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# Love and Eroticism in Medieval Norwegian Runic Inscriptions

**Abstract:** The emotion most often expressed in runic inscriptions particularly on sticks and bones from the medieval towns of Norway, which often have graffiti-like texts, is love, at times more specifically erotic interest. The collection of such expressions from medieval Norway is here introduced and categorized. The texts are initially grouped according to form, i. e. prose or poetry. Those in prose are subdivided by content (love versus eroticism), whereas the poetic ones are arranged according to the type of meter (Eddic, skaldic, ballad-like) and include some examples with lyrical content but no obvious metrical structure. An appendix presents the entire material.

## Introduction

Emotions can be sensed in many of the Viking Age runic inscriptions from Norway, for example, on the silver neck-ring from Senja, where one reads the elated verse by a victorious Viking warrior (N540): *Fórum drengja / Fríslands á vit, / ok vígs fǫtum / vér skiptum*, ‘We travelled to a visit (= battle) with the warriors of Frisia, and we split among us the spoils of war’ (alliteration here marked with underlining). Similarly emotionally engaged, a mother on the memorial stone from Dynna bemoans the loss of her gifted daughter, waxing poetic at the conclusion (N68): ‘Gunnvǫr, Þrýðríkr’s daughter, made a ‘bridge’ in memory of Ástríðr, her daughter: She was the handiest maiden in Hadeland’ (where *hǫnnurst* and *Haðalandi* alliterate). With the coming of Christianity and the growth of towns in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, it seems writing with runes became even more of a general means of expression, and the types of texts that survive cover many and sundry aspects of everyday human life. Medieval inscriptions range from pious prayers and quotations, many in Church Latin, to base and vulgar statements.

Although other emotions are obvious in various inscriptions, clearly the one most often and most explicitly expressed is love, at times more specifically erotic interest. The expressions range from simple requests such as A41: *Kyss mik!* ‘Kiss me!’ written on a small cow bone from the Old Town in Oslo, to an apparent third-party endorsement in the exclamation on one side of a stick from Bergen (B628): ‘Rannveig the Red, you shall fuck (her).’ A selection of the more innocuous ones from Eastern Norway was displayed in the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, in 2010 in an exhibition entitled “Kiss me! The world of runes”. They included, in addition to the “Kiss me” bone just mentioned, four other objects from Oslo in a thematic exhibition case pertaining to “Passion and desire”:

- A7: A decorated wooden spindle whorl on which is emphatically declared: ‘Nikulás loves well the woman called Gýríðr, step-daughter of Pitas(?)’-Ragna.’

- A36: A cow rib with messages to two different women, placed on opposite sides: ‘He who carved these runes loves you, Þordís’ and ‘Þóra, I can beguile (any woman)’. This appears at first glance to be a ménage à trois, but each side is clearly the work of a different hand. Why two men would carve these messages to two different women on the same object remains unresolved.
- A199: A fragment of a cow rib where a woman’s feelings are declared: ‘Ása loves St... (i. e. Steinn/Steinarr, or the like).’
- A322, the final inscription in this category, was less innocuous, and is the earliest graffiti concerning a homosexual relationship known from Norway. On this cow rib, two rune-carvers write back and forth to one another. On the one side, the first asks what the other carved in the Church of the Cross, and on the other side comes the answer: ‘Óli is unwiped (behind) and fucked in the ass.’

Two additional inscriptions concerning love – both long, but one containing only a short erotic passage – were on view in the exhibition case with “Runic letters and class exercises”. A74, the “letter of proposal from Lom”, covers all four sides of a stick found under the floor of the stave church and reads: ‘Hávarðr sends Gu[ðný?] his friendship and God’s greeting. And now it is my full desire to ask for you in marriage, if you do not want to be with [Kol]beinn. [Think] over your intentions and have me told your desire.’ The second, A39 Tønsberg, is part of an apparent class exercise covering all four sides of a stick where carvers who have learned runes try to outdo one another. On the fourth side is a poetic ditty from the erotic sphere: ‘They are both / in a booth together, / Clumsy-Kári / and the wife (kona) of Vilhjálmr.’

Among the circa 600 runic inscriptions with younger runes published in the first five volumes of the Norwegian corpus edition, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (= *NlyR*), only three – recently expanded to four – concerned love. The first, a graffiti carved into a boulder by a hunter, N192 Storhedder 3 in Setesdal, consists of a wish: ‘I wanted to kiss the maiden who is the fairest in the world.’ The second, N344 Årdal church 1, is an erotic lampoon in *fornyrðislag* about a couple in the local community; see the long presentation in *NlyR* 4, pp. 127–134. The third, N461 Trondheim 1, on a bone fragment, is perhaps alliterative, although if poetic it represents only a short-line; the first half is partly damaged and the second half not yet interpreted. It begins (with an alliterative reconstruction by the present author): *Unna’k meyju [mjúk]látri*, ‘I loved the gentle(?) maiden.’ The recent addition to the corpus is a new reading proposed in 2014 by K. Jonas Nordby of N131 Nore stave church 1, which has been shown to be alliterative and end-rhyming folk poetry: *unþumeranekþr*, *Unn þú mér, ann ek þér*, ‘Love me! I love you’ (rather than the reading, normalization and interpretation in *NlyR* 2, pp. 152–153: *unþumeralskþrs*, i. e. *Unn þú mér alls góðs*, ‘Grant me everything good’).

The percentage of amorous inscriptions was thus very low, with only four of the 600 inscriptions containing any allusion to love, slightly more than one-half of a percent. This changed greatly after four large tenements on Bryggen (the “Wharf”)

in Bergen burnt in 1955 and subsequent archaeological excavations produced more medieval inscriptions from that one site than were previously known from all of Norway. The finds from Bryggen, and other more recent finds, particularly from excavations in Trondheim, Oslo, and Tønsberg, have nearly tripled the Norwegian corpus of runic inscriptions from the Scandinavian Middle Ages.

The present collection of medieval Norwegian inscriptions concerning love or eroticism is detailed below in an appendix. Various inscriptions concerning interpersonal relations have been excluded since they are not clearly about love or eroticism. Those concerning the love of God are also excluded. The medieval Norwegians apparently enjoyed the fact that the first three letters of the rune-row, **fup**, also spelled a word: *fuð* ‘cunt, vulva’; ambiguous cases, where it is unclear whether the carver intended to write this word, are not included in the catalogue.

## Categorization of the inscriptions

In the following a categorization of the collection is attempted. The texts are initially grouped according to form: prose or poetry. Those in prose are then subdivided by content, in particular “love” versus “eroticism”, although a clear distinction often cannot be made. The poetic ones are arranged essentially according to the type of meter: Eddic, skaldic, ballad-like. Finally, interesting poetic content is discussed. Note that a few inscriptions in the catalogue are too uncertainly interpreted to be included in the categorization.

Among the prose statements, the simplest are straight-forward declarations of love. These occur specifically in inscriptions from Oslo. A7, A36 (side A) and A199 were all exhibited in Oslo in 2010 and have already been cited. Compare also A258 (N861) from Trondheim, where only ‘I loved’ is interpreted with any certainty.

Kissing is the subject of some five inscriptions, the one from Oslo, already mentioned as having provided the title of the runic exhibition there in 2010, A41, reading simply: ‘Kiss me!’ There are in addition three from Bergen, the most well known being B17: *Ást mín, kyss mik*, ‘My beloved, kiss me!’ The others are B371, perhaps ‘Óláfr kissed ??? ...’, and B540: ‘Kiss me!’ N192 on the Storhedder boulder, concerning a hunter’s unfulfilled desire to kiss the fairest maiden in the world, has already been mentioned.

The expression “fairest maiden” calls to mind a number of simple statements usually concerning beauty, which are all from Bryggen in Bergen. Two instances probably referring to attractiveness, at least in part, are B184: ‘The belt from Fana increased your brightness’ and B192: ‘Such (feminine gender) as you are, is how I wanted mine (feminine gender).’ Two other inscriptions that specifically mention beauty are textually related, namely B404: **sese-se-sese-snot-uliota**·, perhaps: ‘Sessi! Look at Sessi, a non-ugly gentlewoman!’, and similarly B524: ‘Sessi! Look at Sessi, a beautiful woman! See where she sits!’ Here *Sessi* may be a possible although unat-

tested hypocoristic pet name for *Cecilia* (cf. Veturliði Óskarsson 2003, p. 9, concerning recently formed modern Icelandic female pet names, including *Sísi*), or a likewise unrecorded nickname. It has, however, been speculated that B404 and B524 could instead represent a play on words, perhaps utilizing homonyms. Magnus Källström (2010, p. 80) has proposed a new interpretation that entails such a pun. *Sessi* could be the nominative singular masculine ‘bench-mate’ and also the dative singular of *sess* masc. ‘bench; seat’, while a construction with *sjá* + accusative + dative could mean ‘procure/provide something for someone’. Thus the two statements could be translated: ‘Bench-mate, provide to the bench a non-ugly gentlewoman!’ and ‘Bench-mate, provide to the bench a beautiful woman! See where she sits!’

Actually, the group of texts referring to kissing might be termed innocently erotic, or even considered to be euphemistic and blatantly erotic. Six other inscriptions are patently erotic, containing statements concerning sexual intercourse such as the already mentioned graffiti concerning homosexual coitus (A322 Oslo) and A36 (side B): ‘Póra, I can beguile (any woman)’, both on exhibition in Oslo in 2010. Also in this category are B39: ‘Smíðr fucked Vígdís of the Snældu-legs/Snældu-farms’, B390: ‘Ingibjörg loved me when I was in Stavanger’, and B434: ‘Jón Silk-cunt owns me, and Guðþormr Cunt-licker carved me, and Jón Cunt-swelling reads/interprets me.’ This latter inscription surely represents a joke made by adding *fuð* to the bynames of several historical persons known from roughly the same time period. The final one is B628 (the inscription on one side having already been mentioned): ‘Rannveig the Red, you shall fuck (her). It is supposed to be bigger than a man’s prick and smaller than a horse’s prick.’ What “it” refers to is unclear, but it may possibly be Rannveig’s sexual organ.

The prose statements concerning love or with erotic content encompass around twenty inscriptions in total, most of them relatively short. The group containing poetry is by far the largest, numbering some thirty texts, several of them quite extensive.

One subgroup of poetry is here termed “lyrical” and includes inscriptions where the mood waxes poetic, sometimes with alliteration, syllable-rhyme, and poetic expressions including kennings, but where the texts do not have all the formal trappings of Old Norse poetry, in many instances perhaps because they are extremely fragmentary. These are almost all from Bryggen and include:

- B171, quite fragmentary, but telling of something that ‘causes (both) night and d[ay]’ ‘sickness’ or ‘worries’ with mention of a ‘maiden’ or ‘maidens’.
- B320, also fragmentary, and telling of ‘sorrow’, ‘consolation’, and the changing of ‘worries to joy’.
- B495, fragmentary: *Berr í brjóst mér ??? ...*, ‘(I) bear in my breast ??? ...’
- B496, on side A: ‘I love so much (another) man’s wife that the mountains will begin to tremble(?). We, the woman (= wagon?/Eir? [= goddess] of rings) (and I), love one another so much that the earth will burst.’
- B644 is similar, with obvious textual connection to B496: ‘I love so much (another) man’s wife that fire seems cold to me. And I am a friend of this woman.’

- Finally, the Lund gaming-piece (DR DKSkL83), most likely Norwegian though found in Scania: ‘Hrólftr Þorgísl’s/Þorgeirr’s son carved this; for him was then sorrow caused concerning the snow-white gentlewoman’ (*snæhvítu snót*).

The second poetic subgroup evidences the Eddic meters *fornyrðislag* or *ljóðaháttr*. The texts are often far too long to be cited here in their entirety, but the complete texts are as a rule found in the appended catalogue.

- N344 Årdal church 1: a poetic lampoon about a couple in the local community.
- B257, perhaps the best-known Eddic poem from Bryggen, partly in *ljóðaháttr*, partly *fornyrðislag*. It first contains white magic for protection (including the term *bótrúnar* ‘runes of protection’), then both black magic and threats to force someone to do something, and closes: ‘Love me as yourself!’
- B265, which between fragments of other half-stanzas reads: ‘Fortunate I felt then, when we two sat together and no person came between us.’
- B493: ‘My beloved, love me! I love you with all my heart and <all (my) mind>’ (with the final two words written in coded runes).
- A39 Tønsberg: the short ditty in a class exercise mentioned previously about a man shacking up with another man’s wife.
- A104 Bø old church, Telemark, where the priest-poet relates that he cannot sleep and identifies the cause of his problem in a riddle containing poetic circumlocutions for the “names” or designations of the runes which when solved spell out the female name Guðrún.

In the subgroup with skaldic meter, all basically in *dróttkvætt*, are found six or seven examples, ranging from half-lines (i. e. short-lines) to single long-lines, and from half-stanzas to full stanzas. Again the complete texts are found in the catalogue in the appendix.

- B11, perhaps: ‘Ugly is the cunt, may the penis pour (for it).’ The present author has no comment on the appropriateness of presenting this content in a *dróttkvætt* long-line (cf. Marold 1998, pp. 678–679).
- B99: ‘Never should the woman (= the earth’s treasure) love him/them who [resisted?] witchcraft(?)’
- B111, with the missing half-line convincingly conjectured to refer to virginity: ‘The gentlewoman lost [her virginity indecently] to her lover – still she is a virgin for folk.’
- B145, a complete stanza about falling for a beautiful but dangerous woman and being held fast by her. See the scholarly presentations in the literature referred to in the catalogue.
- B255: ‘The wise woman (= Vár [a goddess] of the [golden] wires) makes [me] sit unhappy. The woman (= Eir [a goddess] of the fish’s floor [= sea]) takes often and to a great extent sleep from me.’

- B496, somewhat elliptically written on the B side, in Old Norwegian (*ramn* for ‘raven’): ‘The raven shall, before I reject the wise woman, [become] as white (as the snow that lies [on the mountains?].’
- B548, fragmentary, but starting with the statement: ‘I bear forth a poem (= Yggr’s [Óðinn’s] mead) to the woman (= willow who lifts the arm-ember [= golden jewelry]).’ The rest of what is preserved pertains mainly to the composition of the poem.

There are six instances of more ballad-like folk poetry, with end-rhyme and most often also with alliteration. Almost all of them seem to be minor variations on the same “tune”.

- N131 Nore stave church 1 (with a new reading): *Unn þú mér, ann ek þér*, ‘Love me! I love you.’
- B118: ‘Love me! I love you. Gunnhildr, kiss me! I know you (well)’ (compare with the inscriptions in the subgroup above of prose examples concerning kissing). The stick has twelve counting notches on each of two edges, perhaps for keeping track of the kisses.
- B465: ‘Think of me! I think of you. Love me! I love you.’ (The same poem is found in runes on a weaver’s baton from Old Lödöse in Västergötland, Vg 279.)
- B489, quite fragmentary, but with attempts here at reconstruction: ‘May love me ... [think?] of me, woman, I know ...’
- B535: ‘... I can say to you, as you will experience from me, that I will love you no less than myself ...’
- B556, fragmentary, probably: ‘... [think of] me! I think of you.’

A slight ambiguity exists as to the precise meaning of some of these inscriptions. In N131, B118, B465 and B556 the statements could well be construed as conditional sentences, i. e. beginning with an *if* clause. N131 could then, for example, be translated: ‘If you love me, (then) I will love you.’ This ambiguity arises since the second person singular pronoun *þú* is expressed in the potential *if* clause. If it were simply an imperative in the first clause, as in the translations provided in the list above, this pronoun would not need to be expressed. It is, however, very common to include the pronoun (Heusler 1932, § 424 [p. 133]; cf. Nygaard 1905, § 183 [p. 201]).

Latin love poetry is perhaps the most surprising discovery in the runic material, in particular the only Scandinavian transmission of poems from the *Carmina Burana* in N603 from Bryggen. The material, all from Bergen, further consists of the Vergil quotation *Amor vincit omnia, et nos cedamus Amori*, ‘Love conquers all; let us too give in to Love’, found fragmentarily on a stick (N605) as well as in its entirety in B145 after the skaldic stanza about being enamored of and entrapped by a beautiful, dangerous woman, and in B605, where the first half of the quotation is embroidered on the one preserved shoe of a pair. In addition there are Latin word pairs on a stick (N606), one containing the word *Amor*, and finally a hexameter (with the lacuna filled in from a

parallel text) in B598: *Dum das, carus eris; dare des[ine, despicie]ris*, ‘As long as you give, you will be held dear; if you [abandon] giving, you will be [despised].’

As regards the content of the Old Norse love poetry in runes from Norway, it is interesting to note the preponderance of instances of unrequited love, such as the Storhedder hunter’s unfulfilled desire to kiss the fairest maiden in the world (N192) and the statement in B192 with feminine gender forms that such as you are, is how I wanted mine to be. Love-sorrow or love-sickness results from unrequited love, for example in the Eddic B265: ‘Fortunate I felt then, when we sat together and no person came between us’ and in the inscription on the Lund gaming piece (DR DKSkL83): ‘For him was then sorrow caused concerning the snow-white gentlewoman.’ It is tempting to assume that such expressions reveal influence from contemporary Continental literature (cf. Marold 1998, p. 686). Sleeplessness, in particular, is mentioned as a symptom of love-sickness, for example in the second line of the skaldic B255: ‘The wise woman (= Vár [a goddess] of the fish’s floor [= sea]) takes often and to a great extent sleep from me’ and in the first line of the Eddic riddle with circumlocutions of the “names” of the runes in A104 Bø old church, Telemark. This motif, however, does not seem to have Continental parallels (cf. Louis-Jensen 1987, p. 109; 2006, p. 100).

In conclusion: At present some 3% of the corpus of Norwegian inscriptions with younger runes concerns love or eroticism. If we disregard only partially readable and mainly or totally uninterpretable inscriptions, this probably rises to about 5%. Of interest is the fact that whereas love poetry is extremely infrequent in Old Norse manuscripts, usually occurring only in the so-called skald sagas, 60% of all the instances of Norwegian runic poetry uncovered since the late 1950s concern love and eroticism.

Runic inscriptions give unmitigated glimpses into the lives of medieval people, in particular their thoughts and emotions. The poetic texts discussed here, particularly those in skaldic and Eddic meters, reveal as a rule high literary quality. Runic inscriptions, however, do not primarily record literary texts but usually represent original, first-hand utterances. It is therefore hardly surprising that in many of the cases discussed above these may be to do with their baser desires.<sup>1</sup>

## Appendix: Catalogue

The inscriptions are ordered according to their publication number in the corpus edition, *NlyR* 1–5 (1941–1960) and 6 (1980–1990). Thereafter follow, in numerical order, those registered in the Oslo Runic Archives in the B and A series. Entries marked with an initial question mark either have an uncertain interpretation or may not actu-

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a revised version of a presentation given at the Sixteenth International Saga Conference in Zürich, 9–15 August 2015.

ally concern love or eroticism. Inscriptions concerning the love of God are omitted, as well as those that contain ambiguous examples of **fub**, which could be either the beginning of the *fubork*/rune-row or the word *fuð* ‘cunt, vulva’. Information is included on the object type, archaeological or other dating, and secondary literature. The presentation includes a transliteration of the runes, normalization to Old Norse (Old Icelandic), translation into English, and sometimes comments. In the transliterations, uncertain readings are signaled with a dot under the letter, \* stands for a runic remnant that cannot be read with any certainty, ... represents a lacuna, / signals a new line or a change of sides, extra spaces mean a long empty space, bind-runes are indicated by a bow over the letters, and punctuation is somewhat simplified; brackets and parentheses mark editorial supplements or comments. Translations often follow those in the Scandinavian Runic Text Database.

### ***NlyR* 1–5**

N131 Nore stave church 1, middle stave in the nave (new reading 2014 by K. Jonas Nordby, pers. comm.; 1200s?): **unþumeranekþr**, *Unn þú mér, ann ek þér*, ‘Love me! I love you.’

N192 Storhedder 3, soapstone boulder (slightly amended reading and interpretation by the present author; 1000s/1100s?): **ekuiltakusamayþaerfahsterhaiminum**, *Ek vilda kyssa mey, þá er fegrst er (i) heiminum*, ‘I wanted to kiss the maiden who is the fairest in the world.’

N344 Årdal church 1, stick. See *NlyR* 3, pp. 127–134, for the transliteration and normalization. English translation: ‘(He) lies in the bed-enclosure, lives foolishly, who wets the couch beneath himself at times. There will many maggots swarm where Atli’s daughter sleeps on down.’

N461 Trondheim 1, bone fragment (new conjecture for the damaged word by the present author): **unakmæyiu\*\*u\*latreoælensfulkuifæstahafþe**, *Unna’k meyjú [mj]ú[k]látri ???*, ‘I loved the gentle/flexible(?) maiden ???’

### ***NlyR* 6 (Bryggen in Bergen)**

N603 Nordre Gullskoen, stick (c. 1300; cf. Knirk 1998, p. 499): Fragments of two Latin love poems from the *Carmina Burana*: no. 88 *Amor habet superos* and no. 71 *Axe Phebus aureo*. See *NlyR* 6, pp. 1–9, for the transliteration and normalization. English translation of the fragments: ‘... I burn with (love)flames for the excellent [girl] (and) grow daily in her love (i. e. my love for her increases daily) ...’, [perhaps, with reconstructions:] ‘... I will do/play [my ‘games’] gently: my virgin lady, let us play like that; we are both [young]’, ‘... [birds sing] from the groves in contest; Philomena refuses Tereus complainingly ...’



- N605 Bugård quay, stick (c. 1250): **amoruin**, *Amor vin[cit omnia]*, ‘Love conquers all’ (quotation of Vergil’s *Bucolica*, *Ecloga* 10, verse 69).
- N606 Englegården, stick (c. 1250): **dekor:amenita: flos:amoris**, *decor amoenitas, flos amoris*, ‘adornment of the beautiful landscape; flower of love’.
- ?N646 Gullskoen, flat stick (c. 1300), one side reading: **amop:opo:opum:roma** (‘magic’ words?; **amop** perhaps a mistake for **amor**, *Amor* ‘Love’, as a palindrome of *Roma*).

## B series (Bryggen in Bergen)

- B11, stick (Liestøl 1964, pp. 24–25; Knirk 1997, p. 34; Marold 1998, pp. 678–679; Seim 1998, pp. 267–269; c. 1250): **+felleg:er:fup:sin:bylli / +fuporglbasm**, [perhaps:] *Ferlig er fuð, sin byrli. Fuð-ørg ???*, ‘Ugly is the cunt, may the penis pour (for it). Cunt-perverse (= nymphomaniac?) ???’ (cf. B87 below).
- B17, stick; on the opposite side, a *fupork* (Liestøl 1964, p. 15; Knirk 1997, p. 28; Seim 1998, p. 269; c. 1250): **ost:min:kis:mik ki**, *Ást mín, kyss mik! Ky[ss(?)]*, ‘My beloved, kiss me! Kiss(?)’.
- B39, wooden needle (Liestøl 1964, p. 23–24; *NlyR* 6, p. 234; Knirk 1997, p. 27; c. 1290): **smiþur:saârþ:uigdisi / af:snældu:benum**, *Smiðr sarð Vígðisi af snældube(i)num/ snældubœnum*, ‘Smiðr fucked Vígðís of the Snældu-legs (‘Spindle’-leg folk)/ Snældu-farms (‘Spindle’-farms).’
- ?B87, wooden needle(?), broken (Seim 1998, p. 270; c. 1332): **fup / [f]uprokhlinsmyl**, [perhaps:] *fuð, fuð-rog(?) lín-smyl*, ‘cunt, cunt-perverse(?) head-linen-troll’ (cf. B11).
- B99, round stick, broken (Knirk 1997, p. 33; c. 1290): **atriskyldiaþfoltunapæims lifomu\*... , Aldri skyldi auðr fólðu unna þeim’s lyfum(?) u[nnu(?)]**, ‘Never should the woman (= the earth’s treasure) love him/them who [resisted?] witchcraft(?)’.
- B111, stick, with remains of an unrelated(?) third line (Liestøl 1964, pp. 32–33; 1965, pp. 42–43; Louis-Jensen 1987, pp. 108–109, cf. 2006, pp. 100–101; Knirk 1997, p. 34; Marold 1998, p. 677; c. 1250): **snotgat:lâussânlatalingunirfyrirur / \*\*\*om:æ\*\*\*rhø:mærfyirmônnom**, *Snót gat lausan láta, lín-Gunnr, fyrir ver [sín]-um, e[nn] [e]r hó[n] mærfyrir mōnnum* [Louis-Jensen’s conjectural completion of the missing last half-line: *meydóm með úsóma*], ‘The gentlewoman let loose for (i. e. lost to) her lover – still she is a virgin for folk (i. e. folk consider her to be a virgin) – [her virginity indecently].’
- B118, stick (Liestøl 1964, p. 22; 1965, p. 40; Knirk 1997, p. 31; c. 1200): **unþu-mær-ânēk-þær-gunnildr-kysmik / kanekþik**, *Unn þú mér, ann ek þér. Gunnhildr, kyss mik, kann ek þik*. ‘Love me! I love you. Gunnhildr, kiss me! I know you (well).’
- B145, stick, the third side copied with mistakes by a different hand on the fourth side (Liestøl 1964, pp. 26–29; 1965, pp. 40–42; Knirk 1997, pp. 30–33; 1998, p. 501; Marold 1998, pp. 688–690; c. 1250): **fēll·til·friþrār·þellu·fariēghrār·mēr·ār·la·fiskāl·festibāla·fōrn·byrhamār / nōrna·þæimuihdi·heūirpundār·þōrnluþrs·**

ēōlun·bupār·glōumār·gyghiār·tōuma / gāldr̥sfasl̥ēgha·haldet:omnia·uincip·  
amōr̥·æþ·nos·cēdamus·amori·, *Fell til fríðrar þellu fárligrar mér árla fiskáls festi-  
bála forn byrr hamar-norna; þeim \*lundí(?) hefir Þundar Þornlúðrs jōlun búðar  
glaumar gýgjar tauma galdrs fastliga haldit. Omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus  
Amori.* ‘Sense/thoughts (= the old wind of the mountain-crag Norns) turned early  
for me toward the beautiful, dangerous woman (= held-fast spruce of the bonfire  
of the fish channel). The poet (= tree of Þorn’s/giant’s grinding-trough [= ‘ship’ *lið*  
~ *lið* ‘drink’], i. e. poetry [drink of Þundr (Óðinn)]) was held fast by the madness of  
the tumult in the abode of the harmful woman (= witch of the magic reins). Love  
conquers all; let us too give in to Love.’ (The final half-stanza follows Marold; the  
fourth side is not included here.)

B171, flat stick, fragmentary; also with unrelated runes by a different hand (Knirk  
1997, p. 28; c. 1250): +uældr̥notokḍ... ...k̥minum:sot... / okm̥æyjar, *Veldr nátt ok  
d[ag] ... mínum, sótt(-) ... ok meýjar,* ‘It causes (both) night and d[ay] ... my/mine;  
sickness/worries ... and the maiden’s/maidens.’

B184, flat stick (Liestøl 1964, p. 21; Knirk 1997, p. 28; c. 1200): fanabæltiokbiazku  
þina, *Fanabelti jók \*bjarzku þína,* ‘The belt from Fana increased your brightness/  
beauty.’

B192, flat stick (Liestøl 1964, p. 21; Knirk 1997, p. 28; c. 1200): slikaũilda·ek·mina  
sem̥puest, *Slika vilda ek mína sem þú est,* ‘Such (fem.) as you are is how I wanted  
mine (fem.)’

B255, stick, with names/nicknames and liquid measurements on other sides (Liestøl  
1964, pp. 29–32; 1965, pp. 44–46; Louis-Jensen 1987, pp. 106–108, cf. 2006,  
pp. 97–100; Knirk 1997, pp. 30–31; Marold 1998, p. 687; c. 1290): uar kennir uira  
uitr uglap̥an sitita / air nemr opt ok storom alunn̥s grunn̥tar mik blun̥nti,  
*Vár kennir [mér] víra vitr úglaðan sitja. Eir nemr opt ok stórum ǫluns grundar mik  
blundi.* ‘The wise woman (= Vár [a goddess] of the [golden] wires) makes [me] sit  
unhappy. The woman (= Eir [a goddess] of the fish’s floor [= sea]) takes often and  
to a great extent sleep from me.’

B257, stick, broken in one end (Liestøl 1964, pp. 40–50; 1965, pp. 34–39; Marold 1998,  
pp. 683–684; c. 1335): ristek̥:bot:runār:rist:ek̥biabh:runār:æain:fal̥uip̥:aluom:  
tuiual̥tuiḍ:tr̥olom:þreual̥t:uip̥:þu[s]... / uip̥enne:sk̥þo:skah:ualkyr̥riu:sua:at:  
eæimehi:þo:atæuili:læuis:kona:liui:þinug\*... / êksend̥r̥:þer:ek̥seap̥er:ylhiār:  
êr̥hi:okopola:ap̥er:rini:upole:auk̥:io̥lun̥s:mop̥:sittu:aldri:soppu:aldri... / ant̥:  
mer:sem:sialpre:þer:beirist:rubus:rabus:ep̥:arantabus:laus:abus:rosa:gāua\*  
..., *Ríst ek bótrúnar, ríst ek bjargrúnar, einfalt við alfum, tvífalt við trollum, þrífalt við  
þu[rsum] ... við inni skœðu ‘skag(?)’-valkyrju, svát ei megi, þótt æ vili, lævís kona,  
lífi þínu g[randa(?)] ... ek sendi þér, ek sé á þér ylgjar ergi ok úþola. Á þér hríni úþoli  
ok ǫluns móð(r). Sittu aldri, sof þú aldri ... ant mér sem sjalfri þér. Beirist rubus  
etc. ‘I carve runes of remedy, I carve runes of rescue, once against the elves, twice  
against the trolls, thrice against the [ogres] ... against the harmful ‘skag’(?)-Valky-  
rie, so that she never shall, though she ever would – evil woman – [injure] your*

life ... I send to you, I look at you (i. e. cast on you the evil eye): the she-wolf's lewdness/homosexuality and unbearable anguish. May unbearable anguish and the agitation of madness afflict you. Never shall you sit, never shall you sleep ... Love me as yourself.' (Thereafter Latinate magical words; interpretation of *jolun* following Marold 1998, p. 688 n. 80.)

- B265, two fragments of a flat stick; decimated runes on two other sides (Liestøl 1964, pp. 35–37; 1965, pp. 30–33; Knirk 1997, p. 31; Marold 1998, p. 686; c. 1250):  
 ...\***asigæipiaþrē:tilfiōrs:sæl·ekþapottomk·eruitsatomk·ihia·ōkkomatōkkār:**  
**m·ameþal·iurne·undir:sakāþaatek·umōkat**, ... ??? *til fjōrs. Sæl(l) ek þá þóttumk*  
*er vit sátumk í hjá, ok komat okkar m(aðr) á meðal. Yfir né undir sakadát ek um*  
*okkart [ráð(?)]* ... '... ??? for life. Fortunate I felt then, when we two sat together  
 and no person came between us. Neither over nor under (= nowhere) did I complain  
 concerning our [situation?] ...'
- B320, stick, broken and damaged; reading order of lines uncertain (Knirk 1997,  
 p. 29; c. 1250): ...\***þ:bopi:rāf:skirru:ōk:sotrif:mēþ:sōrh:nu:\*q\*... / ...mm\*\*til:**  
**hugannā:en:huhstot:til:fahnāþ...** / ...\***o\*\*\*\*r\*\*\*þ\*\*\*\*k:hæfi:ōþllast:...** /  
 ...\*\*\***er:ek:huhþa:mer:til:fahnāþþar:um:hiāþ...**, ... ??? *skirru ok sōtdript með*  
*sorg nú ... til hugannar en hugsótt til fagnað[ar] ... (e)k hefi oðlask ... er ek hugða*  
*mér til fagnaðar um ??? ... '... ??? pure(?) and wall-drapery(?) with sorrow, now ...*  
*to consolation and worries to joy ... I have attained ... as I thought joy to me concerning*  
*??? ...'*
- B371, stick, broken, with a fragmentary *fupork* on another side (Seim 1998, p. 271;  
 c. 1200): **olaf:r:kystj:\*\*\*...**, *Óláfr kysti ??? ...*, 'Óláfr kissed ??? ...'
- B390, stick, half-rounded and pointed at one end (Liestøl 1964, p. 21; Knirk 1997, p. 27;  
 c. 1185): **inkebiorkunimerþaerēkuarisþafakri**, *Ingibjörg unni mér þá er ek var í*  
*Stafangri*. 'Ingibjörg loved me when I was in Stavanger.'
- B404, stick, three-sided with one end rounded to a tip (Liestøl 1965, pp. 46–47; *NlyR*  
 6, pp. 46, 236; Knirk 1997, p. 34; c. 1250): **sese-se-sese-snot-uliota**, [perhaps:]  
*Sessi(?)! Sé Sessi(?), snót óljóta!* 'Sessi [pet name for Cecilia?/nickname?! Look at  
 Sessi, a non-ugly gentlewoman!] [Or rather as a wordplay with homonyms (Käll-  
 ström 2010, p. 80):] *Sessi, sé sessi snót óljóta*, 'Bench-mate, provide to the bench  
 a non-ugly gentlewoman!' (Cf. B524.)
- B434, piece of wood, irregularly whittled (Liestøl 1971; Knirk 1997, pp. 27–28; c. 1250):  
**ion silki fup amek en guþormr fupzllæikir / ræist mik en:ion fup kula ræþr mik**,  
*Jón silki-fuð á mik, en Guðþormr fuð-sleikir reist mik, en Jón fuð-kúla ræðr mik*, 'Jón  
 Silk-cunt owns me, and Guðþormr Cunt-licker carved me, and Jón Cunt-swelling/  
 ball reads/interprets me.' (Jón silki, Guðþormr sleikir, and Jón kúla were histori-  
 cal personages around AD 1200.)
- B465, flat stick, broken (Liestøl 1965, p. 39; Knirk 1997, p. 31; Marold 1998, p. 686;  
 c. 1170): **munþumekmanekþ / ekuþpumeranekþer**, *Mun þú mik, man ek þik. Unn*  
*þú mér, ann ek þér*. 'Think of me! I think of you. Love me! I love you.' (The same  
 poem is found on a weaver's baton from Old Lödöse in Västergötland, Vg 279.)

- B489, wooden peg, broken, with unintelligible runes on a third side (c. 1150): **arī:lakapi:unimerk...** / **\*\*\*\*ek:kona:kanik:o...**, [perhaps:] *-ari lagaði. Unni(?) mér ...* [*mun m*]ik, *kona, kann ek ...*, '??? brewed. May love me ... [think?] of me, woman, I know ...'
- B493, stick (Knirk 1997, p. 31; Marold 1998, p. 686; c. 1225): **bylliminunmeranekþer afastomaukaf**[coded:]**allumhuha**, *Byrli minn, unn mér! Ann ek þér af ástum ok af þllum huga*, 'My beloved (= host/server of drinks), love me! I love you with all my heart and all my mind.'
- B495, stick, cut off, rounded and whittled away, with one side still readable (Knirk 1997, p. 29; c. 1225): **+beribriostmêrsuâr\***..., *Berr í brjóst mér ??? ...*, '(I) bear in my breast ??? ...'
- B496, stick, carved with different hands on opposite sides (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1975, p. 180; Knirk 1997, p. 33; c. 1290): **+anek:sua:kôno:mânz:kípa:taka:fioll:uiþ:lægjumk:sua:hugia:ringæiþr:at:iôrþ:springr: / :ram en skal aþr en ek hoskge hamna huit er su miol er liggr**, *Ann ek svá konu manns, riða(?) taka fjoll við; leggjum svá hugi á, hring-reið(?)/hring-Eir(?), at þorð springr. Hrafn skal áðr en ek horskri hafna hvitr er sú mjöll er liggr*. 'I love so much (another) man's wife that the mountains will begin to tremble(?). We, the woman (= wagon?/Eir? [= goddess] of rings) (and I), love one another so much that the earth will burst.' 'The raven shall, before I reject the wise woman, [become] as white (as) the snow that lies [on the mountains?].' (Cf. B644.)
- B524, stick, whittled in one end, with runes on the three other sides concerning Saint Andrew the Apostle (*NlyR* 6, pp. 46, 236; c. 1200): **sesesæsesekonouena:seþu:huar:sitter:**, [perhaps:] *Sessi(?)! Sé Sessi(?), konu væna! Sé þú hvar sitr!* 'Sessi (pet name for Cecilia?/nickname?)! Look at Sessi, a beautiful woman! See where she sits!' [Or rather as a wordplay with homonyms (cf. Källström 2010, p. 80):] *Sessi, sé sessi konu væna! Sé þú hvar sitr!* 'Bench-mate, provide to the bench a beautiful woman! See where she sits!' (Cf. B404.)
- B535, flat stick shaped like a paddle (Knirk 1997, p. 31; Marold 1998, p. 686; c. 1170): **...\*\*okānek:sæhia:þer:sempumānt:røyna:af:mer:atek:skal:una:þer:ænku:uærenmer:u...**, ... *kann ek segja þér, sem þú mant reyna af mér, at ek skal unna þér engu verr enn mér. ...*, '... I can say to you, as you will experience from me, that I will love you no less than myself. ...'
- B540, fragment of base of turned wooden bowl (c. 1150): **kisþumik**, *Kyss þú mik!* 'Kiss me!'
- B548, stick, broken (c. 1290–): **+ólber-ek-ypisæliu-ârmglā...** / **sekfærþáþusuærþa ygir...** / **uiíldaek:grimnis:gíldi:gârþunn...** / **núhauaskaldafstældarš...**, *Ql ber'k yppi-selju arm-glóðar(?) ... sé'k ferð Ásu(?) ærða, Yggjar ... Vilda'k Grímnis gildi grun... Nú hafa skald afstældar ...*, 'I bear forth a poem (= Yggr's [Óðinn's] mead) to the woman (= willow who lifts the arm-ember [= golden jewelry]) ... I see Ása's(?) travel grow ... I wanted the poem (= Grímnir's [Óðinn's] drinking party) ... Now the skalds have steeled (i. e. put into a poem a parenthetical statement) ...'

- B556, flat stick, whittled or broken at respective ends, with coded and repeated runes on another side (Svårdström 1982, p. 15; Knirk 1997, p. 31; c. 1185): **...umik manekþik**, ... [mun(?) þ]ú mik, man ek þik, ‘... [think of] me! I think of you.’
- B598, flat stick, broken in one end (Dyvik 1988, p. 6; Knirk 1997, p. 30; 1998, pp. 485–486, 502; c. 1290): **ðum-das:kārus-eris:dāre:des\*... / ris:**, *Dum das, carus eris; dare des[ine, despicie]ris*, ‘As long as you give, you will be held dear; if you [abandon] giving, you will be [despised].’
- B605, leather shoe, left foot, embroidered (NIyR 6, p. 228; Knirk 1997, p. 30; c. 1225): **imulilamōru / icipomniaop, ??? Amor vincit omnia et, ‘??? Love conquers all, and/ too’.**
- B628, flat stick, broken in six pieces when found (Knirk 1997, p. 27; c. 1225): **rannuæih: rauþuþka\*\*u: strþ/a / þat:se:mæira:en:mañns:\*æþr:ok:miñna:en / hæstræþr**, *Rannveig rauðu ska[lt]u streða. Þat sé meira enn manns[r]eðr ok minna enn hest-reðr*. ‘Rannveig the Red, you shall fuck (her). It is supposed to be bigger than a man’s prick and smaller than a horse’s prick.’
- B644, stick, on opposite sides (Knirk 1997, p. 34; Marold 1998, p. 687; c. 1185): **ānek sua:konomansatmer:þykikaltræltr:enekemuinr:ui’f’spæsūā / asa**, *Ann ek svá konu manns, at mér þykkir kaldr eldr. En ek em vinr vífs þessa. Ása. ‘I love so much (another) man’s wife that fire seems cold to me. And I am a friend of this woman. Ása.’* (Cf. B496.)

## A series (Addenda from the rest of Norway)

- A7 Oslo, decorated wooden spindle whorl (1100s–1200s): **nikulosānkōnōþeiriuæler gyriþheiterstiuðoter / pitasrahnu**, *Nikulás ann konu þeirri vel er Gýriðr heitir, stjúp dóttir Pitas-Rognu*, ‘Nikulás loves well the woman called Gýriðr, step-daughter of Pitas(?)/Pétrs(?)-Ragna.’
- A36 Oslo, cow rib, carved with two different hands on opposite sides (Liestøl 1977, pp. 215, 220; c. 1200): **ansa×þer×es×risti×runaþesar×þortis / þoraekkankilia**, *Ann sá þér, er risti rúna[r] þessar, Þordís. Þóra, ek kann gilja*. ‘He who carved these runes loves you, Þordís.’ ‘Þóra, I can beguile (any woman).’
- A39 Tønsberg, stick, with comments about learning runes and practice exercises in various hands; side D (Gosling 1989, pp. 181–182, 185; Marold 1998, p. 678; c. 1250–1325): **:þau:ero:bæþe:ibup:saman:klāuua:kare:ok:kōna:uiliālms:**, *Þau eru bæði í búð saman, Klaufa-Kári ok kona Vilhjálms*, ‘They are both in a booth together (i. e. shacking up), Clumsy-Kári and the wife of Vilhjálmr.’
- A41 Oslo, cow bone (Liestøl 1977, p. 220; c. 1100): **kysmik**, *Kyss mik!* ‘Kiss me!’
- A74 Lom stave church, stick (Liestøl 1976; 1978, pp. 177–181; 1200s–1300s?): **\*āuāþær:sender:gu\*\*\*\*\*g:þær:kueþiu:oksināuigan / oknuermínfuleruili: at:þiþiþin:efþuuilt:æihimeþ / \*\*\*bæini:uer\*\*\*\*\*a:þitrap:oklatšehiamer / þinuilia**, *[H]ávarðr sendir Gu??? G[u]ðs kveðju ok sína vingan. Ok nú er minn fullr*

*vili at biðja þín, ef þú vilt eigi með [Kol]beini ver[a]. [Hug]a þitt ráð, ok lát segja mér þinn vilja.* ‘Hávarðr sends Gu[ðný?] his friendship and God’s greeting. And now it is my full desire to ask for you in marriage, if you do not want to be with [Kol]-beinn. [Think] over your intentions and have me told your desire.’

A104 Bø old church, Telemark, wooden front of a repository in the choir (Knirk 1986b, pp. 76–80; c. 1200?): **suæfnbanarmer:soterbna / fionsfinkata:fialsibui / hezt ærfape:oukhuishui / ti:þrlsunsæla:þtsklurapa**, *Svefn bannar mér, sótt er barna, fjón svinkanda, fjalls íbúi, hests erfaði, ok heys víti, þræls vansæla. Þat skulu ráða.* ‘I cannot sleep. It is [due to] the children’s sickness (*kaun* ‘boil/skin rash’, i. e. the “rune-name” for **k**), enmity/torment of the worker (*úr* ‘drizzle’ = **u**), the inhabitant of the mountain (*burs* ‘giant’ = **þ**), the horse’s toil (*reið* ‘wagon’ = **r**), the hay’s damage (*úr* ‘drizzle’ = **u**), the thrall’s misfortune (*nauð* ‘destitution/danger’ = **n**); they/one should read/interpret that.’ (Solution: **kuþrun** = *Guðrún*.)

A199 Oslo, fragmentary cow rib (Liestøl / Nestor 1987, p. 423; c. 1125–1175): **asa×an×st\*... / ek×uæit**, *Ása ann Ste... Ek veit*, ‘Ása loves St... (e. g. Steinn/Steinarr/Steingrímr/Stefán). I know.’

?A209, manuscript AM 327 4to (*Sverris saga*), with ink in the margin of fol. 59r (Knirk 1981, pp. 54–56; 1300s/1400s): **intiberz min \*e\*seta nada miK**, *Ingibjörg(?) mín ??? náða mik*. ‘My Ingibjörg, ??? show me grace/mercy [perhaps a euphemism]!’ (Cf. A208, on fol. 1r of the same manuscript.)

A258 (N861) Trondheim, wooden needle (Hagland 1990, p. [45]; 2001, no. 861; c. 1050–1100): **×unaek.mhiu.enbeþr- / .enm[<b]er[<þ]r** [the last rune partially erased], *Unna ek meyju(?) enn betr(?)*, *enn mér*, ‘I loved the maiden(?) even more(?) than myself.’

?A279 (N843) Trondheim, on a building log (Knirk 1986a, p. 8; Hagland 1990, p. [46]; 2001, no. 843; before 1150): **××××kus:mik.merir**, *??? kyss(?) mik ???, ‘??? kiss(?) me ???’*

A322 Oslo, cow rib (Knirk 1991a, pp. 18–19; 1991b, pp. 14–15; c. 1200–1220): **huæssø:for-māl-þet-erþu-reist:ikroskirkju / vælerþa // ðleeroskøyntrāukstropen irazen þor:uæl:fōr:þet**, *Hversu fór mál þat er þú reist í Krosskirkju. Vel(?) er(?) þá(?)*. *Óli er óskeyndr ok stroðinn í rassinn. ??? vel fór þat*, ‘How did that statement go that you carved in the Church of the Cross? Well(?) is(?) then(?)’ ‘Óli is unwiped (behind) and fucked in the ass.’ ‘That sounded ??? good.’

## Lund (Norwegian find?)

DR DKSkL83 Lund, on the flat surface of a round gaming-piece (Steenholt Olesen 2013; c. 1225): **þeta:ræist / rolfr:þorkissun / honom:uar:þāngar / blandat:ump[þ<h]asnæ / huitu:snot**, *Þetta reist Hrólfr Þorgísls/Þorgeirs son; honum var þá angr blandat um þá snæhvítu snót*, ‘Hrólfr Þorgísl’s/Þorgeirr’s son carved this; for him was then sorrow caused concerning the snow-white gentlewoman.’

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