

# **Bilingual Learning in Medieval Iceland: Latinity and Vernacularity in the Old Norse World**

Ryder C. Patzuk-Russell, University of Silesia in Katowice

This paper maintains that over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, medieval Iceland developed a distinctive bilingual educational culture. The lack of surviving Latin manuscripts limits our view of this culture, but hints of it can be seen in the poetics and hagiography it produced, as well as in the narrative of an early fourteenth-century teacher, monk, and bishop, *The Saga of Bishop Lárentíus*. Given some room for speculation, elements and episodes of this saga can be connected to the extant literary corpus, including the production and use of highly specialized grammatical treatises, which offer a Latinate hermeneutics of Old Norse poetry, and the development of a new florid style of vernacular hagiography, which incorporate more Latin terminology and syntax than earlier styles. Furthermore, *The Saga of Bishop Lárentíus* is not only the story of a teacher and his many students, it also contains unique perspectives on language ideology: the rhetorical roles of Latin and Old Norse, the use and prestige of different types of poetry, even the mockery of a Low German speaker with poor Norse skills at the archepiscopal court of Niðaróss. By using this saga as a lens to help interpret our sources for bilingual learning through the lens of this saga, we can add depth to our understanding of the linguistic dynamics of education on the far northwestern periphery of the medieval Latin world.