put him into one of the drawers of the cabinet and locked it. It went the same way with the other three.

bared. Krýpur hann j þad fiörda hvolf skapsins. Hun læsir svo hvolfinu, og likur upp hussdýrunum. Hier er þä kominn Marsilius med marga menn, og falar hann af henne |3v| þann störa skäp, og gefur henne peninga fyrir, og lætur hann strax um nöttena bera heim til sin. Þegar hann er heimkomenn lýkur hann upp hvolfunum hveriu epter annad, og finnur þar j þessa fiöra bidla. Þykiastr þeir meir enn sveiptir, og semia vid Marsilius sier hver med 1000. gýllinum, ad hann ei skule þessa þeira vanvirdu opin bera. Hafde þetta allt undertalad vered med Marsilio og Rosamunda. Nu er ad segia af Ambrosio, hann giörer göda kaupföör til Jndialandz og siglir þadan heimleidis med miklum audæfum. Ä heimleidene kemur ä andvidre, og hrekur þa afleidis til genidien, nærre höfudborg landsins, og biuggust þeir þar til vetrarlegu. Ä konge landsens lä su ä strida ad hvad sem hann ætlade sier til munns ad leg[g] rifu mys ur höndum honum, og vard med öngvu möte vid varnad. Þetta heyrde Ambrosius, og liet epter sier frietta, ad hann munde hier ä kunna bööt ad räda. Kongur hafde svo bod epter Ambrosio, og leitar rada til hanns. Seiger honum þetta sie svo j fyrstu til komid, ad¹⁹ hann hafe läted mödur sina sitia ä fötskör fyrir bordi sinu medan hann mattadest,²⁰ og kastad til hennar af borde sinu því er hann ecke sialfur villdi. Hier

While the fourth was speaking tenderly to her, there came a loud knock on the door. He crouched down into the fourth drawer of the cabinet. She then locked the drawer and opened the door of the house. Marsilius had arrived with many men. He asked for | the large cabinet from her, gave her money for it, and had it immediately carried off to his house. When he came home, he opened the drawers one after another and found the four suitors there in them. They felt more than deceived, and each negotiated with Marsilius that for 1,000 guilders he would not reveal their dishonour. This had all been arranged between Marsilius and Rosamunda.

Now it is said of Ambrosius that he had a good expedition to India and sailed from there for home with great wealth. On the way home, there came a headwind that blew them off course to Genidien, near the capital of that country, and they resided there during winter.

The king of the country had a particular problem: whatever he intended to put into his mouth, mice snatched out of his hands, and it was impossible to prevent this. Ambrosius heard about it and made it known and that he might have a solution. The king then called for Ambrosius and sought his counsel. He told him that this originally happened because he had made his mother sit on a footstool by his table

um [4r] hafe hun sig ävitad, enn hann reidst, og reked hana j burtu. Hafe hun svo sidan af hungre farest. Ambrosius amællte konge störum, rädlagde honum ad bidia skapare heimsins liknar og trua ä hann sidann, enn burt kasta skurgodum. Ef kongur þetta giöri, seigest Ambrosius, vilia siä räd hier vid, og seigest hafa dýr eitt j skipe sinu sem hier muni kunna til hiälpar ad verda. Kongur heiter þessu, og um morguninn kemur Ambrosius med köttinn, og slepper honum j musa höpin. Flyia þær allar, enn kongurinn kaupir köttinn, og gefur Ambrosio fyrir hann 14. skurgod giörd af gulli og silfri. Enn konge verður kristinn. Ur þessum skurgodum liet Ambrosius slä peni(n)ga og keypte fyrir þetta kattarverd skip hladed med dýrmætum audæfum, og sigldi svo um vorid med tveimur skipum heim til Nordtumbra landz.²¹

Pa nu Rosamunda vissi ad hann var til landz komen, villdi hun fagna honum/ prud biö²² sig og liet keira med sig j vagne ä mote honum. Enn sem hann sa hanna svo p'r'agtugt buna reiddest hann miög hrakte hana og slö svo hann braut hennar vinstra handlegg. Sagde hun hefde sviked

while he ate, and threw to her from his table what he did not want for himself. | She had scolded him for this, and he became angry and drove her away. She had then later died of hunger.

Ambrosius reproached the king strongly. He advised him to ask for mercy from the creator of the world and then also to believe in him and cast away his idols. If the king did this, Ambrosius said, he would find a solution, and he said he had an animal on his ship that might be able to help. The king promised to do this, and in the morning Ambrosius came with the cat, released it into the horde of mice, and they all ran away. The king bought the cat and gave Ambrosius fourteen idols made of gold and silver in exchange for it. Then the king became Christian. Ambrosius had money minted out of these idols and with this cat-price bought a ship loaded with treasures and wealth. And so, in the springtime, he sailed with two ships home to Northumbria.

When Rosamunda found out that he had arrived in the country, she wanted to welcome him. She put on beautiful clothing and drove in a wagon to meet him. But when he saw her so splendidly dressed, he became very angry, rebuked her, and struck her so hard that he broke

sig og teked fram hía sier. Rak hana svo
 |4v| burt og bannadi henni nockurn tima
 fyrir sin augu koma. Epter þetta, stöð²³
 hann sinn reikningskap fyrir
 borgmeisturum, fann og sinn vin
 Marsilium²⁴ til sagde honum annad
 skipid, og sagde allt hid sanna um
 kattarverdid, enn Marsilius gaf honum
 mikinn part af þessu fie. Sidan fortaldi
 hann Ambrosio öll vidskipti sin vid
 Rosamundam, enn Ambrosius²⁵ ätalde
 hann hardlega, og sagde honum allt hid
 sanna hve'r'su hun hefde ýfer²⁶ allann
 sinn aud komist, og hallded hreina tru
 vid hann. Jdradest hann þá epter ä enn
 gat ecke neitt adgiört, því hann visse
 eckert hvad af henne var orded. Lagdest
 nu stör vird ä hann af þessu, enn allur
 hanns audur söadest smäm og smäm svo
 vid vergangi lä. Midt j þessum hans
 raunum kemur gidingurinn sem hann var
 pening'an'a umskýlldugur, og 'þær' 3
 merkur af sinu holldde. Enn med því
 Ambrosius hafde nu hvorke efne ä
 peningana ad betala, nie helldur gat vid
 hitt sitt loford stadid. Þa stefnde
 gidingurenn þessu male under döm
 borgmeistaranna, enn þeir af misunnan
 og öþöcka til Ambrosium,²⁷ dæmdu hann
 skýlldugann ad betala til gidingsins, epter
 handskriftarennar medhallde.

her left arm. He said she had betrayed him
 and had been unfaithful to him. Then he
 drove her | away and forbade her from ever
 coming into his sight again.

After this, he settled his business with
 the burgermeisters and found his friend
 Marsilius. He gave him the second ship
 and told him everything about the cat-
 price, and then Marsilius gave him a large
 share of the money. He then told
 Ambrosius about everything that
 happened with Rosamunda — and
 reproached Ambrosius harshly³⁴ — and
 told him the whole truth about how she
 had come by her wealth and remained
 pure and faithful to him.

Ambrosius then regretted his actions
 but could do nothing about them since he
 did not know what had become of
 Rosamunda. A high toll then burdened
 him because of this, and all his wealth
 wasted away little by little, so that he was
 reduced to begging. In the midst of his
 troubles, the Jew — to whom he owed the
 money and the three marks of his flesh —
 appeared. But at that point, Ambrosius
 had neither the means to pay in money,
 nor could keep his promise. The Jew then
 made his case before the judgement of the
 burgermeisters, and out of envy and
 malice towards Ambrosius, they judged
 him obliged to pay the Jew according to
 the terms of the signed contract.

Nu vikur þar til er Rosamunda lá adur epter skambarenn. Þorðe hun ei heim aptur og rāfar um skögenn þar til hun finnur einn fiārmann, 'og býdur' honum alfata kaup, og þott hann trýði þessu eckj j fyrstu þar sem hun var svo vel klædd enn hann nóturlega, þa gjórdur þau þö um²⁸ [6r] sider med sier þesse kaup. Hun gieck sidann leidar sinnar, sem verða villdi,²⁹ hitti fyrir³⁰ ad kvollði einn bondagard, bad þar husa og vidtöku, og kallade sig Mickil. Feck hun kost ä því med því möti hun være j 3 är svina hirdir böndans, og gieck 'hun' ad þessum kosti. Svo bar til ad bondinn atti eitt sinn mäl fyrir landzdomaranum j stadnum og tapadi því, enn Mikill sagdi hann mundi ei hafa vel framfylgt, feck hann Mikli mälid, og skyllði hann vera³¹ friäls madur ef hann ynni það bondanum til handa ella hanns þræll. Vann Mikill þetta mäl, og öx honum virðing hier af, svo adrer sem mäl attu ad kiæra, gäfu honum sina mälstade, og vann hann avallt. Landzdömare þesse var gamall madur, rikur og barnlaus, baud Mikli ad vera sinn skrifari og ried hann það af. Mikill þocknaded honum vel j ollu svo hann arfleidde hann um sider. Þar epter dö landzdomarinn, og var Mikill kosinn j hans stad til landzdomara.

Now we turn back to where Rosamunda lay before, after her shameful beating. She did not risk going back home, and wandered around the woods until she found a certain herdsman and offered to buy his clothes. Although at first he did not believe it since she was so well dressed and he was wretched, they ended up going through | with the trade. She then went on her way, as it happened, and in the evening came upon a farm where she asked for accommodation and to be received, and she called herself Mikkil. The conditions she received were such that she would be the farmer's swineherd for three years, and she accepted these conditions.

It then happened that the farmer had a case before the district judge in the city and lost it; Mikkil said that he must not have conducted the case well. The farmer gave the case to Mikkil and said that he could be a free man if he were to win it on behalf of the farmer — otherwise he would remain his servant. Mikkil won the case and respect for him increased because of it, to the extent that others who had cases to be advocated gave them to him, and he always won.

The district judge was an old man, wealthy and childless, and he asked Mikkil to be his scribe and employed him as such. Mikkil pleased the judge so well in everything he did that in the end he

bequeathed his wealth to him. Later the district judge died, and Mikkel was chosen in his place as district judge.

Nu vikur aptur til Ambrosium ad hann hefur engann frid fyrir gidingnum, appellerar sinu mäle undann döme borgmeistaranna og til landzdömarans. Spurde landzdomarenn hveria vörn Ambrosius sæe hier j, enn hann qvadst einga sjä, svo og hver naudsýn honum geinged hefde til ad giefu ut soddann handskrift, enn Ambrosius sagde³² landsdömaranum allt af Meyar- [6v] kaupunnum j Jndialande. Landzdomarenn dæmde ad Ambrosius skyllde standa vid sina handskrift enn gidinguren skyllde siälfur skiera þær þriar merkur ur hanss holde, enn hanga ä hædstu gälga, ef hann skiære meira edur minna, og þorde gidingurinn ei til þess räda.

Landzdomarenn liet Ambrosium hiä sier vera nockra stund, og eitt sinn bad hann Ambrosium segia sier fra hvernem tilgeinged hefde þä hann hefde keypt konuna j Jndialande, og svo hvar hun være nu af ordenen. Ambrosius sagde honum nu allt hid sanna sem hann til vissi med storum harmatölum ad hann ei vissi hvad af henne vær[e] ordid. Svo geck landzdömarenn fra Ambrosio um litla stund, og kom inn til Ambrosium aptur j

Now we turn back to Ambrosius. He had no peace from the Jew, who called his case before the judgement of the burgermeisters, and to the district judge. The district judge asked what defense Ambrosius might see for himself — and he said he could not see any — and also what need had caused him to issue such a contract. Then Ambrosius told the district judge all about his bride-|purchase in India. The district judge ruled that Ambrosius should honour his contract — but that the Jew himself should cut the three marks from his flesh, or else hang on the highest gallows if he cut more or less. And the Jew would not dare to do this.

The district judge allowed Ambrosius to remain with him for a while. One day, he asked Ambrosius to tell him under what circumstances he had bought his wife in India, and then what had become of her. Ambrosius then told him the whole truth as he knew it, with a great amount of grief, and he said that he did not know what had become of her.

The district judge then left Ambrosius for a little while and came back to him in

kvenmanns klædum, kiende Ambrosius þar þá konu sina, og bad fyrirgiefningar ä sinne ävirðingu. Sette hun hann þar j hussbonda sæte og landzdomaratign, og sagde honum sina æfesögu, ad hun hefde alldrei vered dotter þess manns er hann hana afkeypti, helldur dotter Vilhiäls Jarls ä Sudur Eyium vid Skotland, og hefde hun þadan hertekenn vered. Tökust nu aster med Ambrosio og Rosamunda, og attu tvo syni hiet annar Cajus enn annar Amon. Vard Cajus sidan jarl yfer Sudur eyium, enn Amon landsdomare yfer Nordtumbra lande efter födur sinn, og endar³³ hier þetta æfintyr.

women's clothes. Ambrosius then recognized his wife and asked forgiveness for his faults. She set him there in the seat of the master of the house, and in the rank of district judge, and told him the story of her life: that she had never been the daughter of that man from whom he had bought her, but rather the daughter of Earl William of the Hebrides in Scotland, and she had been kidnapped from there.

Then Ambrosius and Rosamunda's marriage thrived, and they had two sons: one called Caius and the other Amon. Later Caius became earl of the Hebrides, and Amon district judge of Northumbria after his father, and here is where this tale ends.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Katarzyna Anna Kapitan for helping lay some of the groundwork for this publication through our previous collaboration to edit a longer version of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, Tarrin Wills and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir providing for valuable feedback on a draft, and my two anonymous peer reviewers for their careful reading and insightful suggestions for improvement.
2. On Árni Magnússon's note slips (often referred to as AM slips), which are preserved in paper manuscripts from his collection such as AM 576 b 4to, see e.g. Stegmann.
3. The summaries in AM 576 b 4to are of the following texts (listed here with "ok" normalized to "og" in the titles due to the post-medieval date of the manuscript): *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, *Blómsturvalla saga*, *Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns*, *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, *Sigrgarðs saga frækna*, *Tristrams saga*, *Valdimars saga*, *Þjalar-Jóns saga*, *Amíkus saga og Amílius*, *Úlfars saga sterka*, *Ferakuts saga*, *Fertrams saga og Platós*, *Griseldis saga*, *Ásmundar rímur og Tryggva*, and *Andra rímur*. On this manuscript see Loth, as well as Schach, who discusses the version of *Tristrams saga* it preserves and Árni Magnússon's notes on it.

4. Fol. 2r; the verso is blank.
5. Fol. 5r; the verso is blank. At the word “translaterud” Árni began to write “skr(ífud)” but instead opted for a Latin word by adding “t” in heavy strokes over the “sk.”
6. On *Historie om den dyrekjøbte Isabella* and its connection to *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, see Schlauch (348–50, 356–57); on *Saga af fjórum kaupmönnum*, see Guðmundsdóttir.
7. While the analysis of the role of the Jew and antisemitism in this text and the societal implications of the same in seventeenth-century Iceland and northern Europe extends significantly beyond the scope of this study, it is also impossible to sidestep entirely. Very broadly, the open access collected volumes co-edited by Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß on antisemitism in the Nordic countries from the Middle Ages onwards (Adams and Heß) and Jews and Muslims in medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic (Heß and Adams), as well as Adams’ extensive study of Jews in East Norse literature (Adams), provide solid starting points to frame further study of these issues in *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*.
8. The origin of the Whittington’s cat motif in *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* is unclear; however, there are multiple seventeenth-century English versions of this story, both ballads and prose chapbooks, as well as parallels in other medieval and early modern literature and folktales; see for example Wheatley (i–xvi ff.).
9. *Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans* contains five citations for *beisivikt*, one from the sixteenth century and four from the seventeenth century; two of the five citations are from works translated into Icelandic from German in the very early seventeenth century, around the same time that AM 576 b 4to was copied.
10. It has also been brought to my attention by one of my anonymous reviewers that this place name might be a confused rendering of “Fenicien” [Phoenicia].
11. As a further alternative interpretation, it is also tempting to consider the possibility that Genidien is instead a confused rendering of Guinea on the Gold Coast, that is, present-day Ghana. Hints of the Whittington’s cat motif in accounts of early European contact with West Africa in for example the anonymous 1665 English publication *The Golden Coast, or, A Description of Guinney* (88) suggest the potential for a tenuous connection with the scene described in *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda*, but this requires significant further research to substantiate.
12. I owe the idea of translating *borgmeistari* in this way to the suggestion of one of my anonymous reviewers.
13. Underlining here and elsewhere are original to the manuscript and appear to indicate direct quotations.
14. MS “sonur þessa man.”
15. MS “ára freste.”

16. MS “~~fräi~~.”
17. The parentheses around “formalia ... kvikende” are original to the manuscript.
18. Fol. 2r-v is the first of two AM slips (see the introduction above).
19. MS “ad ~~ad~~.”
20. Emended from MS “mettadest.”
21. MS line break after “landz.”
22. MS “biö ~~hun~~.”
23. The scribe appears to have first started to write “giörd” here before writing over the first letters with heavy pen strokes to produce “stöð” (heavy “tall-s” and “t” over “g” and “iö,” respectively, followed by a heavy “ö” and regular-weight “d”).
24. MS “Marsilium ~~aff~~.”
25. *Sic*. Given the narrative context, with Marsilius addressing Ambrosius, the accusative form “Ambrosium” might rather be expected here.
26. MS “yfer ~~þennan~~.”
27. *Sic*.
28. Fol. 5r-v is the second of two AM slips (see introduction above).
29. MS “villdi, ~~eg~~.”
30. MS “fyrir ~~umsidir~~.”
31. MS “vera ~~laus~~.”
32. MS “sagde ~~for~~.”
33. MS “endar ~~þar~~.”
34. In the manuscript, the name Ambrosius appears to be in the nominative case (ending in -us instead of an expected accusative -um ending), suggesting that it is Ambrosius who reproaches Marsilius (MS “hann”). While I have not emended the manuscript reading in my edition (cf. fn. 25 above), I have translated here with Marsilius reproaching Ambrosius, in keeping with the logical context of the narrative and the reading in McDonald Werronen and Kapitan (207). Thank you to the anonymous reviewer who queried this.

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