

“Austrfaravísur” (“Verses on the Eastern Journey”) by Sigvat Þorðarson (995-1045), 11 <sup>th</sup> c.		
1. Hugstóra biðk heyra hressfærs jǫfurs (þessar) þolðak vás hvé (vísur) verðung (of fǫr gerðak); sendr vask upp af ǫndrum austr (svafk fátt) í hausti til Svíþjóðar (síðan) svanvangs í fǫr langa.	1. Swift man of battle, I beg This noble company hear These verses I made on my journey. I suffered teeming rain. I was sent [aboard the] ski [of] the field Of the swan, east, Distant, to Sweden. Little sleep for me that autumn.	“field of the swan” = sea, water “ski of the (swan-field)” = ship
2. Létk til Eiðs, þvít óðumk aptrhvarf, dreginn karfa (vér stiltum svá) valtan vátr (til glæps á báti); taki hlægiskip hauga herr; sákat far verra; létk til húms á hrúti hætt; fǫr betr an vættak.	2. I was soaked. The swaying ferry Was hauled across to Eid. Too scared to turn back, like a fool I risked my life on that boat. The ship was a joke. The devil take it! Never a worse have I seen. In peril I lay in that old tub. Yet things turned out better than expected.	
3. Vasa fýst, es rannk rastir reiðr of skóg frá Eiðum (menn of veit, at mœttum meini) tolf ok eina; hykka fót án flekkum (fell sár á il hvára) hvast gengum þó þingat þann dag, konungs mǫnnum.	3. Not for the first time – that's clear – We met trouble. I was furious. Twelve leagues and one we went Walking the forest from Eid. You can bet we plodded on foot Speedily through the day. Blisters blotched the feet Of all the king's servants.	
4. Réðk til Hofa at hœfa; hurð vas aptr, en ek spurðumk (inn settak nef nenninn) niðrlútr fyrir útan; orð gatk fæst af fyrðum, (flögð baðk) en þau sǫgðu, hnekðumk heiðnir rekkar, heilagt (við þau deila).	4. To Hof I struck the path. The door was shut. Outside I had to ask. I bent down, Poked my nose in to see. Not much I learned from that household. They said, “Today is holy.” Heathen bullies threw me out. To Hell with them, say I!	“hof” means “temple” and occurs as an element in place names.
5. Gakkat inn, kvað ekkja, armi drengr, en lengra; hræðumk ek við Óðins (erum heiðin vér) reiði; rýgr kvazk inni eiga óþekk sús mér hnekði alfa blót sem ulfi ótvín í bæ sínum.	5. “No farther can you enter, You wretch!” said the woman. “Here we are heathens And I fear the wrath of Odin.” She shoved me out like a wolf, That arrogant termagant, Said she was holding sacrifice To elves there in her house.	Re: “elf-sacrifice” – “the <i>álfar</i> were subsidiary deities” who were worshiped as a group. “They were connected to specific localities, and had some similarity to the <i>landvaettir</i> , the 'land- spirits' recorded in other sources. They were perhaps something like 'guardian spirits' of the

		region and helped its prosperity.” (Page, 51)
6. Nú hafa hnekt, þeirs hnakka (heinflets) við, mér, settu (þeygi bella þollar) þrír samnafnar (tíri); þó séumk hitt, at hlæðir hafskiðs myni síðan út hverr's Ölvir heitir, alls mest, reka gesti.	6. Now three of the same name, Turning their backs on me, Have thrust me away. These [whetstone-bed fir-trees] show no courtesy. What I fear over all Is that every [loader of the snow-shoe of the ocean] Who bears the name of Ölvir Will drive away all strangers.	“whetstone-bed”= swordblade “(swordblade) fir-tree” = fighting man  “snow-shoe of the ocean” = ship “loader of the (ship)” = captain
7. Fórk at finna bôru (fríðs vættak mér) síðan brjót, þanns bragnar létu, bliks, vildastan miklu; grefs leit við mér gætir gerstr; þá's illr enn versti (lítt reiðik þó lýða lqst) ef sjá's enn bazti.	7. I went to see the giver Of ocean's glitter, one Whom all men said would greet me. I hoped to find a welcome. That [guardian of the hoe] scanned me sourly – I don't shout men's faults – But if this one is the best, What can the worst be like?	“ocean's glitter” = gold “giver of (gold)” = generous prince, king  “guardian of the hoe” = farmhand “[guardian] is usually used in complimentary kennings, as 'guardian of men, or the land' for 'king.' Here Sigvat uses a deliberately ironical and insulting kenning.” (Page, 51)
8. Mista ek fyr austan Eiðaskóg á leiðu Östu bú, es æstak ókristinn hal vistar; ríks fanka son Saxa; saðr vas engr fyrir þaðra (út vask eitt kveld heitinn) inni (fjórum sinnum).	8. On the foot-track east of Eidaskog How I missed the house of Asta! I asked a [non-Christian] man For some place to put up at. Great Saxi's son I never met. No decency did I find. Four times in a single evening I was shown the door!	Asta: mother of Sigvat's employer, king Olaf Haraldsson, of Norway. “Saxi” is an unknown reference.
9. Kátr vask opt, þás úti qrðigt veðr á fjqrðum vísa segl, í vási, vindblásit skóf Strinda; hestr óð kafs at kostum (kilir ristu men Lista) út þars eisa létum undan skeiðr at sundi.	9. Glad was I often when out On the fjords the harsh storm Drove the wind-filled sail of the king Of the Strinda men across the water. The sea-stallion made a fine gallop. The keels made Lista's neck-ring shudder As we sailed our pinnace, fiercely rushing Out across the great ocean.	“Strinda” and “Lista” are places in Norway. “Lista's neck-ring” = sea around Lista.
10. Snjalls létum skip skolla skjöldungs við ey tjölduð	10. We let the noble Skioldung's ships, Canopied, lie at anchor	

fyr ágætu úti öndvert sumar landi; en í haust, þars hestar hagþorns á mó sporna (ték ýmissar) Ekkils, (íðir) hlýtk at riða.	By the island off the glorious land Through the opening summer. But in autumn it was our lot To ride our horses, kicking, Through thickets of hawthorn. I showed the women my skills.	
11. Jór rinnt aptanskæru allsvangr gǫtur langar, völl kná hófr, til hallar, (höfum lítinn dag) slíta; nú's þats blakkr of bekki berr mik Dönum ferri, fákr laust drengs í diki (dægr mætask nú) fœti.	11. The horse, unfed, covers the long paths Through evening's dusk. Its hooves slash the turf before the hall. The light fades. Now my steed carried me Across waters, far from the Danes, My nag's foot struck the river bank. Now day meets night.	
12. Út munu ekkjur líta, allsnúðula, prúðar - fljóð séa reyk - hvar riðum Rognvalds í bý gǫgnum; keyrum hross, svát heyri harða langt, at garði, hesta rós ór húsum hugsvinn kona innan.	12. Quickly the stately ladies Gaze out to view us Riding through Rognvald's courts. They see our cavalcade. We spur on the horses So the lady within her house Hears from far away The pounding of hooves.	
13. Átt hafa sér, þeirs sóttu, sendimenn fyr hendi Sygna grams, með sagnir siklinga, fǫr mikla; spǫrðumk fæst, en fyrða fǫng eru stór við gǫngu; vǫrðr réð nýtr því's norðan Nóregs þinig förum.	13. Ambassadors of the ruler Of Sognfiord, coming to princes With their retinue Have had a monstrous journey. Little we spared ourselves For men find toil in travel. Norway's strong defender Gave us this southern mission.	
14. Drjúggenginn vas drengjum (drengr magnar lof þengils) austr til jǫfra þrýstis Eiðaskógr á leiðu; skyldit mér, áðr mildan minn dróttin komk finna, hlunns af hilmis runnum hnekt dýrloga bekkjar.	14. The path through Eida forest Was a tough road to take East to the wild boar's tamer. The prince's glory I praise. The [trees of the precious fire Of the bench of ship's rollers] of the battle-leader Should not have thrust me away Before I found my gracious lord.	“wild boar” has connotation of “noble warrior, prince” “bench of ship's rollers”=sea; “precious fire of [the sea]” = gold; “trees of [gold]” = well-rewarded warriors
15. Oss hafa augu þessi íslenzk, kona, vísat brattan stíg at baugi björtum langt en svörtu; sjá hefr, mjǫð-Nanna, manni mínn okunnar þínum	15. Good woman, these dark eyes – Icelandic ones – have shown me The long and uphill road Towards that glittering gold. This foot of mine, mead-Nanna, Has stepped so valiantly	“Nanna” = wife of the god Baldr; “mead [goddess]” = woman

fótr á fornar brautir fulldrengila gengit.	Over ancient pathways Unknown to your man.	
16. Búa hilmis sal hjölmum hirðmenn, þeirs svan grenna (hér sék) bens, ok brynjum (beggja kost á veggjum), því ungr konungr engi (ygglaust es þat) dyggra húsbúnaði á hrósa; höll es dýr með öllu.	16. Men of the king's guard Who feast the wound-swan Array the prince's hall with helmets, Mail-coats. Here they hang. No other young ruler Can boast richer wall-hangings. No fear of that. Glorious is this hall.	“wound-swan” = eagle or raven, traditionally portrayed as feeding on battlefield carrion
17. Létk við yðr, es ítran, Áleifr, hugaz-mólum rétt, es ríkan hittak Rognvald, konungr, haldit; deildak mól ens milda, malma vörðr, í gǫrðum harða mǫrg, né heyrðak, heiðmanns, tǫlur greiðri.	17. With thought and with honor I kept my word to you, When, King Olaf, I visited The noble, mighty Rognvald. Many a long talk I had At the court of that fee'd man of yours. To you, my weaponed prince, No man more true than he.	
18. Þik bað, sólar sökkvir, sinn halda vel, Rínar, hvern, es hingat árnar, húskarl nefi jarla, en hverr's austr vill sinna (jafnvist es þat) Lista þengill, þinna drengja þar á hald und Rognvaldi.	18. [Sinker of the sun of the Rhine], the jarl's kin Begged you to greet well Each of his huskarls Who might come hither. And it is likewise certain That each of your men, [Lista-prince], Who will journey east Will Rognvald help.	sun of the Rhine = gold; in the Sigurd legend the treasure he gained from the dragon Fafnir was hidden in the Rhine river.  Sinker (destroyer) of gold = generous rule
19. Folk réð of sik, fylkir, flest, es ek kom vestan, ætt sem áðr of hvatti Eiríks svika þeira; enn því jarla, frænda, eins, þás tókt af Sveini, yðr kveðk, jǫrð, es, nôðuð Ulfs bróður-lið stóðusk.	19. When I came from the west Many men thought That Eric's kin Were working treachery. But you, who alone has won The jarls' lands from Svein, Will with Ulf's kinsmen Find brotherly help.	
20. Sunr lét Ulfs meðal ykkar, Áleifr, tekít mólum þétt fengum svǫr, sátta (sakar leggið it) beggja; þér lét, þjófa rýrir, þær sem engar væri riptar reknar heiptir, Rognvaldr gefit, aldar.	20. Olaf, the son of Ulf said That between you both, A peace was newly made. You laid down your complaints. Rognvald said you, [clearer of the land of thieves], [were not inclined to perpetrate any hostilities at breaches of the truce.]	Clearer of the land of thieves = ruler
21. Fast skalt, ríkr, við ríkan Rognvald, konungr, halda,	21. You should hold fast, mighty king, the treaty with mighty Rognvald –	

<p>hann es þýðr at þinni þQrf nôtt ok dag, sôttum; þann veitk, þinga kennir, þik baztan vin miklu á austrvega eiga alt með grœnu salti.</p>	<p>he is promised to your need night and day. I know you, presider of Things, to have him as by far your best friend In the Eastway, All along the green sea.</p>	<p>Presider of Things = ruler</p>
<p>Old Norse text edited by R. D. Fulk, from Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. <a href="http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?if=default&amp;table=poems&amp;id=351">http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?if=default&amp;table=poems&amp;id=351</a></p>	<p>Translation of verses 1-17 by R. I. Page, <i>Chronicles of the Vikings</i>, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 48-54. Translation of verses 18-20 by Erling Monsen, <i>Heimskingla</i>, (Cambridge: Heffer, 1932), pp. 302-303, with my emendations in brackets. Translations of verse 21 is my own, with corrections by Peter Tunstall.</p>	