TRUTH:
Kent prompts readers to consider the fallibility of any form of history or storytelling composed by a human capable of bias, self-interest, and the influence of prevailing ideologies.

Whilst Kent positions readers to share her view of Agnes' innocence, she concedes that the truth cannot definitively be determined.

- Through the first person narrative that allows readers to witness Agnes' history firsthand, Kent invites readers' empathy and understanding. When Natan asks Agnes how she would treat a wounded fox kit left to die by hunters, Agnes responds she would "stove their heads in with a rock" as "to leave them is cruelty". This foreshadowing of Agnes' mercy killing of Natan positions readers to perceive her involvement in the Illugastadir murders as a kindness.
- Indeed, when recounting the night she killed Natan, Agnes claimed that as Natan lay in agonising pain from Fridrik's hammer blow to his arm, he had looked up at her, "his lips moved silently" and she "understood what he was trying to say". This moment calls to readers' mind Natan's claim that to end a life from its prolonged suffering is "the only decent thing to do". Agnes is thus justified, and even dignified, in her concession to Natan's dying plead.
- Natan himself had regarded Agnes clearly as he died and, as she noted, "it seemed like forgiveness." Natan's profession of gratitude validates the humanity in her actions on that fateful night.
- In this regard, Kent restores ambiguity and complexity to Agnes' human motives, and solicits readers to be cognisant of her rationale when dictating her innocence or guilt.

Nevertheless, Kent does allow the possibility that Agnes may still be guilty

- Agnes acknowledges the unreliability of memory: "Memories shift like loose snow in a wind, or are a chorale of ghosts all talking over one another". This blurs the distinction between memory and fact; by implication, any version of the past, including Agnes' own, is subject to question.
- Agnes takes caution to carefully "think of what to say to Toti", which suggests she is manipulative in her storytelling and selective about what she shares. This secretive and shrewd behaviour indicates a concealed motive that she is reluctant to share; perhaps one that could implicate her in the Illugastadir murders and validate her guilt.
- She omits, for instance, all the eroticism and passion that characterised her relationship with Natan when she is talking to Toti: "I did not lie to the Reverend… but I did not tell Toti what followed", when "Natan urged me to stay with him in the half-light". Her clandestine intimacy with Natan secretes a hidden flaw or abnormality within their relationship; this prompts readers to consider the possibility of an obsessive or even abusive relationship that harboured ill will within Agnes, giving her motive for her crime. At the same time, Agnes, cognisant of Toti's affection for her, did not wish to invoke feelings of jealousy or contempt within the reverend that could estrange him from her.
- The novel's denouement in the penultimate chapter that elucidates the true circumstances behind the Illugastadir murders is prefaced by a reference to the Lazdæla Saga. Readers are prompted to consider that the story of Gudrù who incites her brother Ospak to "attack", "ambush" and murder her lover, Kjartan, could echo Agnes' own story. This intertextual link revives the possibility that Agnes could be guilty after all.

Peoples' biases may diminish hopes of achieving the truth
Kent solicits readers to recognise that any form of history or storytelling is composed by humans is subject to bias.

- The imagery of "dreadful birds with… cocked heads and sharp mouths" to mockingly describe the authorities at Agnes' trial, who were "looking for guilt like berries on a bush" suggests that Agnes' fate had been predetermined by preconceived notions of her cruelty and malice. Their unquestioning subscription to this naïve, misguided and biased perception of Agnes impaired the authorities' ability to act as equitable deliverers of justice, and thus rendered any hopes of unearthing the truth futile.
- Blondal's cold, unsympathetic caricature of Agnes as "a woman loose with her emotions, and looser with her morals" resonates with the exaggerated stories and rumours regarding Agnes spread by gossipmongers such as the obstreperous Roslin, which erroneously depict Agnes as a ruthless savage who "stabbed Natan eighteen times". His subscription to these ungrounded accounts, which blatantly contrast with the calm, collected and reserved demeanour that Agnes maintains throughout the novel, suggests Blondal's prejudiced distrust of Agnes blinds him to her admirable qualities; thereby limiting his ability to fully comprehend her character and make just and informed adjudications.
- Indeed, Kent suggests that Blondal's narrow view emanates from a personal bias, as he "wouldn't speak badly of [Natan] in any way" as "Natan healed his wife", and therefore he could not conceive the notion that Natan had exhibited any ill will to Agnes that might have provoked her actions.

Thus, Kent suggests that truth cannot be definitively distinguished due to the influence of restricted and uninformed individual perspectives.

Distortion of truth through rumours and stories

The truth may be distorted in the circulation of stories grounded in rumour.

- In Agnes' comment to Toti that stories "have a way of boiling over", Kent is suggesting that it is impossible to identify the extent to which fantasy may have had its genesis in truth as, like "boiling" water, gossip gathers momentum with each telling, and thus can morph information into misinformation. This thus sows doubt in the reader's mind about the validity of the stories told regarding Agnes.
- Recounting the Illugastadir murders, the obstreperous gossipmonger, Roslin, says "the wicked three… robbed the good Natan Ketilsson and Petur Jonsson of their lives". In circulation, the 'murderers' of the story have become devoid of any emotion or rationale; it is clear to the reader, however, that the cold, heartless caricature of Agnes in rumour is far removed from the vulnerable and frightened Agnes that opens up to Toti. This suggests that the truth has been oversimplified in the spreading of the story, and fails to take into account Agnes' emotional reasoning.
- Agnes voices this notion explicitly: "They don't know me… to know what a person has done, and to know who a person is, are very different things". Kent prompts readers to consider the absurdity of deciding truth on the basis of impersonal judgements derived from stories, and of "claim[ing] to know you through the things you've done, and not by… listening to you speak yourself".
- Kent attributes the addition of embellishments to Agnes' story to a gossip's desire to shock and scandalise audiences within a society underpinned by rumour, superstition and innuendo. This is particularly apparent in the melodramatic gossip, Roslin, who, when recounting the gratuitous details of the Illugastadir murders to Margret, "flushed with excitement" and "set the bread on the ground so that she could better demonstrate her horror".

The truth is infinitely more complex than official documents suggest

- Legal facts can be amended and are largely determined by context, often validated after the event. Agnes' story has been literally rewritten from the start to accommodate the sensibilities of her true father, a married philanderer named Jòn Bjarnason. Indeed, the Undirfell ministerial records cite that she is the "illegitimate child" of Magnus Magnusson, an unmarried man, as it "seems a lesser crime to create a child with an unmarried man than one already bound in flesh and soul to another woman". The susceptibility of judicial records to human interest imbues readers with the realisation that these depositions are not immune to prejudice or embellishment.
- Kent therefore reveals that these documents are not infallible: indeed, the Undirfell ministerial records cite that Agnes was fourteen on her confirmation on "22nd of May, 1809" but, through the voice of Toti, Kent notes that "in May she would have been thirteen".
- Moreover, the incapability of legal injunctions to recognise human compassion limits its ability to relay the veracity of the events recorded, which are often borne from conflicting human emotions. The Supreme Court Trials' account of the Illugastadir murders reads that Fridrik, Agnes and Sigridur "came inside Natan Ketilsson's home close to midnight, and stabbed and thrashed Natan and Petur Jonsson… to death with a knife and hammer". Its dispassionate, detached and routine tone offers no explanation for Agnes' or Sigga's motives, citing only that Fridrik "came to commit this evil through hatred of Natan". Unable to fathom the human reasoning behind the crime, the document is an insufficient basis to dictate the criminals' guilt or innocence.
- The limitations of written records is encapsulated in Agnes' sentiment that the words cannot convey the sensuous and emotional experiences of the events recorded, such as "the fog of that day and… the ravens cawing at the smell of the blood".