In my monograph in Studia Islandica 25, *Rauðúlfs þátr. A Study* (Reykjavík 1966), 39–40, I drew attention to three loanwords in the þátr from Old French. One, *kurteisi* (OF *corteisie*) is common in Old Icelandic, and not only in romance sagas; one of the earliest appearances is in *jarðeinabók Þorláks byskups in forna*, in AM 645 4to (written c.1220); the corresponding adjective *kurteiss* (in the superlative form) appears already in the twelfth-century *Leiðarvísir*, probably written by Abbot Nikulás between 1154 and 1159 (Alfræði íslenzk I, 1908, 13; cf. Bjarni Einarsson, ‘The Lovesick Skald’, *Medieval Scandinavia* 4, 1971, 35 and note 24). The other two, *purtréa* ‘adorn with pictures’ (OF *pourtraire*) and *flúr* ‘flower’ (OF *flour, flor*) are found in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts, mainly romance sagas and religious works; Fritzner and Cleasby–Vigfússon (W. A. Craigie’s Supplement) list examples of *purtréa* in *Stjórn, Clarus saga, Rémundar saga; flúr ‘flower’ is found in *Barlaams saga* (oldest manuscript 1275) and *Biskupa sögur II* (fourteenth century), *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr, Stjórn, Karlamagnús saga, Ævintær íslenzk* 1882, *Heilagra manna sögur* I 525/17 (Marthe saga ok Marie Magdelene (manuscripts fourteenth century); also in *Sverris saga* (early thirteenth century) in the sense ‘flour’; cf. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* 1848–87, II 493 (sáðs heiti).

Because a shortened version of *Rauðúlfs þátr* seems to be incorporated into Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla* (ÍF XXVII 298–99; cf. Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olav den helliges saga* (1914), 87), and there is reason to think that the original version of the þátr was later than Styrmir Kárason’s *Ólafs saga helga*, it seemed to me likely that it was first written in the third decade of the thirteenth century. But Old Widding (in his amusing article ‘Dating *Rauðúlfs þátr*, *Medieval Scandinavia* I (1968), 115–121) argues that *purtréa* and *flúr* ‘are words belonging to a painter’s vocabulary’ and that they ‘are attached’ to the ‘florissant stil’ which developed in Old Norse in the second half of the thirteenth century, contemporaneously with a style of painting with flower decoration in church art in Norway. He uses this as evidence in support of his contention that Snorri’s brief account of Óláfr and Rauð(úlf)r was not a shortening of *Rauðúlfs þátr* in the form in which we now have it interpolated into his separate *Ólafs saga helga*, but was the original of which the extant *Rauðúlfs þátr* was an expansion.

Two words in manuscripts that are obviously rather remote from their archetype cannot, of course, be used to date the composition of the original
text, since the date that the words entered the language cannot be precisely
determined, and anyway they could easily have been interpolated at some
stage in the manuscript transmission, and Ole Widding supports his
argument with wider features of the style and language of the extant
Rauðúlf's þátr. But the fact that the language of the þátr shows Norwegian
influence does not really affect the situation, for Snorri might well have
come across the story in Norway, and anyway Norwegian influence on
spelling and style is not uncommon in Icelandic manuscripts towards the
end of the thirteenth century. And interest in describing in detail artistic
decorations of buildings begins in Norse sagas much earlier than 1300 or
even 1250, for Tristrams saga, at any rate, seems to have been translated
as early as 1226. The author of Rauðúlf's þátr uses a considerable amount
of material from southern European literature, including the description
of the revolving building and its decorations, and most notably the ‘gabs’
or boasting, and the story with which the þátr has the greatest affinity is
Le Voyage de Charlamagne, which included both motifs (there is no
indication that the author of the þátr was acquainted with the translation
of this story in Karlamagnus saga). This chanson de geste is thought to
have been composed in the twelfth century, and one of the buildings in it
is said to have had decorations depicting all creation. Another building is
described as having been peinte a flors, so that two of the three French
words in the þátr could actually have been derived directly from the
French poem (the adjective corteis occurs in it several times, though it
does not use the word pourtraire). If the Norwegian or Icelandic author
of the þátr used a version of Le Voyage de Charlamagne, he must of
course have known French, and this would explain both his use of
loanwords from French and his partiality for romance-style descriptions
of buildings. There is no reason in either the language or style of the þátr
why it should not have been written early in the thirteenth century, and
the relationship between it and Snorri’s brief retelling of the story are
best explained by his having read it, possibly in Norway. There is no
reason to suppose that the version he knew differed much from the one
that survives. Dating of texts, when the original manuscripts are no longer
extant, by ‘linguistic facts’, is likely to be less reliable than dating them
by their literary relations, which may inevitably be based on hypotheses,
but at least a terminus post quem for literary motifs can be securely derived
from the known facts of literary history, which is not inevitably more
subjective than linguistic history—at any rate when dealing with loanwords.
Two further addenda to Rauðlífs þátr. A Study:


P. 85, note 1: Cf. also the account of Sigurðr Jórsafari’s travels in the Mediterranean area in *Morkinskinna* (ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1932), chs 46–8, pp. 338–52.