

FIRST  
INTERNATIONAL  
SAGA CONFERENCE



PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
FIRST INTERNATIONAL  
SAGA CONFERENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
1971

Edited by  
PETER FOOTE  
HERMANN PÁLSSON  
and DESMOND SLAY

Issued by  
THE VIKING SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON  
1973

Copyright: Viking Society  
for Northern Research  
1973  
All rights reserved



# CONTENTS

Preface	vii
R.BOYER	
The influence of Pope Gregory's <u>Dialogues</u> on Old Icelandic literature	1
M.CHESNUTT	
Popular and learned elements in the Icelandic saga tradition	28
G.CLARK	
<u>Beowulf</u> and <u>Njáls saga</u>	66
R.G.COOK	
The Sagas of Icelanders as dramas of the will	88
CHRISTINE FELL	
The Old Norse version of the Book of Joshua	114
P.HALLBERG	
The concept of <u>gipta-gæfa-hamingja</u> in Old Norse literature	143
A.HAMER	
Legendary fiction in <u>Flateyjarbók</u>	184
STEFÁN KARLSSON	
Icelandic Lives of Thomas a Becket: questions of authorship	212
R.KELLOGG	
Sex and the vernacular in medieval Iceland	244
JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON	
Elements of learning and chivalry in <u>Fóstbræðrasaga</u>	259
H.MAGERØY	
The literary background of the account of Óspakr's revenge in the <u>Bandamanna saga</u>	300

MARINA MUNDT

Observations on the influence of Piðriks saga on  
Icelandic saga writing 335

J.M.SIMPSON

Eyrbyggja saga and nineteenth-century scholarship 360

A.B.TAYLOR†

Orkneyinga saga - patronage and authorship 396

R.G.THOMAS

Men and society in Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða 411

J.E. VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

The Sagas of Icelanders - possibilities of ethical  
criticism 435

List of Conference Members 462

Minutes of the General Meeting of the Conference 472

## PREFACE

The First International Saga Conference was held in Edinburgh from 21 to 29 August 1971 under the aegis of the Department of Educational Studies and the Department of English Language of the University of Edinburgh. A list of those who accepted invitations to attend is given at the end of this volume.

The central theme of the Conference was "The Icelandic Sagas and Western Literary Tradition". Besides the papers included in the present volume the following were read at the Conference:

- T.M.Andersson. The discovery of darkness in Norse narrative.
- A.L.Binns. Knýtlinga Saga and northern English history in the eleventh century.
- E.J.Cowan. Orkneyinga Saga and Scottish history.
- Bjarni Einarsson. The Vínheiðr episode in Egils Saga and the battle of Brunanburh.
- Hermann Pálsson. Paradigms of love in medieval Icelandic fiction.
- Victoria Yartzeva and A. Desnitskaya. Observations on the language of the sagas.

A general meeting to discuss the future of saga studies was held on the last day of the Conference. Peter Foote took the chair and John Simpson kindly kept a record of the discussion. His minutes are found at the end of this book.

The outstanding social events were a reception by Flugfélag Islands (Icelandair), where members gratefully enjoyed traditional Icelandic hospitality, and a reception by the University of Edinburgh with Professor Angus McIntosh as host.

The Proceedings found here were first edited by Hermann Pálsson and Desmond Slay, and then finally prepared for duplication and read in proof by Peter Foote. It should be noted that the Editors have not attempted to impose the same conventions throughout the volume, though it is hoped that they are consistent within each paper.

Heartfelt thanks are due to Richard Perkins, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College London, and Assistant Secretary of the Viking Society for Northern Research, who also read the complete typescript in a proof stage. We are finally in boundless debt to our typists, Mrs Katja Tims and Mrs Rosemary D'Souza. The fact that they did not find this the most interesting book they have ever copied in no way diminished their industry and care.

Peter Foote  
on behalf of  
the Editors

RÉGIS BOYER

THE INFLUENCE OF POPE GREGORY'S DIALOGUES ON OLD ICELANDIC  
LITERATURE

In recent decades the receptiveness of Old Icelandic literature to foreign influences has become obvious, thanks to the brilliant researches of many scholars throughout the world. When looking for the sources of so many sagas, whether Íslendingasögur or legendary sagas or so-called historical sagas, one is swiftly astonished by the immense extent of the probable reading of the authors. The impression is, very often, that they had read or happened to know most of the literary production of their time.

Naturally, the rôle of the Church in this regard cannot be too much emphasized, especially in the persons of the first bishops of Iceland: Gizurr Ísleifsson, Jón Ögmundarson, Páll Jónsson, Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Guðmundr Arason particularly. It is highly probable that, thanks to their influence, literature in Iceland began with religious writings, such as saints' lives, homilies, Elucidarius, Physiologus, and all kinds of possible translations.

In these conditions, it is not surprising to find traces of sacred texts and authors in practically all the great Icelandic texts, either directly or, more frequently (and for us, more interestingly), by way of assimilation or of what I choose to call impregnation. The list of

such sacred texts would be very long: it would include the Bible, lives of saints, pious legends, martyrologies, religious writers like Isidore of Seville, Honorius Augustodunensis, Vincent of Beauvais, etc.

Of course, in this list, a special place is occupied, in Iceland as in the rest of Europe, by the Fathers of the Church, who will be my particular concern to-day, especially Pope Gregory the Great.

They were read, known and commented on throughout the Middle Ages and certainly take the first place in the libraries of those times.

This is true of Icelandic libraries as well. Augustine (Ágústínus saga, Ágústínus bæn), Hieronymus (Hieronýmus saga, Homilies, Gyðinga saga which is a partial translation of the Vulgata, as is also Veraldar Saga), Ambrosius (Ambrosíus saga byskups, the place the Saint himself took in bishop Guðmundr's life, the Nova Historia Sancti Ambrosii by Gunnlaugr Leifsson), and the translations of the Vitae Patrum, either directly or through Anglo-Norman versions, are very important for the development of Icelandic narrative as well as for the style itself of the sagas - and probably likewise for the ethical, philosophical views of the authors.

But the most important of them is certainly Gregory the Great, the best-known and most imitated author in Europe in the Middle Ages and, therefore, in Iceland as well.

His popularity among Icelanders is not surprising. He had a certain number of features which could not but attract them. For instance, his dislike of abstractions - he is very fond of comparisons and symbols - suited well the realism, the concrete type of imagination of the saga-writers. His works were ready-made models of hagiography, etc.

He is, by far, the most quoted or referred-to author in the "Samtidssagaer" (i.e. Sturlunga Saga, Byskupa Sögur, and so on). For instance, Porláks Saga byskups, chapter 16, tells us that Bishop Porlákr said Gregoríusboen every morning, Lárentíus Saga shows us Bishop Lárentíus in articulo mortis having an extract read of the Expositiones on the Canticum Canticorum; Porlákr follows faithfully in his ministry what the author of Porláks saga byskups calls Cura pastoralis (that is, Liber regulae pastoralis) and Arngrímur Brandsson, in his Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 77, comments on some of Gregory's Homilies.

We know of the existence of two different versions of the life of St Gregory in Icelandic: the one in four extant manuscripts, two of which date from the XIIIth century (NRA 71 and AM 921, IV, 2, 4to), the other from the beginning of the XIVth century. The sources of these texts, according to P. Foote and Hreinn Benediktsson,<sup>1</sup> are John the Deacon and Paul the Deacon. As for Gregory's homilies, which were considered throughout the Middle Ages a model of sacred eloquence, they have directly

inspired a lot of texts in the Icelandic Homilíubók and must be considered as one of its principal sources. The famous fifteen Omeliae in evangelia are, in part (ten in all), preserved in manuscript AM 677, 4to, a copy of an original which Seip thought to be Norwegian<sup>2</sup> and to date from about 1150. Of these homilies, the first six recur in the Homilíubók, the ninth is quoted in the Marthe Saga ok Marie Magdalene, and traces of others can be found in other texts or manuscripts, particularly in Maríu Saga. Overall the Icelandic texts show unmistakable traces of twenty-seven Gregorian homilies.<sup>3</sup>

But the Dialogues are still more important and their influence difficult to estimate because of their depth. They must have been introduced in the North at least in the beginning of the XIIth century and their diffusion must have been great. Hreinn Benediktsson<sup>4</sup> reckons twenty-four fragments come from two codexes. From such an early text as Veraldar Saga (end of the XIIth century?) to Konungs-skuggsjá (end of the XIIIth century?), they are quoted again and again.

I should like here to give some instances of the influence of these Dialogues, not only on Icelandic religious texts and on the sagas of contemporaries, but also on saga literature as a whole, on the form as well as on the themes and subjects, with some instances of perfect copying in texts where one would not expect them.



First on the form. The method of presentation which consists of having a father speaking to his son, or a master to his pupil (here: Gregorius and Petrus) was to make the dialogue itself a genre much practised in the Middle Ages. Suffice it to remind you of Honorius's Elucidarium (and, therefore, the Icelandic Elucidarius), Petrus Alphonsi's Disciplina clericalis which gave birth to the whole literature of "chastoiements" (Chastoiement d'un père à son fils, Enseignements Trebor by the so-called Robert de Ho, Ditié d'Urbain or L'apprise de murture by Urbain le courtois) the Vers del Juīse (where there is a debate between a soul and its body, as in the Débat de l'âme et du corps), the De arrhâ animae by Hugh of St Victor, the influence of which in Iceland must have been tremendous,<sup>5</sup> and so on until the Konungsskuggsjá itself, which is also a dialogue.

When relating a miracle, Gregory mentions his sources, gives the names of the people who witnessed the facts, multiplies the justifications: which is exactly the way the Icelandic authors of jarteinabækur proceed (Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups, Viðbætur to Jóns Saga Helga).

In the detail of the phraseology there are striking similarities. For instance hann var ungr at aldri, en gamall at ráðum (the theme of puer senex), an expression applied indiscriminately to the three Icelandic saints (Jón, Þorlákr and Guðmundr), is a word for word translation

of Gregory's expression. Dial. II 38<sup>6</sup> repeats three times the exhortation Finis venit universae carnis (The end comes of all flesh) which was soon to become a kind of Icelandic commonplace (see Hávamál or, in Sturla Þórðarson's Íslendinga saga, chapter 138, the famous vísa by Þórir jökull: eitt sinn skal hverr deyja). The curious habit of repeating a formula, which has been taken as a perfect instance of popular expression (for example, in Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 14: Hér sofa drengir ok hér sofa drengir, not to speak of the same kind of repetitions in some heroic poems of the Edda) or as a typical feature of poetry of visions (for example vísa 59 in chapter 136 of Íslendinga Saga: logheimr búinn / logheimr búinn or vísa 88 in the same work: í helju heim / í helju heim) comes, so to speak, mechanically in the Dialogues (e.g. IV 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 40, 56).

The number three governs the symbolism of Gregory as well as that of the Icelanders.

It is in the Dialogues that one probably found a lot of stock images, such as the representation of the soul escaping from the body of a dying man in the form of a bird (Dial. II 38 and Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 14).

A dialogue like IV 1, which is a short exemplum on the symbolism of light, is literally imitated in an Icelandic text.<sup>7</sup>

A great number of details relevant to mere anecdote may have found their origin or justification in the Dialogues. It is Gregory who recommends building churches on the site of ancient heathen temples (true, Gregory must himself have found the point in St Paul's Epistles; Dial. II 8, 38, III 7): the fact is commonplace in the byskupasögur. A passage in Dial. IV 15 tells us how Servulus, the illiterate paralytic learned the Holy Scriptures by heart by dint of hearing them read around him. This reminds us of Þóroddr the carpenter (Jóns Saga Helga I, chapter 23) who learned grammar and became "a master in this art" by hearing the lessons of the master when carving the beams of Hólar cathedral. Þorlákr and Guðmundr could find an easy way of justifying their numerous bans or excommunications in the Dialogues, where Saint Benedict, many a time, is supposed to conclude his admonitions with: quia si non emendaveritis, excommunico vos (e.g. II 24).

Prophecies and predictions are one of the characteristic features of the Icelandic sagas as well as of the Dialogues. Equitus (Dial. I 4) like Guðmundr (Íslendinga Saga, chapter 37, Þórðar Saga Kakala, chapter 24, etc.), foresees events soon to follow; Benedict (Dial. II 15) unveils to King Totila his future in the same way as Guðmundr Arason in Prestssaga, chapter 1 and 7; the same Benedict announces that a tempest will chase the Gothic tribes out of Rome (Dial. II 16) exactly as Guðmundr warns

the bad priest Oddleifr that his farm will burn (Íslendinga Saga, chapter 37). Lies are as frequently unveiled in the Dialogues as in the sagas. Many a character in the Dialogues is second-sighted, in the way a man may be framsýnn in the sagas. Foreseeing terrible events such as the mutual killing of brothers is found in the Dialogues as well as in Glúma (the spákona Oddbjörg, about Arngrímr and Steinólfr).

I shall develop for a moment another feature very frequent in the sagas of contemporaries and in the Íslendingasögur: the visions and apparitions which, as everybody knows, finally constituted a separate genre in the Middle Ages. Numberless are such visions in the Dialogues, either in dreams or in daylight, especially to men who are going to die. I count 91 visions of this kind in the Dialogues and 82 in the "contemporary" sagas. There are striking similarities. In Dial. III 25 a saint appears to a man to advise him to apply to another saint whose name is expressly given: such is the case in Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups II chapter 20 and in Jóns Saga Helga I, chapter 50, or Guðmundar Saga Arasonar by Arngrímr, chapter 28. There are ghosts in the Dialogues, as many as there are draugar in the byskupasögur. Dial. III 4 relates that one night Bishop Datius heard a horrible din, roaring of lions, bellowing, hissing of snakes, grunting of swine, cries of mice:

Itaque intempestae noctis silentio, cum vir  
 Dei quiesceret, antiquus hostis immensis vocibus  
 magnisque clamoribus coepit imitari rugitus  
 leonem, balatus pecorum, ruditus asinorum,  
 sibilos serpentium, porcorum stridores et  
 soricum.

In Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 14, Guðmundr,  
 at the time of the reimleikar in Kerlingarfjörður, hears:

dunur miklar ok margs kyns ill læti ok glímur  
 miklar / ... / skræki mikla ok hlaup stór, sem  
þá er naut leika ok láta öskurliga.

Visions of Hell are frequent in the Dialogues: ten at  
 least, some of which are very detailed (IV 32, 37, 40, 53,  
 55). It is unavoidable that we should be led to think of  
 the famous Rannveig's vision in Guðmundar Saga Arasonar,  
 chapter 28 (and Jóns Saga Helga II, chapter 44). Rannveig  
 is a woman of bad morals: she is the concubine of a priest,  
 after having been that of another. One day, she faints.  
 People think she is dead; but towards the end of the day  
 she awakes and begins to tell what she has experienced.  
 Devils came who took her, beat her and carried her away.  
 She has seen the souls of the damned in the torments: fire,  
 blows, tortures, foul smell. She has been led near a  
 huge cauldron surrounded with fire and full of boiling oil;  
 in this cauldron she saw "nearly all the lay chiefs  
 (ólærða höfðingja) of Iceland who had misused the power  
 they had got". A devil told her she would be coming to

suffer the same treatment because of her bad behaviour (hórdómr). Devils grasp her and she feels burning in the feet, hands, back and shoulders. Just at this moment she calls for help to the Holy Virgin, the saints Peter, Óláfr, Magnús and Hallvarðr. Then a great light appears and the saints come. They take her out of the devils' claws. They explain to her that it is a kind of punishment for her sins that she has suffered such torments. And then Peter comes, and after him the Holy Virgin herself. There is then a sudden change of scenery. She finds herself now in a delicious place, under a marvellous light, in a sweet fragrance. Beautiful meadows full of flowers surround "houses" and "halls", magnificent, high and numerous: these are the mansions of heaven. Finally, the vision ends and Rannveig comes back to herself. She will end her life in saintly manner.

Of course, it is important to underline the strong resemblance between this vision and the famous Tyndal's Vision, composed in 1149 by an Irish priest named Marc in Regensburg, in Latin, with the title Visio Tnugdali: there are two French prose versions of this text and one Anglo-Norman one, all from the XIIIth century. But the Icelanders also knew this text, since there exists the translation called Duggals Leizla, of uncertain date but probably from the XIIIth century.<sup>8</sup> But it is simply reasonable to suppose that all these texts have one and

the same source, which is the Dialogues, which must have inspired the enormous literature of visions in the Middle Ages (and accordingly, not least the famous Saint Paul's Vision; and one could think also of Bede and Honorius<sup>9</sup>).

What is interesting here is the fact that the most important visions of Hell and Paradise in the Dialogues present the facts in the same order and with the same details as, first, Visio Tnugdali and then, Rannveig's vision. But what is more important is that the latter gives details which are, all of them, to be found in the Dialogues. There is even in Dial.IV 53 a nun who sees Hell because of her bad behaviour. And in Dial.IV 37 Paradise is described in terms which remind us exactly of Rannveig's vision: meadows full of flowers, bright beings clad in white, exquisite perfume, and particularly, magnificent "houses" and "halls". And let us note, in passing, that Gregory imagines a huge bridge to go from Hell to Paradise, which is strongly reminiscent of Bifröst in the Edda. All in all, the resemblances are too numerous to allow us to think them the result of mere coincidence.

Let us take another detail here: it has to do with the belief, probably felt to be genuinely Nordic, in the fylgja. I do not want to annex this notion to the world of Christian representations, but I must point out that the rare mentions of fylgjur in the "contemporary" sagas

(Íslendinga Saga, chapter 70 or Hákonar Saga Hákonarsonar, vísa 56 for instance) would not seem strange to a reader of the Dialogues. Nor would he find strange the indication of feigð by the sight of an exhausted animal belonging to the man who is going to die, such as is found in Íslendinga Saga, chapter 90, where Sighvatr Sturluson guesses the approach of Valgarðr Styrmisson's death by the sight of the latter's exhausted horse; a quite similar scene takes place in Dial.IV 9 involving the monk Speciosus. To come back to fylgjur: there are exact parallels between Dial. IV 10 and vísa 5 in Hrafn's Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar (perhaps the influence here came through the German source which inspired the author of the so-called Konungsannáll s.a. 1118).

I shall not insist on the importance of dreams in the Icelandic sagas: they take an equally important place in all medieval literature, either because of the influence of the Bible on it, or because of people's psychological state in those times. They are, of course, very numerous in the Dialogues. But rather than give here a long list of references, I will mention just one case where the influence seems to be obvious. It concerns a prediction made by one person to another; and just before it this second person has had a premonitory dream which is strictly analogous to this prediction (alternatively the dream may follow the prediction). Such is the case in, for in-



stance, Dial. III 1 and, among others, in Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 6, Islendinga Saga, chapter 23.

But I shall insist, on the other hand, on the importance of the literature of miracles which was as flourishing in Iceland as elsewhere at the same time and which is here of particular importance, since, as everybody knows, it may have inspired many an episode in the Islendingasögur. This kind of literature constitutes an important part of the Byskupasögur, as is natural, and also of the Sturlunga Saga compilation. Here, par excellence, the influence of Gregory's Dialogues is obvious. Not only are the types of miracles recorded in the Icelandic texts similar to Gregory's, but cases of exact correspondence are very numerous. I shall try to give here a kind of classification, for the sake of convenience.

Animals benefit very often from miracles in the Dialogues as well as in the "contemporary" sagas. Let us notice Libertinus's horse, which when stolen refuses to take one step until it is restored to his master (Dial. I 2), just as Grani, Sigurðr's horse, refuses to walk as long as Sigurðr has not mounted on its back in Fáfnismál. Animals obey the saints in a mysterious way in the Dialogues (I 3, 9; II 11, 15, 16, 26), just as enraged dogs part from one another on Bishop Guðmundr's injunction (Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 23 or Þorláks Saga byskups, yngri gerðin, chapter 47). The drakes in

Guðmundar Saga Arasonar by Arngrímr, chapter 62, come out of Dial.II 26 or IV 40. There is in Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 4, a sow which suddenly becomes mad, runs into a child's bed and bites it to death. The text specifies clearly that the animal must have been possessed by the devil. One may wonder whether we here have to do with a legend, one of those sinister stories which were later to have such a success in Icelandic folklore, or with a popular tradition. But if, as is highly probable, Lambkár Þorgilsson had read the Dialogues, he must have taken the episode from III 21, where a long explanation follows, stating that, as swine are the most disgusting of all animals, it is simply natural that devils should enter them.

One of the attributes of the saints is power over the elements, water and fire for instance. Equally in Gregory's text and in "contemporary" sagas they put out fires (Dial. I 6, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 8, Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 24), chase away mice invading a country (Dial. I 9, Þorláks saga byskups y.g., chapter 16, Jóns saga Helga II, chapter 40), triumph over the danger of water (Dial. III 36, IV 59, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 48, Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 36), calm tempests or cause rivers to return to their beds (Dial. II 34, III 10, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 23, Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 20,

Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 36), walk into a supernatural light (exact parallel between Dial.II 36 and Prestssaga), and cause delicious smells to arise from the relics they are bearing (Dial.III 30, IV 15, 16, 17, 28, 37, 49 and Prestssaga chapter 22, Porláks saga y.g., chapter 43, Jóns saga Helga II, chapter 42, Guðmundar saga Arasonar, chapter 38).

Here are some examples of exact correspondence.

Constantius, out of mere absent-mindedness, fills lamps with water instead of fuel, but they burn as well "as if it were the best oil", says Dial. I 5. In Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 11, Guðmundr blesses water and it burns to give light to chess-players, sem it bezta lýsi states the text. St Maurus runs on water to save the life of a child who is going to drown in Dial.II 7, and Porlákr does the same in Porláks Saga byskups, chapter 60. The people who carry Cerbonius's corpse to Populone do not suffer from the rain which is falling everywhere around them (Dial.III 11), and Fulgentius draws on the ground a circle in the middle of which he stands without receiving a drop of water (Dial. III 12), just as Porlákr causes rain to fall on a burning farm but nowhere else (Porláks saga byskups, chapter 26). Bishop Frigidianus and Bishop Guðmundr cause a river to change direction in exactly the same manner and for the same reasons in Dial.II 9 and Prestssaga, chapter 22.

The solicitude of the saints for poor people is great: they know how to fill a barrel of wine with a small quantity of grapes (Dial. I 7, 9) or how to allow a piece of cheese to renew itself so as to be sufficient for a whole family (Jóns saga Helga I, chapter 37); they can announce that flour will arrive tomorrow to feed hungry poor people (Dial. II 22) or that a whale will come ashore tomorrow on a poor farmer's shore (Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 26).

The wonder-workers very often heal diseases. The advantage here lies with the "contemporary" sagas where such miracles happen 183 times. But there are exactly identical miracles: saints can heal wounded animals, for example (Dial. I 10, Þorláks saga byskups, chapters 23, 25 and 26).

One of the saints' specialities is to find things which have been lost: this happens 37 times in Byskupa Sögur and 82 times in the Dialogues. Some similarities are striking (for instance, to be brief, cf. Dial. II 32, where Benedictus liberates a friend of his from his chains, with Hrafn's Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar, chapter 19, where people miraculously get out of the fetters into which Þorvaldr Snorrason has put them).

There are three cases of resurrections in the Dialogues against eleven in the Byskupa Sögur. But in all cases in the Dialogues, and in eight cases out of the eleven in the Byskupa Sögur, they concern children.

To give a few other instances: when St Stephanus dies, in Dial. IV 20, angels enter his cell to take his soul; among the audience, only people who deserve to see the angels can do so, the others do not see anything at all; in Islendinga Saga, chapter 21, when the bells of Hólar cathedral are ringing, everybody can hear them except those who are under Bishop Guðmundr's excommunication; in the same way, when the people present smell the wonderful scent arising from St Martin's relics in Prestssaga, chapter 22, the sceptical priest Steinn cannot smell anything, which will cause him to repent.

The man who is to behead Sanctulus in Dial. III 37 raises his arm and is then unable to lower it: exactly the same thing happens to Þorsteinn Jónsson when he brandishes his axe against Bishop Þorlákr (Oddaverja Páttir, chapter 6).

And finally, Bishop Savinus causes a river to re-enter its course by throwing into it a piece of wood on which he has just written a special formula (Dial. III 10): this reminds us of the same kind of episode in Eigla and Grettla where runic inscriptions on pieces of wood acquire strange powers.

I shall now give four instances where the resemblances are so great that it seems impossible to speak of anything other than conscious imitation. It is remarkable that two of these instances come from Islendingasögur

and one from Sturlunga Saga, and only one from the Byskupa Sögur.

(1) In Dial. II 3 Gregory tells how St Benedict escapes death: his monks, who protest against the rule he has imposed upon them, offer him a bottle full of poisoned wine. He draws the sign of the Cross on the bottle which immediately falls on the ground in pieces:

Et cum vas vitreum in quo ille pestifer potus habebatur recumbenti patri ex more monasterii ad benedicendum fuisset oblatum, extensa manu Benedictus signum crucis edidit, et vas quod longius tenebatur eodem signo rupit: sicque contractum est, ac si in illo vase mortis pro cruce lapidem dedisset. Intellexit protinus vir Dei quia potum mortis habuerat, quod protare non potuit signum vitae.

We may compare Egla, chapter 44, where we have the well-known episode in which Egill engraves runes on the horn with poisoned beer:

dróttning ok Bárðr blönduðu þá drykkinn ólyfjani ok báru þá inn; signdi Bárðr fullit, fekk síðan ölsejgunni; færði hon Agli ok bað hann drekka. Egill brá þá knífi sínum ok stakk í lófa sér; hann tók við horninu ok reist á rúnar ok reið á blóðinu. Hamkvað:

9. Rístum rún á horni / ... /

Hornit sprakk í sundr, en drykkirninn fór niðr í hálm.

Of course, the author of the Icelandic saga has adapted the facts to circumstances, replacing the sign of the

Cross by runes and adding, à l'islandaise, a vísa which plays the same role as the commentary in Gregory's text. But it is the same frame, the same composition, the same order of events, the same results and, I must say, the same conciseness.

(2) Einar Ól. Sveinsson has shown that Flosi's famous dream in Njála, chapter 133,<sup>10</sup> had its source in the Dialogues and I shall not repeat his demonstration: the simple quotation of both texts will be sufficient:

Dial. I 8 (on abbot Anastasius and his abbey):  
 quo videlicet in loco ingens desuper rupes eminet,  
 et profundum subter praecipitium patet. Quadam  
 vero nocte cum jam omnipotens Deus ejusdem  
 venerabilis viri Anastasii labores remunerare  
 decreuisset, ab alta rupe vox facta est, quae  
 producto sonitu clamaret dicens: Anastasi, veni.  
 Quo vocato alii quoque septem fratres, vocati  
 sunt ex nomine. Parvo autem momento ea quae  
 fuerat emissa vos siluit, et octavum fratrem  
 vocavit. Quas dum aperte voces congregatio  
 audisset, dubium non fuit quin eorum qui vocati  
 fuerant obitus appropinquasset. Intra paucos  
 igitur dies primus venerandus vir Anastasius,  
 ceteri autem in eo ordine ex carne educti sunt,  
 quo de rupis vertice fuerant vocati. Frater  
 vero ille ad quem vocandum vox parum siluit  
 atque eum ita nominavit, morientibus aliis,  
 paucis diebus vixit, et tunc vitam finivit; ut  
 aperte monstraretur quia interjectum vocis  
 silentium parum vivendi spatium signaverit.

Njála, chapter 133.

"Mik dreyndi þat," segir Flosi, "at ek þóttumsk vera at Lómagnúpi ok ganga út ok sjá upp till gnúpsins. Ok opnaðisk hann, ok gekk maðr út ór gnúpinum ok var í geitheðni ok hafði járnstaf í hendi. Hann fór kallandi ok kallaði á menn mína, suma fyrr, en suma síðar, ok nefndi á nafn. Hann kallaði fyrstan Grím inn rauða ok Árna Kolsson. Þá þótti mér undarliga: mér þótti sem hann kallaði Eyjólf Bölverksson ok Ljót, son Síðu-Halls, ok nökkura sex menn. Þá þagði hann stund nökkura. Síðan kallaði hann fimm menn af váru liði, ok váru þar Sigfússynir, bræðr þínir. Þá kallaði hann aðra fimm menn, ok var þar Lambi ok Móðólfr ok Glúmr. Þá kallaði hann þrjá menn. Síðast kallaði hann Gunnar Lambason ok Kol Þorsteinsson. Eptir þat gekk hann at mér; ek spurða hann tíðenda. Hann kvezk segja mundu tíðendin. Ok spurða ek hann at nafni; hann nefndisk Járngrímr. / ... / Vil ek nú at þú segir, hvat þú ætlar draum minn vera." "Þat er hugboð mitt," segir Ketill, "at þeir muni allir feigir, er kallaðir váru /... /"

But it must be added that the reference is not complete. The episode in Njála could be inspired by other passages in the Dialogues. See for instance Dial. IV 27 where three different tales tend to prove, one after the other, that "people who are going to die know certain things". There, the monk Gerontius on his death bed sees "men in white", one of them engaged in writing the names of certain monks (who, of course, will die in the order in which he has written their names). The young monk Mellitus is going to die of plague: he sees a young man who gives him a letter and says "Open and read"; the epistle contains the names of the



other monks who are to die with Mellitus. And finally a young man stricken with plague announces his death and gives the names of all those who are to die of the same disease. So, the same story, with variants, appears four times in the Dialogues: a permanence which must have incited the author of Njála to take the episode into his text. And further it is not impossible that Hrafn the Red's vision of Hell which takes place in chapter 157 of the saga might correspond to the vision of Petrus de Hibernia in Dial. IV 37, a passage which may also have inspired the sixth part of Sólarljóð.<sup>11</sup>

(3) If we now read Guðmundar Saga Dýra, chapter 13, in Sturlunga Saga, we come to a curious passage. Guðmundr Dýri, whose anger against Önundr Porkelsson has reached its peak, is about to take action, and the author multiplies the signs which forebode Önundr's death. This is one:

Pat var um várit, er húskarlar kómu inn í Langahlíð  
(the place where Önundr lives) um ljósan dag ok  
vildu hitta Önund at því, er þeir þurftu - þá sáu  
þeir hann eigi. Ok fór svá þrisvar. Ok sat hann  
þó í rúmi sínu.

There is, to my knowledge, no other instance in the Icelandic texts of this portent, if we take into account that this invisibility is not caused by magic or sorcery (as, for instance, in Fóstbrœðra Saga). But we find exactly the model in Dial. I 2, about Libertinus:

Eodem quoque tempore in campaniae partibus Buccellinus cum Francis venit; de monasterio vera praefati famuli Dei rumor exierat, quod pecunias multas haberet. Ingressi oratorium Franci coeperunt saevientes Libertinum quaerere, Libertinum clamare, ubi in oratione ille prostratus jacebat. Mira valde res: quaerentes saevientesque Franci ingredienti in ipso impingebant, et ipsum videre non podebant; sicque sua caecitate frustrati, a monasterio sunt vacui regressi.

Of course, the meaning of this invisibility is exactly the reverse in the Dialogues and in Guðmundar Saga Dýra. But the fact is the same and the tale likewise short..

(4) Finally, we read in Dial. III 14 the following story:

(of Jacobus, servus Dei): Alio quoque tempore accesserunt ad eum peregrini quidam misericordiam postulantes, scissis vestibus, pannis obsiti, ita ut paene nudi viderentur. Cumque hunc vestimenta peterent, eorum verba vir Domini tacitus audivit; qui unum ex discipulis suis protinus silenter vocavit, eique praecepit dicens: Vade, atque in illa silva in loco tali cavam arbore require; et vestimenta quae in ea inveneris defer. Cumque discipulis abiisset, arborem sicut fuerat jussum requisivit, vestimenta reperit, et latenter detulit magistro. Quae vir Dei suspiciens, peregrinis nudis atque petentibus ostendit et praebuit dicens: Venite, quia nudi estis, ecce tollite, et vestite vos. Haec illi intuentes, recognoverent ... quae posuerant, magnoque pudore consternati sunt; et qui fraudulentem

vestimenta quaerebant aliena, confusi receperunt sua.

This passage is faithfully copied, with the necessary adaptations, in Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 16:

Pat er sögn Lambkárs Gunnsteinssonar, at Guðmundr byskup gisti í Galtardalstungu./.../ Pá varð þat til tíðenda, at sveinn einn fátækr kemr hlaupandi til byskups, alnökviðr, svá at hann hafði ekki klæði á sér. Hann biðr byskup at hann gefi honum nökkut til klæða sér. Byskup hyggr at sveininum ok mælti svá: "Áttu enga klæðaleppa, sonr?" segir byskup. "Já, alls enga," segir sveinninn. "Allóbirgr þykkir mér þú vera, sonr minn," segir byskup, "ok má eigi þat vera, at ek ráða ekki ór við þik. Nú mun ek vísa þér til fatleppa, er Mária hefi sent þér, ok eru þeir niðri á mýri undir torfstakki þeim, er first er bænum." Sveinin varð um fár svá ok kvaðst eigi fara mega þangat nökviðr. Byskup kvaddi til tvá klerka sína at fara með honum, ok fór hann mjök svá nauðigr með þeim. Nú koma þeir til torfstakkanna ok koma til allra ok finna undir þeim, er byskup kvað á, fataleppa vanda. Þeir spyrja nú sveinninn, hvárt hann kenni nökkut fataleppa þessa. "Kenni ek víst," segir hann, "ek hefi átt þetta, ok þykkir mér vera engu neytir, ok ætlaða ek, at byskup mundi gafa mér betri, ok hefir ekki Mária sent mér tötra þessa."

Between the story of Jacobus, servus Domini, and that of Guðmundr Arason, there are only slight differences: the pilgrims have been replaced by a boy, the tree by a peat-heap, the rags by nakedness. For the rest,

everything has been faithfully copied, including the humour with which both saints pretend to be filled with pity for the people who are asking them for clothes.

These are, of course, only a few hints, limited to some Islendingasögur and "contemporary" sagas, about the influence of Pope Gregory's Dialogues in Iceland. It could be sufficient, it seems to me, judging from the scope, variety and multiplicity of the borrowings, to prove the deep influence the Dialogues had. I must add that J. de Vries sees parallelism between King Totila's adventures in the Dialogues and some passages in the Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason,<sup>12</sup> that Sigurður Nordal underlines the similarity between the bird (a thrush) which annoys St Benedict in the Dialogues and the swallow (that is Queen Gunnhildr) which tries to prevent Egill Skallagrímsson from composing his Höfuðlausn, and that Einar Ól. Sveinsson has found textual similarity between a sentence in Laxdæla Saga and a passage of the Dialogues.<sup>13</sup>

The diversity of the Icelandic texts here mentioned, the variety of ways in which the borrowings have been made - they range from stark plagiarism to vague reminiscence - and the great number of notions, ideas, images we have found to be identical in the two kinds of text enable us to speak, I think, not only of influence but still more of impregnation after complete assimilation. The Icelandic authors must have lived in a kind of symbios-

is with the great Latin texts, those precisely which were popular all over Europe in the Middle Ages. To come back to the Dialogues: repeated reading of such a work, attentive, frequent and generalized, was necessary to produce such an impregnation.

This paper is only a modest contribution to a more general study. My conviction is that such a study, applied to a certain number of texts or authors known throughout Europe in the Middle Ages (for instance, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Isidore of Seville, Honorius Augustodunensis, Vincent of Beauvais) would most probably lead to a similar conclusion. And I think that it is from a patient study of foreign authors, from a deep assimilation of them, that Icelandic literature has arisen: not by servile copying but by elaboration. The remarkable effort these authors had to make did not consist in trying by all means to reconcile to these foreign teachings a native tradition in itself irreducible to the new trends, but it certainly consisted in shaping from these teachings and on their basis an original personality. This literature did not come into existence, form and prestige by opposition or revolt; it grew by a slow and sure assimilation, a kind of steady maturing.

As far as literature is concerned, the progressive acquisition of Christian thought and teaching in Iceland will have served a maieutic purpose.

## NOTES

1. P.G. Foote: Early Icelandic Manuscripts in facsimile. Vol.IV: Lives of Saints. Perg. fol. nr 2 in the Royal Library Stockholm, Copenhagen 1962, pp. 22-3.  
H. Benediktsson: The Life of Saint Gregory and his Dialogues. Fragments of an Icelandic manuscript from the 13th century. Editiones Arnarnagæðar, series B, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1963.
2. D.A. Seip: The Arna-Magnæan Manuscript 677, 4to. Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi, vol. XVIII, pp. 23 ff.
3. See too: G. Turville-Petre: The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, London 1951, pp.182-3; idem: Origins of Icelandic Literature, Oxford 1953; T. Knudsen: Gammelnorsk Homiliebog, Corpus Codicum Norvegicorum Medii Aevi, Vol. I, passim; and the article Homilie-bøker in Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder.
4. Op.cit., in note 1.
5. See O.A. Johnsen: "Om S:t Victorklosteret og Nordmennene. En skisse", in (Norsk) Historisk Tidsskrift, 33, 1943-1946, pp. 405-32.
6. The references to Gregory's work are to the edition of Wendelin Foerster: Li Dialogue Gregoire lo Pape. Les Dialogues du Pape Grégoire traduits en français

du XIIe siècle, accompagnés du texte Latin ... 1ère  
 partie: Textes. Halle et Paris 1876. References to  
 Icelandix texts are for Sturlunga Saga to the  
 edition by Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and  
 Kristján Eldjárn, Reykjavík 1946, and for Byskupa  
Sögur to the edition by Guðni Jónsson, Reykjavík 1953.

7. Niðrstigningar Saga.
8. Cf. e.g. de Vries Altnordische Literaturgeschichte.  
 2nd ed., Berlin, 1957, § 190.
9. For instance, in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica the  
 vision of Drycthelm of Northumbria.
10. I quote here from the Norwegian translation of  
A Njáls búað: Njáls saga, kunstverket, Bergen-Oslo,  
 1959, p. 15; see too Njáls Saga in Íslenzk Fornrit  
 XII, chapter 133 (pp. 346-8) and the notes given  
 there).
11. Pointed out by Å. Ohlmarks: Den okända Eddan.  
 Stockholm 1956, p. 382 .
12. Altnord. Lit., § 189.
13. Íslenzk Fornrit V, pp. XXXIV and 120.

MICHAEL CHESNUTT

POPULAR AND LEARNED ELEMENTS IN THE ICELANDIC SAGA-TRADITION

I

It is a notorious weakness of the professional scholar that he tends to ignore the external pressures to which he is subjected. Some humanists feel such a deep obligation to justify themselves that they are wholly impatient of inherited ideas; others display an unreasonable degree of conservatism. Literary discussion has much to lose and little to gain from this process of polarisation, for the undoubted benefits of innovation can quickly be cancelled out by a loss of emotional contact with the subject. Perhaps it would be well to state that my argument in this paper is based on a conviction - which some would no doubt call a prejudice - that literary studies are in the first place an aesthetic activity. "Each generation must define the past in its own terms" - which is just one way of saying that important literary questions, whether historical or critical, are in constant need of re-evaluation. Individual experience, even ideology, should also be brought to bear upon the problems under discussion. One of the attractions of literary study is that it has no absolutes: the scholar who has respect for the integrity of his sources will try as far as is possible to adapt his response to the findings of linguistic and historical



research, but it is futile to suppose that literary results can be purged of all subjectivity, or that they can ever be held to have been "proved" in the sense attached to that word by the natural scientist. On the other hand, if literary study is to claim a certain freedom from restrictions it must be seen to keep an open mind. Its direct function is to present the work to the reader in a way which is meaningful, irrespective of differences in time and place, outlook, language or experience. It is above all else these concerns that make the subject distinctively humanistic.

The foregoing reflections are in a measure prompted by the controversy between Lars Lönnroth and Peter Hallberg concerning the possible European influences on Icelandic saga writing<sup>1</sup>. These, at least, are two writers who can be said to have broken new grounds in saga studies, though their approaches could scarcely be more dissimilar. The nature of their dispute is sufficiently well known for a detailed recapitulation to be unnecessary. There are, however, certain considerations which I should like to put forward in relation to it.

Lars Lönnroth's basic assumption is that there may have been much more Latin influence on saga literature than has been previously accepted. This is not a priori unlikely considering the generally clerical or at least learned character of the oldest prose texts which have

come down to us; and the dearth of specific evidence is in itself no argument to the contrary, for significant parallels are more often discovered by accident than the majority would care to admit. There is nevertheless a strong suggestion that Lars Lönnroth has seized upon the notion of Latin influence because he finds its alternative theoretically displeasing. The established historians, whose main preoccupation is with ecclesiastical and political institutions, have a tendency to assume that all major European cultural movements are centrifugal. This is a convenient theory, inasmuch as it provides a framework within which individual problems can be discussed, but it ought not to be elevated into a doctrine: phenomena such as the Irish missions to the Continent prove that the exceptions are as important as the rule. Neglect of these exceptions has produced a seriously oversimplified view of the European Middle Ages - a view which the literary historian is all too easily tempted to adopt. The consequence in the case of the sagas is bound to be a certain scepticism concerning their origins, for it is hard to accept in terms of the given framework that a major literary genre could arise spontaneously in Icelandic conditions. This (or something very similar) would seem to be the attitude underlying Lönnroth's summary of his doctoral thesis, where we are presented by way of conclusion with a list of thematic and stylistic features offering good prospects to the hunter of Latin parallels.<sup>2</sup>

Icelandic literature is here brought within the safe jurisdiction of the medievalist: everything must be of Latin origin unless it can be proved to be native.

If one looks dispassionately at the history of Icelandic studies one can see that such a development was inevitable. The chauvinistic-romantic schools of thought cry out for some kind of reaction, and Lönnroth's mistake - now that the dust has settled - appears largely to have been a matter of tactics. Scholars with declared views on the subject might privately admit that debate is a necessary professional activity, but they give the impression of being reluctant to engage in it. The dispute about authorship is a case in point. Lönnroth takes a dim view of the tradition which ascribes certain works to Snorri Sturluson and his nephew Sturla Þórðarson. He fails to explain why these names should have been transmitted by the scribes while the bulk of Icelandic prose writing remains anonymous; but he raises the important question of Snorri's and Sturla's literary rôle, and emphasizes that their function may rather have been that of general editor than of author in the restricted sense. This point of view is not, in fact, entirely new, but it is presented in an unashamedly iconoclastic fashion. It is the manner rather than the matter which has caused most offence - the student of Irish is immediately reminded of the reaction to James Carney's Studies in Irish history and literature (Dublin

1955), where a tendency to overstate his case is again the author's besetting sin. (Cf. Oskamp 1970, 12.) Peter Hallberg's response to the insinuations against Snorri would surely have been different if his adversary's tone had been less provocative. Neither party actually emerges as a clear-cut victor: Hallberg, for all his display of superior philological skill, is content with a fervent reaffirmation of traditional doctrines, while Lönnroth's harsh scepticism puts him in a position where he lacks freedom to manoeuvre. The one thing which unites the combatants is the low value which they set upon opinion, by which I mean opinion for its own sake. They apparently fail to recognise that there is no such thing as a self-evident truth in questions of literary history. If I now attempt to find a position midway between Lönnroth and Hallberg, I do so in the full knowledge that I am liable to be hit by the missiles of both.

## II

It seems to me that Latin ecclesiastical culture had a decisive effect on the development of medieval Icelandic literature. The extent to which Iceland was open to influences from outside is frequently understressed, and Lönnroth's thesis performs a useful service by the very emphasis with which it recalls this fact to our minds. On the other hand, the nature of these outside influences may have been rather different from what Lönnroth has assumed -

and the same applies to his numerous predecessors who have canvassed the theory of Latin models more discreetly. From an early date Icelanders studied in the schools of France, Germany and England, and the effect of their education can be clearly traced in the religious and historical prose of the twelfth century (Turville-Petre 1953, esp. Chapters V and VII). But this is not to say that the only Icelanders who travelled abroad were ecclesiastics and scholars, or that the medieval Latin classics were the only form of literature with which they came in contact. The folklorist who reads medieval Icelandic secular prose can have no doubts in his mind that the authors had encountered oral traditions stemming from both East and West, and that they did not hesitate to combine these with materials deriving from written sources. Nor does this apply only to lygisögur, or to the curious tales in sources like Flat-eyjarbók; even a classic family saga such as Njála offers evidence of the eclecticism practised by Icelandic writers. To take just a few examples: it is common knowledge that Flosi's dream is modelled on a story in Gregory's Dialogues (Sveinsson 1943, 8ff.), and that the account of Clontarf goes back to traditions current in the Norse islands of the West. But I wonder how many readers have paused to reflect on the incident at the Alþingi when Skarpheðinn insults Porkell hákr? It is told, as part of the build-up to this incident (ch. 119), that Porkell had won himself a formidable reputation out East: he had slain a finngálkn

in Finland and a flugdreki in Estonia. Baltic-Fennic folk-belief suggests a kernel of genuine tradition for the second exploit, though the first is obviously based on popular etymology. Of course the author (or his informant) could scarcely have had any specific information about the Estonian house-serpent, much less about the story-complex surrounding the Sampo of Kalevala;<sup>3</sup> but he must somehow have known that such legends and beliefs were current in the region where Porkell had his adventure. I take it that he was here inserting a piece of local colour derived via oral tradition from the Baltic, i.e. from a milieu in which there were regular cultural contacts between the East Scandinavians and Baltic Finns.<sup>4</sup> Dragon worship in Estonia received mention in Adam of Bremen (Gesta IV:17), but this to my mind neither increases nor diminishes the likelihood that Njála took the detail in question from an oral source.<sup>5</sup>

Here I think an important point requires to be made. Medieval Icelandic society was conservative and the economy of the country was weak. Influences from abroad would have their most widespread and immediate effect when they could be assimilated without imposing a strain on the community; conversely, innovations involving social adjustment or financial outlays would come both slowly and sparsely. To put the matter in a less abstract way: popular traditions from outside would find an immediate home in a country where oral storytelling and the re-

citation of poetry were regular pastimes, while book-learning from Latin sources would spread slowly amongst the limited public which could not only read and understand manuscripts but also afford to import them. The classic sagas - those which have earned Icelandic literature its justifiable fame - emerged between two and three hundred years after the coming of Christianity. It is unthinkable that this length of time should have been sufficient for a sophisticated art of vernacular narrative to have been developed on the basis of Latin models alone; and even if this were possible, the restricted circulation of Latin literature would make it highly unlikely that the resulting art would take the form which it in fact did. The sagas of Icelanders describe the achievements and quarrels of the more prominent families in the country. Features such as the conventional insertion of genealogies, or the bewilderingly large number of subsidiary characters, are in themselves indicative of a preoccupation with ancestral history, which is a well-known phenomenon in tradition-bound societies and owes nothing to the learned culture of the church. Generally speaking, the subject-matter of the sagas is not that which would have suggested itself to a clerical minority with vernacular literary ambitions. Nor does it seem probable that works of such grandeur could have been written to the mere order of an aristocratic patron - the Icelandic chieftains must indeed have been awesome personalities if they could inspire their clergy

to produce Egils saga or Njáls saga on commission. I do not mean to imply that clerical learning was irrelevant, but rather that its contribution was of a more restricted character than is often maintained. The principles of written composition had to be studied, and the vernacular applied experimentally to a wide range of subjects, before the language could acquire the flexibility and stylistic assurance exhibited by thirteenth-century writers. Latin models were an indispensable component in this process of self-education. But as far as content is concerned, Icelandic authors might well have restricted themselves to imitating the works from which they learned the basic techniques of their craft. (This is actually what they did in the twelfth century, and what their Norwegian cousins for the most part continued to do.) The imaginative writings of Icelanders from the period beginning c. 1200, and in particular those works which are classified as Íslendingasögur (sagas of Icelanders) and fornaldar-sögur (legendary sagas), are so different in conception from what was produced elsewhere in Europe that we must somehow or other find an explanation for their sudden emergence.

Many scholars have supposed that the sagas of Icelanders were a natural extension of the biographies of Norwegian kings, and that these in turn grew out of the Latin saints' lives which were part of the professional baggage of the clergy. This formula is not only



seductively simple but also reassuring in its compatibility with the centrifugal view of history. Unfortunately it rests on the all too slender thread of the First saga of St Óláfr, a thread which has recently been cut. Ever since the publication of Gustav Storm's Otte Brudstykker af den ældste Saga om Olav den hellige (Christiania 1893) it has been assumed that the miracles of Óláfr in AM 325 IV 4to belong with certain other fragments concerning the saint in the Norwegian Riksarkiv (NRA 52). None of the fragments preserved in Norway are of a legendary character; the status of the Arnamagnæan material is therefore crucial if it is to be argued that hagiography provided the initial stimulus to the composition of kings' sagas. It has now been shown that the Copenhagen and Oslo fragments probably have nothing to do with each other. A severe blow is thus delivered to a widely supported theory: in particular, it is no longer possible to strengthen the (imagined) clerical flavour of the First saga by bold analogy with hagiographic episodes in the Legendary saga (Louis-Jensen 1970).

These arguments are of profound significance, for they provide philological indications that the clerical background to the sagas may be more imaginary than real. Latin learning is displayed in individual instances, and the actual techniques of writing were evolved in an ecclesiastical context; but the intellectual growth of the Icelandic church is in no way synonymous with the

origins of secular literature, and a slight widening of the historical perspective makes it difficult to understand why anyone should have wished to think so. Being neither richly endowed nor in close touch with the Continent, the church lagged behind in important areas, for example in liturgical usage. The elevation of the Host gives direct ritual expression to the doctrine of transubstantiation, which was promulgated by the Lateran Council of 1215 and has since occupied a central place in Catholic belief; but it took more than half a century for the practice of elevation to reach Iceland (Fæhn 1955, 615 and note 60). The Þorlákstíðir, which are the only substantial monument of Icelandic music from the period before the Reformation, were not composed until the fourteenth century. Even then the melodic material was borrowed wholesale from Dominican models of much earlier date. One would have expected the patron saint to have been provided with an office rather sooner, and certainly while the island was still independent of Norway, but one is driven to the conclusion that the church simply did not have the necessary resources.<sup>6</sup> The unfinished cathedral at Kirkjuböur in the Faroes likewise bears witness to the economic disability which afflicted the island dioceses of the North Atlantic, though it acts as a simultaneous reminder that they shared the artistic aspirations of the mainland. It is hard to see why literary composition should have constituted an exception when Icelandic manifestations of European

ecclesiastical culture were for the most part belated and derivative. If the initial stimulus to saga authorship is still to be sought in Latin books, despite the absence of any demonstrable line of descent from the saints' lives, we must postulate an almost unthinkable complex process of literary osmosis. The breadth of reading which that process would presuppose can scarcely have been enjoyed by the Icelandic clergy in the formative years at the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century. I have already implied that manuscripts were expensive.<sup>7</sup> Doubtless there was an adequate supply of those books which (to use King Alfred's words) were "most needful for all men to know". But the libraries, as far as we are able to determine, never contained much in the way of foreign imaginative literature - least of all in the crucial period to which I am here referring.

There is an inevitable link between the investigator's overall perception of medieval Icelandic society and his attitude to the problem of saga origins, as is clearly illustrated by Lars Lönnroth when he puts up a general case against "the theory of the two cultures". According to an old view of Icelandic literary history, the first half of the thirteenth century saw a systematic separation of functions: the educated laity set about recording the traditions of the country, in an outburst of patriotic awareness which was partly stimulated by the threat from Norway, while the clergy confined themselves more and more

to those subjects which were their immediate personal concern. This interpretation rests on a particular set of subjective assumptions, and Lönnroth has ample justification for calling it in question.<sup>8</sup> It would be profoundly ridiculous to suggest that the clergy abstained from writing on secular subjects, or to formulate a rule to the effect that sagas could only have been written by laymen. Equally objectionable, however, is Lönnroth's contrary assumption that sagas could not have been written by laymen. This too is based on certain preconceptions; it is not so much a refutation of the theory of the two cultures as an inversion of it in the light of more recent fashion. The primary motive for doubting Snorri's authorship of the works attributed to him is a general scepticism concerning the level of secular education. Common sense, not to mention the analogy of other countries, tells us that it cannot have been high. There must nevertheless have been some individuals among the aristocracy who shared the studious bent of the clergy whom they employed; and in any case the hypothesis of clerical rather than lay authorship in no way simplifies the question of what authorship actually means in such a context. Lönnroth writes that "Heimskringla and the Prose Edda should ... really be regarded as a single stage in the textual history of several works collected and adapted by Snorri's assistants" (1965b, 14; cf. 1965a, 94-95). That may well be so (or partly so), but we must still decide whether it was Snorri or his

assistants who made the dominant contribution to the partnership. The mention of his name in the manuscripts suggests that the answer is Snorri, and it is entirely possible that his work of co-ordination<sup>9</sup> was recognized as authorship by the scribes. They themselves felt free to alter details of wording or to conflate dissimilar exemplars, as anyone who has edited an Icelandic text is well aware: authorship for them probably consisted in the imposition of a particular form or viewpoint on materials which were partly or even wholly pre-existent. I am firmly persuaded that the laity in Iceland were as well equipped for authorship in this sense as their clerical brethren. What was required was not skill in writing, for that practical talent was readily available on hire, but a fund of traditional knowledge combined with the ability to organize it. These qualities could be found in both cleric and layman; the difference between the two categories was that the cleric did not require the services of an amanuensis to give verbal shape to his ideas. It may be objected that this difference was indeed great, but the scribes' habitual disrespect for the wording of their exemplars shows that it was above all the outline which interested them. The exact formulation of individual sentences had nothing to do with the integrity of a work as they saw it.<sup>10</sup> When a cleric wrote a saga he fulfilled two roles simultaneously, and to that extent approached closer to our ideas of authorship than the layman such as Snorri who, in the Icelandic

phrase, "put (a book) together" (setti saman, cf. Lönnroth 1965a, 17). But he was on the same footing as the layman in all other respects. The anecdote of the wedding at Reykjahólar has important implications here, for it will be remembered that it was a priest, Ingimundr, who told the story of Ormr Barreyjarskáld, "with many verses, and a good flokkr of his own composition at the end" (Porgils saga ok Hafliða, 18). Ingimundr was not acting on this occasion in his priestly capacity. Whatever he may have been taught in the course of his professional training, it was not the tale of Ormr with its exotic Hebridean background or the art of making poetry in the vernacular. Oral storytelling was clearly a well developed art long before Latin culture began to make itself felt in Iceland, and Ingimundr was probably neither the first nor the last to recite Orm's saga. If, however, the latter had come down to us in a manuscript version we should possess "a single stage in the textual history" of a work which had previously existed orally - and we should know with more certainty that a priest had participated at the oral stage of the textual transmission than that it was a priest who committed it to parchment.

I cannot prove that oral narration was a more favoured pastime in Iceland than the study of Latin authors, but a general assessment of the social history of the country compels me to think so. It would be very remarkable if the production of written sagas implied a conscious

setting aside of oral traditions, for these preserved just the kind of information in which people in general, and the leading families in particular, were chiefly if not exclusively interested. The sagas of the thirteenth century were as much parochial in outlook as the earlier learned literature was international: this applies whether we are speaking of the sagas of Icelanders, which focus on the period before and after 1000, or of legendary sagas purporting to tell of remote prehistory. Saga writing, even if it was wholly in the hands of clerics, must have satisfied some kind of demand. A peasant community would sooner call for records of its existing traditions than for a series of newly invented substitutes. Lars Lönnroth has himself conceded the relevance of secular patronage in this context, though he distinctly underestimates the power of the consumer. A historical interpretation which makes adequate allowance for social conditions leads inevitably to a hypothesis of traditional origins for the saga literature. On this view, the oldest written sagas are to be explained as a synthetic product originating at a point in time when the clerical skill of writing was pressed into the service of a much older activity, namely, the preservation of tradition. Preservation implied both transmission and renewal. The former could be better assured if there was a written record to aid the memory, and at least in that respect there could be no hostility to the production of such records. The latter implied an artistic freedom

for the writer which did no more than continue age-old practice: contrary to common opinion, word for word repetition was neither looked for nor applauded by the oral storyteller's public. An individual personality may still be detected behind the inherited text of a saga. There is nothing in the theory of oral origins which denies us that freedom, or which forbids us to suppose that wholly fictional works were composed at a later stage: the origins of a genre are not to be confused with its subsequent evolution.<sup>11</sup> Equally, there is nothing contradictory to the theory of oral origins in the observation of particular stylistic habits in a text, for these belong to the "single stage" at which the work was written down and are not derived from the tradition. Texts can be grouped together on the basis of such features, as Peter Hallberg has shown in his work on Snorri,<sup>12</sup> but the question of the writer's relationship to his sources remains entirely open.

What, then, was the nature of these sources? Sigurður Nordal and his disciples repeatedly tell us that we can never know, but current opinion is a little less pessimistic. Variants of the same story, whether in different sagas or in different redactions of the same saga, have been scrutinized in the hope of achieving more clarity on this point. The method is often thought of as the personal invention of the Norwegian scholar Knut Liestøl, and the conclusions to which it led him are viewed with that peculiar suspicion which only folklorists can arouse. In



point of fact it had been used before Liestøl's time, for example by Adolfine Erichsen (1919) in her study of Ljósvetninga saga; it was Liestøl's gift for systematization, rather than the originality of his mind, which earned him a key position in saga studies. His thesis was that Iceland had a richly developed oral tradition, of which the saga manuscripts preserve little more than a direct transcription (Liestøl 1930, esp. Chapter II). It is most regrettable that the book-prose school has made so little effort to distinguish between the two parts of this postulate. That Liestøl was probably wrong in denying artistic freedom to the writer does not mean that he was wrong in assuming a sophisticated tradition. Opinions will, of course, vary as to the degree of sophistication which can be assumed: my own preference is for the solution offered by Theodore M. Andersson, who has made a careful review of the evidence and has arrived at a formula which is both moderate and unambiguous. According to him, the variants "show that a saga writer was not bound by the written word ... He composed ... from his stock of lore and recollections. Even if the details were fluid, the tradition was narratively firm, that is to say, the gist of the story was constant" (Andersson 1964, 182). Eminent authorities would now appear to have swung round to this way of thinking. G. Turville-Petre writes in one of his most recent papers that there are verses in Gísla saga which "could not be understood unless a prose explanation

went with them"; accordingly, if we accept previous findings concerning the age of these verses, we must think that the author of the extant saga had materials on which to build ("... much of the substance told in the prose of Gísla saga, although not the form in which it is told, must date from the twelfth and not the thirteenth century"). The corollary is not shirked. "In a modified way, we may be drawing back to the theory of the oral saga" (Turville-Petre 1970, 15-16).

I have already expressed the opinion that foreign influence would most readily make itself felt on the level of popular tradition. If this is so, and if we accept a theory of oral origins for the sagas, we must be prepared at every turn to find foreign elements woven into the narrative fabric. The genre was well adapted to the assimilation of new material, notwithstanding its firm roots in native tradition and its (pseudo-) historical pretensions. I may say that I cannot too strongly endorse Andersson's judgment regarding the issue of historicity. When Liestøl asserted that the Íslendingasögur claim to be history he was making "an aesthetic statement aimed at clarifying the relation of the saga writer to his material" (Andersson 1964, 50; cf. Liestøl 1930, Chapter IX). The function of the saga was to provide the family with a sufficiently impressive past, and embellishments could do it no harm as long as they did not detract from its psychological truth.

Besides, the entertainment value of a story was important. The epilogue to Göngu-Hrólfs saga ([2]39) tells us that old poetry and tales "hafa ... meir verið framsett til stundlegrar gleði enn ævinlegs átrúnaðar". The stylistic self-consciousness may strike as late, but not the sentiment. It is surely wrong to draw a sharp line of division here between Íslendingasögur and fornaldarsögur. The latter tend to be looked upon as a product of the age of decadence - a type of saga which only began to be written in the second half of the thirteenth century and which was both socially and artistically inferior to what preceded it (cf. Hallberg 1969, 40-41, 130, 132). This is to overlook important factors. Anne Holtmark (1966) has observed that it was quite compatible with the dignity of Sturla Þórðarson to recite Huldar saga, and that there were several Icelandic families who traced their line back to the hero of a fornaldarsaga. Such tales made their distinctive contribution to family history while providing excellent entertainment at the same time. It might be added that not a few Íslendingasögur devote introductory chapters to the adventures of remote ancestors prior to the age of Settlement. I cannot find any essential difference between these chapters and the fornaldarsögur; nor is there any real evidence that the fornaldarsögur are stylistically impoverished. A common origin for both types of saga can therefore be assumed - something which is in any case

theoretically desirable. Differences in tone and content reflect differences of attitude to the tradition: it goes without saying that the fornaldarsögur use foreign motifs more often than the Íslendingasögur. Basic principles, however, are the same in both cases. The saga writer who combined entertainment with instruction will have felt free to borrow from the works of his predecessors. Copious supplementary material, both native and imported, was available from oral sources. That is why I personally believe that a study of individual motifs can throw fresh light on the relationship between Norse and Celtic literature (cf. Chesnutt 1968). The fornaldarsögur and Prose Edda promise the richest harvest, but there is no reason why the Íslendingasögur should be excluded from investigation: see for example Guðmundsson 1967, Chapter 7. In the same way, I would expect motif research to throw up evidence of links not only with England, France and other major European countries, but also with the Baltic, Finno-Ugric, Byzantine and even Oriental worlds. The growth of Latin learning in twelfth-century Iceland coincided with the Crusaders' occupation of the Holy Land; Rögnvaldr Kali and Nikulás Bergsson claim their place in the history of Northern culture alongside the less adventurous majority.

The social function and popular origins of the sagas are thus far more important than the clerical education of scribes. The implication from the point of view of literary criticism is that we should adopt evaluative

criteria which are appropriate to a popular art form, and in particular refrain from judging a saga by its degree of conformity to our own norms. Though Hrafnkels saga attracts us on account of its symbolism, ambiguity and narrative economy, it does not follow that the Icelandic public thought it better than other sagas which lack these qualities. If the number of surviving manuscripts is anything to go by, a light-hearted and loosely assembled yarn like Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar had nearly as much appeal as the stark and intense Egils saga. We are also rather ignorant of the medieval Icелander's judgment in matters of style. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (cf. Andersson 1964, 78 and note 53) reckons with a good deal of oral influence on the style of the sagas - not least with regard to those features which a modern reader admires as unusual. The simplicity of approach, the use of direct speech, and even the detached attitude of the narrator may be nothing more than a reflex of the spoken idiom. How then are distinctions to be made between naivety and calculated effects? Liestøl (1930, esp. 26-31) was forthright in his strictures upon a style which is usually adulated; there is nothing remarkable from the folklorist's point of view in stereotyped phraseology or a frequent use of understatement. As to structure, there are at least as many examples of botched effects as there are strokes of genius. Grímr's laughter in Droplaugarsona saga (Hallberg 1969, 68-69), or the "thief's eyes" of Hallgerðr in Njála, are fine examples of an anticipatory

device with a deliberate purpose; on the other hand, there can be no greater anticlimax in Icelandic literature than the final meeting between Kári and Flosi (Njáls saga ch.159), where the accumulated suspense of the last section of the narrative is allowed to ebb away in a few lines. I think we should be on our guard against inaccurate encomia of the saga style. We should certainly ask ourselves to what extent the phenomena in question are distinctively Icelandic. The sagas habitually express character through action; they also abound in formulae, and in passages where the sublimity of the situation is offset by the prosaic language. All these things are thought of as unique qualities of the genre, but all of them can be paralleled elsewhere - the works of Malory, which are the product of a completely unrelated literary culture, are just one source of comparison which springs to mind.

Scholarship has yet to establish a set of critical principles which are consistent with the popular character of the sagas. Moreover, there are ancillary problems to be solved before a genuine improvement in critical method can be claimed. The editorial problem is one of them; it is not easy to make a stylistic analysis if one is uncertain as to the proper choice between variants, and hazardous to say anything about structure if a text exists in widely differing redactions. A redaction may represent the conflation not only of two or more manuscripts, but

also of manuscripts with oral tradition. The existence of a secondary oral tradition was accepted by previous generations of textual scholars,<sup>13</sup> and more recent studies have done nothing to disprove it. Sometimes we cannot tell whether the form in which a particular passage appears is that chosen by an oral narrator, or by the "author" who first wrote the saga down, or by a scribe who had made arbitrary changes. If a scribe happened to be an active tradition-bearer<sup>14</sup> - as some scribes doubtless were - his changes could constitute an improvement on what went before. We may frequently have to do with a combination of good and bad qualities for which no single person is responsible. This is an area where criticism must come to terms with the unfamiliar concept of authorship which I discussed earlier; it is only one example of the difficulties that remain to be confronted.

### III

This paper has sought to counterbalance the Icelandic book-prose theory as well as the reaction which it called forth. I have stressed the traditional background on the one hand, while on the other I have argued that an internationalist standpoint is of more benefit to motif research than to conventional literary history. But I would readily admit that significant foreign parallels are not exclusively to be found on the level of oral tradition. The educated

minority must have left some marks on secular literature; we have only to ask ourselves where they did so, and with what effect. The answer appears in the texts of the sagas, but not merely in those passages for which a direct analogue can be cited. Lists of such instances, though easy to assemble, tell us very little that we need to know. A more rewarding procedure is to seek out areas of convergence between native and foreign ideas, for it was precisely at these points that the learned Icelander received intellectual stimulus.

One of the Latin books which must certainly have been known in thirteenth-century Iceland is the Etymologiæ of Isidore of Seville. Hólar and Viðey possessed copies of this work when their libraries were inventoried in the 1390s, but it had been used long before that time by the authors of Porláks saga and Rímberga (cf. Olmer 1902, 53; Paasche 1957, 324; Gjerløw 1962). In the first book of the Etymologiæ Isidore has something to say about heroic poetry and the men whom it celebrated: "Heroicum enim carmen dictum, quod eo virorum fortium res et facta narrantur. Nam heroes appellantur viri quasi aerii et caelo digni propter sapientiam et fortitudinem" (Lindsay 1911, I: xxxix, 9). The Icelandic reader could not fail to have been struck by the relevance of this dictum to the Edda poetry. What is not so obvious is whether he would also have considered it to be applicable to the prose sagas. The remarks prefixed to Piðriks saga in a late Icelandic copy



(AM 178 folio) may possibly imply that he did: we read there that sagas teach the distinction between good and evil, though it is not said that they were actually written for that purpose.<sup>15</sup> Isidore explained that it was the "wisdom and bravery" of heroes which made them "worthy of heaven". E.R. Curtius has shown that he was here expressing an ideal of conduct which in time degenerated into a commonplace: the phrase sapientia et fortitudo is a rhetorical topos in which the essential qualities of the hero are juxtaposed (Curtius 1938, § 9, and 1954, Chapter 9). Authors who knew the topos tended in practice to be less demanding than they ought to have been. Their heroes might have one of the required attributes, but rarely both; Roland in the French poem is fortis, Oliver is sapiens. The great majority of Icelandic saga heroes were of the same breed as Roland. Their bravery, though incontestable, often verged upon rashness, and there were other respects too in which their ethical code was imperfect. Readers who were conscious of the ultimate ideal must have longed for a family history which extolled the wisdom as well as the valour of its protagonists. Njála was perhaps the one saga which thoroughly satisfied their demands: it celebrated not only the fortitudo of Gunnarr but also the sapientia of Njáll, and in many ways it laid the greater emphasis on the latter. The correspondence would not seem to be wholly accidental, for the very structure of the story can be understood in terms of the topos. The

first section treats of the fighting man par excellence, the second of the wise counsellor who abhors bloodshed. Gunnarr and Njáll thus clearly emerge as the representatives of extremes; the paths which they choose are estimable in themselves, but neither can lead to perfection.

Njála approaches closely at this point to the so-called secondary epic, which may well explain the esteem in which it is held at the present time. I do not in fact think that it qualifies for the title of epic: it is not equivalent in kind to the Chanson de Roland or the Nibelungenlied. It does, however, share something of the epic's fullness of treatment.<sup>16</sup> And there is surely no comparable example in Icelandic of the fruitful blending of diverse elements. The author had a breadth of interest which was not hamstrung by theoretical inhibitions; serious history could exist side by side with antiquarianism and still leave room for trivialities like the adventures of Porkell hákr. I said previously that the saga authors required a fund of material and the ability to organize it. The author of Njála took the bulk of his material from native sources - both oral and documentary - but he inhabited a conceptual world which was at least partly European. His organizational principles were subject to influence from outside.

Sigurður Nordal (1957, 23) has described Njála as "a symbolic fable of the vanity of human wisdom". This is at best a half-truth. The author struggled to reconcile

artistic aims which were seemingly contradictory: he tried to compose a story which had symbolic meaning for the erudite and traditional authority for the common people. (Paradoxically enough, this aspect of his achievement remains unaffected by the structural flaws in the section following the Burning, which merely reflects his sense of responsibility to the less sophisticated section of his audience.) We must face the fact that the saga displays an internal order of priorities which is inconsistent with Nordal's interpretation.<sup>17</sup> The different kinds of narrative material are complementary - not subordinate - to the moral design. Such a design indeed exists, but only in embryonic form; criticism has no licence to endow the author with ambitions which he made no effort to realize. By the same token the relevance of the Latin topos to the saga ought not to be exaggerated - after all, the antithesis between bravery and wisdom was inherent in the tradition from the moment that Gunnarr was brought into association with Njáll. It is reasonable to think that some Icelanders of the thirteenth century were familiar with Isidore's formula, and arguable that the author of Njála was one of them. But there can be no certainty as to the justice of such assumptions. I would hazard a guess that the author of the saga did see the applicability of the topos; further than that I am not prepared to go. Njála still makes artistic sense to Icelanders who have never heard of the Etymologiæ or Gregory's Dialogues.

The last seven centuries have seen no significant change in that regard.

Literary parallels to the sagas should accordingly be treated with some caution. They do not always point to external influences, but may rather indicate that the writer has perceived a native analogy to a continental European idea. The observation will sometimes have had little significance; sometimes, however, it will have created a sense of artistic solidarity with the outside world. The relationship of European literature to the sagas is that of a secondary stimulus, not a primary source. Icelandic authors did not require it as a model, though the more self-conscious among them will have been encouraged, and perhaps even reassured, by the discovery of common ground. I am here referring to form as well as content. The vernacular prose medium of the sagas was a natural outgrowth of the technique of oral narration; it lacked any established precedent in the major European literatures, which preferred verse for historical and fictional subjects. The beginning of saga writing happened, however, to coincide with a reaction against the prevailing fashion. French authors who are concerned about the credibility of what they write express an actual dislike of verse composition: Georges Doutrepoint, in his monumental work on the mises en prose, gives examples of this tendency from the beginning of the thirteenth century (Doutrepoint 1939, 385).

European movements furnished the saga writer with a line or two of defence against charges of literary deviation. Such an effect will not have been unwelcome.

The approach to the sagas which I have here outlined may be characterized as neo-nationalistic. I am fully aware of this fact, and I by no means expect the "rationalist" party to accept all of my premises. Scholars who continue to operate with the hypothesis of learned origins may well be able to produce new arguments in its favour. In doing so, however, they will be laying themselves open to the criticism which Erich Auerbach directed against rationalistic interpreters of the Old Testament (Auerbach 1946, 19). The rationalist's explanation is often persuasive, but it may nevertheless be psychologically absurd: that is an occupational danger which he must learn to live with.

## NOTES

1. For bibliographical details see BONIS [Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Studies] 1963 (Copenhagen 1964) no. 211; 1965 (Copenhagen 1966) nos. 187, 330-333; 1966 (Copenhagen 1967) no. 161; and 1968 (Copenhagen 1969) nos. 174, 320, 322, to which add Samlaren LXXXVIII (1968 for 1967) 190-197 [P. Hallberg].
2. Lönnroth 1965b, 23-24. - It should be mentioned that Lönnroth has considerably modified his views since the publication of his thesis: he is now willing to accept the hypothesis of oral recitation in prose, and would by implication also accept the existence of an active Icelandic narrative tradition. Cf. Lönnroth 1971a, esp. the concluding pages, and 1971b. Neither of these latter publications had reached me when the present paper was written - a fact which the reader is asked to bear in mind when considering my objections to Lönnroth's earlier work.
3. For these see Looorits 1949-60, §§ 74, 89; Lid 1943 and 1951; and Fromm 1967, 262-277.
4. Compare K. Krohn's views on the genesis of Kalevala (see for example Krohn 1927, 16 ff. and 71 ff.), as well as the discussion of Scandinavian-Estonian contacts in Looorits 1949-60 and v. Schroeder 1906. - It is interesting that several other sagas locate flugdreki incidents in the remote, almost imaginary world lying to the East and North. Thus, Gull-Póris saga gives a brief account of Valr the viking, whose treasure was hidden norðr við Dumbshaf (344-345); this tradition recurs in Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar (136 ff.), and its influence is doubtless to be detected - despite the difference of geographical

location - in the name and role of the "black berserk" Fair in one of the late romances (Victors saga ok Blávus, 29). Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar also mentions Valr's uncle, Hárekr Bjarmakonungr, in an incident (128-129) which exhibits a special likeness to Kalevala. (For another appearance of this Hárekr in the fornaldarsaga repertoire see Bósa saga, 58.) Very similar to Valr and Hárekr is the redoubtable warrior Grímr ægir, whom Göngu-Hrólfir encounters during a battle fought skamt frá Aldeigjuborg (Göngu-Hrólfis saga, 208 and [2] 21-[2] 22). On the Baltic-Fennic milieu of Old Norse-Icelandic dragon traditions see further Chadwick 1959.

5. Adam's book does not appear to have been particularly well known in Iceland. A translated extract from Book II is preserved in AM 415 4to, which is a fragment of an encyclopedic manuscript dating from the early fourteenth century: see Kålund 1917-18, 59-62. There is another copy in Flateyjarbók, of which 415 may here be the direct exemplar, cf. Jónsson 1927, 145-146. Turville-Petre (1953, 204) mentions the possibility that the twelfth-century author of Hungrvaka was "influenced, perhaps indirectly or through an oral medium", by the Gesta. Other Icelandic writers who may have borrowed from Adam are Ari and Oddr Snorrason: see Ellehøj 1965.
6. The negative attitude of the Norwegian archdiocese must also have had an inhibiting effect. Contrary to received opinion, the Guðmundar saga Arasonar does not support the assumption that the Office and Mass in their existing form were composed in the first half of the thirteenth century. Cf. Ottósson 1959, esp. 68 ff.

7. Lars Lönnroth has made the same point for a different purpose (1965b, 12).
8. Not, however, on the mere grounds of its subjectivity, when the critic himself is no model of 'objective rigour' - Lönnroth's summary of earlier opinion (1965a, 5-6) may also be a trifle unrefined for some tastes: Meissner, Nordal, Einar Ól. Sveinsson and the rest share certain tendencies, but not the conscious community of purpose which seems to be implied.
9. Despite the imperfections noted by Lönnroth (1965a, 88ff.).
10. But it ought not to be inferred that all scribal alterations were drastic: they failed, amongst other things, to obliterate linguistic affinities of the kind which have been pointed out by Peter Hallberg (see note 12 below).
11. Too much general importance can be attached to studies like Nordal's Hrafnkatla (1940); see for example Hallberg 1969, 61.
12. The most recent exposition of his method is Hallberg 1968.
13. e.g. by Jiriczek and Schröder; cf. Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar, 63 and notes 1-2.
14. i.e. a member of the community who took an active part in the recitation of oral tradition. We may suppose that the number of such persons was never very large.
15. Piðriks saga af Bern I, 6<sup>9-13</sup> [read pær, or þat with sg. verb, for MS þau (line 12)?] - It is uncertain whether the prologue to Piðriks Saga is genuine, though its influence has been detected in a fourteenth-



century redaction of one of the kings' sagas (see introduction to the edition, XXIII-XXVIII, LV).

16. "Epic" is here to be understood in Curtius's sense (see Curtius 1954, 177). An entirely different question is the possible genetic link between the Íslendingasögur and the "heroic lays" of the Edda: cf. Bandle 1969.
17. Nordal is more than a little disingenuous when he adds that the "bare stem of 'moral' is covered with such a luxuriant growth of exciting narrative that the reader may forget to look behind it" (loc.cit.).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sagas are cited from the following editions: Bósa saga ed. O. Jiriczek (Strasbourg 1893); Gull-Póris saga ed. Guðni Jónsson (Íslendinga sögur IV, Reykjavík 1953); Göngu-Hrólfs saga ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson (Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda III, Reykjavík 1889); Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar ed. F.R. Schröder (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek XV, Halle a/S. 1917); Njáls saga ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (Íslensk fornrit XII, Reykjavík 1954); Victors saga ok Blávus ed. Agnete Loth (Editiones Arnarnagæðar B: XX, Copenhagen 1962); Piðriks saga af Bern ed. H. Bertelsen (Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur XXXIV, Copenhagen 1905-11); Porgils saga ok Hafliða ed. Ursula Brown (Oxford English Monographs [III], London 1952).

Andersson, Theodore M. 1964 The problem of Icelandic saga origins (Yale Germanic Studies, 1). New Haven.

Auerbach, Erich. 1946 Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur. Berne.

Bandle, Oskar. 1969 "Isländersaga und Heldendichtung" Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar, 1-26. Reykjavík.

Chadwick, Nora K. 1959 "The monsters and Beowulf" in: Peter Clemoes (ed.), The Anglo-Saxons. Studies in some aspects of their history and culture presented to Bruce Dickinson, 171-203. London.

Chesnutt, Michael. 1968 "An unsolved problem in Old Norse-Icelandic literary history" Mediaeval Scandinavia 1, 122-134.

Curtius, E.R. 1938. "Zur Literaturästhetik des Mittelalters. II" Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie LVIII, 129-232.

- Curtius, E.R. 1954 Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter, 2nd edition. Berne.
- Doutrepont, Georges. 1939 Les Mises en prose des Épopées et des Romans chevaleresque du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Académie royale de Belgique: Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques. Mémoires, Collection in-8° 2/XL). Brussels.
- Ellehøj, Svend. 1965. Studier over den ældste norrøne historie-skrivning (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, 26). Copenhagen.
- Erichsen, Adolfine. 1919 Untersuchungen zur Liósvetninga saga. Berlin.
- Fromm, Hans. 1967. Kalevala. Das finnische Epos des Elias Lönnrot (Kommentar). Munich
- Fæhn, Helge. 1955 "Gudstjenestelivet i Nidaros domkirke i middelalderen" in: A. Fjellbu and others (ed.), Nidaros erkebispesetol og bispesete 1153-1953 [I], 599-631. Oslo.
- Gjerløw, Lilli. 1962 "Isidor av Sevilla" Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder VII, col. 479. Copenhagen etc.
- Guðmundsson, Helgi. 1967 Um Kjalnesinga sögu. Nokkrar athuganir (Studia Islandica, 26). Reykjavík.
- Hallberg, Peter. 1968 Stilsignalement och författarskap i norrön sagalitteratur (Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis: Nordistica Gothoburgensia, 3). Göteborg.
- - - 1969 Den isländska sagan (Verdandis skriftserie, 6), 2nd edition. Stockholm.

- Holtmark, Anne. 1966 "Heroic poetry and legendary sagas" in BONIS 1965, 9-21.
- Jónsson, Finnur. 1927 "Flateyjarbók" Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie, 139-190.
- Krohn, Kaarle. 1927 Kalevalastudien IV. Sampo (FF Communications, 72). Helsinki.
- Kalund, Kr. 1917-18 Alfræði íslenzk III (Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur, XLV). Copenhagen.
- Lid, Nils. 1943 "Kring Kalevala-miljøet" Syn og Segn XLIX, 289-298.
- - - 1951 "The mythical realm of the Far North" Laos I, 58-66.
- Liestøl, Knut. 1930 The origin of the Icelandic Family sagas (Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, A:10). Oslo.
- Lindsay, W.M. 1911 Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarvm sive Originvm Libri XX. Oxford.
- Loorits, Oskar. 1949-60 Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens (Skrifter utg. av Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien, 18). Uppsala.
- Louis-Jensen, Jonna. 1970 "Syvende og ottende brudstykker Fragmentet AM 325 IV~~4~~4to" in: Opuscula IV (Bibliotheca Arnæmagneana, 30), 31-60. Copenhagen.
- Lönnroth, Lars. 1965a "Tesen om de två kulturerna. Kritiska studier i den isländska sagakrivningens sociala förutsättningar" Scripta Islandica 15/1964, 1-97.
- - - 1965b European sources of Icelandic saga-writing. An essay based on previous studies. Stockholm.
- - - 1971b "Hjálmar's death-song and the

- delivery of Eddic poetry" Speculum XLVI, 1-20.
- Lönnroth, Lars. 1971b [Review of] Einarsbók. Afmælis-  
kveðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar in: Mediaeval  
Scandinavia 4, 175-181.
- Nordal, Sigurður. 1940 Hrafnkatla (Studia Islandica, 7).  
Reykjavík.
- - - 1957 The historical element in the Ice-  
landic Family sagas (Glasgow University Publications:  
The W.P.Ker Memorial Lectures, 15). Glasgow.
- Olmer, Emil. 1902 Boksamlingar på Island 1179-1490.  
Enligt diplom (Göteborgs högskolas årsskrift, VIII:2)  
Göteborg.
- Oskamp, Hans. 1970 The voyage of Máel Dúin. Groningen.
- Ottósson, Róbert Abraham. 1959 Sancti Thorlaci episcopi  
Officia rhythmica et Proprium Missæ in AM 241A folio  
(Bibliotheca Arnarnæana Supplementum, 3). Copenhagen.
- Paasche, Fredrik. 1957 Norges og Islands litteratur inntil  
utgangen av middelalderen, ny utgave ved Anne Holts-  
mark. Oslo.
- v. Schroeder, Leopold. 1906 Germanische Elben und Götter  
beim Estenvolke (Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-  
historischen Klasse der Kaiserlichen Akademie der  
Wissenschaften, CLIII:1). Vienna.
- Sveinsson, Einar Ól. 1943 Á Njálsbúð. Bók um mikið  
listaverk. Reykjavík.
- Turville-Petre, G. 1953 Origins of Icelandic literature.  
Oxford.
- - - 1970 "Scaldic poetry: history and  
literature" in BONIS 1969, 7-20.

GEORGE CLARK

BEOWULF AND NJÁLSSAGA

One could make a case on broadly generalized grounds for the potential value of a comparative study of Beowulf and Njálssaga; both texts have their roots in a common Germanic heroic tradition, and in very different social and literary contexts, both works resolve the paradoxes of heroic literature: that human greatness finds its highest point in death and extinction; that fate chooses the hero, but the will distinguishes him. There is, however, a more immediate connection between Beowulf and Njálssaga; in chapter 119 the saga briefly and allusively recreates the basic narrative pattern discernible in the Old English poem. The saga's allusive and indeed ironic development of the Beowulf tale-type controls and modifies the audience's attitudes towards Skarpheðinn at the assembly following Höskuldr Hvítanessgoði's death. An allusive Beowulf analogue in Njálssaga poses problems and opportunities for literary historians; the text presumably predates many of the fictionalizing and legendary sagas usually compared to Beowulf, but the author of the saga counted on his audience's recognition of the motif, an indication of the story's currency, and he made that recognition of the tale-type integral to the development of the audience's response to Skarpheðinn. My purpose now is to examine the aesthetic and hint at the literary-

historical implications of a Beowulf analogue imbedded in the text of Njálssaga.

In chapter 119, the narrator of the saga introduces Þorkell hákr, the last of the chieftains whom Ásgrímr Elliða-Grímsson and Njáll's sons visit in their search for support at the assembly. Though the other chieftains visited are identified only by name or by name and a brief genealogy, the narrator carefully traces Þorkell's ancestry to the legendary figures of Grímr loðinkinni, Ketill hængr of Hrafnista, and Hallbjörn hálftröll, and the narrator notes that Þorkell hákr hafði farit utan og framit sik í öðrum löndum (to cite, as I shall do when possible, the admirable Penguin translation, Þorkell hákr "had been abroad and won fame in foreign lands"); the narrator briefly sketches Þorkell's exploits and notes their commemoration:

Hann hafði drepit spellvirkja austr á Jämtaskógi; síðan fór hann austr í Svíþjóð ok fór til lags með Sörkvi karli, ok herjuðu þaðan í Austrveg. En fyrir austan Bálagarðssiðu átti Þorkell at sækja þeim vatn eitt kveld; þá mætti hann finngálkni ok varðist því lengi, en svá lauk með þeim, at hann drap finngálknit. Þaðan fór hann austr í Aðalsýslu; þar vá hann at flugdreka ... ok lét hann gera þrekvirki þessi yfir lokhvílu sinni ok á stóli fyrir háseti sínu.

He had killed a robber east in Jamtland Forest, and then travelled east to Sweden, where he joined forces with Sorkvir the Old. Together they harried in the Baltic. One evening, on the coast of Finland, it was Thorkel's turn to fetch water for the crew; he encountered a fabulous monster and was only able to kill it after a long struggle. From there he travelled south to Estonia, where he killed a flying dragon . . . in Iceland he had these feats carved above his bed-closet and on a chair in front of his high-seat.

Olafr pái had famous tales from the past carved on the waintscotting and roof of his parlour, but Þorkell hákr appropriately memorializes his own career which resembles a famous tale from the past, the story Beowulf exemplifies.

I think no one has previously identified this episode as a Beowulf analogue or argued that Njáls saga portrays Þorkell hákr as a Beowulfian hero in an ironically conceived context. The story does not match the narrative pattern Friedrich Panzer analyzed as the "bear's son" tale-type, and until recently Panzer's analysis provided our model of the essential Beowulf story. In 1959, however, Mrs Nora K. Chadwick published an important though rather knotty article, "The Monsters and Beowulf", in a volume of studies presented to Bruce Dickins entitled The Anglo-Saxons. Mrs Chadwick's study re-examines a number of Beowulf analogues in Old Icelandic and reveals that Panzer's schema does not embrace all



of the recurring parallels between Beowulf and a number of Old Icelandic texts. The new schema Mrs Chadwick's findings imply, a kind of North Germanic version of the "bear's son" story, clearly matches Porkell hákr's adventures as they appear in Njálssaga. The heroes Mrs Chadwick deals with are again and again either members of a princely family of the Gautar, like Beowulf himself, Böðvarr Bjarki, Herrauðr, Oddr skrauti, and Gull-Pórir, or they are members of the "Hálogaland family of Ketill hængr of Hrafnista", including Ormr Stórolfsson, his father Stórolfr, Örvar-Oddr, and Grettir whom Mrs Chadwick calls the "last descendant of the line to whom this adventure is credited". The adventure or the narrative pattern almost becomes a family heirloom, an inheritance to which, in Njálssaga, Porkell has a legitimate or a legitimized claim. Njálssaga traces Porkell's ancestry, through his mother's father, to the right line of Grímr loðinkinni, Ketill hængr of Hrafnista, and Hallbjörn hálftröll; in contrast Ljós-vetningasaga neglects to trace Porkell's maternal ancestry. The Landnámabók does not push Porkell's lineage past Grímr loðinkinni, the last-named point in the line leading to Guðrífðr, Porkell's mother.

The inherited Beowulfian adventure includes three combats, or better perhaps three adversaries, themselves often explicitly related and even sometimes descended from other adversaries of earlier Beowulfian heroes. Mrs Chadwick identifies these enemies as first "the draugr

Agnarr and his variants", second "an evil supernatural woman", and third "the dragon Hárekr, a flying dragon, or a variant". Porkell completed his foreign adventures when he killed a flying dragon; his first opponent, the spellvirki, does not notably resemble Grendel for example. He could be any harm-doer, a brigand, a highwayman, or a supernatural adversary like the spellvirki Hálfðan Eysteinnsson encounters in Kolsskógr, namely Kolr who, with his daughter, attacks Hálfðan. The hero kills both, but they renew the battle as revenants, and Hálfðan wrestles for a long time with Kolr before overcoming him. An ingenious reader might argue that Kolr and his daughter parallel Grendel and his mother or the Sandhaugar trolls in Grettis-saga. Another spellvirki in Hálfðan's story, a viking Agnarr, enters a burial mound while still alive and reappears as the draugr Agnarr in Gull-Póris-saga. Njálssaga casts a little more light on Porkell's spellvirki at the moment of truth when Skarpheðinn and Porkell face one another armed. Porkell describes his weapon and probably refers to his first great victory: þetta sax fekk ek í Svíþjóðu, ok drap ek til inn mesta kappa (this is the sword I got in Sweden . . . I killed a great warrior to get it") If we are to take the spellvirki and the kappi as the same, the parallelism between Porkell's story and the Beowulfian tale-type may be clearer: Beowulf took a special sword, a hæftmece, into the mere to fight Grendel's mother; he won that battle with a gigantic sword he found in the

monster's lair and brought the ancient weapon's hilt to Hroðgar. Beowulf's rewards included a sword and probably the hæftmece as well. Grettir's booty from the burial mound of Kár the Old included a sword, and he also won a heptisax from the waterfall cave of the Sandhaugar trolls. Hörðr of Harðar saga ok Hólmverja, one of Mrs Chadwick's Beowulf analogues, wins a sword (and other goods) from the burial mound of the draugr Sóti; Gull-Pórir received a sword and other gifts from the draugr Agnarr in Gull-Póris saga. The Jämtaskógr spellvirki and Swedish kappi may be the same, or may form a doublet, but in either case, they make a satisfactory version of "the draugr Agnarr and his variants". Þorkell's second enemy, the finngáalkn, a monster partly human and partly animal, may be a variant of Mrs Chadwick's "evil, supernatural woman", for example Grendel's mother, even though the text does not specify the monster's gender. Þorkell encountered this adversary when he went to fetch water, and presumably the finngáalkn's lair was in or near a body of water; Grendel's mother inhabited a mere or pool, Grettir ventured beneath a waterfall to pursue the female troll who raided the farm at Sandhaugar, and in Örvar-Oddssaga, Ögmundr's mother, called a gygr and finngáalkn, was a water-dwelling monster who at one point attacked Oddr's ships. When Gull-Pórir finally destroyed his old enemy, the sorceress Kerling, he hit her with a rock as she attempted to escape into a waterfall.

Mrs Chadwick finds that the hero's "bear's son" adventures characteristically take place in the Eastern Baltic, including Northern Russia, and Porkell hákr's combats move progressively eastward, the farther east, the more fabulous. The narrator of Njálssaga reemphasizes the eastward movement of Porkell's adventures when he traces Porkell's return from Estonia to Sweden, then to Norway, and thence to Iceland.

Porkell's adventures appear as a narrative sketch, the synopsis of a well-known story, and since the narrator does not give the sketch a detailed retelling, it is unrecognizable in terms of Panzer's analysis, but the overall pattern, the hero's ancestry, the three enemies, and the locale, matches the schema Mrs Chadwick proposes. In his monumental edition of Njálssaga, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson asserts that Porkell's fabulous adventures most probably derive from a written source, some páttur now lost; the book-prose hypothesis, or assumption, assuredly predisposes one to assume that Njálssaga took this narrative from a written source, but Porkell hákr plays a prominent and a heroic part in Ljósvetningasaga, and if literary tradition had credited him with a voyage and adventures abroad, one could only wonder why the author of Ljósvetningasaga should be ignorant or silent on the point. Another hypothesis may accommodate the facts more comprehensively: in order to present Skarpheðinn and Porkell hákr as archetypal

opponents, the author of Njálssaga arbitrarily assigned to Porkell a recognizable story-type ultimately drawn from a tradition of oral narrative. As a written text, Beowulf could not have influenced twelfth- or thirteenth-century Scandinavians: a tradition of oral narrative must ultimately connect the appearances of this tale-type in eighth- or ninth-century England and in thirteenth-century Iceland.

Unlike Beowulf, whose name presumably means "bear", Porkell hákr has no explicit bear's son or animal origin, but Panzer, who did not invent the name of the "bear's son story", notes that in many variants the hero's antecedents are not bearish. Panzer retained the traditional name for the story-type noting that it is metaphorically appropriate to the hero's extraordinary qualities. Icelandic heroes whose careers parallel Beowulf's occasionally have a bearish nature or origin, and a glance at a few Icelandic parallels will help confirm the availability of the "North-Germanic bear's son story" to saga writers and to clarify some of the functions this tale-type served in sagas which aimed at more realism than Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar where wild impossibility becomes the norm. I shall omit Gréttissaga which extends and duplicates Beowulfian motifs but has already received considerable attention.

In Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa the hero's name is "bear" and two of his earlier adventures may claim comparison with Mrs Chadwick's basic story. As a young man, Björn

voyages abroad and in Garðaríki, Russia, he kills a notable champion, a kappi, who has challenged King Valdimar's rule; the kappi is man, not monster or draugr, but the enemy parallels Grendel who in his own way challenges Hroðgar's rule, occupies his royal seat, and almost becomes an antitype of Hroðgar when we learn that Grendel's lair is an underwater hall furnished with at least some of the treasures a royal hall of men would boast. In France Björn kills a flying dragon, and the details of this exploit parallel Beowulf's last fight in several particulars. The dragon attacks another man, but Björn thrusts his shield over the intended victim; Beowulf shields his kinsman Wiglaf from the dragon's fiery breath; Björn seizes the dragon by the tail with one hand and with the other cuts it through behind the wing; Beowulf cuts his dragon in two with a short sword after Wiglaf has wounded the beast. Björn's Beowulfian adventures occupy chapters four and five of the saga, whose main action develops the rivalry between the hero and Þórðr over a woman, Oddný, whom Þórðr marries by treachery and Björn evidently enjoys almost by right. The feud demonstrates Björn's superiority which is only confirmed when Þórðr ambushes and overpowers his old enemy. Björn's adventures abroad mark him as a man destined for greatness, and worthy of it, but he fulfills his heroic nature in Iceland, against human enemies, and in the essentially realistic context of a basic plot as vital now as then, the eternal triangle.

Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings similarly finds a Beowulfian narrative a suitable touchstone for a man's potential greatness or innate claim to heroic status. The amiable Ólafr Hávarðarson, after other less spectacular public services, wrestles successfully with the draugr Þormóðr, a bad actor in life and potentially worse in death; as a revenant, Þormóðr haunts his farmhouse which his widow fears will be desolated. Ólafr ends these visitations in a combat scene which closely parallels Grettir's wrestling match with Glámr. Subsequently Þormóðr harasses one Brandr inn sterki who is rounding up his sheep in a winter storm; Ólafr again wrestles with the draugr, breaks his back, and sinks the body deep at sea; the place seems unclean afterwards. One might compare the mere in which Beowulf kills Grendel's mother and decapitates Grendel's body, thus completing the war with the monsters whose lair remains bloodstained and uncanny. Ólafr's second meeting with Þormóðr is probably not taken directly from Grettissaga as the first seems to be, and unlike Grettir, Ólafr partakes of the nature of the bear: Svá segja menn, at Ólafr Hávarðarson hafi haft bjarnyl, því at aldrei var þat frost eða kulði, at Ólafr færi í fleiri klæði en eina brók ok skyrtu gyrða í brökr ("It is said that Ólafr Hávarðarson had bear's warmth since no matter how cold it was, he never put on more clothing than trousers with his shirt tucked in"). An Icelandic folk-belief credits the bear with such natural heat that he never feels cold, and men born on a bear's skin may

share this property. In chapter four of the saga, the Ójafnaðarmaðr Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson ambushes and kills the promising young man, who dies fighting with courage and equanimity against superior numbers, even as Björn Hít-dælakappi did, and this heroic though premature death becomes the apex of a brief career. The real hero of the saga is Hávarðr, the central action the father's revenge for the death of an admirable son. Ólafr's "bear's son" adventures and nature in good part provide the measure of the man his father laments and avenges, and Ólafr's essential worth justifies and motivates the chief action of the story.

Harðar saga ok Hólmverja similarly credits its hero, Hörðr, with a Beowulfian adventure, the raid on the draugr Sóti's burial mound. Mrs Chadwick points out that Hörðr's companions in this exploit include Hróarr, Geirr, and Helgi who correspond to Hroðgar, Heorogar, and Halga, the three sons of Healfdene named in Beowulf. The main action of Harðar saga ok Hólmverja focusses on the hero's career in Iceland, his outlawry, the tension between his innate nobility and his life as an outlaw, his betrayal and last, heroic fight. Although magic enough embellishes the story, its essence conforms to the conventions of Icelandic realism. Hörðr's "bear's son" exploit establishes his worth, but it also motivates his later misfortune; Sóti curses the ring Hörðr seized from the draugr, and the curse has power.



Another saga set chiefly in Iceland illustrates the "emergent hero" function of the Beowulfian theme in Old Icelandic. Gull-Pórrissaga includes two possible "bear's son" figures. A minor and short-lived character, Björn Beruson boasts a promising name and lineage; "bear, she-bear's son" takes his second name from his widowed mother Bera, and Bera was also the name of Böðvarr Bjarki's mother. During Pórir's raid on the gold-guarding dragons, Björn attempts to rescue or avenge one of the companions whom a dragon has seized. Björn wounds the monster, but its venomous blood gushes into his face fatally poisoning him. Beowulf is bitten in the throat and dies dragon-poisoned, hence Björn's character and death may recall Beowulf's. The central hero of the saga, Pórir Oddsson or Gull-Pórir, naturally survives this youthful exploit.

Mrs Chadwick makes Gull-Pórir's encounter with the draugr Agnarr and battle with the dragons, Valr and his sons, important examples of her thesis, but as in the other sagas I have mentioned, these Beowulfian adventures occupy the heroes' youth and the sagas' early chapters. Of Gull-Pórir's Beowulfian enemies, only the "evil, supernatural woman" of Mrs Chadwick's study, a sorceress called Kerling, plays a part in the main action of the story which again is set in Iceland and turns upon feuds, rivalries, and battles which largely conform to the conventions of realism observable in the family sagas. The "bear's son" theme

establishes Þórir's claim to heroic status; the essence of his saga comes later and finds the essential measure of the hero in conflicts with other men over mundane matters like grazing rights.

Porkell hákr's Beowulfian or "bear's son" adventures, like Gull-Þórir's, Björn Hítðelakappi's, Hörðr's or Ólafr's, introduce a champion, a man of heroic status against whom the saga can measure Skarpheðinn. The "bear's son" motif in Njáls saga ironically preludes the hero's disgrace and the fulfilment of an adversary's greatness. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (in Njáls Saga: a Literary Masterpiece) has characterized Porkell as a "swaggering, puffed up warrior" and an "inflated windbag"; in a very sensitive characterization of Björn of Mörk, Professor Einar asserts, "The story of Porkell hákr deals with a man who imagines he is something other than what he is, and who thereby makes himself ludicrous." I believe that in doing justice to Björn of Mörk, Professor Einar has mistaken the character of Porkell hákr who is not a miles gloriosus but a truly formidable figure. Porkell's foreign exploits do not appear as his own unsupported boast but as the narrator's concise statement of fact; Asgrímur Elliða-Grímsson testifies to the reality of Porkell's prowess as he indicates the hero's booth: þessa búð á Porkell hákr, kappi mikill, ok væri oss munr, at vér fingim liðsinni hans ("this booth belongs to Thorkel Braggart. He is a great

warrior, and it would make a great difference to us if we got his help"). Besides recording Porkell's boast that he dared venture single combat against any challenger, the narrator states as fact that Porkell dealt harshly in words and deeds with all comers.

When Porkell's will and courage fail before Skarpheðinn, the narrator again states as objective fact that Porkell had never before and never again failed a test of will and courage. The confrontation between Skarpheðinn and Porkell hákr does not expose Porkell as a windbag; the clash illuminates Skarpheðinn's stature. Matched against Skarpheðinn, Porkell collapses as if he were a fraud, but he is not, and the narrator's careful delineation of Porkell's prowess and his failure makes Skarpheðinn's appalling and almost inhuman power startlingly vivid.

The booth to booth progression culminating in Porkell's introduction, test, and discomfiture focusses on Skarpheðinn. Magnús Magnússon attests to the power of this scene: "at the end Skarpheðinn is almost a nightmare figure as he stalks through the Althing, brutal, sardonic, terrible, and doomed." We can give the "nightmare figure" a more precise name. As the narrator prepares for the confrontation between these two enemies, he characterizes Porkell as a "bear's son" hero, and Skarpheðinn as a troll; the clash becomes, and parodies, an archetypal conflict between the hero and the monster.

As the procession moves from booth to booth, the chieftains who refuse Ásgrímur and Njáll's sons support successively ask who the fifth man in the line may be, and each describes Skarpheðinn. Skapti Þóróddsson asks first, and calls Skarpheðinn mikill maðr ok fölleitr ok ógæfusamligr, harðligr ok tröllsligr (I will render this as "a big man, pale and unlucky-looking, fierce and troll-like"). Later Hafr inn auðgi describes Skarpheðinn as svá illiligr sem genginn sé út ór sjávarhömrum ("as grim-looking as if he came from a sea-cliff" in my rendering), and the habitat seems appropriate for a Beowulfian enemy, a troll or even a dragon. To cite one example, Mrs Chadwick identifies the marauding brown bear Grettir kills as a variant of the draugr Agnarr; from an English point of view, the bear is a Grendel figure, and its lair was a cave in a sea-cliff. Skarpheðinn evidently understands this hostile description to characterize him as a troll, and as at every challenge he seizes upon a theme in the taunt and hurls it back at his adversary; Skarpheðinn asserts he would gladly meet Hafr or more boys of his sort in combat and then implies that Hafr lacks the courage to rescue his sister, allegedly abducted by Eydís járnaxa and Steðjakollr, evidently a troll-couple.

To describe Skarpheðinn as a "nightmare figure" or a troll or a Grendel figure captures only a part of the episode's tone and meaning. The allusive art of the saga

characterizes the antagonists as archetypal enemies and makes the audience aware of the characterizations, the event fixes the audience's sympathies on Skarpheðinn; in a clash between Beowulf and Grendel, as it were, we find ourselves delighted with Grendel's moral victory, a victory of will, spirit, courage, and manliness, and a victory innocent of blood. Porkell does not make himself ludicrous by pretending to be what he is not, but he becomes a victim of the ironies the episode develops: that a hero should emerge in a familiar pattern toward a failure of heroism, that an audience should side with the monster not the man, that in a particular context real prowess should suddenly turn counterfeit. Skarpheðinn strikes us as an appalling figure, as he readies his axe, but we almost laugh as Porkell sheathes his sword and sits ingloriously down. The allusive identification as troll and hero, and the comedy of the unprecedented but welcome outcome, gain force as we realise that the opposed weapons recapitulate the troll versus hero theme: Porkell's sax, a traditional prize of the hero's encounter with troll, draugr, or kappi, opposes Skarpheðinn's axe, appropriately named Rimmugýgr, "Battle troll".

The action at the assembly illuminates and evaluates Skarpheðinn's character both in terms of the immediate past, the killing of Höskuldr Hvítaneðsgoði, and the imminent future, the conflict between Skarpheðinn and Flosi which destroys the prospect for a peaceful

reconciliation. The successive challenges to Skarpheðinn, his admissions and his denials, develop the narrator's attitude toward his character. The episode portrays Skarpheðinn as grim and terrible, but not simply as grim and terrible. The killing of Höskuldr compromised Skarpheðinn's courage and perspicacity. Mörðr Valgarðsson's campaign of lies overcame Skarpheðinn's natural shrewdness and scepticism, and in order to distribute responsibility for the killing, and especially to make Mörðr inescapably a party to the subsequent legal proceedings, Skarpheðinn took advantage of numbers rather than offering Höskuldr single combat. Since Mörðr succeeded in deceiving virtually everyone he attempted, Skarpheðinn's failure to see through a masterly web of deceit hardly makes him a fool; similarly the sagas do not seem to regard the use of superior numbers unmanly, but as Skarpheðinn later remarks, a higher standard is rightly expected of his family than of others. The events at the assembly powerfully demonstrate Skarpheðinn's undiminished manliness, and the episode also reasserts his shrewdness. The challenges Skarpheðinn answers and rebuts highlight his alert and sardonic intelligence, his ironic and incisive cast of mind.

Skarpheðinn's ferocious wit wins our intellectual respect; in every hostile description of himself, he finds a weapon against the speaker, and the sharpness of his answers matches the tone of the challenges put to him.

When Skapti Þóróddsson calls him ógæfusamligr, "unlucky", and tröllsligr, yet professes not to know his name, Skarpheðinn declares that he must be the wiser of the two since he knows both Skapti's name and a discreditable nickname he claims Skapti has earned. When Hafr inn auðgi describes him as illiligr, "grim" or even "evil", and hints that Skarpheðinn is troll-like, the riposte alleges that trolls have previously disgraced and cowed Hafr. Snorri goði predicts that Skarpheðinn has not long to live, but Skarpheðinn asserts that death is an obligation, implying his willingness to discharge it, but he points out that there are other obligations, for example avenging a father's killing, and he observes that Snorri has failed in this duty.

Two recurring themes mark Skarpheðinn's exchanges at the assembly: the concept of luck, gæfa, and the relationship between fathers and sons. Every chieftain visited remarks Skarpheðinn's aura of bad luck, his ógæfa. Skapti Þóróddsson calls Skarpheðinn ógæfusamligr, Snorri goði addresses him saying protin sé nú þín in mesta gæfa ("you have now exhausted your store of good luck"), and Guðmundr inn ríki, after evaluating and praising Skarpheðinn as a warrior, adds: Ok er þó maðrinn ógæfusamligr ("But he looks like a man of ill luck"). Skarpheðinn implicitly accepts this appraisal, observing that he justly bears the reproach for killing Höskuldr Hvítanessgoði, but Skarpheðinn asserts that Guðmundr inn

ríki's ógæfa and reproach lie in having been slandered by Þorkell hákr. To have killed Höskuldr and not to have killed Þorkell compromise equally the honours of the two men, and both admit the justice of the other's charge. The ensuing exchange with Þorkell hákr illuminates Skarpheðinn's understanding of ánæli "reproach", and ógæfa. Þorkell takes an explicitly moralistic view of the Njálssons' killing of Höskuldr saying that Guðmundr inn ríki must have judged their cause unpopular því at slík hafa verk verst verit unnin ("for it was a hideous crime") and Þorkell's description of Skarpheðinn adds a new adjective to the familiar ones: illmannligr, "ill-looking, rogue-like, cruel, wicked" in Cleasby-Vigfússon's gloss. Skarpheðinn squarely denies the justice of Þorkell's malicious moralism: . . . er þér skuldlaust at velja mér hæðiyrði, saklausum manni (" . . . you have no need to pick on me, an innocent man, with your insults"). This protestation of innocence may seem surprising under the circumstances, especially since Skarpheðinn has just admitted that he bears the reproach for killing Höskuldr, but Skarpheðinn distinguishes moral turpitude and ógæfa and indicates most clearly the center of his ethical system as he defines immorality for Þorkell's benefit: Hefir mik aldrei þat hent, at ek hafa kúgat föður minn ok barizk við hann, sem þú gerðir við þinn föður ("I have never threatened my own father's life as you once did, nor ever fought with him, as you once did").



If Skarpheðinn's ethics have a second principle, it would probably be manly conduct; he repays Porkell's illmannligr with fúlmennska, "baseness" in Cleasby-Vig-fússon, but in context probably "unmanly perversion", and Skarpheðinn concocts a delightfully ingenious and obscene slander against a famous slanderer; no one could pocket Skarpheðinn's insult with honor, but Porkell takes it like a mouse.

Skarpheðinn has not been a partial advocate on his own behalf, but he sees the killing of Höskuldr and its probable consequences as ógæfa rather than moral failure and punishment. I believe the narrator shares this view; when Njáll's

sons bring their father the terrible news, Njáll predicts the result: his death, Bergþóra's, and his sons', but Njáll foresees that Kári, who shares the guilt equally with Njáll's sons, will survive by the power of his gipta, his good luck. Later Ásgrímur asks Njáll how he feels about the case, and the concept of luck dominates the answer: Heldr þungt, því at mik uggir, at hér muni eigi gæfumenn hlut at eiga ("I am uneasy . . . for I fear that there are men of ill luck involved"). That cryptic sentence may number the men who oppose his sons among the unlucky. I suspect that it is his own ógæfa which drives Flosi to choose the bitterest words he can possibly hurl at Njáll's sons; Flosi in fact echoes the slander against Njáll's manliness that led to the death of Sigmundur the lampooning poet, and repeating those words deepened the

disgrace of Hallgerðr's last appearance in Njáls saga. With the possibility of a reconciliation ended, Sifðu-Hallr sees what Njáll foresaw: Hér eigu hölztu miklir ógæfumenn hlut at ("There are men of too much ill luck involved in this"), and Flosi may well be included among the ógæfumenn. Þorkell hákr conceives ógæfa moralistically, but I believe the narrator does not. The observation that greatness and good luck do not necessarily go together fits Skarpheðinn.

Skarpheðinn's accusations that Þorkell menaced and fought his own father, and that Snorri goði failed to avenge his father, clarify Skarpheðinn's motives for the killing of Höskuldr and his disruption of the agreement reached with Flosi. Though slow to believe Mörrðr's lies, Skarpheðinn found their inner logic inescapable: no good son forgets his father's killing, nor could a good son hear his father's manliness slandered and be silent.

The tragic irony of the situation lies in Skarpheðinn's awareness that Höskuldr is a good man, and therefore a man who would inevitably avenge his father's death. Skarpheðinn does not realize that Höskuldr's ethics are unlike his own, that Höskuldr's goodness moves in the direction of saintliness.

An impression of Skarpheðinn's sinister power, guilt, and inner turmoil does not finally dominate the episode at the assembly. The momentary identification as a troll

or monster might fit Professor Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's analysis of the hero's "misfortune and anguish", but as the saga develops and even parodies the traditional story, a sense of surprise and comedy gives our response to Skarpheðinn another dimension. He may have seemed nightmare-like, compromised, and indiscreet as he overmatched his challengers, but he emerges from Þorkell's booth with Ásgrímur's approval, Guðmundr inn ríki's admiration (coupled with tangible support), and the audience's sympathy. He retains that sympathy to the end of the saga.

ROBERT G. COOK

THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS AS DRAMAS OF THE WILL

The center of interest in the Sagas of Icelanders is their realistic portrayal of character. This is particularly evident when we consider the sagas in the light of other medieval literature. The heroes of Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, for example, take their character from the story in which they exist. The story carries the meaning and thus comes first; the personages come second. Lancelot is interesting only as the extreme of the adulterous courtly lover, and Chrétien's poem about him is a lesson in the effects of immoderate devotion. Yvain's career, falling from a pinnacle of fame and happiness through foolish neglect, and then winning his way back to his wife's love through acts of prowess and charity, is clearly shaped by medieval conceptions of the progress of the soul through stages of love. This is a different kind of literature from the sagas, where Grettir and Egill are important, not for what they stand for, but because of who each one is. The characters in the sagas exist in their own right, not for their usefulness in a certain kind of fiction. Even Chaucer's Wife of Bath or Miller or Host, thought to be unusually realistic in medieval literature, fit artistic patterns and didactic purposes seldom imposed on saga characters. It is not too much to say that the primary

tendency in the sagas is toward realistic biography.

The realism of the sagas derives from their foundation in traditional material and the fact that the saga-writers chose to assume the role of historian with regard to this material - and played this role even when dealing with fictions. In a small country with a strong sense of its history in terms of individuals, families, and places, it is easy to understand that the core of the traditional material must have been a distinct sense of character - of Egill as proud and wilful and greedy, of Snorri goði as shrewd and cunning. Around these characters stories could be told and elaborated, but the characters must remain alive and real.

All persons, of course, once they are dead and exist in memory, tend to become fictions. If they are set into patterns of love and heroism, the pressure to fictionalize and idealize is especially strong. But the sagas seem to have experienced little of this pressure, and a common error in reading them is to see them as less mimetic than they actually are, to read them as tales of love and heroism, or in terms of still other abstractions. In fact, the writers of the sagas had very little interest in the abstracting or idealizing process necessary to produce fiction. They took their characters as they were, or in whatever realistic mould they chose to see them, with all their faults and inconsistencies.

Björn Hítðlakappi is a good example of a saga

character in whom the ideal of heroism and the demands of literary consistency have been sacrificed in favour of complex realism. In Russia, when he accepts the challenge to fight for his host Valdimarr, he says that he would rather die nobly than live with shame (Bjarnar saga Hít-dælakappa, Íslensk Fornrit 3, ch. 4). Here, and when he slays a dragon in France, we feel that we are reading heroic literature, but when Björn spends a long winter at the farm of Þórðr and Oddný, bickering fruitlessly with his rival Þórðr, the tone is more petit bourgeois than heroic. There is still another surprise, however, for at the end of the saga Björn regains his original stature and dies a hero's death.

But it would be a mistake to go too far in asserting the realism of the characters in the family sagas. They remain, after all, figures in a particular literature, and one which is very conventional and circumscribed. If we ask ourselves what kind of people these saga characters are, and how they relate to each other, we notice above all that they are unusually given to self-assertion, and either display some form of it themselves or react to it in others.

That the sagas depict an individualistic, competitive society, and that conflicts between men are the essence of the action, is an obvious fact, put succinctly in three words by Árni Magnússon, recorded by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík: "bændur fljúgast á" ("farmers fight"). Jón

Helgason has put it more fully: "[The sagas] depict especially the relations between men, with a fondness for the harsh encounters in which honor, life and property are at stake" (Norron Litteraturhistorie, Copenhagen 1934, p. 135). But the actual combats, in which the hero or his opponent loses his guts or his head, are merely the most striking expression and the culmination of conflicts in a wider sense, which make up the typical action of the sagas: offences, challenges and other forms of overbearing behavior; attempts to get around or persuade another.

Borrowing the medieval division of the soul into three faculties - reason, emotions, will - we can say that the saga treatment of character centers almost exclusively on the will, to the neglect of the other two faculties. It is hard to think of another literature where so much time is spent persuading, bargaining, advising, whetting, cajoling, bullying, being obstinate, and so forth; where the range of human activity is so severely restricted to the elements of competition and the expressions of wilfulness or its opposites. When there is love or reason in the sagas, these are usually presented in their volitional aspect: love turns into a question of making up one's mind or of competition; advice becomes a matter of imposing one will on another.

For example, when Bergþórshváll is being attacked by Flosi and his men, Skarpheðinn and his father argue about

whether to go inside the buildings or defend the farm from outside. Each gives a reasonable opinion, Njáll that the house is strong and that they can defend themselves from inside with greater success than Gunnarr did, Skarpheðinn that the men who are attacking them are less honorable than those who attacked Gunnarr and are likely to set fire to the house if they stay inside. Rather than continue the argument on reasonable grounds, however, Njáll turns it into a struggle for supremacy: "Now you are going to override my advice and show me disrespect, my sons - and not for the first time. But when you were younger you did not do so, and things went better for you then." To this sort of petulance there can be no logical response, and so the sons simply give in:

"Let us do as our father wishes," said Helgi.

"That will be best for all of us."

"I am not so sure of that," said Skarp-Hedin, "for he is a doomed man now. But still I do not mind pleasing my father by burning in the house with him, for I am not afraid of dying."

(Íslenzk Fornrit 12, ch. 128; English by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson)

Wilfulness and self-assertiveness are, of course, to be expected in heroic literature and in an unpoliced society like medieval Iceland. But the amount of wilfulness in the sagas goes beyond the ideal demands of heroism or the practical demands of maintaining one's integrity and



property. It could, in fact, be argued that the brand of decadent heroism that characterizes the sagas is precisely what results when heroic values are contaminated by excessive wilfulness. As for honor, Theodore M. Andersson has shown ("The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas", Speculum 45, 1970, 575-93) that the notion of the primacy of honor in the sagas has been greatly exaggerated, that, for example, the aggressive behavior of Halli Sigurðarson (in Valla-Ljóts saga) is condemned, while the conciliatory attitude of Blund-Ketill (in Hensa-Póris saga) is admired.

If honor is not predominant in the sagas, neither are a sense of beauty, deep convictions, inner anxieties and conflicts, religious piety and love of God or country or one's neighbor. When present, such things lie under the surface, erupting only occasionally; in fact the tension created by their suppression accounts for much of the warmth and humanity in the sagas. Grettir's and Gísli's fear of the dark and Guðrún's recollection of Kjartan are unforgettable. But in the typical actions of the sagas the inner life is played down in favor of manifestations of the will.

With their restriction as well as their suppression of many possible forms of human activity, the sagas do not display the wide variety of the world of Dante or Chaucer, with their scholars and sensualists and lovers and saintly

religious and hypocrites and idealists and assorted misguided souls. Saga characters express themselves and relate to each other primarily on the level of will.

A literal fists-on-the-table scene from Ljósvetninga saga may serve as a kind of exaggerated paradigm for the relationships of men in the sagas. Guðmundr inn ríki of Mþðruvellir, late in his life, is on a visit to one of his thingmen at Tjörnes. He is offered the high-seat, while another visitor, Ófeigr Járngerðarson, is shown the next seat in.

When the tables were set up, Ófeigr put his fist on the table and said, "How big does this fist seem to you, Guðmundr?"

He said, "Certainly quite big."

Ófeigr said, "Then you would expect there to be some power in it?"

Guðmundr said, "I would guess so."

Ófeigr says, "Do you think it could deliver a hard blow?"

Guðmundr says, "Very hard."

Ófeigr says, "What harm do you think it could do?"

Guðmundr said, "Broken bones or death."

Ófeigr answers, "How would you like such a death?"

Guðmundr said, "Not at all, and I am not eager to have it."

Ófeigr said, "Then don't sit in my place."

Guðmundr says, "So shall it be," and sat on the other side.

Then it came out that Ófeigr wanted to be the most esteemed there (vildi þar mest vera metinn) and had occupied the high-seat before, and did not hold back when something occurred to him.

(Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 11)

It is hard to go further than this in raw assertiveness, both in motive and method. Though Ófeigr had reluctantly opposed Guðmundr in a battle early in the saga, he was his thingman and could have yielded his favorite seat with honor. But he simply vildi þar mest vera metinn, wanted to be top dog, and he prevailed in the most direct way.

This urge to prevail, to have one's way - quite apart from the demands of honor and in fact just for its own sake - is very frequent in the sagas. In Laxdæla saga we are told of Þorkr inn digri and his brother Þorgrímur that they "wanted to be the biggest and most important men there" (Íslenzk Fornrit 5, ch. 18). Halli Sigurðarson in Valla-Ljóts saga moves from his own district to Svarfaðardalr, simply because he thinks his chances of being mestr maðr ("biggest man") are better there than at home (Íslenzk Fornrit 9, ch. 2).

In its extreme form this aggressiveness produces the ójafnaðarmaðr or inequitable man, whose designation

describes his insistence on getting on top. A partial listing of such characters would include Þórólfr bægifótr in Eyrbyggja saga; Þórðr in Þorsteins þáttur stangarhoggs; Steinarr Sjóðason in Egils saga; Eysteinn Máðason, Þorbergr hoggvinkinni and Þorsteinn varastafr in Reykðæla saga; Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson in Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings; Víga-Styrr in Heiðarvíga saga; the brothers Sölmundr and Söxólfr in Ljósvetninga saga; Hrolleifr and Bergr inn rakki in Vatnsdæla saga. These men, usually minor characters, come close to being stock figures, distinguished chiefly by their need to assert themselves; we cannot even accuse them of an Iago-like malice. Yet it is characteristic of the sagas that these men initiate a major share of the action.

The ójafnaðarmenn exemplify the most overt form of assertiveness. But there are other ways of imposing your will on others, for example by persuasion, or advice, or trickery, or obstinacy, or flattery. Some of the major characters in the sagas display unmistakable signs of wilfulness: Grettir's obstreperousness, particularly as a young man; Egill's and Víga-Glúmr's persistence in out-doing others even to the end of their lives; the imperiousness of Brodd-Helgi in Vápnfirðinga saga, expressed both by his greed and by his cruel refusal to stay overnight with his dying ex-wife Halla; the relentless quarrelsomeness of Vémundr kǫgurr in Reykðæla saga; the competitiveness and homicidal excess of Þorgeirr Hávarsson in Fóstbræðra saga.

The very presence of a character like Snorri goði in Eyrbyggja saga shows a fondness for men who are able to get their way, by whatever means. Even Njáll, along with his far-seeing wisdom and restraint, shows a tendency toward wanting to master others, particularly his sons.

Some characters, on the other hand, surprise us by their renunciation of aggressiveness, their refusal to accept provocation. Among these are such admirable figures as Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi (Njáls saga), Ingimundr inn gamli (Vatnsdæla saga) and Blund-Ketill (Hensa-Póris saga).

Detailed discussion of individual characters and character types would be one way of demonstrating the prevalence of the element of will in the sagas. Another would be to analyze a particular saga or sagas, showing how events which turn on the will form the shaping episodes in the story. A third way - and the one which will be attempted in the remainder of this paper - is to survey some typical non-violent saga scenes, with a view toward showing how frequently they are a matter of overcoming or testing the will.

### Whettings

Whettings, by which the will of a character is aroused or sharpened toward a particular action, are the scenes which come most readily to mind. A good whetting scene occurs at the very beginning of Vatnsdæla saga.

Ketill raumr is blamed by his people for doing nothing about the deaths on the highway between Raumsdalr and Jämtaland; too old to take action himself, he rouses his eighteen-year-old son Þorsteinn in a lengthy harangue, pointing out that things were better in the old days when sons followed their fathers' example and risked their lives to gain honor, instead of sitting at the fire, drinking beer. This speech angers Þorsteinn and he soon sets out to clear the forest of danger (Íslenzk Fornrit 8, chs. 1-2).

Another case of a father whetting a son occurs in Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings. Here too the father is old and a former viking. Óláfr Hávarðarson has generously rounded up the lost sheep of Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson for two autumns and received no thanks. When he refuses to do this a third autumn, Þorbjörn spreads the story that Óláfr is stealing the sheep.

One evening, when father and son sat at table, there was a leg of mutton on the table before them. Óláfr picked it up and said, "This leg is quite big and thick."

Hávarðr said, "But it's my guess, son, that it's from one of our sheep, and not one of Þorbjörn's - and such unfairness (Ójafmaðr) is much to endure."

Ólafr laid the leg on the table and turned red. It seemed to those who were sitting there that he pushed against the table so hard that the leg of

mutton broke and one piece flew against the wall and stuck fast there. Hávarðr looked up and said nothing, but smiled.

(Íslenzk Fornrit 6, ch. 2)

Another whetting over food occurs in Heiðarvíga saga, when Þuríðr serves breakfast to her sons Barði and Steingrímr, whose brother Hallr has been slain by the sons of Hárekr. She serves them an ox-leg broken in three parts, saying that Hallr was broken even more and little was said about it. She also serves them a stone, saying they have digested much worse by not daring to avenge Hallr (Íslenzk Fornrit 3, ch. 22).

Sometimes other objects are used in whettings. Especially memorable is the bloody cloak in which Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði was slain, which his widow Hildigunnr throws around the shoulders of her uncle Flosi Þórðarson, charging him to avenge the slaying (Njáls saga, Íslenzk Fornrit 12, ch. 116).

Flosi's response, köld eru kvenna ráð, "cold are the counsels of women" - echoed by Þorkr in Gísla saga when Þórdís has prompted him to kill Gísli (Íslenzk Fornrit 6, ch. 19) - reminds us that it is women more often than men who do the goading. Njáll's wife Bergþóra goads her sons into three killings, those of Sigmundur Lambason (ch. 44), Þráinn Sigfússon (ch. 91), and Lýtingr of Sámstaðir (ch. 98).

Droplaug Þorgrímsdóttir tells her sons how she has been slandered by Þorgrímr torðyfill, but then says that they are to do nothing about this (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 3). It may be that, since they are still young, she does not want them to risk their lives, but it is more likely that this is a piece of persuasion by negative psychology.

Wives are more frequent whetters than mothers, however. In Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings Bjargey rouses Hávarðr from a year's bed-rest on three different occasions (Íslenzk Fornrit 6, chs. 5, 6, 8) to seek compensation for the slaying of their son Óláfr. Eventually her egging takes effect and the aging Hávarðr, almost miraculously rejuvenated, seeks effective revenge.

In Ljósvetninga saga Þorvarðr Hqskuldsson has a troublesome son named Hqskuldr who stirs up new trouble with the Mqðrvellingar. When the son asks for help in fighting Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Þorvarðr is unwilling until his wife puts pressure on him, saying "I won't raise another son if you abandon this one in battle." Þorvarðr remarks grimly that women often have their way and goes to aid his son in the large-scale battle at Kakalahóll (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 14).

Another wife who threatens to withhold her favors is Þórhildr Bersadóttir, the aunt of Björn Hítðalakappi. As Björn rides off with only two companions into danger which



she foresees, she tells her husband Arnórr, "If any harm comes to Björn today, we will not share the same bed to-night." With this Arnórr rides off with eight others to give Björn necessary aid against an ambush (Íslenzk Fornrit 3, ch. 18).

Servants too can do the whetting, as in Reykðela saga when Steingrímur Örnólfsson is whetted by his overseer Hrafn to take vengeance against Vémundur kpgurr for prodding a man to strike him with a ram's head (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch.13). A better-known egging by a servant is that of Hrafnkell by the woman who noticed Eyvindr riding in splendor from his ship (Hrafnkels saga, Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 8). In similar fashion an unnamed woman in Njáls saga provokes Lýtingr of Sámstaðir by telling him of the ofláti ("gaudy person", i.e. Höskuldr Njálsson) who has just ridden past the farm (Íslenzk Fornrit 12, ch. 98).

Finally, under whetting we can point to several instances in which a person is clearly whetted against his deepest wishes. Bjarni Helgason in Vápnfirðinga saga is prompted by Þorgerðr silfra to slay Geitir Lýtingsson; immediately after he does so, Bjarni regrets it and throws Þorgerðr out of the house (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 14). Similarly Bolli Þorleiksson is prompted by Guðrún to slay Kjartan in a memorable passage in Laxðela saga. With the killing done, and Bolli supporting the dying Kjartan in his lap, it is said that he regretted the deed (Íslenzk Fornrit 5, chs. 47-49).

Requests for aid

Another frequent form of persuasion in the sagas is the request for aid, usually in a legal cause but sometimes in a military one. The most elaborate request is found in chapters 119 and 120 of Njáls saga when the sons of Njáll have slain their foster-brother Hǫskuldr and are at the Althing seeking friends to support them in their unpopular case. With the help of Helgi Njálsson's father-in-law, Ásgrímr Elliða-Grímsson, they go successively to the booths of Gizurr hvíti, Skapti Þóroddson, Snorri goði. Hafr inn auðgi, Guðmundr inn ríki, and Þorkell hákr. Only Gizurr promises aid, and Skarpheðinn repays the others for their refusal with stinging insults (one of which, curiously enough, wins him the support of Guðmundr ríki who is delighted to hear how his rival Þorkell hákr was slandered).

After the settlement fails and Njáll and his family have been burnt to death, Flosi is in the same position of needing support in a suit. He and his followers go by foot through most of the eastern part of Iceland, asking for help at eight powerful farmsteads. In all cases but one (Sqrli Brodd-Helgason), Flosi is successful; in four cases he offers money, and once (with Þorkell fullspakr and Þorvaldr, the sons of Ketill þrymr) the money is accepted (Íslenzk Fornrit 12, ch. 134).

In Hrafnkels saga Sámr and Þorbjörn seek aid and are turned down by most of the chieftains in the land before

they finally get help from the sons of Þjóstarr (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 3).

In Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings Bjargey, Hávarðr's wife, goes in succession to her three brothers, Valbrandr, Þorbrandr, and Ásbrandr, to gather forces for vengeance against Þorbjörn. She puts her request enigmatically, asking for nets and turf-axes on loan; her brothers get the message and loan her their sons (Íslenzk Fornrit 6, ch. 8).

These are cases of multiple requests, but usually the petition is to just one person. When this person is a relative or a goði, aid is more readily granted. But not always: in Hrafnkels saga, for example, Sámr is very reluctant to take the case against Hrafnkell from his brother Þorbjörn and tries to persuade him to accept Hrafnkell's offer of compensation. When Þorbjörn refuses and in fact whets Sámr by insulting him, Sámr agrees to take the case (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch.3).

Sometimes aid is enlisted by first establishing a bond of obligation. In Vápnfirðinga saga Brodd-Helgi visits Digr-Ketill in Fljótsdalr and makes a pact of friendship with him; only afterward does he get to the real point of his visit and ask Ketill for his help in prosecuting Þorleifr inn kristni for non-payment of his temple tax. Ketill's reaction, not surprisingly, is "I wouldn't have made a pact of friendship with you if I had known that this was behind it"(Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 5).

In Hensa-Póris saga there is an elaborate three-stage persuasion by this means. Following the burning of Blund-Ketill, Þorbjörn stígandi goes with his foster-son Hersteinn, the victim's young son, to seek aid. They begin by getting the support of Þorkell trefill, though he is reluctant at first. Þorkell in turn takes them to Gunnarr Hlífarson, whom they rouse from bed and take outside, where they sit down on the ground so close that they are sitting on his cloak. (For a similar use of sedentary pressure, see chapter 75 of Laxdæla saga.) Gunnarr does not understand their haste when his visitors tell him that they have come to ask the hand of his daughter Þuríðr for Hersteinn, but he agrees to the engagement. Then they go inside and Gunnarr asks for news - nothing much lately, he is told, apart from the burning of Blund-Ketill! Then of course he realizes that he has been tricked. The third stage is that Gunnarr takes his new allies to his uncle Þórðr gellir at Hvammr and asks him his opinion of the match. Þórðr approves and gets the assent of Þuríðr, whom he is fostering. The bargain is sealed and the wedding is set for a week off; only then does Gunnarr tell Þórðr the news about the burning and he realizes that he too has been implicated in the action (Íslensk Fornrit 3, chs. 10-11).

In Ljósvetninga saga Guðmundr inn ríki employs a similar trick with his brother Einarr, with whom he has not been on good terms. His aim is not to gain his aid, however, but to prevent Einarr from aiding his friend Þórir

Helgason, against whom Guðmundr is preparing a suit. Guðmundr gives his brother a cloak and has him shake hands to affirm that they will be on the same side in lawsuits. Later, when Þórir comes to him for aid, Einarrr realizes that he has been tricked (Íslensk Fornrit 10, ch. 6).

### Trickery

Such scenes as these last three testify to the great fondness in the sagas for getting the better of somebody, or getting somebody to do something, by any possible means - the more elaborate, the better. A memorable example (which might also have been included above) is Þorkell Þjóstarsson's scheme in Hrafnkels saga for getting the support of his brother Þorgeirr: old Þorbjörn, acting on Þorkell's instructions, stumbles at the entrance of the booth and grabs Þorgeirr's ailing toe as he falls; Þorkell then uses this as a way of persuading his brother to aid in alleviating Þorbjörn's pain (Íslensk Fornrit 11, chs. 9-10). Even more ingenious is Njáll's scheme for forcing Hrútr to relinquish Unnr's dowry, an elaborate trick by which Gunnarr disguises himself as a pedlar in order to make the legal summons in Hrútr's presence (Íslensk Fornrit 12, chs. 21-24).

Several other examples of getting around someone by trickery: in Ljósvetninga saga Guðmundr inn ríki intends to burn down Saurbær in order to kill Eilífr skyti. Hlenni, the blind old farmer at Saurbær, talks Guðmundr out of

burning the farm by promising to send Eilífr and his companions to Eyrarskógr. Hlenni keeps his word, but Guðmundr does not find his enemies at the appointed place because Hlenni sends them there concealed in peat-baskets (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 10) In Reykðæla saga Vémundr kǫgurr wants to buy some choice wood that his rival Steingrímur Þrúólfrsson has already contracted to buy. When the Norwegian merchant who is selling the wood refuses Vémundr's insistent request and even bribery, Vémundr pays a man to spread a lie to the effect that Steingrímur has decided to buy his wood elsewhere, and thus he has his way (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 9).

#### Persuasion of reluctant persons

A special class can be made of incidents in which a person is talked into something against his will. Such giving-in usually leads to trouble. In Droplaugarsona saga Droplaug gets her second husband Hallsteinn to invite her son Helgi to spend the winter. Hallsteinn is very reluctant, but gives in and in consequence is slain by his slave Þorgils, obviously at the prompting of Helgi (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 7).

In Ljósvetninga saga Guðmundr arranges a marriage for his overseer, who then requests that he attend the feast. Guðmundr is ófúss ("unwilling"), but agrees to go. At the feast his wife hears slanderous rumours about Guðmundr's weakness, including sexual failings, and this causes a

long history of conflict between Guðmundr on the one hand and Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr on the other (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 5).

In Víga-Glúms saga Þórarinn Þórisson is unwilling to take action against Glúmr for the slaying of Sigmundr Þorkelsson (Þórarinn's brother-in-law), feeling that only dishonor can come of quarrelling with Glúmr. But his brother Þorvaldr krókr persuades him to prepare a case. The outcome is as Þórarinn predicted: Glúmr prepares a counter-suit and not only gets Sigmundr declared unhallowed but has his father Þorkell outlawed (Íslenzk Fornrit 9, ch. 9). Þórarinn is a good example of a well-meaning man (he is described as "wise and popular") with a less peaceful brother (Þorvaldr krókr is described as "a fighter of duels and overbearing") who gets dragged into difficulties reluctantly but repeatedly - like Geitir Lýtingsson in Vápnfirðinga saga. Þórarinn's reluctance is manifest at four additional points in Víga-Glúms saga, in chapter 21, twice in chapter 22, and once again in chapter 24.

In Laxdæla saga Vigdís prevails over her unwilling husband Þórðr goddi in the matter of sheltering the murderer Þórólfr. Though it does not lead to his death, this causes considerable difficulty, which Þórðr gets out of by offering to foster Óláfr pái (Íslenzk Fornrit 5, chs. 141-6).

Also in Laxdæla saga, the sorcerer Kotkell, who was evicted from the district for having contrived the

drowning of Þórðr Ingunnarson, persuades Þorleikr Hǫskuldsson to give him a place to live in Laxárdalr. Þorleikr is naturally opposed at first, but changes his mind when offered fine horses, "for he thought the horses were excellent animals, and Kotkell pleaded his cause cleverly" (ch. 36; Hermann Pálsson's translation).

### Warnings

There are in the sagas many attempts to influence another's will by warning him of danger; the point of these scenes is usually to demonstrate the strong, unyielding will of the person who is warned. Since these warnings are seldom heeded, this is a good place to turn our subject around and treat some of the forms of refusal. This negative side is as important as the positive, for along with the many attempts at influencing someone, there are as many efforts at resisting. Stubbornness and assertiveness are two sides of the coin of wilfulness.

Among those who ignore warnings of danger, Bárðr Hallason in Víga-Glúms saga stands out for ignoring three warnings (from his father, from Hlenni Qrnólfsson, from his servant) of Vigfúss Glúmsson's threat to his life if he goes out to fetch his timber. He does go out, and of course is slain by Vigfúss (Íslenzk Fornrit 9, ch. 19).

In Njáls saga Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði is advised by Flosi to move from the farm at Ossabær to a safer place



at Skaptafell, but he refuses and is slain by the sons of Njáll (Íslenzk Fornrit 12, ch. 109). In a similar case in Reykðæla saga Bjarni, who has killed a relative of Víga-Skúta, fails to heed his uncle Víga-Glúmr's advice to stay with him for the winter, and of course he is slain (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 23).

In Hrafnkels saga Eyvindr is urged several times to ride away from the impending attack by Hrafnkell, but he refuses (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 8). Vésteinn, in Gísli saga, also recently returned from abroad, rides into Dýrafjörðr with the same indifference to his impending death (Íslenzk Fornrit 6, ch. 12).

Sometimes the warning comes through a dream rather than from another person. Helgi Droplaugarson has a dream of being attacked by wolves, whereupon Þorkell tries to persuade him to go home with him, thus avoiding the route foreshadowed in the dream. But Helgi refuses, saying "I will go the way I planned," and rides to his death (Íslenzk Fornrit 11, ch. 10). In Vatnsdæla saga Þorkell silfri has a dream which his wife Signý interprets to signify that he will be slain, but he does not heed it (Íslenzk Fornrit 8, ch. 42). Other unheeded dream-warnings occur in Vápnfirðinga saga and Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa.

Obstinacy

The sagas have many cases of obstinacy, and many forms, from Þorgeirr Hávarsson's persistence in returning to Ísafjörður after he has been banished from that district, to Hænna-Þórir's refusal to sell some of his hay. Obstinacy is especially common in family relationships: Grettir as a young man deliberately mismanages the tasks assigned him by his father; Gunnlaugr takes supplies for a trip out of the storage shed after his father expressly refused to send him abroad.

In several cases one member of a family refuses to go along with something that others in the family had agreed on. Helgi Droplaugarson is opposed to the marriage between his mother and Hallsteinn, though his brother Grímr accepts it (Íslensk Fornrit 11, ch. 4). Later, as we mentioned above, Helgi kills Hallsteinn. Similarly, Halli Sigurðarson in Valla-Ljóts saga is the only one of three brothers opposed to the marriage of their mother to a wealthy but not prominent farmer named Torfi. When he has the excuse of a provocation, Halli kills Torfi (Íslensk Fornrit 9, ch. 1).

In Laxdæla saga the dying Hǫskuldr Dala-Kollsson calls together his two legitimate sons to ask them to share his estate three ways with the illegitimate Óláfr pái. Bárðr agrees to this, but Þorleikr refuses to go along with his father. Hǫskuldr then tricks Þorleikr (another case of getting around somebody with a trick) by giving Óláfr gifts

of golden objects that weigh twelve ounces instead of the twelve ounces of silver legally allotted to illegitimate children (Íslenzk Fornrit 5, ch. 26).

These three stubborn brothers remind us of a common phenomenon in the sagas: two or more contrasting brothers, one of whom is distinguished by his greater wilfulness. Other pairs are Þórarinn and Þorvaldr krókr in Víga-Glúms saga; Glúmr's two sons, Már and Vigfúss, in the same saga; Þorsteinn and Jökull, the sons of Ingimundr inn gamli in Vatnsdæla saga; and Egill Skalla-Grímsson and his more peaceable brother Þórólfr.

#### Wise refusals

Finally we can point to the firm refusal for the good, a wise firmness which the reader admires. This would be the opposite of those cases where a reluctant person is talked into something which leads to trouble.

Áskell Eyvindarson in Reykðæla saga wisely refuses to be dragged into trouble on several occasions. When Vémundr kǫgurr offers him part of a stolen whale he turns it down and scolds him for the theft (Íslenzk Fornrit 10, ch. 8). Later he refuses oxen stolen by Vémundr (ch. 11). In general, Áskell's discretion and patient efforts at peace-making offset the trouble caused by the wilful Vémundr in this saga.

Ljótr in Valla-Ljóts saga refuses to let Björn Þorgrímsson and Sigmundr talk him into slaying Þoðvarr,

the innocent brother of Halli Sigurðsson (Islenzk Fornrit 9, ch. 6). Víga-Glúmr does not let himself be talked into attending a wedding where he expects trouble (Víga-Glúms saga 9, ch. 20). More generally, Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi and Njáll and Ingimundr inn gamli exemplify this kind of strength, as mentioned earlier.

These are just a few of the possible categories, with only a few examples within each category, of scenes which dramatize the will, but enough has been presented here to show that in the typical and central actions of the sagas it is primarily the will that is at stake.

\* \* \* \*

The narrative form of the sagas is remarkable for its economy, for what it does not do, and a good analysis of saga style should describe the way in which the writers, who were surely familiar with other literatures, disciplined themselves not to use the narrative possibilities available to them: the interior monologue, the authorial comment, the didactic model, for example. This paper has shown that the writers also practised considerable economy in their treatment of character, curtailing whole areas of human experience.

The sagas call to mind a relationship between two people which has degenerated to a struggle for the upper hand. In such a fists-on-the-table relationship there is

little room for affection or concern or rational discourse. But just as the persons in such a relationship are no less real or human for acting under circumscribed terms and having to suppress or neglect certain forms of expression, so the realism of the saga characters does not suffer from the comparatively narrow range of their activity. It may in fact be that it is precisely this concentration on the will which - like the economy of language and description - increases the apparent realism in the sagas. Reason can so easily become abstract; love, as happens usually in medieval literature, can become idealized or stylized. But when people are engaged with each other on the level of will there is not much scope for idealization.

CHRISTINE ELIZABETH FELL

THE OLD NORSE VERSION OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA<sup>1</sup>

Those of us who sometimes find ourselves defending the retention of Old Icelandic in English departments tend to fall back on the standard argument that Old Icelandic helps our understanding of Old English poetry. Urged further, we link Njáls saga and The Battle of Maldon as illustrations of the Germanic heroic code. But recent criticism has taken us away from the links between these two literatures, and has concentrated much more on the relationship of the vernacular, and even the apparently secular, to Latin Christian culture. "Typological" and "allegorical" are more fashionable words than "Germanic" or "heroic". In Old English there will soon be no secular poetry left to us, since The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message are being read as translations of The Song of Songs and it has been posited that The Ruin is a poem on Doomsday. Allegorical interpretations of the risqué riddles will shortly be with us.

It is time to move in the opposite direction: to take Old English and Old Norse religious translations and paraphrases of Latin models and see how these models

are adapted and altered. If instead of looking at the learning and latinity of a saga-writer, we see how the Old Testament has been modified in a northern version, we have moved into an area where the evidence can be calculated with precision. There is much disputation over what is "native" and what is "foreign" in family sagas. There can be less argument where we are dealing with the relationship of a vernacular text to its Latin source. In apparently straightforward translation, the translator can do a good deal to alter the emphasis of his original, and the writer of paraphrase has freedom to tamper with structure as well as with idiom. The Anglo-Saxon poets turn the stories of Judith and Exodus into epic poems; and an Old Norse version of the Book of Joshua reads like an Icelandic saga. If we isolate the features that distinguish these Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian versions from their originals, we can (having looked at the influence of foreign learning on native literature) assess the extent to which native culture imposed itself on foreign learning. This may help us to clarify our ideas about both.

The Old Norse version of the Bible known as Stjórn<sup>2</sup> is found in a number of manuscripts. Of these I am dealing exclusively with two in the Arnarnagðan collection, AM 226 folio and AM 227 folio, to which I refer as

A and B in the traditional manner. Both these manuscripts have a preface explaining how Stjórn came to be written. King Hákon Magnússon of Norway, who reigned from 1299 to 1319, had had translated for the benefit of his household, who could not understand Latin, a work called Heilagra Manna Blómstr to be read on the feast days of saints - aa þeirra haatidum ok messudogum. For Sundays and other days when God himself rather than one of his saints should be celebrated, it seemed appropriate that there should also be a translation of the Bible. King Hákon had therefore commanded the vernacular version of the Bible to be written, based not only on the scriptures, but also on such well-known learned works as the Historia Scholastica and the Speculum Historiale.

There are other references in the manuscripts associating Hákon with the work, and we may take it that in its present form it was put together in Norway at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The two manuscripts I am dealing with however are both dated c.1350 and both associated with the Skálholt diocese in Iceland, AM 226 specifically with the monastery at Helgafell<sup>3</sup>. At first sight we appear to be concerned with mid-fourteenth-century Icelandic transcriptions of an early fourteenth-century Norwegian translation.



This is of course an over-simplification. It is in the highest degree unlikely that the translations for Hákon were new and original. In the Introduction to the facsimile edition of B the editor, D.A. Seip, points out that early Norwegian works quote a text of the Bible that is identical with that in Stjórn<sup>4</sup>. Clearly, if there are verses of the Bible occurring in early vernacular works it cannot be pure co-incidence that the phrasing is the same as the phrasing in Stjórn. Equally clearly, the compiler of Stjórn is not drawing on scattered quotations. He is presumably therefore revising an earlier version. This is also suggested by the extent to which the vocabulary of translation is consistent from the early religious texts onwards. That the words for "patriarch", "promised land", "synagogue" etc. should regularly be translated by the same Norse compounds, indicates the existence of a tradition in translation. Seip, after dealing more fully with the evidence, concludes that part of the Bible was translated into Norse before 1150. "It has been preserved partly in quotations in many Norwegian and Icelandic writings, and partly in a fourteenth-century revision of a portion of it."

The two manuscripts A and B of Stjórn have large parts of the text in common. Genesis and Exodus contain only normal manuscript variants as far as Exodus

chapter 18. The pattern is a simple one of Biblical translation interspersed with comment, interpretation and information from the works Hákon had apparently specified, the Historia Scholastica of Petrus Comestor and the Speculum Historiale by Vincent of Beauvais. From Genesis Stjórn translates: Ok þa sagði guð sua. Verði lios. From the Historia Scholastica is added the explanation that the division between the light and the darkness signifies the division between Lucifer and his following, and the good or unfallen angels. We do not need to search for the sources, the manuscript specifies them. Chapter headings are explicit: Her segir af fiorda degi er guð skapadi sol ok öll onnur himintungl. af speculo hystoriale. The next chapter heading mentions two sources: Her segir fra þi er guð skapadi fiska ok fugla. scolastica historia ok speculum historiale. The compiler has also made use of Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Isidore of Seville, still with full acknowledgement.

It is probably this early part of the work that we should specifically associate with Hákon's instructions. At Exodus chapter 18 manuscripts A and B diverge. B goes on directly to The Book of Joshua, A has some inserted leaves of a later date which complete those parts of the Pentateuch (Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers) that are missing in B, and then also goes on to

Joshua. The redactions of The Book of Joshua in A and B seem almost entirely unrelated. The one in B is contained in one other fourteenth-century manuscript of Stjórn but the one in A is not found elsewhere except in the late copies of A itself. Neither redaction follows precisely the same pattern as the earlier books. The recension in A is probably nearer to it, since it is based on Petrus Comestor's Historia Scholastica rather than on the Vulgate. The version in B is based directly on the Vulgate, and though it occasionally has explanatory comment as in A, neither the Historia Scholastica nor the Speculum Historiale are mentioned throughout, and the comment is of a fairly simple kind. For example mention of the Dead Sea is followed by a reminder that it is called "Dead" because that is where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha stood. Interpretation of The Book of Joshua is reserved for a final chapter which is identical in A and B but which is not from either of the two sources we have come to expect, nor from the Historia or the Speculum. There is also a divergence from previous practice in that no source is mentioned in the manuscripts.

Gustav Storm has suggested that the Book of Joshua in A (that is the one based on Petrus Comestor) had its origin in Iceland at the end of the fourteenth century,

and that the text in B (mainly from the Vulgate) was based on an earlier Norwegian translation. Later scholars, including Einar Ól. Sveinsson, think that B also is of Icelandic origin. Selma Jónsdóttir has shown that there are reasons for connecting B with Þingeyrar monastery, and possibly with the work of Bergr Sökkason<sup>5</sup>. What we can say definitely about Joshua in B is that although it is transcribed in the same manuscript as a fourteenth-century revision of a vernacular Bible, it does not share the distinguishing marks of that revision. The B redaction is the one I wish to examine further, making occasional reference to Old English material on Joshua.

In the opening chapter of Joshua in B the translation is close to the Vulgate, but the very first lines suggest a change of attitude. The emphasis is not loqueretur Dominus ad Iosue, but that Joshua is now leader of the Israelites. The word used for leader is hertogi and the Old Norse phrasing and vocabulary here close to the Old English of an Ælfric homily<sup>6</sup>. Stjórn tells us that Moses by God's counsel hafðe ... sett þann mann hertogha yfer allan Gyðinga lyð er heet Josue. Ælfric's homily on Joshua says that God gesette Iosue þam folce to heretogan. There is no other departure from the Vulgate in Stjórn for the rest of

the first chapter, but this is an indication of the way in which the Scandinavian translator approaches his material. As he becomes more involved in the story the changes become more noticeable. The Old Testament narrator has his own formal structure, and relies for his effects very much on the device of ritualistic repetition. The translator's changes are towards greater drama, greater variety of presentation, and greater realism. Dialogue is heightened, stylistic devices rhetorical and alliterative are employed, episodes are re-shaped either to prolong the suspense element, or to bring them to a more sharply defined climax, incidents are dramatised and humanised where the original offers bare factual outlines. This is seen both in matters of detail and matters of general structure. The whole book of Joshua becomes centred on the activities of its hero. This necessitates selection from the Vulgate of only that material which is relevant to the personal story of Joshua. Lists of names are omitted. The Vulgate describes the division of the land of Canaan among the children of Israel. The description is full of unfamiliar names and incomprehensible geography. The translator ignores it.

There are three episodes in the Stjórn B version of Joshua which seem to me most clearly to illustrate the translator's re-shaping of his material. All of

them show his humanising of the bleak Biblical narrative. In the first he demonstrates his narrative and structural techniques.

In the first part of Joshua there are a number of campaigns fully described, notably the overthrow of Jericho. Towards the end of the book there are a number of lesser campaigns dealt with briefly each in almost exactly the same idiom. Joshua 10, 28-39 are as follows:<sup>7</sup>

28 eodem die Macedam quoque cepit Iosue et percussit  
in ore gladii  
regemque illius interfecit et omnes habitatores eius non  
dimisit in ea saltem parvas reliquias  
fecitque regi Maceda sicut fecerat regi Hiericho  
29 transivit cum omni Israhel de Maceda in Lebna et  
pugnabat contra eam  
30 quam tradidit Dominus cum rege suo in manu Israhel  
percusseruntque urbem in ore gladii et omnes habitatores  
eius  
non dimiserunt in ea ullas reliquias  
feceruntque regi Lebna sicut fecerant regi Hiericho  
31 de Lebna transivit in Lachis  
et exercitu per gyrum disposito obpugnabat eam  
32 tradiditque Dominus Lachis in manu Israhel et cepit  
eam die altero atque percussit in ore gladii omnemque  
animam quae fuerat in ea sicut fecerat Lebna

33 eo tempore ascendit Hiram rex Gazer ut auxiliaretur  
Lachis

quem percussit Iosue cum omni populo eius usque ad  
internecionem

34 transivitque de Lachis in Eglon et circumdedit

35 atque expugnavit eam eadem die

percussitque in ore gladii omnes animas quae erant in ea  
iuxta omnia quae fecerat Lachis

36 ascendit quoque cum omni Israhele de Eglon in  
Hebron et pugnavit contra eam

37 cepitque et percussit in ore gladii

regem quoque eius et omnia oppida regionis illius  
universasque animas quae in ea fuerant commoratae  
non reliquit in ea ullas reliquias

sicut fecerat Eglon sic fecit et Hebron

cuncta quae in ea repperit consumens gladio

38 inde reversus in Dabir

39 cepit eam atque vastavit

regem quoque eius et omnia per circuitum oppida  
percussit in ore gladii

non dimisit in ea ullas reliquias

sicut fecerat Hebron et Lebna et regibus earum

sic fecit Dabir et regi illius.

In the Old English translation of Joshua,<sup>8</sup> which  
is almost certainly by Ælfric, he manages exact

translation of this passage for the first half, but then pity breaks through and the Vulgate's percussit in ore gladii ... universas animas becomes acwealdon eal ðæt hi ðær fundon ðæs earman folces. But the translator of the Stjórn B Joshua abandons the formal patterning of his original, and treats each of these campaigns as a separate event. At first he does not add much to the Biblical narrative, but he varies the wording, rejecting the repetitive idiom of the Vulgate, and substituting a more vivid and dramatic phrasing. In the Maceda campaign omnes habitatores is changed to the alliterative sva konur sem karla. In the next campaign, Lebna, omnes habitatores becomes hvert mannz barnn. By Gazer the Stjórn translator is seeing the potentialities of his material. With the Vulgate version of Joshua 10, 33 (see above) we can compare Stjórn B: J þann tíma samnaði Jram konvngur af Gazer at sér miklvm her. for síðan oc ætlaði at hialpa Lachis monnvm. Enn þat varð æigi sva. hellðr hefir Josve af hans ætlan niosn. snyr þa i mot honvm. oc æiga orrosto beði langa oc harða striða oc stranga. sva at æigi liettir fyrr enn þar fellr konvngur Jram oc allr hans herr. sva at engi maðr var eptir vðrepinn af hans liði<sup>9</sup>.

Stjórn B has provided Hiram with a great army; stressed the ironic contrast between Hiram's well-



intentioned support of Lachis, and its destined failure; provided Joshua with the warning of Hiram's intention, and finally described the battle in alliterative and well-balanced phrases. Instead of Biblical idiom we have what one might loosely call saga idiom.

Joshua's next campaign is against Eglon. Stjórn B expands again, but this time with a different type of detail: oc kringði þegar vm borgina með bardaga oc atsokn sva harðri. at hann vann hana a þinvm degi oc drap allt þat er þar var mannkyns. oc æyddi allt þat herað er þar la til borgarinnar. The Scandinavian translator started his description of the campaigns by following the Bible closely in the first two, though with slight alteration of the wording. He built up the two campaigns of Gazer and Eglon into major events. He ends by saying briefly that Joshua conquered also Ebron and Dabir. The whole account has moved away from Old Testament structure and patterning to read more like a piece of Norse history.

The second episode I wish to examine is Joshua's earlier campaign against the city of Ai (Joshua 8, 1-29 in the Vulgate). Here the source itself provides fairly detailed information. In Stjórn the whole story is reorganised, including the geography<sup>10</sup>. In the original

there is mention of a valley between Ai and the main body of the Israelite army. In Stjórn this is utilised for a second ambush landnorðr of the city. In the Vulgate Joshua gives instructions to part of his army beforehand that they shall run from the enemy in order to draw the pursuit after them. In Stjórn these instructions are placed at the critical point in the action, not outlined as part of the preliminary strategy. When the plan has worked and all the men of Ai have come out to chase the fleeing Israelites, those who were concealed in ambush behind the city enter it and set fire to it. The Biblical wording implies utter demoralization of the enemy. Viri autem civitatis . . . respicientes et videntes fumum urbis ad caelum usque conscendere non potuerunt ultra huc illucque diffugere. Stjórn's wording is less contemptuous and more ironical, in an understatement characteristic of saga-technique: Nv sem borgarmenn sa reykt og loga til hvssa sinna. varð þeim seinna vmi eptirsöknina. As in the Gazer incident the antithesis between expectation and outcome is pointed - when the men of Ai see the Israelites running from them they þickiaz hafa i hendi sigrinn. Where the Vulgate with usual brevity says that all the inhabitants were killed, Stjórn inserts a sentence with an alliterative climax on the fate of the city itself: Eptir þat brendu þeir borg alla Hay at kavllðvm kolvm.

In the third episode I wish to look at the Stjórn translator makes no basic alterations to the structure of his material. This one is not a campaign, it is the description of how the men of Gabaon, knowing that Joshua intends to exterminate all inhabitants of the Promised Land, obtain a peace treaty with him on false pretences. On the whole the qualities of humour, drama and warmth are alien to the Biblical narrative, but here even the Vulgate version has a touch of them. Joshua 9, 3-6 are as follows:

3 at hii qui habitabant in Gabaon audientes cuncta quae fecerat Iosue Hiericho et Ahi 4 et callide cogitantes tulerunt sibi cibaria

saccos veteres asinis imponentes et utres vinarios scissos atque consutos

5 calciamentaue perantiqua quae ad indicium vetustatis pittaciis consuta erant induti veteribus vestimentis

panes quoque quos portabant ob viaticum duri erant et in frusta comminuti

6 perrexeruntque ad Iosue qui tunc morabatúr in castris Galgalae et dixerunt ei atque omni simul Israheli de terra longinqua venimus pacem vobiscum facere cupientes.

Stjórn B opens this episode in typical saga manner: Gabaon het ein miog mikil borg.<sup>11</sup> The way in which the Gabonites prepare for their plot is given in much greater detail than in the source. Where the Vulgate has one adjective, Stjórn has two, preferably alliterating with each other, and if possible alliterating with the noun they qualify as well. The saccos veteres of the Vulgate become secki savrga oc slitna. The Vulgate does not trouble to describe the donkeys carrying the sacks, but in Stjórn they are carefully chosen to aid the deception: hvarki höfðv þeir asna feita ne feliga. helldr þa er þeir fengv herfiligsta. The bread was not merely mouldy, it had reached the stage of being almost inedible; the garments were not just old, they were slitinn af fyrnsky, and the old and rent wine-skins are transformed into vinberla brotna oc bvnna saman. Ælfric, more restrained in his enjoyment of the incident, merely describes the plotting of the Gabonites as gamenlice<sup>12</sup>.

When these Gabaonites meet Joshua, the Stjórn B translator extends and rewords the conversations between them. His eloquence becomes most noticeable when the Gabaonites draw attention to their faked evidence. Joshua 9, 12 reads: en panes quando egressi sumus de domibus nostris ut veniremus ad vos calidos sumpsimus nunc sicci facti sunt et vetustate nimia comminuti.

In Stjórn B this becomes: Nv með þi at þer trvið æigi varvm orðvm. þa litið á fargagn vart. se her bravð vart er ver tokvm nybakat aðr ver hæiman forvm. enn þat er nv harðt oc af mikilli fyrnsko myglat oc mað i gegnvm, sva at æigi er manna matr. The real distress of the Stjórn translator is reserved for the condition of his wine-barrels. In the Vulgate we have only wine-skins, once new but now torn, whereas in the Norse version: Þa lietvm ver oc nytt vin i nyia berla. enn sakir sva langrar læiðar er vinit rotið enn leglar lekir oc lavggstocknir. Ælfric austerey refrains from comment on the wine, but in his description of the bread he also chooses the translation nigbacene for calidos.

This episode is also interesting in that it seems to show the Stjórn translator re-interpreting behaviour in the light of his own code of ethics. The emphasis in his source here as elsewhere in the Old Testament is on the Israelites' relationship with God rather than their relationship with their neighbours. The anger of the Israelites is because they have sworn an alliance with the people they had been divinely commanded to kill rather than anger at the trick that has been played on them. But to the Stjórn translator it is clearly the element of stealth and treachery in the Gabaonites' behaviour that is the cause of the Israelites' anger.

When he recounts their final submission to the Israelites he gives it, in contradistinction to his original, something of the dignity of a saga episode. Joshua 9, 25 reads: nunc autem in manu tua sumus quod tibi bonum et rectum videtur fac nobis. The Stjórn translator by the slightest of syntactical adjustments removes the self-abasement from this: Gerit nv við oss sem yör likar oc þo somir yörvm rikdomi oc réttlæti. He adds also a sentence for which there is no basis in his source. Síþan var þat dōmt oc lavgtekit með swardavgvm hinna beztv manna or hvarra tveggja liði. The matter is, in fact, ratified as a decent and respectable treaty.

It is difficult in dealing with these shifts of attitude to be sure how much is conscious or unconscious on the part of the translator. Certainly in Ælfric's translation, when Joshua is urged to behave in the manner befitting a thane, ðegenlice,<sup>13</sup> we feel we are moving more in the Anglo-Saxon than the Old Testament world, and in the same way when Stjórn B enumerates the conquests of the Israelites, the vocabulary suggests a Scandinavian rather than a Hebrew landscape: borgir oc bði. kastala oc kavptvn ... a heðvm eða hæðvm<sup>14</sup>. Later in Stjórn, in the first book of Samuel, a chapter concerning David's victory over the Amalekites is given the chapter heading Dauid sigraði vikings<sup>15</sup>. The word obviously means no

more than "raiders" but it can hardly have shaken off all its northern associations. In the early part of Joshua when the Israelites are getting ready for the march round the walls of Jericho, the Stjórn translator evidently feels that the presence of trumpets in the luggage needs some explaining, and he brings it into line with Germanic ideas of music and festivity by describing the trumpets as the ones which they were accustomed to use til gleði oc gamans<sup>16</sup>. Ælfric in his homily on Joshua also becomes very alliterative about trumpets: on ðam seofoðan dæge swiðlice bleowan seofon sacerdas mid sylfrenum bymum<sup>17</sup>.

The translator of the Stjórn B Joshua depends very much for his effectiveness on alliteration linked with balancing of phrases and especially with doubling, whether of nouns, adjectives or verbs. There are sections of his work which show no sign of it, but in dialogue, especially where eloquence is required, it marks sentence after sentence. This is one of the features which distinguish most clearly Joshua in Stjórn B from Stjórn A. When the woman Rahab asks Joshua's spies that she and her household may be spared by the conquering Israelites, her cadences in the B text become more and more rhythmic and alliterative, but in the A text, based on Comestor, there is no trace

of this deliberate rhetoric<sup>18</sup>. We can compare the B version again with Ælfric who records the killing of men, women and children of Jericho in the plaintive and alliterative phrase weras ond wifmen ond ða wepende cild<sup>19</sup>.

The pleasure Ælfric takes in both dramatic and rhetorical effect, mainly in his homily but also in his translation, is very like that of the Stjórn translator. But the points for comparison are among the minutiae of semantics and stylistics, and in order to compare Old Norse with Old English treatment of Biblical material in the wider areas of structure or attitude, we need to leave Ælfric and turn to the Old English poems of Exodus and Judith. Here the Old Testament is to some extent re-written in the Anglo-Saxon image. These poems re-organise Vulgate material in the same way that the Stjórn B Joshua does, and they provide many parallel examples of structure altered, dramatic detail added, the local and familiar introduced, the alien and less comprehensible omitted.

The Biblical Exodus covers a whole range of material on the Israelites in Egypt and later their wanderings in the wilderness. The Anglo-Saxon poet restricts himself to the central event, the flight from Egypt across the Red Sea. The Bible builds up the quarrel between



Israelites and Egyptians through the long chapters on the ten plagues. The poet ignores the first nine of these, dealing only with the affliction which actually brought about the Israelites' departure, the killing of the Egyptian first-born. This, as well as allowing for a more coherent cause-and-effect structure, is of course the most dramatic of the afflictions, and lends itself most fully to imaginative description. Even though the Egyptians are the enemy, the poet's account of the angel of death visiting the Egyptian homes is tempered by sympathy. The description of men mourning the loss of kin is so much a part of Old English poetry that it can scarcely be expressed without poet and audience feeling involved in the lament. Lines such as Wæron hleahtor-smiðum handa belocene, or swæfon seledreamas<sup>20</sup> not only imply loss and deprivation in the Anglo-Saxon rather than Egyptian context, they also demonstrate the poet's response to that suffering. As in the Stjórn account of the Gabaonites, foreigners are no longer seen solely as enemies of the Israelites.

This humanising of the situation continues. The Israelites leave Egypt and the hosts of Pharaoh pursue them. There is no suggestion in the Bible that the reason for the pursuit is the Egyptians' desire to be revenged for the death of their "brothers". As in

Joshua, the Biblical account is God-centred, and the Egyptians pursue the Israelites because God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But the motive of revenge brought in by the Exodus poet makes sense in terms of human relationships for those to whom vengeance for kin was a primary obligation.

When the poet sees or seems to see a battle approaching, we are again in a northern landscape, where wolves sing evensong in the hope of feasting. The waves of the Red Sea also become, like more northerly seas, sincald. The Israelites are sæmenn and sæwicingas. The poet of Exodus and the translator of the Stjórn Joshua move in terrain that their audience will recognise.

In the introduction to his edition of Judith Dr Timmer wrote "Holofernes has a retinue of warriors ... who are called eorlas and beornas; Holofernes' feast is distinctly reminiscent of the revelry in a Germanic hall ... The warriors are called bencsittende and fletsittende; their armour is that of the Germanic warriors: byrne, helm, sweord, scild etc. ... We even find the Germanic method of fighting in a scildburh."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand Dr Timmer noted that the feast, though Germanic, is disorderly, and that there is no indication

of the comitatus idea in the behaviour: "when the warriors find Holofernes dead, they take to their heels."

These points need to be thought through more carefully. It is doubtful if the poet could entirely have avoided words suggesting the Germanic heroic atmosphere even had he wished to do so. What else can a sword and a shield be but a sweord and a scild or their synonyms? We ought not to impose semantic limitations because the amount of surviving material is small, and has conditioned our responses to certain words. In Ælfric's translation of Joshua Joshua campaigns with his fyrð, a word which inevitably reminds the modern reader of Alfred in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. But it would be absurd to assume that it was used with intent to remind, or to think that Ælfric saw Joshua as a type of Alfred.

Nevertheless, though some of Timmer's examples may be open to query, his general point is a valid one. All the trappings of the comitatus are there but not the spirit of it. What Timmer does not make clear is that the poet deliberately points this contrast. In The Battle of Maldon<sup>22</sup>, when Byrhtnoð dies, the Anglo-Saxons encourage each other to thoughts of revenge now their gold-giver lies dead. When the Assyrian in Judith finds his goldgifa dead, he falls to the ground, tears his hair and laments. In Maldon the knowledge that their leader

lies cut down by the sword, is used as incitement to go on fighting in the face of certain death. In Judith the Assyrian tells his comrades:

Her lið sweorde geheawen  
beheafdod healdend ure.

The reasonable reaction within the comitatus literary tradition would be to seize their weapons and to utter speeches of heroic import. Instead:

Hi ða hreowigmode  
wurpon hyra wæpen ofdune, gewitan him werigferhðe  
on fleam sceacan.

There is similar irony in the drinking scene. Not all Anglo-Saxon feasts may have been as graciously decorous as the heroic poetry would suggest. It was perhaps not unheard of for a lord to drench his followers with wine until they all lay unconscious on the floor. But when the description of such behaviour in poetry is dignified by the vocabulary of the comitatus, the effect achieved is not of the heroic code, but of the mock-heroic. The nouns referring to Holofernes have a familiar ring: sinces brytta, se stiðmoda, goldwine gumena. The verbs are incongruous. This worthy character styrme ond gylede, hlynede ond dynede, oferdrencte his duguðe. The tone is close to that of the anti-drink riddles, where those who have drunk too

deeply are shown to be deprived of their senses, like the followers of Holofernes agotene goda gehwylces. It is clear too that descriptions such as sinces brytta have not become so familiar as to have lost all impact. In a single speech the Judith poet calls God tires brytta and Holofernes morðres brytta. The poet's play on the term would be pointless unless he could rely on the connotations of the more familiar phrase being fully present in his audience's mind. That Holofernes after death finds himself wyrmum bewunden in a wyrmsele is the more ironic in that he has been pictured in terms of an Anglo-Saxon chieftain occupying a winsele and doubtless golde bewunden. The poet enjoys the incongruous juxtaposition, just as the translator of the Norse Joshua plays with the comic aspects of the Gabaonites' plot.

Old English poetry has received more attention from critics than Stjórn has, and the structure of Exodus and the irony of Judith are dealt with in various articles<sup>23</sup>. It is not necessary to examine them fully here. But the parallels between Old English and Old Norse Biblical translation have not been explored and are worth exploring. The main question which should be asked, and which I have not asked so far, is whether we are simply dealing with comparable developments in the two cultures, or whether we have a case of English

influence on Scandinavian attitudes to translation of religious material. The former seems likely at first glance. But we know of the work of English missionaries in Iceland in the eleventh century, and many service books, books of homilies and general material for ecclesiastical use must have been imported from England. Ælfric's work was known in Iceland. Mr A.R. Taylor has shown in a recent article the use which the Hauksbók compiler made of Ælfric's homilies<sup>24</sup>. Englishmen teaching and preaching in Iceland, even if using Latin service books, must themselves have been educated within the Anglo-Saxon vernacular tradition. The heavily alliterative and rhetorical style of Joshua B, and indeed much of the hagiographic material in Icelandic, so often reminds me of the rhythmic and alliterative prose of Ælfric and Wulfstan that I am tempted to suggest the influence of English vernacular. It is interesting in this context that Selma Jónsdóttir has demonstrated that the illustrations of AM 227, the Joshua B manuscript depend on English models<sup>25</sup>. But for such a hypothesis to be substantiated very much more work would need to be done not only on these two vernacular traditions but on other, possibly related, ones. Hans Bekker-Nielsen and

Ole Widding have demonstrated Iceland's debt to Low German hagiography<sup>26</sup>. All I have tried to do in this paper is to indicate a range of material and a type of evidence which I do not think has yet been adequately explored.

## NOTES

1. I wish to record here my debt to the late Gerd Wellejus. She first drew my attention to the Stjórn version of Joshua, and I think she would have worked on this herself if she had lived. Had she done so her contribution to this subject as to others would have been both scholarly and perceptive.
2. C.R. Unger (ed.), Stjórn. Gammelnorsk Bibel-historie fra Verdens Skabelse til det babyloniske Fangenskab (Christiania 1862).
3. Ólafur Halldórsson, Helgafellsbækur fornar (Studia Islandica 24, Reykjavík 1966), p.37.
4. Didrik Arup Seip (ed.), Stjórn AM 227 fol. A Norwegian Version of the Old Testament transcribed in Iceland (Corpus codicum Islandicorum medii aevi 20, Copenhagen 1956), pp.16 ff.
5. Gustav Storm, "De norsk-islandske Bibeloversættelser fra 13de og 14de Aarhundrede og Biskop Brandr Jónsson", Arkiv for nordisk Filologi 3 (Christiania 1886), pp.252-3.  
Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Athugasemdir um Stjórn", Studia Centenalia in honorem memoriae Benedikt S. Þórarinsson (Reykjavík 1961), pp.17-32.  
Selma Jónsdóttir, Illumination in a Manuscript of Stjórn (Reykjavík 1971).



6. Benjamin Thorpe (ed.), The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church (London 1846), II, 212 ff.
7. All quotations from the Vulgate are from the following edition: Biblia Sacra Iuxta Latinam Vulgatam Versionem (Rome 1939), IV.
8. S.J. Crawford (ed.), The Old English Version of the Heptateuch (Early English Text Society O.S. 160, 1922, reprinted 1969).
9. Unger, p.371.
10. Unger, pp.364-6.
11. Unger, p.366.
12. Crawford, p.391.
13. Crawford, p.378.
14. Unger, p.372.
15. Unger, p.489.
16. Unger, p.359.
17. Thorpe, p.212.
18. Unger, pp. 351-2.

19. Crawford, p.386.
20. Edward Burroughs Irving Jr. (ed.), The Old English Exodus (Yale University Press 1953, reprinted 1970), pp.45-6.
21. B.J. Timmer (ed.), Judith (Methuen's Old English Library, London 1952, 2nd.ed. 1961), pp.11-12.
22. E.V.Gordon (ed.), The Battle of Maldon (Methuen's Old English Library, London 1937, reprinted 1957).
23. Robert T. Farrell, "A Reading of OE. Exodus", Review of English Studies New Series 20 (1969), pp.401-17. Fredrik J. Heinemann, "'Judith' 236-91a: a Mock Heroic Approach-to-Battle Type Scene", Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 71 (1970), pp.83-96.
24. Arnold Taylor, "Hauksbók and Ælfric's De Falsis Deis", Leeds Studies in English New Series 3 (1969).
25. Selma Jónsdóttir, op.cit.
26. Old Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, "Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography", The Germanic Review 37 (1962).

PETER HALLBERG

THE CONCEPT OF GIPTA-GÅFA-HAMINGJA IN OLD NORSE LITERATURE

In the Revelations of St Birgitta of Sweden there is a passage on her visit to a farm in western Sweden about the year 1349. When dwelling in that place she hears a voice telling her that the people there "venerate brownies and do not go to church, except in order to be spared from being ashamed before other people, and they never listen to the Word of God. Therefore the Devil is reigning in this place". The voice indicates how to teach the misguided inhabitants of that farm; for instance: "Don't bring the brownies sacrifices of your cattle and swine, nor of bread or wine and other things. Don't say that fortune causes this or that, but that it happens because God allows it."

Birgitta's Revelations were regularly written down by clerics in Latin from her dictation in Swedish. The Latin text was printed in Lübeck 1492 under the title Revelationes Celestes, since then the standard edition. Long before that time there appeared a Swedish translation of the Latin manuscript. The word rendered in the quotation above by "brownies" is in the Latin text penates, and in the Old Swedish translation tompta gudhom, approximately "spirits of the grounds". And the word rendered here by "fortune" is in the Latin "original" fortuna, corresponding to the words "lykka älla skäpna" in the Old Swedish translation.<sup>1</sup>

As far as I know, this passage has not been utilized before in the discussion of the Old Scandinavian concept of fate or fortune. To me it seems to be of great interest in that connection. When Birgitta, or the voice through her, condemns talking of fortuna - lykka or skäpna - she regards it as a heathen and native habit. That is quite clear, especially as she is referring at the same time to a practice such as sacrificing to tompta gudhom.

## II

As is well known, some scholars have maintained that the Old Scandinavian concept of fate or fortune is in fact of Christian origin. It will be enough here to mention Walter Baetke and his treatise on Christliches Lehngut in der Sagareligion (Berlin 1951).<sup>2</sup> One of his reasons for supposing a comparatively late and Christian origin of that concept is the fact that the words expressing it are lacking or rare in the Eddic poetry, which on the whole is much older than the sagas. In the Scaldic poetry they are rare too; and when they appear there it is often, according to Baetke, "in ausgesprochen christlichem Gebrauch" (50)

For my part, I am not convinced by Baetke's examples and arguments. As for the Eddic poetry, it moves in a mythological and heroic sphere, where norms and ideals, and the words expressing them, might well be of another kind than in the realistic prose sagas. And if the concept of

fortune sometimes turns up in a Christian c o n t e x t , it is not necessarily an indication of its specifically Christian c o n n o t a t i o n s in that context - to say nothing of its Christian o r i g i n . To Baetke's comments on the Icelandic sagas, the main and almost exclusive source for the study of the Old Norse concept of fortune, I shall return later. But I am not going here to engage in any detailed polemics against Baetke and his followers. Instead I will give my own reasons for an opposite view.

As a point of departure the passage from Birgitta seems to carry considerable weight, as it directly opposes the concept of fortune to Christian faith and connects it with heathen customs. And her testimony is not inspired by reading or foreign influences, but closely related to contemporary Scandinavian life. Perhaps someone would suggest the possibility that the inhabitants of the farm in western Sweden had adopted the Latin concept of fortuna. But that seems to be an extremely unattractive hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

### III

The passage from Birgitta also provides us with an opportunity of comparing a translation with its original. (To be sure, the circumstances in this case are a little special, as in a way Latin is here the secondary language, Swedish the original.) I suspect that translations from

Latin into Old Norse-Icelandic have sometimes played a rather confusing part in the discussion of the ideas involved and their provenance. As a fictitious example, let us say that we have come across the oldest case of the word hamingja "good fortune, luck" in a translation from Latin, rendering there the word fortuna. Does that mean that also the c o n c e p t of hamingja should be thought of as adapted from Latin literature? Strangely enough there seems to be an inclination to think so, quite irrationally. But of course we have simply to do here with a translator's normal situation. He has to find in his native language the nearest equivalents of the words in the original. If he meets the Latin word fortuna, perhaps a domestic hamingja immediately strikes him as the best approximation to it. That does not imply at all that the concepts denoted by fortuna and hamingja are identical, or that they have the same background. It may seem a truism to say this, but I am afraid it is not unnecessary to emphasize that truism.

A few other, authentic instances can make the point still clearer. In the older section, written in the first half of the thirteenth century, of the Bible compilation Stjórn<sup>4</sup> the giant warrior Goliath, slain by young David, is repeatedly called víkingr (463, 464, 465). In the translation Barlaams saga ok Josaphats<sup>5</sup> from the middle of the thirteenth century, the enemies of the Christians are also sometimes characterized as vikings. Thus prince

Josaphat, turned Christian, addresses his own pagan father as "hermaðr oc grimr vikingr" (116). More striking, perhaps, is the comment on Josaphat, when he has abandoned his crown to devote himself to the life of a hermit, and is attacked by the Devil: "En sa hinn vngi berserkr guðs gek fram med oskialvannda h'artta" (197). Of a certain Antonius and his fight with the devils we learn: "En Iesus Kristr glæymdi eigi holmgangu sins bersserks" (54).

Now, although we have to do in these translations with definitely foreign and Christian matters, I suppose few scholars are prepared to dispute the Scandinavian origin of the words and concepts berserkr, hólmanga and vikingr. To be sure, if one goes on talking of berserks of God or Jesus Christ, the word may by and by assume some new connotations from its new surroundings. But that has nothing to do with its origin. And we are discussing origin now.

As for the words for the concept of fortune, such as auðna, gipta, gæfa and hamingja (the four discussed by Baetke), they have not, as far as I know, been shown to have been invented in connection with translations, in order to render certain Latin words. But if they have not, if they have existed before they were used in translations - and no scholar, I think, has questioned that - what did they mean then, in pre-Christian times? If you suppose a Christian-Latin origin for the concept of fortune in Old Norse or Old Icelandic literature, you will have to answer that question.

## IV

Generally speaking it seems to be a rather strange idea that the concept of fate and/or fortune should be so unusual that it would be necessary for Old Icelandic to import it from Latin and Christian literature. In various forms it is widespread all over the world. In Scandinavian countries it would be more natural to think of it as a common Indo-European heritage, than as a late literary loan from the South.

However that may be, it may perhaps be worth while to examine the facts once again, and ascertain the frequency and distribution of the "fortune words" (as I will call them for the sake of convenience) over a considerable span of texts and time. In such matters one cannot begin with picking out isolated cases, early or late, without seeing them against a wide horizon. One will have to work on a broad basis, excerpting a lot of texts from various saga genres, in order not to miss important general characteristics revealing chronological changes or typical differences between one kind of saga and another. In a set of tables, appearing at the end of this paper, I have shown in numbers some results of such an investigation. But before making any comments on those numbers, I would like to call attention to a striking quality of the Northern "fortune words": they are very productive in word formation, and show a rich variety of compounds. In Fritzner's dictionary one will find besides the simple gæfa the noun compounds gæfufundr,



gæfuleysi, gæfumaðr, gæfumunr, gæfuraun, gæfuskipti, gæfu-skortr, as well as the adjectives and adverbs gæfudrjúgr, gæfufár, gæfufullr, gæfulauss, gæfuliga, gæfumannligr, gæfumikill, gæfusamliga, gæfuvannr "lacking gæfa". One could add a few compounds with gæfa as the latter part, such as fargæfa "good luck with a journey" or konungsgæfa. Then we have the negative ógæfa and its compounds. And gipta and hamingja show a similar picture. It seems at least very probable, that a word group with such a remarkable growing power should have old and deep roots in the native ground.

## V

And now to the figures of the tables. I have confined myself to the four words mentioned above: auðna, gipta, gæfa, hamingja, and their various compounds, all of them denoting either good or bad luck. On the other hand I have left aside words such as forlög, sköp and örlög, denoting fate in a more neutral sense, so to say. The late and very rare loan-word lukka "luck", a synonym of gipta and gæfa, has also been dropped. The excerpts are gathered from a series of saga genres, more or less distinct: Kings' Sagas; Icelanders' Sagas; Sturlunga Saga; Bishops' Sagas; translations of pseudo-historical works; "Riddarasögur", all of them also translations.

For a special reason I have recorded separately the share of "fortune words" represented in direct speech as

compared to the author's own relation. One will find, as a rather conspicuous and consistent feature, that those words are strongly "over-represented" in direct speech. If we take for instance Heimskringla, the third text among my Kings' Sagas, it has a total of 17% direct speech; but 26 out of 45 "fortune words", or 58 % , appear in direct speech - that is to say more than thrice as many as would be expected from an even distribution over the whole text. Most other Kings' Sagas show similar proportions. For this genre as a whole the average figures come very close to those of Heimskringla: 59% of the "fortune words" in direct speech as compared to a total of 19% direct speech.

The Icelanders' Sagas are on the same line. On an average they have much more direct speech than the Kings Sagas, 30 % , but also a considerably higher percentage of "fortune words" in direct speech, 79 % . If one has a look at the five biggest sagas, one will see that they all conform to the general tendency: Egils saga has 22 % direct speech against 93 % "fortune words" in direct speech; the corresponding figures for Eyrbyggja saga are 17 % against 100 % , for Grettis saga 24 % against 79 % , for Laxdæla saga 31 % against 86 % , and for Njáls saga 41 % against 95 % .

Of the other genres Sturlunga saga and the translations of pseudo-historical works show a definite "over-representation" of "fortune words" in direct speech, while

the distribution in Bishops' Sagas and "Riddarasögur" is quite even. In most of my material, then, the tendency is unmistakable. And Kings' Sagas and Icelanders' Sagas certainly should weigh most in this connection, as the two central saga genres and those showing the highest average frequency of "fortune words": 1.9 and 2.2 per 10,000 words respectively.

It might be added that there are a lot of "fortune words" in oblique narration too. If those cases had been included (which would have been possible, or even more correct), my figures for the dialogue as compared to the author's own relation would have become considerably higher.

The distribution demonstrated here can hardly be mere chance; its manifestations are too evident and consistent for that. But how to account for it? Has direct speech in contrast to the author's relation some general and intrinsic quality that would make it a hotbed for such a group of words as auðna, gipta, gæfa, hamingja? As far as I know, there is no evidence for that. So I have only one explanation to suggest: that to the authors themselves the "fortune words" did not seem as familiar as they supposed them to have been to the people from earlier centuries whom they are telling us about. In other words, the authors had a feeling that this vocabulary mainly belonged to an old native tradition, somewhat weakened and perhaps even a little old-fashioned in the authors' own days.

Some other figures in my tables possibly point in the same direction. Thus Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar by Sturla Þórðarson (1214-1284), dealing with a later period than the other Kings' Sagas, has the lowest frequency of them all: 0.7/10,000. One also notices the low number (0.8) in Sturlunga saga as compared with the Icelanders' Sagas (2.2). In both cases we have to do with tales of Icelanders, but in the former case from the nearest past or the author's own time, in the latter case from the remote past, some two or three centuries back.

On the whole, the fact that the Icelanders' Sagas, the central and most genuinely Icelandic saga genre, show the highest frequency of "fortune words" confirms the impression that those words are firmly established in a native tradition.

## VI

We will return later to the problem of origin. But next it seems appropriate to dwell for a while upon the distribution and use of the four words recorded in my tables.

By far the least frequent is auðna. The most common term is gæfa, with the exception of the Kings' Sagas, where hamingja dominates; but nearly half of those cases - 26 out of 57 - belong to Heimskringla.

The three most frequent words are often used in very much the same sense, combined and paralleled like a group of

complete synonyms. So it would be a rather desperate undertaking to try to trace definite differences in their meaning and function. Between gipta and gæfa, at least, it seems impossible to find any such difference whatsoever. But hamingja sometimes reveals a profile of its own. If gipta and gæfa denote fortune - or, as ógipta and ógæfa, misfortune - clinging to a man as part of his character and individuality, hamingja, in accordance with its etymology (from OI hamr m. "outer clothing; guardian spirit"), can have a touch of personification, a supernatural force or being external to the man, accompanying him as a kind of fylgja. Thus, in Víga-Glúms saga a man's hamingja appears in a dream to his nephew in the shape of a gigantic woman (30-31). Still today one can say in modern Icelandic "Hamingjan hjálpi mér" or "Það má hamingjan vita", where it would be impossible to exchange hamingja for gipta, gæfa, or auðna. In Rómverja saga,<sup>7</sup> a translation from about 1200 of works by Sallust and Lucan, fortuna typically enough seems to be rendered throughout by hamingja, while other Latin words, such as cursus or fata, are translated by gæfa.

As can be seen in the tables, Alexanders saga,<sup>8</sup> a translation from about 1250 to 1260, makes more frequent use of hamingja than any other text in my material. That is due to the original Latin poem, where fortuna is very common, often in a clear personification, a being sometimes speaking of itself as one among goddesses, gyðjur (24-25).

A later original Icelandic "riddarasaga", Sigurðar saga böгла<sup>9</sup>, makes a more frequent use of hamingja than any other comparable text I know of. We have certainly to do here with direct influence from Alexanders saga, especially obvious as there are several references to Alexander, and also the personification of the concept is imitated. Two men, for instance, call themselves messengers of the hamingja, and one of them is talking of their adversary's "veika og vesala hamingja, er þér mun hér til fylgt hafa, og er því svo lausleg, að nú ætlar hún við þig að skiljast, enda hafið þið lengi illa saman búið" (111). Where we meet such a use of hamingja - strongly reminiscent of the fickle goddess Fortuna - in a work of Icelandic origin, it is no doubt influenced by the Latin concept, either directly or, as probably in our present case, indirectly, through the translated Alexanders saga.

At the same time we meet in Sigurðar saga böгла some cases of óhamingja (118, 119, 239, 248), with no touch of personification. In fact, when men began to use that negative, it is probably an indication that they no longer had any distinct feeling of a personified hamingja; the concept had more or less merged with gipta and gæfa. This process seems to have taken place rather early. Thus, in Veraldar saga<sup>10</sup>, a translation supposed to be as old as from about 1190, the only instance of a "fortune word" is óhamingja. It is said of King Salomon that in his old age

he was stricken by great óhamingja (33), as he fell in love with heathen women. In Snorri's Heimskringla<sup>11</sup>, óhamingja appears several times (I, 299; II, 38, 246, 247).

## VII

We usually talk of gipta and gæfa as denoting a kind of inherent and more or less constant quality of a man, affecting the course of his life. But sometimes these words assume another meaning, less mystic and general, more banal and conventional, so to say. This latter meaning, presumably secondary to the other one, may be illustrated by two late "post-classical" sagas, both from the first part of the fourteenth century. In Víglundar saga<sup>12</sup> a man says to his brother: "ok mundi okkr þat til ógæfu verða, ef þú dræpir bónda hennar saklausan" (108). The intended murder would give rise to misfortune for the brothers: til ógæfu verða. In this case, then, the ógæfa is seen as a possible result of a certain action - not as a cause of it. Similarly we hear in Finnboga saga ramma<sup>13</sup> of an old married couple having "in mesta sæmd ok gæfa" (263), very much honour and luck, from their bringing up young Finnbogi. The gæfa lies in the reward they have from this, especially a generous payment.

The meaning now illustrated, although probably secondary, seems to have been introduced early, and to include hamingja as well as gipta and gæfa. Thus the case just

cited from Veraldar saga, the óhamingja which is said to henda "happen to" King Salomon, most likely has to be interpreted in that way. His misfortune seems either to be identified with his love for the heathen women, or to be the consequence of that love. But the passage does certainly not imply that King Salomon is to be regarded as a man of óhamingja in general.

The double meaning of the "fortune words" might be illustrated from Snorri's Óláfs saga helga, one of the Kings' Sagas richest in those words. When Óláfr gets to know that his court poet Sigvatr in Óláfr's absence has had the king's new-born son baptized and given him the name Magnús, he is at first very angry. But after Sigvatr has explained his reasons, the king says to him: "You are a real man of fortune (gæfumaðr), Sigvatr. It is not to be wondered at if fortune (gæfa) accompanies wisdom (vizka). On the other hand it is strange, which sometimes happens, that fortune (gæfa) accompanies unwise men, that imprudent doings turn into fortune (hamingja)" (210-11). In this passage, gæfa and gæfumaðr obviously refer to an inherent and permanent quality; gæfa is paralleled with and opposed to another such quality, vizka. But as hamingja is used in this connection, it clearly implies the more or less momentary result of an action. A corresponding meaning we find in óhamingja, when a man blames another man for having rushed "into such a big misfortune (óhamingja) and brought down



upon himself the king's anger, unnecessarily" (246).

More ambiguous, perhaps, is the only case of óhamingja in Ynglinga saga, the mythical introduction to Heimskringla. We are told there of Óðinn that he possesses the craft of sorcery, and that he is therefore capable of knowing beforehand the fates of men, and of giving them "death or misfortune (óhamingja) or sickness, and also of taking from them their sense or strength and giving it to others" (19). It is true, the óhamingja is described here as a r e s u l t of Óðinn's manipulations, but as Óðinn is a god, it is possible that the óhamingja which he imposes upon a man is meant to be not just momentary bad luck, an óhapp, but a more permanent burden, a kind of curse.

## VIII

There is another instance in Heimskringla, in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar, indicating a vagueness or ambiguity about the concept of hamingja and óhamingja. When the heathen Earl Hákon Sigurðarson, Óláfr's principal opponent in Norway, has been killed by his own slave, we have a kind of epitaph by the author, summarizing the dead chieftain's character and life. He is said to have had many qualifications for being a leader: great ancestry, wisdom and prudence to manage the ruling power, and also "fearlessness in battle and by that the fortune (hamingja) of coming off victorious and killing his enemies". But after a stanza, quoted in order to

substantiate this judgment, we hear again: "Earl Hákon was a very generous man, but such a great chieftain as he was he had an extreme misfortune (óhamingja) in his death-day" (298-9). This passage, of course, refers to his being killed by a slave in a pigsty. And the reason for that pitiful end, we get to know in the next sentence, was that then the time had come when heathen sacrifices and their performers (blótskaprinn ok blótmennirnir) were to be condemned, and holy faith and true service to come instead. Earl Hákon, then, somewhat paradoxically was invested both with hamingja and óhamingja. To solve this seeming contradiction we have to understand those words here as referring not to one overall and general quality, but to different aspects of the earl's character and fate.

Snorri's Óláfs saga helga also provides us with a series of occurrences of hamingja in that deeper sense which we usually connect with the word. Thus Óláfr's hamingja is said to have turned out to be stronger than the sorcery of the Finns (11). One of the district kings in Norway has a feeling that Óláfr's auðna and hamingja will decide, if he is going to gain the power over the country or not (48). Before leaving on a mission for Óláfr Hjalti Skeggjason asks the king to lay his hamingja on this expedition. The king answers that Hjalti has often shown himself to be a man of hamingja, but is now eager to provide Hjalti and his companions with his own royal hamingja, "if it carries any

weight" (88). Precisely what it implies to "leggja á" or "leggja til" one's hamingja, is hard to say. But perhaps one has to imagine it as a kind of occasional transfer or extension of that somewhat elusive personal quality.

One of the petty kings just mentioned warns his colleagues not to "etja hamingju við Óláf Haraldsson" (102); that is to say, he does not trust their own hamingja to match Óláfr's. Comparing himself to Earl Hákon King Óláfr boasts that Hákon has been lacking hamingja in their earlier confrontations (327). On another occasion Óláfr hesitates to trust his hamingja so unconditionally as to meet his enemies with only a small force (339).

Naturally enough the viewpoints may differ as to what is to be regarded as a person's hamingja or óhamingja. Thus, when Óláfr happens to come across the young Earl Hákon Eiríksson at sea and has him taken prisoner, he makes the comment to him: "People have not been lying of you kinsmen that you are handsome men, but as for your fortune (hamingja), it is out now." But young Hákon himself is more confident: "It is not misfortune (óhamingja) that has happened to us." Victory changes from one time to another: "Perhaps we will have better luck another time" (38). In other words: an incidental mishap, an óhapp, need not necessarily brand a person as a man of misfortune; he may principally be a gæfumaðr despite that.

The double use of hamingja can be traced also in Egils saga, for instance. Five of the seven cases have the supposedly more genuine sense of a general quality. In one of the two remaining cases old Kveld-Úlfr reminds his son Þórólfr that he had once warned him that his visit to King Harald's court would bring no hamingja to the family (49). Later, when Þórólfr has been killed by the king, Kveld-Úlfr doubts whether he will himself be granted the hamingja of revenge (61). In these two examples we again have to do with hamingja denoting the result of an action rather than a force affecting the course of a man's life.

By the way, it is worth noticing that unlike the four other big Icelanders' Sagas - Laxdæla saga, Eyrbyggja saga, Njáls saga and Grettis saga - Egils saga reveals an unusually high frequency of hamingja, and at the same time - also unlike those four sagas - no single instance of gipta. The same is the case with Heimskringla among the Kings' Sagas - a little indication again of a certain affinity between Heimskringla and Egils saga.

There could, of course, be much more to say about the "fortune words" and their functioning on various levels. Sometimes they are used in the deeper sense of a kind of metaphysical or mystic power, affecting our whole life. Sometimes, perhaps in the same texts, they do not seem to mean much more than our talking of good or bad luck. And then we have all kinds of shades and blends of meaning

between these two extremes.

## IX

Now, let us return again to the problem of origin. In his discussion of the "fortune words", and especially the fortune connected with the kings, Walter Baetke strongly emphasizes the circumstance that by far the most of these words apply to "the Christian kings Óláfr Haraldsson (the Saint) and Óláfr Tryggvason" (51). The fact itself is well established, at least as far as Óláfr Haraldsson is concerned, and can easily be read out of my tables. Typically enough, Óláfs saga hins helga (Legendary saga) has the highest frequency (4.1/10,000) of "fortune words" among the Kings' Sagas; and within Heimskringla one notices that Óláfs saga helga dominates completely.

But how to account for this? To me, Baetke's conclusion as to the Christian origin of the concept of fortune (51), seems somewhat rash. The two Óláfrs, the missionary kings, were looked upon by the saga authors as ideal heroes, having good fortune in spite of their final death in battle. The gipta, græfa and hamingja connected with them concern their careers as rulers, their overcoming of enemies and such matters. There is nothing especially Christian about those concepts. If they are native Scandinavian concepts, as I contend, and besides fairly neutral in relation to definite religious systems - they mean success in life, but can be

provided by Óðinn, by God, or by some other, more undefined power - if it is so, what would then be more natural than that popular Christian kings and heroes should be endowed with plenty of that fortune? The gipta, gæfa and hamingja - however deep rooted in a heathen past - could fit the Christian hero excellently.

Quite another matter is that by a long and frequent use of the "fortune words" in such a context, they could, perhaps, by and by assume a Christian shade of meaning. But even of this, I think, there is no clear evidence, if any, in our texts.

## X

It is a striking fact that on the whole the "fortune words" are very infrequent in the specifically Christian texts, and when we meet them there they have nothing peculiarly Christian about them.

In 500 big pages of Heilagra manna sögur<sup>15</sup> one finds only one case of gipta and two of hamingja; not one single gæfumaðr among all those holy men and women.

In the homilies of the Icelandic Hómilíubók<sup>16</sup>, written about the year 1200, and thus a comparatively old document, there is no instance of gæfa or hamingja, and only two of gipta. Elizabeth counts it a greater gipta (139) than she deserves, when the Holy Virgin, her kinswoman, comes to see her. But especially interesting for our purpose is the

other case. Men are blamed there for doing good deeds not so much for the sake of faith and love of God, but "more in the hope that God will give them worldly fortune (veralddliga giptu), both property and honor and health in this world" (95). Thus there is emphatic stress here on a wholly mundane meaning of the concept of fortune in gipta.

In the oldest part of the Bible compilation Stjórn, some 300 pages (349-654), supposed to originate from the first half of the thirteenth century, there are only six "fortune words", all of them hamingja. Thus King Jonathan says of his enemies, the Philistines: "For God our Lord has deprived them of fortune (hamingja) and given them under Israel" (452). That is to say, God can dispose of the hamingja, but in itself it is neutral, it may belong to heathens as well as to Israelites. "From where came to me the great fortune (hamingja) of finding so much pity in you?" (422), Ruth asks Boas - and that is hamingja applying entirely to Ruth's worldly welfare.

In the first 300 pages of Stjórn, the youngest part of the work, presumably from the first decades of the fourteenth century, we find a higher frequency of "fortune words" - this time no instance of hamingja, but one of auðna, twenty-two of gipta, and six of gefa. But still they lack specifically religious connotations. Jacob asks his brother Esau for his giptu ok miskunn (185). Laban addresses Jacob with the wish: "Before you I would like to be a man of

fortune (gæfumaðr)" (176). Joseph is sent by his father to find out how giptusamliga (193) his brothers and their cattle get on. The same word is used of Joseph himself: "God accompanied him, and all his undertakings were successful (tókusk honum giptusamliga)" (198). On the whole, Joseph is seen as a typical gæfumaðr, but as in the sentence just quoted, his gæfa, though provided by God, is of a completely worldly nature. "God was still with Joseph," we hear, "and showed mercy to him and gave him the fortune (gipta and gæfa)" (200) of getting on well with the warden of his prison, a contact leading up to Joseph's success and promotion with the Pharaoh of Egypt.

## XI

At the end of his treatise Walter Baetke remarks that the phrase gipt hins helga anda is a common one (54) - a fact taken by him, of course, to support the view that the concept of fortune in Old Norse poetry and prose on the whole is strongly connected with, and originated in, Christian ideas. But such a conclusion is open to serious objections - decisive objections, as far as one can see.

Baetke does not seem to make any difference between the terms gipt and gipta, obviously regarding them just as variants of one and the same word. He has failed to notice that there is a definite differentiation in the use of them. From the point of view under discussion here, it is quite



impossible to treat them as if they were identical. The word gipt has preserved much of the basic meaning "gift", and - unlike gipta, as well as auðna, gæfa and hamingja - it has become a kind of terminus technicus precisely for Christian blessing or inspiration.

In the Icelandic Hómilíubók quoted above we have, as said, only two cases of gipta representing the "fortune words". On the other hand, we meet gipt twenty-five times, and then with specifically Christian and religious connotations, often in the qualifying phrase gipt hins helga anda.

Also in Stjórn it appears again and again. The inspired law-maker Moses is said to be "fullr af heilags anda gipt" (5). We hear of Baruch and Deborah that after a victory they offered God a song of praise, telling much of the future "af gipt heilags anda" (388). When David had been saved from his enemies by the Lord, "he went into the Lord's tent and recited before Him in all humbleness af gipt hins helga anda" (545) a psalm of praise.

In the three cases quoted here, the word gipt is then related to a distinctly religious inspiration - connotations that one will not find with the words gipta, gæfa and hamingja in the same texts. On the other hand, gipt is extremely rare in profane sagas. From Heimskringla and the five biggest Icelanders' Sagas I have one instance only, in Grettis saga<sup>17</sup>, where an old woman tells Grettir that

he is now deserted by "allri gipt ok gæfu" (247).

That we have got this clear differentiation and a specific word for the gift of heavenly blessing and religious inspiration, may well be regarded as an indication that there was a certain need for it, and that gipta, gæfa, hamingja could not do the same service - because they had in themselves if not an irretrievably heathen character, then a completely profane one.

## XII

I would like to add here a few words on Vatnsdæla saga<sup>18</sup>. As the table shows, it has the highest frequency of "fortune words" among the Icelanders' Sagas: 9.3/10,000; thus it can lay claim to a special interest in the present connection.

The dating of Vatnsdæla saga is rather difficult. But it is usually held to have been written comparatively late, in the latter part of the thirteenth century. The author displays an obvious Christian orientation. His saga ends with the judgment on the chieftain Þorkell krafla, that he "was a believer and loved God and prepared himself for his death in a very Christian manner" (131). Combined with that fact the extremely frequent use of "fortune words", especially hamingja, may seem to support the hypothesis of a late, Christian origin of that concept.

However, the author of Vatnsdæla saga is not only a

Christian. He is also very interested in heathen customs and superstitions, sometimes of a rather odd kind. And in fact, all of his twenty-seven "fortune words" except the last one - the Christian Þorkell krafla is said to be a giptumaðr (131) - apply to the heathen forefathers, practically throughout in the sense of an inherent quality, belonging to a family as well as to its individual members. In one or two cases the hamingja seems to have a slight touch of personification. Thus, a father addresses his son with the words that the time has now come for him to try his strength and know "hvát hamingjan vill unna þér" ("what fortune is willing to allow you") (6).

In his edition of the saga in Íslensk fornrit VIII (1939), Einar Ól. Sveinsson talking of the concept of fortune makes the comment: "it would have been better, if the saga had not been nagging about it that much" (xxix). It is true, the author's exploitation of hamingja seems a little exaggerated. Here too one has the impression of a certain antiquarianism. Probably he saw the family hamingja as a concept typical of a remote past, and over-exposed it in his eagerness to revive those old days<sup>19</sup>. At the same time fortune was a suitable quality for people whom he obviously admires. Perhaps he regarded the men of hamingja as a kind of heathen equivalent of good Christians.

In the perspective adopted here, the high frequency of "fortune words" in such a story as Vatnsdæla saga rather

seems to corroborate the view that the saga concept of fortune is ancient and native.

### XIII

Much is problematic and ambiguous about the concept of fortune in saga literature, and will probably remain so. But after all, one thing seems fairly clear: there is no basis for the hypothesis that this concept must be of foreign and Christian origin.

However, that hypothesis is not without its interest from another point of view, as symptomatic of a trend in recent years to try to find, even desperately, direct connections between saga writing and Christian medieval literature. Let us suppose that a scholar finds in an Icelanders' Saga a character full of pride but punished for his arrogance by the course of events. Aha, he thinks, and translates the pride of the saga into superbia, one of the seven mortal sins. And now we have to do with a Christian morality, a sort of theological treatise - although the saga author has managed to conceal his real purpose so ingeniously that nobody has been able to excavate it before our modern X-ray-eyed interpreter.

This is a bit of a caricature, of course. But I think we must admit that we sometimes do things not very far from this, and that makes one rather uncomfortable. To keep to my example, pride is a trait of character which has

certainly appeared and been noticed and commented upon by men in all times and all over the world. To establish on such points direct connections between saga literature and medieval Christendom, we will have to find exclusively or specifically Christian features in details or patterns. The fact that the saga authors were Christians, does not imply that they wrote as Christian moralists and propagandists, for the reader's edification. For instance, even the usual theme of conversion to Christendom in the Icelanders' Sagas often seems to be a sort of literary topos, a matter of a fairly objective report rather than of pious edification.

The same contention must be made in respect of all kinds of comparative studies in the saga field, when we are searching for models or loans. Archaic epic everywhere has many striking features in common. I think there are some books in the Old Testament far more similar to Icelanders' Sagas, both in subject-matter and style, than Tristrams saga ok Isondar is for instance - a translation supposed by at least one scholar to have given rise to Icelandic saga writing<sup>20</sup>. But most of us would probably hesitate to conclude that the Old Testament served as a model for the saga writers - although it could be proved that they knew that model. An old and wide-spread genre such as heroic epic is likely to reveal many quite similar traits independently, wherever it appears, in details as well as in patterns and narrative devices. The opposite would certainly be strange.

Needless to say, comparative studies, studies of relationship and origin, are a very respectable undertaking, in the field of saga research as elsewhere. A medievalist, however, has to face realistically the sad fact that his material and sources are so much scantier and more ambiguous than those of later times. And he must realize that this cannot be taken as an excuse for slackening the claims to scholarly standards of argument and evidence - even at the price of saying little or nothing on comparative matters.

In tackling the problems here touched upon a saga scholar could learn a lot from folklorists and anthropologists. We know, for example, that folktales move from country to country, from one part of the world to another. But to establish a relation of cause and effect between two stories, however alike, a careful folklorist would not find it enough to point to similar patterns in plot and character types. To draw such a conclusion, he would require that the tales had also some very peculiar details in common, which could not possibly be coincidental: a certain person has in both cases a wart on his nose, and the like. Anthropologists again and again find the same patterns in ideas and customs of primitive societies in various corners of the world, without rushing into conclusions as to origin and interrelations. They analyse those structures for their own sake, well knowing that even the most striking similarity between them is a quite normal fact, telling us nothing of dependence in one

direction or the other.

I think the Old Scandinavian concept of fortune is a topic to be discussed by scholars in that spirit and with that insight.

## NOTES

1. The Old Swedish text of Birgitta's Revelations is edited by G.E. Klemming in Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet, 14 (1857-84). The passage quoted is to be found in vol. 3, pp. 197-8. For the same passage in Latin, see Revelationes S. Birgittae. E Codice Membs. Fol. 21. Bibl. Universitatis Lundensis ("Cod. Falkenberg") Suecice et Britannice Praefatus. Pars posterior. Edidit Elias Wessén (Einar Munksgaard, Hafniae 1956), p. 514. A passage very much reminiscent of the one just cited appears in the Old Swedish text, p. 196. A man is accused of false belief or superstition (vantro), because he believes that everything is ruled by skäpnom ok lykko; the same man uses magic and "certain devilish words" in order to catch plenty of fish.
2. Walter Baetke, Christliches Lehngut in der Sagareligion. Das Svoldr-Problem. Zwei Beiträge zur Sagakritik. (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Band 98. Heft 6. Berlin 1951.)
3. An interesting parallel to the passages from Birgitta is to be found in the Old Norse translation, Barlaams ok Josaphats saga (ed. Christiania 1851 by R. Keyser and C.R. Unger), a religious story wide-spread in medieval Europe in Latin, French and other versions. After the Flood, we are told, men in the world grew worse. They "glæymdv sialfum guði. oc gerðu ser sialfer guði. Svmir truðu at aller lutir skylldu sialfkrave verða. oc skylldi allt skipazt með engarre forssio. ætlaðv engan guð vera þann er þeir atto vndir at luta. Einir trvðu



at hamingian myndi fagnað oc fremd veita oc at orllog oc auðna myndv allu raða" (pp. 24-25; my italics). The concepts of fortune and fate are thus, in this Christian context, definitely seen as opposed to real faith in God.

4. Stjórn. Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie, edited by C.R. Unger (Christiania 1862)
5. Barlaams saga ok Josaphats, edited by R. Keyser and C. R. Unger (Christiania 1851).
6. Víga-Glúms saga, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson in Íslenzk fornrit IX (Reykjavík 1956).
7. Rómverja saga, edited by R. Meissner (Palaestra 88, Berlin 1910).
8. Alexanders saga, edited by Finnur Jónsson (København 1925).
9. Sigurðar saga böglá, edited by Bjarni Vilhjálmsen in Riddarasögur III (Reykjavík 1953).
10. Veraldar saga, edited by Jakob Benediktsson (Skrifter udg. af Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 61, København 1944).
11. Heimskringla, edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in Íslenzk fornrit XXVI-XXVIII (Reykjavík 1941-51).
12. Víglundar saga, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson in Íslenzk fornrit XIV (Reykjavík 1959).
13. Finnboga saga ramma, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson in Íslenzk fornrit XIV (Reykjavík 1959).

14. Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, edited by Sigurður Nordal in Íslensk fornrit II (Reykjavík 1933).
15. Heilagra manna sögur I, edited by C.R. Unger (Christiania 1877). I have examined the first 500 pages of this volume.
16. Hómilíubók, edited by Th. Wisén (Lund 1872).
17. Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, edited by Guðni Jónsson in Íslensk fornrit VII (Reykjavík 1936).
18. Vatnsdæla saga, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in Íslensk fornrit VIII (Reykjavík 1939).
19. Cf. A.U. Bååth's question in connection with Vatnsdæla saga in his thesis Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor (1886): "Does it not seem, then, as if the author wrote with the aim of demonstrating the old belief in fate?" (p. 29, footnote).
20. The scholar referred to is Paul V. Rubow, who presented his hypothesis in Smaa kritiske Breve (København 1936), p. 12

## T A B L E S

Frequency of the words auðna (1), gipta (2), gæfa (3), hamingja (4), and their compounds, such as giptusamliga gæfuleysi, hamingjumikill.

Abbreviations:      DS = direct speech  
                         FR = frequency per 10,000 words  
                         S = total size in words

In order to save space, editions have been indicated only by the years of publication. Fuller bibliographical information will easily be found for instance in: Hans Bekker-Nielsen and others, Norrøn fortællekunst, København 1965; or in: Kurt Schier, Sagaliteratur, Stuttgart 1970. - As for the Icelanders' Sagas, they have been excerpted here from the editions in the series Íslenzk fornrit. Exceptions from that are the two versions of Eiríks saga rauða, H(auksbók) and S(kálholtsbók), where I have used Sven B.F. Jansson's text in Sagorna om Vinland I, Stockholm 1945; and the younger version, Y, of Gísla saga, edited by Konráð Gíslason, København 1849.

KINGS' SAGAS	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In DS %	FR
Fagrskinna (1902-03)	54000	11.5	-	-	1	8	9	3 33	1.7
Hákonar saga Hákonar- sonar (1887)	100000	11.5	-	6	-	1	7	2 29	0.7
Heimskringla (1941- 51), as a whole	228000	17.0	6	-	13	26	45	26 58	2.0
Ynglinga saga	10000	0.1	-	-	1	1	2	0 0	2.0
Hálfðanar saga svarta	2000	2.5	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Haralds saga hárfagra	9700	7.4	1	-	-	-	1	1 100	1.0
Hákonar saga góða	7000	8.4	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Haralds saga gráf- feldar	3700	7.2	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Óláfs saga Trygg- vasonar	28000	11.0	-	-	-	4	4	1 25	1.4
Óláfs saga helga	91000	25.0	3	-	7	17	27	19 70	3.0
Magnúss saga góða	6800	18.0	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Haralds saga harð- ráða	23000	16.0	1	-	1	1	3	2 67	1.3
Óláfs saga kyrra	1000	4.4	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0

KINGS' SAGAS	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In DS %	FR
Magnúss saga ber- totts	4700	8.0	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Magnússona saga	7500	18.5	-	-	1	-	1	0 0	1.3
Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla	5900	12.5	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Haraldssona saga	9600	8.0	-	-	1	1	2	0 0	2.1
Hákonar saga herði- breiðs	7000	26.0	1	-	1	-	2	2 100	2.9
Magnúss saga Erlingssonar	11000	15.5	-	-	1	2	3	1 33	2.7
Knyttlinga saga (1919- 25)	48000	23.0	1	1	4	5	11	9 82	2.3
Morkinskinna (1932)	90000	34.0	-	12	7	8	27	21 78	3.0
Óláfs saga hins helga (Legendary saga) (1922)	39000	22.0	-	1	10	5	16	7 44	4.1
Orkneyinga saga (1965)	61000	13.5	-	1	1	2	6	1 17	1.0
Sverris saga (1920)	80000	23.0	3	5	2	2	12	9 75	1.5
KINGS' SAGAS, TOTAL	700000	19.0	12	26	38	57	133	78 59	1.9

ICELANDERS' SAGAS	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In	DS %	FR
Bandamanna saga (K)	9400	56.0	-	-	2	-	-	2	100	2.1
Bandamanna saga (M)	11000	54.0	1	1	1	-	3	0	0	2.7
Bjarnar saga Hítðela- kappa	19000	22.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Droplaugarsona saga	9400	19.5	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Egils saga	62000	22.0	-	-	8	7	15	14	93	2.4
Eiríks saga rauða (S)	7700	16.5	1	1	1	-	3	1	33	3.9
Eyrbyggja saga	38000	17.0	1	1	-	1	3	3	100	0.8
Finnboga saga ramma	23000	27.0	1	-	3	2	6	1	17	2.5
Fóstbræðra saga (H)	14000	31.0	-	-	2	1	3	2	67	2.1
Fóstbræðra saga (M)	18000	28.0	-	-	2	-	2	2	100	1.1
Gísla saga (E)	19000	27.0	1	-	2	-	3	1	33	1.6
Gísla saga (Y)	22000	29.0	-	1	-	-	1	1	100	0.4
Grettis saga	61000	24.0	-	1	12	1	14	11	79	2.3
Grænlandinga saga	6500	18.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Grænlandinga þáttr	4200	28.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Gunnlaugs saga	9400	31.0	-	1	-	-	1	1	100	1.1

ICELANDERS' SAGAS	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In DS%	FR
Hallfreðar saga	8800	34.0	-	6	1	-	7	4 57	8.0
Heiðarvíga saga	12000	38.0	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Hrafnkels saga	9100	42.0	-	-	1	-	1	1 100	1.1
Hænsa-Póris saga	8700	41.0	-	-	1	-	1	1 100	1.1
Kjalnesinga saga	11000	30.0	-	-	1	-	1	1 100	0.9
Kormáks saga	10000	19.5	-	-	2	-	2	2 100	2.0
Króka-Refs saga	11000	36.0	-	1	2	-	3	3 100	2.7
Laxdæla saga	58000	31.0	-	5	1	1	7	6 86	1.2
Njáls saga	97000	41.0	2	8	12	-	22	21 95	2.3
Vápnfirðinga saga	9600	26.0	-	-	1	-	1	1 100	1.0
Vatnsdæla saga	29000	38.0	-	10	3	14	27	20 74	9.3
Víga-Glúms saga	19000	36.0	-	2	4	2	8	8 100	4.0
Víglundar saga	12000	23.0	-	-	1	-	1	1 100	0.8
Þórðar saga hreðu	16000	34.0	-	1	-	2	3	2 67	1.9
ICELANDERS' SAGAS TOTAL	645000	30.0	7	39	63	31	140	110 79	2.2

STURLUNGA SAGA (1946)	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In	DS %	FR	180
Porgils saga ok Hafliða	13000	8.5	-	1	3	-	4	3	75	3.1	
Sturlu saga	18000	13.5	-	-	-	1	1	1	100	0.6	
Prestsaga Guðmundar góða	16000	17.5	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0	
Guðmundar saga dýra	19000	6.9	-	-	1	-	1	0	0	0.5	
Hrafns saga Svein- bjarnarsonar	5000	5.2	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0	
Íslendinga saga	101000	6.5	3	3	2	-	8	1	13	0.8	
Pórðar saga kakala	30000	6.6	1	2	-	2	5	2	40	1.7	
Svínfellinga saga	5600	12.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0	
Porgils saga skarða	45000	17.5	1	-	-	1	2	1	50	0.4	
Sturlu þáttur	3200	21.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0	
STURLUNGA SAGA, TOTAL	256000	11.0	5	6	6	4	21	8	38	0.8	



BISHOPS' SAGAS (I-III, 1948)	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In	DS %	FR
Hungrvaka	7700	0.9	-	1	4	1	6	0	0	7.8
Þorláks saga byskups	14000	7.3	-	-	2	-	2	0	0	1.4
Páls saga byskups	7200	0.0	-	-	5	-	5	0	0	6.9
Árna saga byskups	44000	10.5	-	-	-	1	1	0	0	0.2
Jóns saga helga ("eldri")	17000	14.5	-	1	-	1	2	1	50	1.2
Jóns saga helga ("yngri")	18000	8.3	-	-	1	-	1	1	100	0.6
Guðmundar saga Arasonar	48000	10.0	-	-	1	-	1	0	0	0.2
Laurentius saga	35000	15.0	-	1	-	1	2	0	0	0.6
Guðmundar saga Arasonar (by Arngrímur Brandsson)	66000	16.0	-	9	-	5	14	2	14	2.1
BISHOPS' SAGAS TOTAL	257000	11.5	-	12	13	9	34	4	12	1.3

TRANSLATIONS	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In	DS %	FR
Alexanders saga (1925)	48000	31.0	-	4	2	61	67	43	64	14.0
Gyðinga saga (1881)	27000	16.5	-	-	1	1	2	1	50	0.7
Karlamagnús saga (1860) as a whole	214000	40.0	-	9	24	6	39	33	85	1.8
Karlamagnus saga ok kappa hans	18000	20.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Af fru Olif ok Landres syni hennar	11000	43.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Af Oddgeiri danska	16000	51.0	-	1	2	-	3	3	100	1.9
Af Agulando konungi (B)	60000	40.0	-	7	7	4	18	12	67	3.0
Af Agulando konungi (A)	45000	40.0	-	-	10	1	11	8	73	2.4
Af Guitalin Saxa	21000	49.0	-	1	4	1	6	6	100	2.9
Af Otvel	12000	37.0	-	-	1	-	1	1	100	0.8
Af Jorsalaferð	5400	47.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Af Runzivals bardaga	16000	47.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Af Vilhjalmi korneis	3400	35.0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0
Um kraptaverk ok jartegnir	5900	8.5	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0.0

"RIDDARASÖGUR"	S	DS %	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total	In DS %	FR
Bervers saga (1884)	23000	30.0	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Ivents saga (1872)	16000	48.0	-	1	-	-	1	1 100	0.6
Möttuls saga (1878)	6100	39.0	-	-	-	-	0	0 0	0.0
Partalopa saga (1877)	11000	32.0	1 <sup>1)</sup>	-	-	-	1	1 100	0.0
Strengleikar eða Ljóðabók (1850)	38000	24.0	-	-	7	1	8	2 25	2.1
Tristrams saga ok Ísondar (1878)	49000	33.0	-	-	7	2	9	2 22	1.8
"RIDDARASÖGUR", TOTAL	143000	32.0	1	1	14	3	19	6 32	1.3

1) This auðna is a verb: "Nú fari minn hagr sem auðnar" (89)

ANDREW HAMER  
LEGENDARY FICTION IN FLATEYJARBÓK<sup>1</sup>

The legendary sagas of Iceland are sometimes taken to have been first written down during the twelfth century. They are principally distinguishable from the other types of Icelandic saga by the presence in them of fantasy, and by the important position within the development of their plots that fantastic episodes occupy. There is no attempt in these sagas at temporal or spatial realism; although the hero of a legendary saga might be a member of a Scandinavian royal family, he may well travel to exotic countries such as Russia, India, and Byzantium, as well as to mythical regions such as Giantland; furthermore, he may fight for booty as a viking in one episode, destroy monsters from the mythical past in another, and take up arms to safeguard the honour of a princess in a third.

Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards describe as "legendary fiction" all the stories which have the features just mentioned. They use this term because, they say, these sagas "set out to construct an image of human activity in the distant past; and that they are precisely fiction in the original sense of a thing

shaped or invented. However, we use the term legendary with reference not to sources but to the narrator's attitude of mind."<sup>3</sup> Accepting that these stories treat of the distant past does not, of course, include the preconception that they are in any way primitive.

Since the nineteenth century, the legendary fiction of Iceland has been relegated to the position of an inferior literature, when compared with the great sagas of Icelanders, such as Njáls saga, Grettis saga, and Laxdoela saga. Margaret Schlauch asks, when writing about fantastic tales of courtly chivalry: "Why did these foreign products so completely supersede the older, far superior sagas in the favour of the people?"<sup>4</sup> She gives as one of many possible reasons a change in audience-demand, caused by the economic distress and armed feuding of the thirteenth century. She says that "Icelanders may have welcomed the unreality and the imaginative fantasy of the lygisögur as a sort of intellectual narcotic which gave them release from unpleasant actuality."<sup>5</sup>

Einar Ól. Sveinsson agrees with Margaret Schlauch about the mediocrity of the legendary sagas. He notes that in Parcevals saga "the Holy Grail is reduced to next to no significance, so that the Icelanders never came to know one of the most important symbols in all

mediaeval literature." He adds that a good translation of this work, as well as of Tristans saga, "would have been worth all the rest". It was the translation of inferior literature that predominated however. Sveinsson says: "Here we find thrilling tales, full of dangers and adventures and supernatural episodes, but with singularly poorly delineated characters, mere glossy cardboard figures cut to a stereotyped pattern. This is a literature of amusement, of escape, of dreams, where everything invariably turns out well, where all reality goes by the board."

Sveinsson's critical approach is determined by his beliefs as to the social conditions that prevailed in thirteenth-century Iceland. And yet it is possible that he accepts the account of the age, as we have it in Sturlunga saga, a little unquestioningly. Of course it is a contemporary record written by men whose own families were deeply involved in the feuding, but it may be that for those very reasons our knowledge of the period cannot be complete. At any rate, as Margaret Schlauch herself points out, "so far as we know, prosperity does not necessarily ensure good literature, nor a financial depression cause its corruption." To say that the legendary sagas were not as good literature as the sagas of Icelanders is to impose upon them twentieth-century

ideas of what constitutes good literature. Hermann Pálsson and Edwards have pointed out that legendary fiction was taken seriously by the Icelanders<sup>6</sup>, and that it remained popular long after the miseries of the Sturlung age had been forgotten.

At the beginning of his story<sup>7</sup>, Helgi Thórisson is on a trading voyage, selling butter and bacon to the Lapps. The party lands on a wooded shore, and Helgi wanders further inland than the others. He goes deep into the wood, and gets lost when a heavy mist comes down. As night falls, he meets twelve women, one of whom is lovelier than the rest. She calls him by name, and says he may sleep with her if he chooses. He asks her name, and she gives it as Ingibjörg, daughter of King Gudmund of Glasir plains.<sup>8</sup> Helgi sleeps with Ingibjörg for three nights, after which time they part. She gives him treasure, warning him to tell no-one how he came by it. Helgi is welcomed back by his men.

The following Christmas, a terrible gale springs up, and Helgi and his brother Thorstein go out to see whether their ship is securely moored. (This ship had been bought with part of Ingibjörg's treasure, while the rest is hidden on board.) Two riders now appear and steal Helgi away. Helgi's father, Thórir, appeals to King Ólaf Tryggvason to help him recover his son.

The next year, on the eighth day of Christmas, Helgi comes to King Ólaf's hall, together with two other men, both of whom are called Grím. These men give the king two beautiful drinking horns, also called Grím. As the king accepts the horns, the men tell him that they are a present from King Gudmund of Glasir plains, who desires King Ólaf's friendship in return. The king says nothing to this, but has the horns blessed by the bishop and filled with good ale. Now the horns are passed back to Helgi's companions, who are to take the first drink. They cannot touch the blessed horns, however, and disappear, taking Helgi with them. As they go out, they blow out the lights and kill three of the king's retainers. Afterwards, King Ólaf and his men drink unharmed from the two horns.

The following year, again on the eighth day of Christmas, three men approach the church where the King is attending Mass. One man remains at the church door while his companions depart; Helgi has been brought back blind. He tells King Ólaf that King Gudmund sent the two Gríms the previous winter in order to fool him, but the blessing of the horns was stronger than Gudmund's power. Helgi admits that he has liked nowhere better than Gudmund's court, with its richness and gaiety. King Ólaf is unimpressed, and asks simply, "Why are you



blind?" "Ingibjörg gouged out both my eyes when we parted," replies Helgi; "she said the women in Norway wouldn't enjoy my company for very long." He says that he has been returned to Norway because of King Ólaf's prayers. Helgi dies exactly a year after his return, while the ~~Grim-hörns~~ vanish when King Ólaf disappears from the Long Serpent.

It has long been recognized that one version of the probable mythical source for Helga bättr Þórissonar is to be found in the first of Saxo's two Thorkillus stories, in Book Eight of his Danish History<sup>9</sup>. Saxo's Thorkillus, an Icelfander, takes King Gorm of Denmark to the realm of King Geruthus (the giant Geirröð of Snorri's Edda). On the way, they are entertained by Geruthus' brother, Gudmundus, who rules over the desert kingdom of Permia. Though Gudmundus offers them their choice of food, drink, and his twelve daughters, Thorkillus advises them not to accept his hospitality on peril of being forced to remain in Permia for ever. Gudmundus, despairing of ever accomplishing his treachery, lets them continue their journey. Not far off is "a gloomy, neglected town, looking more like a cloud exhaling vapour". Frightened though they all are, they carry on to Geruthus' palace. "Inside the house was ruinous throughout, and filled with a violent and abominable reek. And it was seen to

teem with everything that could disgust the eye or the mind ... the flooring was covered with snakes ... and bloodless phantasmal monsters huddled on the iron seats." There is great treasure here, including a bracelet, a gold-tipped tusk, and a "vast elk-horn, laboriously decked with choice and flashing gems". Despite Thorkillus' good advice, three men lay their hands on this treasure. Instantly, it is metamorphosed, the horn and bracelet becoming snakes, while the tusk turns into a sword. The three men perish. On the way home, the party is again entertained by Gudmundus. One of the men, Buchi, embraces one of Gudmundus' daughters, and pays dearly for it; for as they are fording the river to leave Gudmundus' realm, Buchi is drowned. Parallels with Helga þáttur Þórissonar are seen in the loss at one stroke of three men; the importance of the horn(s); a pile of treasure; the twelve women; the mist/smoke; the sexual promiscuity of Gudmund's daughter(s).

Thorkillus makes a second journey to Giantland, this time to the realm of King Útgarða-Loki. On their way, they stop at the cave of two giants, who give them fire and directions for the journey. Their cave echoes in its description the account of Geruthus' palace: "the entrance was hideous, the door-posts were decayed, the walls grimy with mould, the roof filthy, and the floor

swarming with snakes; all of which disgusted the eye as much as the mind."

The party finds King Útgarða-Loki living, like the other giants they had met, in a decayed and ruinous realm of darkness. His hall teems, like theirs, with snakes. It is to be noted that Thorkillus undertakes this second quest because King Gorm has been persuaded that souls are immortal: "so that he was constantly turning over in his mind the questions, to what abode he was to fare when the breath left his limbs, or what reward was earned by zealous adoration of the gods."

The second of Saxo's Thorkillus-journeys, that to the kingdom ruled by Útgarða-Loki, shows some similarity to (the first Thorkillus-story and to) the story of Eric the Far-travelled<sup>10</sup>. Eric, the son of Thránd of Thrándheim, vows to search throughout the world until he finds "the place known to heathens as Óðáinsakr" ("the field of the undead") and to Christians as "the meadows of the living", or "Paradise". Eric travels to Byzantium, where he is instructed in the Christian faith by the emperor. He and his companions are baptized before leaving Byzantium. The emperor tells him to travel south, for Paradise lies on the other side of India. Eric and his companions journey through India until they enter

a country of perpetual darkness. Emerging on the other side, they see a river, and on the other bank, a radiant country, full of flowers, and breathing "an abundance of honey".<sup>11</sup> A stone bridge spans the river, but the way is blocked by a vast dragon. Eric and one companion carry on, but the rest turn back, afraid. "Now the Norwegian Eric (the hero) drew his sword and held it in his right hand, while with his left he took the hand of his one companion. They pressed forward, and leapt into the dragon's mouth. And it looked to the Danish Eric (the hero's friend, as well as namesake) as though the dragon swallowed them both." The Danish Eric returns home, and tells of the fate met with by the hero and his companion. "But when the Norwegian Eric and his companion had leapt into the mouth of the dragon, it seemed to them as though they were going through smoke, and when they had passed through this, they saw a beautiful land ... The sun shone so that there could never be darkness, and there was no shadow." Eric has a vision of an angel, who asks him how he likes this place, and he replies better than anywhere else. He is told that, compared with Paradise, the place he is in is like a desert. Eric returns to Norway, which is still heathen, and tells his story. One day, he disappears, and the companion who entered the dragon with him tells the Norwegians that he has been taken away by the angel.

Saxo's Thorkillus can be seen as a "good" heathen; when his companions call on their gods to protect them, he invokes only "the god who created the universe"<sup>12</sup>. After he has seen the underworld, Thorkillus is baptised, and dies a Christian. What the author of the story of Eric the Far-travelled has done with Saxo's myth is to make it uncompromisingly Christian. Eric sets out determined to discover the afterlife, but completely open-minded about whether that afterlife be the heathen's Ódáinsakr or the Christian's Paradise. In fact, it is only after he has become a Christian that he is granted the vision. Jón Þórðarson, who wrote Eireks saga Viðförla into Flateyjarbók, shows that he was using this overtly Christian story for a definite purpose, because he says, in a postscript to the story, "and he who wrote this book set this story down first in it, because he wants every man to know that there is no true faith except in God".

Jón Þórðarson was responsible, of course, for the writing into Flateyjarbók of Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar and Óláfs saga ins Helga as well as Eireks saga Viðförla. It may well be, therefore, that he means by "no true faith" Scandinavian heathendom. We know from the stories in Saxo that the heathen Ódáinsakr was connected with Giantland<sup>13</sup>. Heiðreks saga reveals an interesting

Icelandic modification of this tradition. "Gudmund was the name of a lord in Jötunheimar (Giantland); his dwelling place was at Grund, in the region of Glasisvellir. He was a mighty man, and wise, and so old were he and his people that their lives lasted through many generations of men. For this reason heathen men believed that in his realm must lie the Óðáinsakr, that region where sickness and old age depart from every man who enters it, and where no-one can die."<sup>14</sup> Should the reader of Flateyjarbók, then, look for connections between the Óðáinsakr-story of Eric and the Gudmund-story of Helgi? There are, certainly, interesting similarities between them: in each, the hero leaves Norway and enters a wonderful, shining land, after passing through mist and darkness; each hero is to say that he likes this land better than any other, and each is to see this claim dismissed; both Helgi and Eric are given up for lost in Norway, but each returns to spend his last days there.

All this is to suggest that Helga þáttur Þórissonar is a sophisticated piece of literature. Certainly, the complex treatment of the imagery of light and dark bears this out. The darkness associated with Ingibjörg and Gudmund is first encountered as a mist in which Helgi gets lost. The imagery re-appears in the storm the following Christmas, when Helgi is carried off by the two

riders; and again, the Christmas after that, in the dousing by the two Gríms of the candles in King Ólaf's hall. It culminates, of course, in Helgi's blindness, caused directly by Ingibjörg. On the other hand, we are not faced here with a consistently treated imagery of "light: dark" as "good: bad", as we should expect from naïve literature. Ingibjörg and her eleven women seem to be associated with some source of light, for Helgi is able to see them plainly, even though it is night and he is lost in a wood, and a thick mist has come down. He is able to distinguish clearly the many colours of their tents, riding gear, jugs and basins. Presumably, the light associated with Ingibjörg is the light that radiates through the shining Glasir plains. The ambivalence of this imagery of light is caught up in ambivalence of Glasir plains itself; although the home of the sinister Gudmund, and although the place where Helgi is blinded, it is nonetheless the place Helgi has like most of all.

Because of Ólaf's praying to God to recover Helgi, and because of the blessing of the Grím-horns by the bishop, it is evident that we are meant to see Helga þáttur Þórissonar as having Christian significance of some kind. It is to be noted that many of the central events in the story take place on the eighth day of Christmas. St Luke (2,21) says that on this day the

infant Christ was circumcised - "and he was given the name Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived." (Genesis 17, 1-15, describes the covenant made between God and Abraham: "I will fulfil my covenant between myself and you and your descendants after you, generation after generation ... As an everlasting possession I will give you and your descendants after you the land in which you now are aliens, all the land of Canaan ... For your part, you must keep my covenant ... Every male among you in every generation shall be circumcised on the eighth day ... thus shall my covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting covenant.")

To St Augustine, as is to be seen in his sermons on the psalms, the number eight, whenever it occurs, is to be interpreted as the symbol of our life in eternity. Noting this fact, Maren-Sofie Røstvig suggests that "this symbolism follows when the octave is seen as referring to the eighth age of bliss or again to that eighth day on which Christ rose from the dead, thus securing eternal life for man."<sup>15</sup> Medieval tradition could make of this day, the eighth day of Christmas, a symbol of the Christian year, since it united Christ's birth and resurrection.

Professor Røstvig also notes, however, that in accordance with the doctrine of the creation of harmony from



discord, "the Fall is not merely annulled by the scheme of redemption, but out of the two is created a harmony superior to the one that was lost" (p. 47). For this reason, the Fall may also be associated with the eighth day (as against the eighth day of the Resurrection).

If Helga þáttur Þórissonar contains elements of (especially Augustinian) numerology, then the tale must be read as an Everyman story. The four years of Helgi's life mentioned in the tale will represent his earthly existence - St Augustine draws a parallel between the four passions and humours - but this earthly life is to be seen as ordained and bound by the power of God's love, four being also the number of the Gospels. As Professor Røstvig notes (p. 63), "the fourfold nature of the world and of the divine scheme of redemption was a datum, an absolute truth contained in the Bible as interpreted by all the great authorities."

Helgi's exile in Glasir plains is ultimately a blinding experience, since a life devoted to earthly and material satisfaction deflects the soul's gaze away from eternity. Helgi is first carried off to Glasir plains, while he is out checking the safety of his ship and treasure. In his sermon on Psalm xi (noted by Professor Røstvig, p. 43) St Augustine says that the greed of the wicked "for this world's goods ... is like a wheel which repeats its circle every seven days and consequently

never arrives at the eighth day or the day of eternity, which forms the title of the Psalm" (commentary on v. 19). The psalm is, in fact, entitled "Unto the end, for the octave, a psalm for David". A similarly-headed psalm is, of course, Psalm vi: "Unto the end, in hymns for the octave, a psalm of David". Since the number eight is so important to Helga þáttir Þórissonar, it may well be that the "octave" psalms, vi and xi, contain the clue to the Christian message presented in the tale. In the light of Helgi's four years' "earthly life", and of the eighth day of Christmas as the day of Our Lord's circumcision, Psalm vi is particularly relevant. In commenting on verse 2, St Augustine talks of the "number four assigned to the body ... to the old man, to the Old Law", and links it to the "number three assigned to the soul". The Old Testament generations, "religious yet still carnal", are here explicitly associated with bodily circumcision, but St Augustine goes on to say that "since Our Lord's coming, however, we have passed from bodily circumcision to circumcision of the heart". It is at the Day of Judgement, which "we may safely interpret (as) the octave", that man passes from the body to the soul.

But if Helgi's exile is to be seen like Israel's exile in Egypt, as a type of the Fall, then we must look at the commentary on Psalm vi for some insight as to the

nature of Helgi's blindness. Since it has been suggested that any understanding of the Christian message found in the tale depends on an appreciation of the numerological importance of the number eight, we must presumably search for the answer in St Augustine's commentary on verse eight of this psalm. Here we find: "This is the effect of blindness of heart: every man in such a state is shut out from God's interior light; yet while life lasts, the blindness is not absolute. For there is an exterior darkness reserved more especially to the Day of Judgment ... To be completely deprived of God - what does that denote if not total blindness?" In terms of the numerology associated with the number eight, Helgi disregards the "circumcision of the heart", his part of man's covenant with God. In return (see Genesis 17, 7, 8, 10, 11) he loses sight of Canaan. If it has been correct to suggest that there exists a close parallel between Helga páttir Þórissonar and Eireks saga Víðförla, then the description of the land Eric finds, full of "an abundance of honey", becomes significant, when compared with the traditional description of Canaan as "flowing with milk and honey" (see, for example, Numbers 13, 28; 14, 8; Joshua 5, 8).

There remains to be found a biblical equivalent to Glasir plains, Jón Þórðarson's region of "no true faith". The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt (see for example

Exodus 2, 23-5), although they had first entered Egypt voluntarily (Genesis 47, 27), and were enslaved as a matter of political expediency (Exodus 1, 6-14). Perhaps a closer parallel to Helgi's forcible abduction to Glasir plains is to be found in the rape of the Israelites by the Babylonians (Ezekiel 17, 19). Babylon, too, was associated with darkness and blindness. (See, among many instances, Jeremiah 39, 7, Lamentations 3, 2, Ezekiel 12, 1-7. Compare, too, the inability of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men to tell the king his dream with Daniel's correct expounding of it, in Daniel 2. The Lord had granted Daniel a vision by night, and Daniel blesses Him: "he knows what lies in darkness and light has its dwelling with him.")

It has been pointed out above that the name of Glasir plains is ambivalent, being associated with both light and darkness, pleasure and pain. The eighth day, too, has been seen to be ambivalent, since it referred both to the Fall and to the Resurrection. Now, since exile in Glasir plains (or Babylon) - that is to say, the sin that blinds Helgi from sight of Canaan - is ambivalent, and since a link has been suggested between Helga þáttr Þórissonar and Eireks saga Víðförla, it should also follow that Eric's Canaan will have elements of Babylon. In MS AM 194 8vo (ed. K. Kálund as "Landafræði" in Alfræði Íslenzk) there

are references to the four rivers that flow from Paradise: Phison, Nile, Tigris, Euphrates. "The fourth river is called Euphrates; it rises under the Ellding mountains, flows from Ermland and through Mesopotamia, where that city stands, which is called Babylon." The angel seen by Eric the Far-travelled tells him: "the place you see here is as a desert compared with Paradise, but that place is not far off, and the river you saw flows from there."

Interestingly, in the medieval tradition of religious literature, Babylon, like Glasir plains, was ambivalent, since a new regenerate city had been built after the destruction of the old evil city. Ambivalent, too, is the paradise seen by Eric the Far-travelled; although a land of perpetual sunshine, it is only reached by passing through a region of darkness, and is, in fact, guarded by a dragon, which can obviously be read as a symbol of Death.<sup>16</sup> Again, although this country appears to Eric as filled with flowers and honey, the angel describes it as like a desert, compared with Paradise. The description of the land seen by Eric, a land guarded by an enormous snake, embodies the same concept as the description of Babylon found in Konráðs saga Keisarasonar. Furthermore, the manuscript quoted earlier, MS AM 194 8vo, says: "in this part of the world is Babylon, the great and ancient city. Here Nabugodonosor held sway; but now it is deserted, so that men cannot pass by there by reason of the snakes and

all sorts of evil creatures."<sup>17</sup>

If Glasir plains are to be seen as Babylon, as a fallen Eden, then Ingibjörg must presumably be the representative of Babylon, the whore. In Revelation, which contains, after all, a vision of the Day of Judgement, John sees the whore as "mounted on a scarlet beast" and "clothed in purple and scarlet" (17, 3-4). Helgi sees Ingibjörg and her women riding on red horses and wearing red costumes. Ingibjörg's sexual promiscuity resembles the description of the sins of Babylon, which are seen in Revelation in sexual terms: "The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her" (17, 2).

Like Eric the Far-travelled, Helgi has been granted a vision of what he thinks is Paradise. But just as Eric's angel tells him, "the place you see here is as a desert compared with Paradise," so Helgi's paradise turns out to be Gudmund's desert kingdom. Knowing Helgi to be deceived, King Ólaf asks him, "Why are you blind?".

In Genesis the serpent promises Eve three things: immortality, clear spiritual insight, and the knowledge of good and evil. "And the serpent said unto the woman, 'Of course you will not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods knowing both good and evil'." As soon as

Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, "the eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked" (3, 4-7). Helgi tells King Ólaf, "Ingibjörg said she couldn't sleep with me without feeling uneasy whenever she touched my naked body."

Jón Þórðarson is presumably pointing a conventional Christian moral - that the irony of sin is that, instead of opening the eyes, it belittles and imprisons, and causes spiritual blindness, resulting in the inability to distinguish between good and evil, Heaven and Hell. In Revelation, John sees a vision of the souls of the righteous: "I saw what seemed a sea of glass shot with fire, and beside the sea of glass, holding the harps which God had given them, were those who had won the victory over the beast ... " (15, 2). (This sea of glass is, of course, that which surrounds the throne of God in Revelation.) Jerusalem, the Biblical antithesis of Babylon, is also seen in Revelation as built of "pure gold, bright as clear glass ... The streets of the city were of pure gold, like translucent glass" (21, 18-21). The outward similarity between Paradise, the sea of glass and fire, and Glasir plains, the "glassy" or "shining" plains, deludes the blinded Helgi. In biblical tradition, Heaven was not the only source of light; Satan shone too, as Lucifer.

Helga þáttur Þórissonar was written into Flateyjarbók

between two other short stories, Norna-Gests þáttur and one which we can call the guest's þáttur (Fl. I 375-6, §305), both of which appear to be connected with it. In both these other stories, a visitor arrives at King Ólaf's hall from the other-world of Scandinavian heathendom, and in both, Ólaf questions the visitor about the past, in the same way as Helgi, returned from the same world, is interrogated.

We are evidently meant to connect Norna-Gests þáttur with Helga þáttur Þórissonar, for we are told that the Norn-Gest arrives in the same year as "those men who were called Grím, and (who) were sent by Gudmund of Glasir plains". Norna-Gests þáttur, it should be noted, seems to be adapted from an original Ódin-myth, in which the god questioned the Norns, or Fates. In the guest's þáttur, Ódin is himself the visitor, and he tries to win power over King Ólaf by giving the king's cooks two sides of beef for the royal table, but these are thrown out by Ólaf, who recognizes Ódin. The two sides of beef in this story form a parallel to Gudmund's bribing offer of the two Grím-horns in Helga þáttur Þórissonar. The references and parallels within the two other tales to Helga þáttur Þórissonar suggest that the narrator considered that tale to be important to Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar.



Since Babylon, that is to say idolatry, was presumably represented by Óðin-worship in Scandinavia, we should read Helga þáttur Þórissonar, like its two companion-pieces, as an exemplar dealing with Ólaf Tryggvason's battle against Óðin-worship. Interestingly, Snorri's Edda contains a list of the names used by Óðin when he went to visit Geirröð, who, it will be remembered, is Saxo's Geruthus, the brother of Gudmund. The first of these names is Grím (Grímr, "Masked One") which occurs four times in Helga þáttur Þórissonar, while another is Helblindi, "One who blinds with death". Seen in the context of Ólaf Tryggvason's reign dedicated to destroying the cult of Óðin, Helga þáttur Þórissonar can be shown to be organic to the Flateyjarbók version of Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar.

The imagery of light noted in the stories of Helgi Þórisson and Eric the Far-travelled is picked up in several of the legendary stories within Jón Þórðarson's account of the life of St Ólaf. At the saint's baptism, an onlooker says the word "light" three times, and it is after this that King Ólaf Tryggvason makes his prophecy about the child's future greatness.<sup>18</sup> It may be, then, that one should regard Jón Þórðarson's work (Eireks saga Víðförla, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar and Óláfs saga ins Helga) as one long "saga". I make this point very tentatively, as one certainly cannot base any claims of this

nature solely on the presence of light and dark imagery. (Indeed, light-dark conflicts are so common, both in Christian and non-Christian literature, that it might have been more remarkable if this imagery had not been used.) With this proviso in mind however, one more legendary story, from Óláfs saga ins Helga, might be mentioned here.

After the saint's death, he is invoked on one occasion by the Varangian Guard, who are fighting a losing battle against a blind heathen king, against odds of sixty to one (Fl. II 380-1, § 310). The blind enemy king asks, "Who is that princely man who rides on a white horse at the head of their army?" None of his men can see St Ólaf. The point of this miracle is, I think, clear, in terms of the imagery of light and insight, darkness and spiritual blindness, already met with: like Helgi Thórisson after his return and questioning, the heathen king gains spiritual insight when confronted with the power of God.

Jón Þórðarson apologises for his inclusion of St Ólaf's miracles within the saga, but says that they "greatly stir the mind". He asks the reader at this point always to beware, because "the enemy of mankind never ceases to conquer us every day, just as he once did in Paradise (Fl. II 391-2, § 326). It is clear that, while the two Ólaf-sagas are historical works dealing with the progress of Christianity

in Scandinavia, the legendary fiction within these sagas is at least partially concerned with Everyman's continuous struggle. Man's nature is towards sin and blindness; Helgi Thórisson sins and is returned, Eric the Far-travelled is given up for lost when he is swallowed by the dragon.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson<sup>19</sup> admits to being disappointed in Bishop Páll Jónsson (died 1211) who heard from Archbishop Absalon of Denmark the following miraculous story. A priest saw a spider fall into a chalice of consecrated wine, and though he knew the wine to be poisoned, he did not dare throw it away. So, praying for God's protection, he drank the wine himself. He suffered no ill effects, and shortly afterwards, the spider came out of his little finger. Sveinsson says, "Because of his understandable willingness to learn from the man at whose hands he had received consecration, Páll's usual sound judgement seems to have been sufficiently weakened to make him believe this fable." It may be, of course, that Páll believed every word, but it is also possible that he used this story, not as a remarkable historical record, but, to quote Jón Þórðarson, in order to "stir the mind".

## NOTES

1. I am grateful to Hermann Pálsson for his help and encouragement during the preparation of this paper.
2. For a discussion of such effects, see especially Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards, Legendary Fiction in Medieval Iceland (Studia Islandica 30, 1971).
3. The use of the traditional term "legendary" with a new reference, as defined by Pálsson and Edwards in "Legendary Fiction ...", will be followed in this paper.
4. Margaret Schlauch, Romance in Iceland (1934). See especially pp. 7-11 for this paper.
5. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, The Age of the Sturlungs (Islandica 36, 1953), pp. 41-2.
6. Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards, Hrólfr Gautreksson: A Viking Romance (The New Saga Library Series I, 1971). See the introduction to that volume for some discussion of the critical reaction hoped-for by medieval Icelandic authors of legendary fiction.
7. Helga þáttir Þórissonar appears in Flateyjarbók (ed. Vigfusson and Unger, Christiania, 1860-1868), I, pp. 359-62. References are henceforth abbreviated to Fl. The story occurs as one of the þættir in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar.
8. Glasir plains, Glæsisvellir, means "shining" or "glassy" plains. The verb glæsa means "polish,

cause to shine", while glær is a poetical word for the sea. The word is presumably related etymologically to glær "glass".

For some discussion of Ingibjörg and Guðmund, as well as an analysis of folk-tale elements within Helga þáttr Þórissonar, see the introduction to Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards' Gautreks Saga and other medieval tales (1968). Quotations in this paper from Helga þáttr Þórissonar are taken from the translation of the tale found in this volume.

9. Saxo Grammaticus, Historia Danica; quotations here are from the translation by Oliver Elton, The First Nine Books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus (1894), pp. 348, 349, 353, 352.
10. Eireks saga Viðförla in Fl. I 29-36, §§ 1-5. So far as I know, no English translation of this story exists.
11. Text: sá þeir land fagrt með miklum bloma ok gnott hunangs (Fl. I 33, §3). See also § 4, p. 33: þa sa þeir fagrt land. grausin huit sem purpuri við sætum ilm ok myklum bloma ok flutv hunangs lækir um alla uegu landzins.
12. It is possible that monotheistic pagans were regarded as being in some sense more righteous than polytheists. See for example the account of the death of Thorkel Moon, quoted by Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards, "Narrative Elements in the Icelandic Book of Settlements", Mosaic 4 (1970), p. 5.
13. It is probable that Saxo's Undersakr is to be identified with the Ódainsakr found in other sources.

14. C. Tolkien, The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise (1960), Appendix.
15. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Structure as prophecy: the influence of biblical exegesis upon theories of literary structure", in Silent Poetry, Essays in numerological analysis, ed. A. Fowler (1970), pp. 32-72; see p. 43.
16. The biblical archetype for this analysis is Jonah, who prays to God "from the belly of the fish": "out of the belly of Sheol I cried for help," 2, 1-2. (Biblical quotations in this paper are from The New English Bible, 1970.) This story was taken as a "type" of the Resurrection during the Middle Ages (see Matthew 12, 40: "Jonah was in the sea-monster's belly for three days and three nights, and in the same way the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth.")

Christ is seen as the fulfilment of the prophecy given in Isaiah 9, 2: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: light has dawned upon them, dwellers in a land as dark as death." (Eric and Helgi both pass through mist and darkness into light.)

Interpreting the dragon encountered by Eric as a symbol of death reveals an interesting collision of pagan and Christian traditions. (In terms of the mythology found in Saxo, e.g. lib. viii, cap. 14, the bridge to another world crossed by Eric - and guarded by the dragon - is the bridge to the land of the dead.)

17. Kålund dates this MS at 1387 - exactly contemporary with E. Munksgaard's dating of Flateyjarbók (1387-94) in his Om Flatøbogen og dens Historie (Copenhagen 1930). But this coincidence, though interesting, is not important, since these ideas were conventional.

The translations from this MS are taken from M. Schlauch, op.cit., pp. 76-7.

18. Fl. II 11, § 9. Considering the importance of the role of baptism in the three sagas written into Flateyjarbók by Jón Þórðarson, it is interesting to note that baptism was illumination to the early Church. (See for example J. A. MacCulloch, The Harrowing of Hell, pp. 248-9.)
19. Sveinsson, op.cit., p. 171 (notes to Chapter xiii). The story is taken from Maríu saga (ed. C.R.Unger, Christiania 1871), where it is said that Páll regularly told this story on St Mary's Day.

STEFÁN KARLSSON  
ICELANDIC LIVES OF THOMAS À BECKET:  
QUESTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

The following abbreviations are used:

- Bisk. Biskupa sögur, gefnar út af Hinu íslenzka  
bókmenntafélagi (Kaupmannahöfn 1858-78).
- CCI Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi (Copenhagen  
1930-56).
- DI Diplomatarium Islandicum (Kaupmannahöfn og  
Reykjavík 1857- ).
- EIM Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile  
(Copenhagen 1958- ).
- Isl.æv. Islendzk Æventyri ... herausgegeben von Hugo Gering  
(Halle a. S., 1882-3).
- MI Manuscripta Islandica (Copenhagen 1954- ).
- NRA The Norwegian State Archives, Oslo.
- Ann Islandske Annaler indtil 1578. Udgivne ved  
Dr Gustav Storm (Christiania 1888).
- Th.s. Thomas saga.

I

In his collection of Icelandic tales, Islendzk æventyri, isländische legenden, novellen und märchen (1882)  
Hugo Gering printed for the first time a tale he called



"Of William the Bastard and his Sons " (No.16).

The oldest manuscript containing this tale was written around the middle of the fourteenth century or a little later, and the tale is one of a group of 36 in Gering's collection that he believed on grounds of common characteristics of style to be composed, translated or retold by the same individual, who must have written at least some of these tales after 1339.

The beginning of this particular tale runs as follows:

Merkiligir tveir kennimenn, Bergr Gunnsteins-  
son ok Jón hestr, hafa skrifat lífssögu virðuligs  
herra Thomæ Cantuariensis erkibiskups, hvárr með  
sínnum hætti, hversu hann þreytti fyrir guðs  
kristni í Englandi allt til þíningar; ok eigi  
því síðr hefir hvárrgi þeirra túlkat grundvöll  
sjálfrar sögunnar er stendr í bók þeirri er  
Speculum historiale heitir, hvaðan leiddi þann  
úvana ok údæmi er með yfirgirnd var komit uppi  
í Englandz kristni framarr en í öðrum ríkjum.

In translation:

Two notable clerics, Bergr Gunnsteinsson and  
Jón hestr, have written lives of the venerable  
Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, each in his  
own way, describing how he fought for Christian-  
ity in England up to his martyrdom; nevertheless

neither of them has interpreted the basis of the story, which is recorded in the book called *Speculum historiale*, wherefrom had resulted the evil customs and vices that had developed along with excessive greed in the English church more than in any other country.

The oldest manuscripts of this tale are fragmentary and lack the beginning of the tale. Gering uses two manuscripts to supply this: the younger of these, from the early eighteenth century, has the reading Jón Hallzson where Gering prints Jón hestr. The other manuscript used by Gering is from the late fifteenth century, and in this manuscript Gering reads Jón hestr although twenty years earlier Guðbrandur Vigfússon had read the name as Jón holt and printed it thus in a review in *Ný félagsrit* (1863), p. 148. Understandably Guðbrandur took the appearance of Jón hestr unkindly and pointed out Jón holt to Gering in a letter, saying of Jón hestr that he was "a quite unknown entity, not to be identified under the sun". But Gering kept to his reading and asserted in the volume of notes, 1884, that "das hest ist jedoch von mir und Verner Dahlerup als factische lesung des codex constatiert" (p. 44). After this scholars had to put up with Jón hestr until 1964 when Agnete Loth did away with him in her introduction to the facsimile edition of *Thomasskinna*, restoring at the same time Jón holt. "It is," she says, "quite certain that

the reading holtt ... is correct" (EIM VI, pp.10-11).

## II

Both the venerable clerics mentioned above, Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt, are known from other sources, but we have little knowledge of them, nor are their literary activities mentioned elsewhere.

In the so-called Prestssaga Guðmundar góða, probably written around 1240, the priest Bergr Gunnsteinsson is mentioned among the travelling companions of the bishop-elect Guðmundr and the chieftain Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson when Guðmundr went to Norway for consecration in 1202 (Bisk. I, p. 481), and another journey of Bergr's is noted in annals for the year 1212 (Ann. IV, V, VIII, IX). Nothing else is known about him with certainty, but it has been conjectured that he was of a notable family, the son of a certain Gunnsteinn Þórisson, who is said to have moved from the north of Iceland to the west, and if this is the case Bergr must have been the uncle of Abbot Lambkárr Þorgilsson, who has been believed to be the author of the Prestssaga Guðmundar góða. According to Peter Foote: "Probably the outside limits for Bergr's life-time are c. 1160-1230" (Saga-Book XV, p. 444).

Jón holt is mentioned in Árna saga biskups, which was probably written in the first years of the fourteenth century. Árni Þorláksson, who was bishop from 1269 to 1298,

fought a hard struggle for the rights of the church against laymen, who had from days of old had power over church farms, and one of the priests who supported the bishop most diligently in this fight was Jón holt. According to the story the farm of Hitardalur was seized from Jón holt by laymen in 1284, when he had lived there for nearly 40 years (Bisk. I, p. 734). If Jón holt was priest there for the whole of this period, which is the most natural interpretation, then he must have been born around 1220. Still, he may have been somewhat younger, for during the winter of 1288-89 Jón holt stays in Norway with King Erik Magnússon the Priest-Hater (Bisk. I, p. 776), and puts his case before the archbishop that spring (Bisk. I, p. 779). In the autumn of 1289 Jón holt is still in Norway (Bisk. I, p. 782), and the date of his return to Iceland is uncertain, but according to annals he died in 1302 (Ann. III, IV, V).

3. Ever since the passage about these two authors (or translators) of the Thomas sagas was printed in Ný félagsrit in 1863, scholars have agreed in attributing to the above-mentioned Bergr Gunnsteinsson the oldest Life of Thomas in Icelandic; but it is only gradually during the century that has passed since then that the nature of this story has become clear.

In 1863 Guðbrandur Vigfússon declared Bergr Gunnsteinsson to be the author of "The Older Thomas saga" (Ný félagsrit, p. 150) as if there were only two sagas in existence, there being no Thomas saga in print at the time.

In 1869 the industrious textual editor C. R. Unger published three versions of Thomas saga, explaining them as follows.

The oldest version, which is only preserved in two fragmentary manuscripts, whose contents do not overlap, was believed by Unger to have been written in Iceland in the early thirteenth century, but he knew nothing of its source or sources (Th.s., 1869, p. iv).

Apart from these fragments Thomas saga exists in two more or less completely preserved versions. Unger showed that the older of these (Thomas saga I) had been translated from the so-called Quadrilogus prior, which is a combination of four Lives of Thomas, those by John of Salisbury, Herbert of Bosham, Alan of Tewkesbury and William of Canterbury, and additional use is made of the Passio of Benedict of Peterborough. Unger thought this to be a Norwegian translation from the latter half of the thirteenth century, probably its final years (Th.s., 1869, pp. i-ii).

The younger of these two versions (Thomas saga II)

Unger believed to be made up of four elements. According to him the main source was a work in Latin by Prior Robert of Cretel, who is frequently quoted in the narrative, but whom Unger failed to identify, and additional use was made of the Quadrilogus translation, Speculum historiale by Vincent of Beauvais, and finally the oldest Icelandic version. Unger believed this youngest Thomas saga to be Icelandic from the early part of the fourteenth century (Th.s., 1869, pp. iii-iv).

After Unger's edition had appeared Guðbrandur Vigfússon could be a trifle more accurate in his pronouncements on the Thomas saga he wanted to attribute to Bergr Gunnsteinsson, and in his Prolegomena to Sturlunga saga (1878) he says that Bergr "compiled a short Life of St. Thomas of Canterbury" (p. cxxv). Here he must be referring to the version Unger called the oldest and believed to be preserved in two fragments.

In his edition of the youngest Thomas saga in the Rolls Series (1875-83) Eiríkur Magnússon prints the fragments believed by Unger to be from the oldest version and labels them D and E, considering D to be a fragment of two Lives (Vitæ) and E from a third work, Gesta post martyrium. Eiríkur Magnússon thought Bergr Gunnsteinsson had written the Life of Thomas preserved on three leaves of four in D (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. i-lix).

In his edition Eiríkur Magnússon pointed out that Robert of Cretel who is often referred to in the youngest Thomas saga must have been Robert of Cricklade, a twelfth-century prior of the Austin house of St Frideswide's Oxford (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. xcii-xciv). Robert's work on St Thomas is lost, but E. Walberg showed that an Anglo-Norman poem on the Saint, composed by Beneit, a monk of St Albans, derived material from this lost work, and by a comparative study Walberg also discovered that the text of the fragment D was also based on Robert of Cricklade's work, which was probably written in 1173 or 1174, or a few years later (La tradition hagiographique de saint Thomas Becket avant la fin du XIIe siècle, 1929, pp. 9-33).

In his paper "On the Fragmentary Text concerning St Thomas Becket in Stockh. Perg. fol. nr. 2" in Saga-Book XV (1961) Peter Foote showed that this fragmentary text in Stockh. Perg. fol. nr. 2, which Unger had printed in the second volume of Heilagra manna sögur 1877, was certainly for the most part and probably in its entirety a translation of Robert's work. He also argued that D and E were fragments of a single version, probably from the latter half of the thirteenth century which was based on the translation of Robert Cricklade's work, but with additional material "perhaps from John of Salisbury's Vita and certainly from Benedict of Peterborough's

Miracula". Peter Foote believes that this "D-E recension" was later expanded "by reference to the ... Quadrilogus translation", and he thinks that this second edition of the "D-E recension" was used by the author of the youngest saga along with the Quadrilogus translation itself and other material (Saga-Book XV, p. 445).

Peter Foote thought it probable that the translation of Robert of Cricklade's work was made by Bergr Gunnsteinsson around 1200 (Saga-Book XV, p. 444), and on chronological grounds it seems hardly possible to attribute to Bergr any other known version of Thomas saga, if this is the same Bergr Gunnsteinsson noted in sources from 1202 and 1212, as must be considered highly probable because of the rarity of both the names Bergr and Gunnsteinn. On the other hand it might well be that the author of the 16th tale in Gering's Aventyri, referred to above, actually ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteinsson the expanded version of the Robert of Cricklade translation used by the author of the youngest Thomas saga, but this will be considered later.

3. There has been greater disagreement among scholars about Jón holt's possible contribution to the extant Thomas sagas.

In Ný félagsrit 1863 Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggested that the younger version of Thomas saga could be ascribed to Jón holt, i.e. that version which is best preserved in



the manuscript Thomasskinna (p. 150), and he put this view forward again in his Prolegomena to Sturlunga saga in 1878 (I, p. cxxxv). Finnur Jónsson took a similar view in his literary history of 1901 (II, p. 884) and so did Agnete Loth in her introduction to the facsimile edition of Thomasskinna, but with some reservation (EIM IV, p. 11).

Eiríkur Magnússon had no trouble making one man out of the ghost-figure Jón hestr and Jón holt, but he thought it impossible that he could have been author of the youngest saga. He had two arguments. One was that the youngest saga and Bergr Gunnsteinsson's saga were in fact the same version, as the youngest saga was "a popularised descendant" of Bergr's saga. "No Icelfander of old would have classed them as two different sagas," Eiríkur says. The other argument was based on a misunderstanding of the remarks about Bergr's and Jón's saga, which were understood by Eiríkur to mean that "both men wrote a saga of Thomas up to his Passion", i.e. that neither saga contained Gesta post martyrium, and this could certainly not refer to the youngest saga which contains miracles that took place after the death of Thomas. On the other hand Eiríkur Magnússon was "strongly inclined to think" that the translator of the Quadrilogus version was Jón hestr or holt (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. lix-lx). I will come to Eiríkur's view of the nationality of that translation later.

In his paper in Saga-Book XV Peter Foote pointed out that Eiríkur Magnússon misunderstood the remarks he referred to. They were as follows:

Merkiligir tveir kennimenn, Bergr Gunnsteinsson  
ok Jón holt (or hestr, as EM and PF have it),  
hafa skrifat lífssögu virðuligs herra Thomæ  
Cantuariensis erkibiskups, hvárr með sínum  
hætti, hversu hann þreytti fyrir guðs kristni  
í Englandi allt til pínungar

and Peter Foote notes correctly that "allt til pínungar (up to his martyrdom) goes with þreytti (fought), not with hafa skrifat lífssögu (have written Lives)". On the other hand Peter Foote says that "it would be easiest chronologically to connect him (i.e. Jón holt) with the D-E recension ... rather than with the Quadrilogus translation or with T (i.e. the youngest saga)" (p. 443, note 95).

I shall now discuss these three theories as to which Thomas saga Jón holt is likeliest to have written.

Eiríkur Magnússon thought that the youngest saga in its present form was not written until after 1299, for it mentions Queen Isabel "er átti Eiríkr konungr Magnússon" (whom King Erik Magnusson had to wife) (Th.s. II, 1883, p. xxxvi). King Erik died in 1299, but as Jón Helgason has pointed out in his introduction to the facsimile edition of Hauksbók (1960), "the preterite is the normal

tense in genealogies" and is not used only of things that have come to an end. When Haukr Erlendsson mentions his wife Steinunn in Landnáma he adds "er Haukr Erlenz sun atti" (whom Haukr Erlendsson had to wife), although both partners in the marriage are still living (MI V, pp. xxi-xxii). Here it is therefore the marriage of Isabel and Erik in 1293 which is the terminus post quem. It is thus possible on account of the dating that Jón holt wrote the youngest saga, although it is unlikely, since he died in 1302, then probably around 80 years old.

But another factor seems to exclude this possibility. In the 16th tale in Gering's Íslendzka æventýri we are told about the sagas by Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt, that neither of them has

túlkat grundvölls sjálfrar sögunnar er stendr í  
bók þeirri er Speculum historiale heitir, hvaðan  
leiddi þann úvana ok údæmi er með yfirgirnd var  
komit uppi í Englandz kristni framarr en í öðrum  
ríkjum.

I have understood this rather vaguely worded passage to mean that the author of the 16th tale is criticizing Bergr Gunnsteinsson for not having made clear the state of church administration in England around the time when Thomas became archbishop, namely that the English monarchy was more involved in and had greater influence over church

affairs than was customary in other countries. This "basis of the story" is lacking in the Quadrilogus translation and it is also lacking in Robert of Cricklade's work, as it has been reconstructed on the basis of Icelandic Lives of Thomas and the Anglo-Norman poem of the monk Beneit in Margaret Orme's monograph in Analecta Bollandiana 84 (1966). On the other hand, this "basis of the story" is explained in the 16th tale in Gering's Aventýri and the same is true of the youngest saga of Thomas Becket (Chs. 1-2, 6, 10-11) where there is a short account of the English system of church administration from the time when Pope Gregory brought Christianity to England and of the monarchy from the time when William the Bastard conquered the country.

It follows from this that the criticism of the Lives of Thomas by Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt in the 16th tale of the Aventýri would be utterly unjustified if it referred to the youngest Thomas saga.

Also it seems clear that the author of the youngest Thomas saga knew and made use of the 16th tale in the Aventýri. There are various similarities in wording between these two texts, but I will let two examples suffice to support my case:

(1) In the 16th tale there is a historical error which is not found in the main source of the tale, Speculum historiale, namely that William Rufus was the eldest son of William the Bastard (ll. 30-31). The same error appears in the youngest saga (Th.s., 1869, p. 296.7, cf. Th.s. I, 1875, p. 4, note 7).

(2) In Speculum historiale there is the following account of this King William: "Tandem exhaustus expensis ad rapinas convertit animum" (Isl. æv. II, p. 39, note 3). This passage is translated and expanded in the 16th tale as follows:

Ok sem þetta kirkjufè var út sóat, þótti kóngi nauðsyn gjöræz til nýrra fèbragða; herjar þó ekki á víkinga ok heiðnar þjóðir, sem aðrir kóngar, helldr á saklausa sveininn Jesum Maríu sun (ll. 158-61)

In the youngest Thomas saga there is this passage:

Enn er fehirðzlan var naliga hreinsut, legz Vilhialmr konungr i hernad at afla fiær i þann stað, ok heriar æigi æ heidinn dom ædr vtlenzka hofdingia, helldr æ hinn saklausa suein drottin Jesum (Th.s., 1869, p. 296. 11-14).

After this the text in the 16th tale is similar to Speculum historiale, but in the youngest Thomas saga it has been shortened, while the following has been inserted:

" ... þuiat hann setr upolligt gialld æ klaustr ok kirkjur i Einglandi." This sentence is found in a different place in the 16th tale, "leggjandi gjalld úpólanligt á alla biskupsstóla, klaustr ok kirkjur í Englandi" (ll. 89-91), and the same is true of a corresponding sentence in Speculum historiale: "Quapropter importabilis pensionis edictum per totam Angliam cucurrit" (Isl. æv. II, p. 37, note 4).

I think, therefore, that there can be no doubt that the youngest Thomas saga is younger than the 16th tale of the Eventyri, and at the same time it becomes impossible that the reference in the 16th tale to the Life of Thomas by Jón holt can be the youngest Thomas saga.

Peter Foote's idea that the D-E version of Thomas saga might be the work of Jón holt can be refuted by the same argument as Eiríkur Magnússon employed to disprove that the youngest Thomas saga could have been ascribed to Jón holt, and it fits this case still better: if the author of the 16th tale had ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteins-son the translation of the Life of Thomas by Robert of Cricklade, he would hardly have ascribed to Jón holt the D-E version, which was the same story slightly expanded, for he says at the same time that Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt wrote Lives of Thomas "hvárr með sínum hætti" (each in his own way).

My conclusion is that if anything has been preserved of Jón holt's Thomas saga it can only be the Quadrilogus translation.

5. The author of the 16th tale in Gering's Aventyri mentions two Thomas sagas, but uses a third source himself, Speculum historiale. The author of the youngest Thomas saga uses two older Thomas sagas, a translation of Robert of Cricklade with additions, and the Quadrilogus translation, apart from using the Speculum historiale. It would of course be simplest to assume that the two sagas mentioned in the 16th tale are the same as the two sagas used in the youngest Thomas saga. We have already seen that these two texts are related, probably with the youngest Thomas saga derived from the 16th tale, but now it is time for a closer discussion of these two works and their possible authors.

In the introduction to his edition of Thomas saga in 1869 Unger says (in English translation):

There is some probability in Guðbrandur Vigfússon's suggestion that the author of this version of Thomas saga (i.e. the youngest saga) could be Abbot Arngrim of Thingeyrar who died in 1362 and wrote a saga of the Icelandic bishop Gudmund. Bisk. S. II(p. iii note).

Abbot Arngrímur is in all probability identical with

Arngrímr Brandsson, who in his early life was priest in the Skálholt see and a friend of Jón Halldórsson, the Norwegian who was bishop of Skálholt from 1322 to 1339. In 1327 (Ann, p. 397) Bishop Jón sent the priest Arngrímr "sem hann hœlt fremstan í sínu biskupsdæmi" (whom he regarded highest in all his see) to Norway to put his affairs before the archbishop (Bisk. I, p. 865, cf. p. 908). Arngrímr stayed there for two winters (Ann, p. 397) and in 1334 he became priest at Oddi (Ann, pp. 207, 349), one of the best livings in the diocese. In 1341 the annals state that Sira Arngrímr joined a monastery (Ann, p. 352) and this was probably the Benedictine one at Þingeyrar. In a document from the north country (1346) "brother Arngrímr" is mentioned accompanying another Norwegian bishop, Ormr Ásláksson of Hólar (DI II, no. 518). During the bishop's absence (1347-1351) Arngrímr was his deputy (officialis, DI III, no. 19), and having returned Ormr ordained Arngrímr abbot of Þingeyrar (Ann, pp. 224, 276, 355, 405). He died in 1361 or 1362 (Ann, pp. 226, 359). Arngrímr wrote his saga of Bishop Guðmundr Arason in 1343 or later (CCII XIX, p. 15), using as his main source a Guðmundar saga which was probably written by his contemporary Bergr Sokkason, abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá. This source is only preserved in young manuscripts (Papp. 4to nr. 4; AM 395 4to) and has not yet been published.



It is undeniably somewhat surprising that Unger quotes Guðbrandur Vigfússon as saying that Abbot Arngrímr could have written the youngest Thomas saga, for both in 1863 and 1878 Guðbrandur had believed Jón holt to be the most probable author of that saga, as I have mentioned above. Unger probably bases his remark on a letter Guðbrandur wrote to him on 21 May 1869 (NRA, Priv. Ark. 59, Unger 1). There Guðbrandur thanks Unger for the first sheet of his edition of Thomas saga, which Unger had sent him while the book was being printed, and says about the youngest Thomas saga: "þar eru mörg góð og skringileg orð, og sagan hefir keim af Arngrími höf. Guðmundar S." (it contains many fine and quaint words and the story has a certain flavour of Arngrímr, the author of Guðmundar saga). Unger's remark should therefore be regarded as a too liberal interpretation of Guðbrandur's words.

In his edition of Thomas saga (II, pp. lxiii-lxix) Eiríkur Magnússon made a thorough comparison of the youngest Thomas saga, and Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga, and he pointed out that Thomas saga had obviously been the model for Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga. He says: "The author's object, though not openly avowed, was evidently to make bishop Gudmund all through æ complete a counterfeit of Thomas of Canterbury as the different framework of the circumstances would allow" (II, p. lxv). He also

points out a clear textual relationship between these two sagas, of such a nature that Arngrím's Guðmundar saga must be a derivative of the youngest Thomas saga, and finally he points out a great number of rare words and phrases common to these sagas.

In spite of this Eiríkur Magnússon did not believe them to have a common author; the explanation must be Arngrím's admiration for the youngest Thomas saga, and he says: "As a natural consequence Arngrim uses the phraseology of T. in the manner of an imitator. To him T. is a Ciceronian classic whom he strives to rival, but whom he fails to reach, because his ideal itself is an imitation of Latin, and thus Arngrim's native idiom asserts itself now and again" (II, p. lxix). Eiríkur Magnússon goes on to say that "He uses words commonly occurring in T. in peculiar senses of his own, entirely foreign to T." I cannot accept this criticism of Eiríkur Magnússon's of Abbot Arngrím's Guðmundar saga and the examples he gives of doubtful usage do not sound convincing to me; I feel that these words from Thomas saga are completely fitting and have an intelligible meaning in Guðmundar saga.

One of the things Eiríkur Magnússon mentions as showing that Thomas saga and the youngest Guðmundar saga cannot be the work of a single author is the fact that the word góðfýsi "devotion" is a "word of exceedingly frequent

occurrence" in Thomas saga, whereas it occurs only twice in Guðmundar saga, in one of the cases probably taken straight from Thomas saga, and on the other hand Ölmusa is a very common word in Guðmundar saga in the sense of "alms-man, alms-folk", but the word does not occur in this sense at all in Thomas saga (II, p. lxviii). An alternative explanation can be given for this: góðfýsi is a very frequent word in the Quadrilogus translation. It occurs for example, six times in chapter XI, but only twice in the corresponding text in the youngest Thomas saga, one of these times in the form góðfýst (Th.s., 1869, pp. 33-6, 321-2); and Ölmusa in the sense in which it is used in Arngrím's Guðmundar saga is common in the Guðmundar saga version on which he bases his work, though it is not always found in the same positions in these two versions of the saga.

In my opinion Eiríkur Magnússon has by no means succeeded in disproving that the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrím's Guðmundar saga could be written by the same person. On the contrary it seems to me that the close relationship between them both in style and treatment of material can best be explained by assuming a single author.

In this connection I want to quote Margaret Orme's remarks in her article in Analecta Bollandiana 84 (p. 382)

concerning the working methods of the author of the youngest Thomas saga:

The T. editor is relatively self-conscious of his role as narrator and, further, his intervention to express approval or disapproval is more frequent than narrators' comment in the Quadrilogus translation. Since many of the short metaphorical additions he makes to his excerpts from Q are his responsibility, some longer passages showing an interest in more elaborate exegesis may be tentatively attributed to him. Some aspects of St Thomas's life and character are emphasised more than others, probably with the audience, "contemplatives", in mind. Uncompromising devotion to God, manifesting itself in both thought and action, is naturally enough presented as the guiding principle of Thomas's life. In addition, devotion to the Virgin and the virtues of chastity and asceticism are stressed, as is also the value of the spiritual life as opposed to worldly indulgence and secular wisdom.

Having worked on the text of the different versions of Guðmundar saga for a few years I could not find a better or more exact description of Arngrímr's methods in his Guðmundar saga than the words here used by Margaret Orme of the author of the youngest Thomas saga.

It is tempting to bring in a short aside at this point. If it is possible to put forward conclusive arguments to the effect that these two Lives are the work of a single person, then a comparison of Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga with his main source on Guðmundr's life can be of value when we try to judge the probability that individual elements in the youngest Thomas saga are derived from lost parts of Robert of Cricklade's work. Margaret Orme says (p. 384): "Robert may have had an account of Thomas's continued studies at home after his mother's death (T 28-30): the extant Latin lives afford a contrast here, saying that he neglected his studies at this period." This may be compared with what Arngrímr's source has to say after having described the death of Guðmundr's father (Papp. 4to nr. 4, ff. 3v-4r):

Tók Guðmundr þat fyrr en fé í föðurarf at vera barðr til bókar ok náms. Hann var mjök ólátr í fyrstu, ok því var fóstri hans ok frændi mjök við hann harðr ok hirtingasamr. Þótti þat auðsét í hans uppvexti at honum mundi í kyn kippa um ódælleika, því at hann vildi ráða at

sínum hluta við hvern sem hann átti leikunum at skipta. (Earlier than any money Guðmundr received as his paternal inheritance that he was beaten to books and study. At first he was extremely disobedient and on that account his uncle was strict with him and punished him. It seemed obvious in his upbringing that he would inherit his family's unruliness, for he wanted to have his own way, whoever he was playing with.)

This corresponds to the oldest sources on Guðmundur's youth (Bisk. I, p. 416), but in Arngrímur's Life all this is turned upside down (Bisk. II, p. 7):

var ... Guðmundr uppfæddr með móðurfrændum sínum, þegar til bækr settr at skilningaraldri, hlýðinn ok auðmjúkr sínum meistara, sem öllum öðrum, er honum vildu gott kenna, því at sú er röksamlig regla ritninganna, at engi rísi fyrr upp til meistaraðóms yfir aðra menn, en hann sat áðr hlýðinn lærisveinn fyrir síns meistara fótum. (Guðmundr was brought up with his mother's family, put to studies as soon as he reached the age of understanding, obedient and humble towards his teacher, as well as to all those who wanted to teach him good things,

for it is a reasonable rule of scripture that nobody can raise himself to be a teacher of others unless he has sat as an obedient pupil at the feet of his master.)

In the light of these working methods it seems rather uncertain whether accounts of Thomas's love of study were put on parchment until his youngest Life was composed in Iceland.

I mentioned initially that the 16th tale in Gering's Eventyri collection was one of a group of 36 tales in that collection which Gering ascribed to a single author. This author he called Alpha. Gering made a lengthy analysis of the main characteristics of this author as opposed to three other authors (or translators) whom he believed to have written tales in his collection (Isl. æv. II, pp. xxv-lxiv), and it may be said that the characteristics mentioned by Gering correspond entirely with the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrím's Guðmundar saga. One of these characteristics is that the author Alpha is much freer in his treatment of material than the other Eventyri authors, wherever it is possible to compare him with his sources. Most of the words characteristic of the Alpha author in contradistinction to other texts in the Eventyri collection also occur in the youngest Thomas saga and Guðmundar saga, and other traits of style that Gering gives examples of can also be found in these two

sagas. Among these may be mentioned alliteration, connective formulae, antitheses, litotes, rhetorical questions and a great number of loan words, and much besides that I have unfortunately not time to exemplify.

Some of the tales Gering ascribed to Alpha are connected with the name of Jón Halldórsson, bishop of Skálholt. Some of these tales are supposed to have been related by him to entertain people, also there is among the Alpha-texts a Jóns þáttr biskups Halldórssonar, an account of the bishop written after his death in 1339. We learned earlier that Arngrímr Brandsson was Jón Halldórsson's dearest friend among the priests, so that for these reasons too no Icelandic author mentioned by name in the early fourteenth century is likelier than he to be the Eventyri-author Alpha.

In his book Stilsignalment och författarskap i norrön sagalitteratur (1968) Peter Hallberg compares the use of a group of words and a few other elements of style and concludes that the three works I have mentioned and ascribed to Arngrímr Brandsson were all the work of a single person, but that this person had written many other works as well and was to be identified as Abbot Bergr Sokkason at Munkaþverá (Bergr is first mentioned in sources from around 1312 and last heard of in 1345), for among the works grouped together in Hallberg's study was the youngest



Nicholas saga, which can with certainty be ascribed to Bergr, and also Michaels saga, which is thought to be his work as well. Hallberg thought that Bergr must have translated Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga from Latin, and earlier Björn M. Ólsen had believed that saga to have been originally composed in Latin. This theory of Björn M. Ólsen's is, on the other hand, fairly suspect for a number of reasons and even improbable, although Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga is obviously written with an eye to foreign readers.

Hallberg's conclusion is of the greatest importance, for if these three works I have ascribed to Arngrímr had not been grouped together by Hallberg's methods it would have been out of the question to regard them as the work of a single person. On the other hand I think that many other factors have to be taken into account, not only factors of style but also the author's treatment of his material, insofar as it is possible to make a comparison with sources, if we are to assume a single author for all the works grouped together by Hallberg in his book and in two later papers in Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar (1969) and Einarsbók (1969). I am inclined to think that Peter Hallberg has demonstrated some common characteristics of two or more authors working at the same time, in the first half of the fourteenth century, and at least partially in the same environment, the Benedictine monasteries in

northern Iceland. As an example of differences between works within this group we can mention that two words that occur frequently in Bergr's Nicholas saga, the adverbs stórliga and senniliga, are extremely rare in the youngest Thomas saga and Guðmundar saga, whereas the noun punktr is common in the works I have ascribed to Arngrímr, but does not occur in Nicholas saga (Hallberg 1968, pp. 132-3, 148-9, 156). Also I might mention that alliteration is much more frequent in the "works by Arngrímr" than in Nicholas saga; on the other hand the present participle used in the sources is often changed to a finite verb in the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga, whereas frequent use of the present participle is one of the clearest stylistic traits of the Nicholas saga.

My conclusion is that it must be considered probable that Arngrímr Brandsson wrote the 16th tale in Islendzk æventyri and afterwards the youngest Thomas saga.

6. If this conclusion is found credible it becomes obvious that the two Thomas sagas mentioned in the 16th tale are the same two Thomas sagas used in the youngest Thomas saga. Then Arngrímr Brandsson probably ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteinsson the expanded D-E version which he used, i.e. the translation from Robert of Cricklade with

additional material younger than Bergr's Life, and the Quadrilogus translation to Jón holt.

7. As I said before, Unger asserted that the Quadrilogus translation was Norwegian, and this has mostly been taken for granted ever since. Still, there are certain doubts about it in Agnete Loth's introduction to the facsimile edition of Thomasskinna (EIM VI, p.11). Eiríkur Magnússon, the only earlier scholar to ascribe the Quadrilogus translation to Jón holt, attempted to combine these two views by assuming that Jón holt was "really ... a Norwegian, though he was domiciled in Iceland" (Th.s. II, 1883, p. 1x). Sources do not give Jón's patronymic and the use of place-names as surnames was undoubtedly more common in Norway than Iceland. On the other hand it casts some doubt on his Norwegian nationality that in Árna saga biskups the Icelandic chieftain Hrafn Oddsson addresses him as frændi (kinsman; Bisk. I, p. 779). Even if we take this address literally he could have been half Norwegian, but anyhow he seems to have spent all his adult life in Iceland, if what Árna saga tells us is true, that he spent almost 40 years at Hítardalur before 1284.

Unger says of the chief manuscript of the Quadrilogus translation, which was probably written around 1300 or a little later, that it was certainly written in Norway (Th.s., 1869, p. viii), but Eiríkur Magnússon says that

it is "clearly of Icelandic workmanship" (Th.s. II, 1883, p. lx). Eiríkur Magnússon's assertion is wrong, but at the same time Unger's remark is doubtful. The manuscript was clearly written by a Norwegian, but the influence of Icelandic orthography can be traced in a few elements. Unger pointed out that the manuscript must have been in Iceland in later centuries (Th.s., 1869, p. viii) for it contains a great deal of Icelandic marginal scribbling from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but he was mistaken in thinking (as he appears to have done) that the oldest scribbles, which date from the fourteenth century, were Norwegian, for they are also clearly Icelandic.

Unger thought in fact that there were more things in the language of the manuscript than just the orthography which indicated Norwegian origin (Th.s., 1869, p. iii), but they are hardly so important as not to be explained by the fact that the scribe was Norwegian.

The conclusion is then that it may very well be that this oldest manuscript of the Quadrilogus translation was written in Iceland by a Norwegian, and there are no objections to ascribing this translation to Jón holt, whether he was wholly Icelandic or of Norwegian origin.

8. In his edition of Thomas saga Eiríkur Magnússon

gathered evidence that accounts of Archbishop Thomas were known in Iceland around 1200, and he also gives a few examples of connections between England and Iceland in the late twelfth century (Th.s., II, 1883, pp. x-xxiv). Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1178-93) studied in England a few years before Thomas became archbishop, and his nephew and successor at Skálholt, Bishop Páll Jónsson (1195-1211), also pursued studies there, probably a few years after Robert of Cricklade wrote his Vita et miracula of Thomas. Shortly before the turn of the century the pious Icelandic chieftain Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson went to Canterbury and made St Thomas an offering of walrus ivory, and we know that Hrafn was acquainted with Bergr Gunnsteinsson.

Bergr Gunnsteinsson must have made his translation not later than Guðmundr Arason's time as bishop of Hólar (1203-37), when Guðmundr fought a hard struggle to wrest judicial powers in the affairs of churchmen out of the hands of the laity. Bergr may have been at work already in the time of St Þorlákr, who was the first Icelandic bishop to assert the rights of the church to benefices, which were for the most part controlled by laymen. This struggle was brought to an end in the Skálholt see by Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1269-98) with his code of ecclesiastical law, and one of his main supporters in that struggle, Jón holt, priest at Hítardalur, translated

the Quadrilogus into Icelandic during that time. After a hard fight against the laymen Bishop Ormr Ásláksson (1343-55) finally introduced this law in the Hólar see, and his most faithful collaborator, Abbot Arngrímur of Þingeyrar, is the probable author of the youngest Thomas saga.

Thus the accounts of Thomas Becket were a source of inspiration and a weapon for the warriors of the Icelandic church; and they served as models not only for the careers of these Icelandic bishops but also for the works of those who wrote their sagas.

#### An additional note

In the text quoted from Íslendzk æventýri on pp. 213 and 223 túlkat (interpreted, explained) is Gering's conjecture for his reading túlkt in the oldest manuscript in question, AM 586 4to, where Eiríkur Magnússon (Thomas saga II, p. lviii) read aukit (added). A fresh examination of the manuscript has given the reading tekjt (taken, incorporated), a reading which is found in other manuscripts as well.

This alteration of the previously established text entails a modification of the interpretation given on p. 214, but the meaning of the passage as a whole has not been changed.

# The recensions of Thomas saga

Robert of Cricklade translation

Benedict of Peterborough

John of Salisbury

D-E recension

Quadrilogus translation

Speculum Historiale

Expanded D-E recension

Islendzk æventyri XVI

The youngest Thomas saga

ROBERT KELLOGG

SEX AND THE VERNACULAR IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND

When one considers the theme of this conference, the Icelandic sagas in comparison to medieval literature elsewhere in Europe, the most remarkable general difference is the relative size and variety of the body of serious narrative and intellectual prose produced by thirteenth-century Icelandic literary culture in the vernacular language rather than in Latin. In French and Italian a comparable richness of vernacular prose in contrast to Latin is not to be found before the fourteenth century, and in English not until the fifteenth at the earliest. In France, for example, the thirteenth century witnessed a remarkable development of Arthurian romance in prose, particularly the so-called Vulgate Cycle, but except for the chronicles of Villehardouin and Joinville at the beginning and the end of the century, French prose was limited in both the variety of its literary forms and its intellectual scope. In Italy, Latin held an even more tenacious monopoly on the literary culture of the thirteenth century, allowing significant competition only from the dolce stil nuovo in poetry.



Because literature requires audiences as well as authors, the development of literary prose in Iceland had its roots in all of the cultural institutions that resulted from the country's unique relationship to Britain and the mainland of Europe, not just the literary ones. Specifically, the two institutions that dominated later medieval culture, the Church and the royal courts, had a far more ambiguous influence on cultural life in Iceland at the beginning of the thirteenth century than they did in any other country in Europe. I refer to the Church and Court as social and political institutions, not as shorthand terms for their characteristic modes of thought and aesthetic conventions, whose role in the art of the sagas it will be one of the main purposes of this conference to examine.

Thirteenth-century writers in Iceland were fascinated by the court of Norway and were, of course, the recognized authorities on the history of its foundation and development. Even the Íslendinga sögur, which tell stories about the tenth-century court, explored its nature as a paradigm of the more interesting court of contemporary Norway. Egils saga in particular illustrates this use of an ancient and somewhat primitive royal court, or series of courts, to examine

an institution very much on the mind of its thirteenth-century author. Nor did the saga writers spare the Church as an institution from acute historical analysis. The author of Sverris saga, Abbot Karl Jónsson, although himself a cleric, has left a vivid account of the Norwegian archbishops' lust for power and of their ultimate political ascendancy, through the ceremony of the coronation, over the crown. Abbot Karl was aware that this device for solidifying and sanctioning the interdependence of Church and Court had spread from England to Denmark and hence, within his own lifetime, to Norway.

Learning, piety, manners, art, and power - all were focussed in these two great centralizing institutions, the Church and the Court. And yet, despite this strong attraction, to which all civilized nations had succumbed, the Icelanders had a clear idea at the beginning of the saga-writing period how dangerous both could be. This is the ambiguity, the delicate balance between a retreat into archaic provincialism on one hand and a wholehearted acceptance of alien hierarchies on the other, that characterized the Icelandic view of contemporary European culture at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Within this general context I should like to consider briefly the nature of the great Icelandic schools. Whether we think of the school at Haukadal, where Ari Þorgilsson went in 1074 at the age of seven, or Oddi, where Snorri Sturluson went in 1181 at the age of three, we must think of educational establishments much different from similar schools of the same period elsewhere in Europe, whether operated by cathedrals and monasteries or, at the end of our period, incorporated into universities. The general pattern in either case was an exclusively male community composed of boys and men in clerical orders. The earliest stages of the curriculum consisted of Latin grammar and rhetoric, with, of course, Latin literary models.

Writing about this kind of training, Father Walter Ong, S.J., has wittily compared it to the male puberty rites of other cultures.<sup>1</sup> Boys were whipped for making the kind of habitual mistake in Latin grammar or composition that in any other language might lead to neologisms and linguistic change. The essence of Latin and of the idealized Rome of medieval Latin culture was that it was eternal and unchanging. It was also stridently masculine in its outlook, teaching the stoical and militaristic virtues of Latin antiquity. if not the outright anti-feminism so common in medieval

authors of even the greatest wit and learning. The aim of the Latin schools was, in Father Ong's view, to wean the young men away from the corrupt and mutable world of the feminine and to initiate them into the changeless masculine world of eternal Rome. The vernacular languages, consigned by the medieval educational system to the kitchen, the nursery, and other domains of womenfolk, are notorious for their willingness to admit the poor usage and corruptions that lead in time to linguistic change. They are likewise capable of expressing ideas that may not always correspond to those Latin ideas whose theological status has been established.

A number of institutional forces and happy circumstances conspired against the establishment of typical European schools in Iceland. When I try to imagine the atmosphere at Haukadal and Oddi two things particularly impress me. First, the priests and prelates who lived on these large farming estates were the sons and fathers of the secular chieftains who actually owned the schools and church buildings personally. Secondly, the clergy were usually married men. They could not or did not wish to segregate themselves from the kitchen or the nursery any more than from the law courts and great gatherings of men. One could say, as contemporary

European observers did, either that Iceland was a country so pious that everyone obeyed the bishops or that it was so sunk in iniquity that its bishops were made to obey the higher secular authority. Leaving aside the moral conclusions, both views were correct because the two authorities, secular and ecclesiastical, were bound by ties of filial and fraternal love.

How on these large family estates could the seven-year-old Ari or the three-year-old Snorri escape the attention of women? How, too, could they fail to receive - or at least be exposed to - the comprehensive education that trained the leaders capable of conducting important law suits, of making their way in the seats of power abroad, of expounding a Latin text or a vernacular verse in whose ancient rhythms some sacred or historical truth lay hidden? The news of the day as well as the traditions of the past were as integral a part of their education as the reading of Latin texts, and for these they depended as much upon the women of the estate as the men. Since the family was the basis not only of Icelandic politics and economics but to a large extent of its intellectual leadership as well, not too many men could afford to be without wives. Sexual love as well as the normal intimacies and affections of family life were a common experience of

Icelandic intellectuals in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as was the constant exposure to the vernacular language which necessarily follows from that fact.

The earliest schools in Iceland, which first taught reading and writing, were in all likelihood based on the common European model. The men who according to the First Grammatical Treatise first wrote down the Icelandic laws, genealogies, and sacred translations in the Icelandic language would have learned the art of writing with ink on vellum by copying Latin texts. For some years, therefore, Iceland experienced a cultural situation that had been common all over medieval Europe: the vernacular language, traditions, and verbal art were oral, while Latin was the language of writing. The most famous story illustrative of this situation is Bede's account of the Anglo-Saxon poet Cædmon, who was taught to sing the traditional oral poetry in a dream and then went on to compose paraphrases of the Bible as it was translated for him by the monks at Whitby. Bede's story took place five centuries earlier than the time we have been considering in Iceland. It is quite possible that Anglo-Saxon England at that time had as frank and open relationship between the sexes among its intellectual leaders as Iceland did later on, for the moving force in the effort of converting

Latin scripture to vernacular poetry according to Bede's account was a woman, the Abbess Hild, clearly a person able to understand the scriptures in Latin herself but at the same time eager to have them available to those who could not.

That the earliest literary activity in Iceland was in Latin is quite clear, therefore, from a great many pieces of evidence. But by the middle of the twelfth century considerable progress had been made both in supplying translations of influential books and in setting down directly into Icelandic the knowledge and experience that had hitherto existed only orally. In this latter process it is also clear that women played an important role. One of Ari Þorgilsson's sources of information in the writing of Íslendingabók was Þuríðr, the daughter of Snorri goði.<sup>2</sup> She remembered her father well, and he had been thirty-five years old at the time of the Conversion. This kind of vernacular tradition, passed on by women of intelligence and retentive memory, would not have been possible if the normal sexually segregated Latin-school pattern elsewhere in Europe had prevailed in Icelandic education.

More striking and convincing is the complex instance of Gunnlaugr Leifsson's Latin life of Óláfr Tryggvason, in which he states his indebtedness to six

informants, three of them men and three women.<sup>3</sup> It illustrates the process that must increasingly have seemed wasteful: taking down notes from oral informants in the vernacular, writing out the work in Latin, and then having the work translated back into Icelandic. But even in this awkward transitional period the testimony and traditions preserved by women were crucial to the development of Icelandic historiography.

An apparently harmonious and productive relationship between the sexes in Icelandic cultural life of the Commonwealth period had consequences not just for the language of the sagas but for their view of the relations between the sexes in general. In fact, much of the vernacular literature of medieval Europe depends upon a significant cultural role being played by women, as patronesses, inspirers, and audiences, if not as teachers and authoresses. One thinks, for example, of the courtly audience of Chrétien's verse narratives, not to mention the later and more obvious instances of Petrarch and Boccaccio. A revolution in sensibility as profound as the one created by Chrétien and his followers does not take place in a vacuum. An audience had to be ready for it, had to have anticipated and in a sense created a potential for responding to it. We can think of this audience as one significantly influenced by women who



had in some strange fashion been recently liberated and empowered. I see no reason for revising the conventional view of the French situation expressed many years ago by James Douglas Bruce in his Evolution of Arthurian Romance:

As long as facility in reading was confined to a few and even members of the higher classes were mainly dependent on being read aloud to, the traditional form of narrative - namely, verse - was not likely to yield ground; but as soon as a knowledge of reading became more general and people no longer dependent on professional reciters, the superior attraction of prose for many who were interested in these stories of love and adventure would be sure to make itself felt. What is here said applies, of course, especially to women who must have constituted the majority of the romance-writer's clientèle.<sup>4</sup>

Not only the fact of women in the audience but the nature of their education is reflected in the various forms of narrative art. Bruce stresses the role of the educated woman as an audience, while I am exploring the significance of educated women as suppliers of tradition. But the two roles are in practice not mutually exclusive. By giving a prominent place in society to talented and

energetic women, thirteenth-century Iceland anticipated more nearly the Renaissance than it resembled the culture of the medieval Court. And it signalled this fact by writing for and about women in a language that the Church and its schools had relegated as their special preserve.

While one may resist the temptation to speak of the authoress of Laxdoela saga, it is proper to suggest that women played a part in preserving the stories on which it is based and that there are aspects of the saga that the women of Iceland need not necessarily have had to learn from their sisters over the seas in the courts of France. One such element is the social stature of Unnr in djúpúðga and the private relationship of tenderness and authority that existed between Óláfr feilan and her. This relationship is recapitulated in Höskuldr and his mother, and again in the remarkable scene when Höskuldr discovers Óláfr pái learning what was literally his mother tongue from Melkorka.

The image of the mother secretly breaking her habitual silence in order to pass on the knowledge of her native language to her son profoundly illustrates the argument of this paper. By segregating the sexes educationally and linguistically and by heroically striving against the most powerful laws of human nature

to enforce clerical celibacy, the medieval Church in Europe was making impossible the cultural role of women that was so highly prized and so movingly represented by the author of Laxdoela saga. Those handsome, gifted men of Laxdoela saga repaid the strength of their mothers with a masculine tenderness that is richer and more human in conception than either the fin amour of the romances or its idealization in Dante's feelings for Beatrice. Almost as remarkable as the scene in which Melkorka is discovered talking to her son in Irish is Óláfr pái's setting Melkorka's foster-mother on his knee when they meet in Ireland. The whole atmosphere of the saga has prepared us to recognize the wonder and profundity of this image in which the truly civilized man transmits a familial affection from one woman to another, transcending the differences between generations, sexes, and cultures. It is not easy to imagine a context in which this image would be appropriate outside of the sagas.

This pattern of maternal strength and filial affection may be a modern psycho-analyst's nightmare, especially since it is accompanied in Laxdoela saga by a female wilfulness, not to say bitchiness, that is epitomized in a small way when Vigdís hits Ingjaldr in the nose with a purse full of money, and in a large

way in Guðrún's relationship to Kjartan and her husbands on the one hand and her own sons on the other. But it is a pattern that we have no trouble accepting in a saga, because men and women are in fact that way. That this view of human nature in Laxdoela saga draws upon a peculiarly feminine wisdom cannot be proved in quite the same way as Ari's dependence on Puriðr or Gunnlaugr's on his three women. It has about it the aura of a culture that was willing to think deeply and honestly in its narrative art not only about legal, political, and ecclesiastical institutions but also about the relationship between the sexes in their most dangerous and attractive aspects.

In contrast, the literature of the Church and of the Court embodied partial visions. In neither was woman the social partner of man that she was described as being in the greatest narratives of medieval Iceland. Speaking broadly, she was, in the literature of Church and Court, either a sinner or a saint, a goal toward which man tended, to his joy or his sorrow. In Icelandic narrative, she had a will of her own, one that was conditioned significantly by her total social and psychological role - as wife, mother, daughter, teacher, servant, mistress ... woman's work is never done. Until the Icelandic Commonwealth, through its own

exhaustion and its aspiration for what it conceived to be higher and more modern cultural ideals, surrendered to the Church and the Court as controlling influences on its cultural life, the saga writers wrote for and about women who had never been in need either of liberation or of their own special kind of authors. For who had taught the saga writers their language and their stories while the monks were teaching them how to write?

## NOTES

1. "Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite", Studies in Philology LVI (1959), 103-24.
2. Described in the first sentence of the first chapter of Íslendingabók as "bæði margspök ok óljúgfróð".
3. They are listed at the end of Chapter 81 in the Icelandic translation, which appears as an appendix to the Icelandic version of Oddr the Monk's Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in Guðni Jónsson's edition (Íslendingasagnautgáfan).
4. (Göttingen, 1923), I, 365-6.

JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON

ELEMENTS OF LEARNING AND CHIVALRY IN FÓSTBRÆÐRA SAGA

Fóstbræðra Saga belongs to the category of Icelandic sagas known in their homeland as Íslendingasögur, i.e. sagas of Icelanders, a term intended to signify that these sagas deal primarily with Icelandic characters, in contrast to sagas whose scene is laid in other countries, such as Sagas of Kings (konungasögur), Heroic Sagas (fornaldarsögur), or the southern Romances of Chivalry (riddarasögur). In English, sagas of this category are commonly known as Family Sagas, although they are, in fact, no more peculiarly concerned with family history than other kinds of sagas.

If we wish to categorize Fóstbræðra Saga more particularly, we can assign it to the sub-class of Sagas of Icelanders sometimes referred to as Sagas of Poets (skáldasögur), for one of the two heroes of the saga is Þormóður Kolbrúnarskáld, and verses attributed to him are woven into the narrative of the saga. It thus has a place among such sagas as Egils Saga, Gunnlaugs Saga, Bjarnar Saga, Kormaks Saga, and Hallfreðar Saga. But in one respect Fóstbræðra Saga stands in sharp contrast to all of these sagas: it contains a number of digressions from the main thread of the narrative. As regards their subject matter, these digressions are chiefly of three kinds:

1) Information about the organs of the human body and various character traits associated with them.

2) Theological reflections.

3) Poetic stretches in an ornate rhetorical style.

These passages have long been looked at askance by scholars, who regard them as offending grossly against the "classical" Icelandic saga style. Árni Magnússon, the great manuscript collector and a perspicacious scholar, describes Fóstbræðra Saga in the Flateyjarbók as dragging "a train of nonsensical verbiage" - cum ineptissimo verborum syrmate.

Fóstbræðra Saga is preserved, in whole or in part, in five vellum manuscripts or copies of such manuscripts, and one paper manuscript is also of some independent value for the last part of the saga. The manuscripts, in probable chronological order, are as follows:

Hauksbók, written shortly after 1300.

Möðruvallabók, written about the middle of the  
fourteenth century.

Codex Regius or Membrana regia, a vellum manuscript  
from the same time, now lost, but the  
text preserved in paper copies.

Flateyjarbók, written shortly before 1400.

Bæjarbók, written about the same time, now lost,  
but the text preserved in paper copies.

Codex Holmiensis, a paper manuscript of the first  
half of the seventeenth century.



In Hauksbók the text of Fóstbræðra Saga is shorter and more concise than in the other manuscripts, and it is also mostly free from the digressions which have been considered so damaging to the saga style. It is therefore no wonder that Hauksbók was for a long time regarded as the best and most original of the manuscripts of the saga. Finnur Jónsson argued in favour of this view in the introduction to his edition of Hauksbók (1892-96), and his position is shared by C.F. Hofker in his dissertation De Fóstbræðrasaga (1908) and Björn K. Þórólfsson in his edition of the saga (1925-27).

Björn K. Þórólfsson did, however, observe that Hauksbók is not entirely free from the characteristics which were felt to spoil the saga style of the other manuscripts. In his introduction he remarks that "Hauksbók's mode of expression [is] in a few places somewhat unsagalike", and that the influence of the translated romances can be traced here and there. He goes on to give some examples, such as the author's comment on Þorgeirr Hávarsson's last fight: váru honum lengi sín högg bæði fyrir skjöld og brynju - "his blows served him a long time as both shield and armour" - and the words of Þórdís of Löngunes who wants to capture Þormóðr and launa honum með ljótum dauða - "repay him with a repulsive death". In conclusion he says, "These passages also occur (frequently altered and expanded) in the other recensions."

In his book Om Olaf den helliges Saga (1914) Sigurður Nordal tries to determine the relations between Fóstbræðra Saga and the various sagas of St Olaf. Based on this hypothetical relationship, Nordal and other scholars have concluded that the saga was written about 1200 or in the first years of the thirteenth century; and this has become a kind of corner-stone for the dating not only of Fóstbræðra Saga but of other Sagas of Icelanders - a terminus a quo for this literary genre. Björn K. Þórólfsson seems to accept Nordal's dating. He must therefore assume that the Hauksbók text of the saga represents an altered and expanded version of the original, since, according to him, it contains "unsagalike" elements and shows the influence of translated romances, which is not supposed to have made itself felt until about the middle of the thirteenth century. Now, these supposedly altered and expanded readings are also found in the other principal manuscripts - Möðruvallabók, Flateyjarbók and Regius - and frequently in a more expansive phrasing than in Hauksbók. Following Björn K. Þórólfsson's apparent reasoning we would thus have to assume that the saga was twice expanded in the same peculiar fashion in the same places. Some people have been inclined to regard this as not very probable.

A German scholar, Vera Lachmann, was the first to challenge the old faith in the superior merit of Hauksbók. In her book Das Alter der Harðarsaga (1932), she touches

briefly on Fóstbræðra Saga and gives examples - though fewer than one might wish - to show that the unusual stylistic features found in the other manuscripts also occur in Hauksbók, even though the latter uses a more concise phrasing. From this she concludes that the Hauksbók text represents a reworking of the other version: "da es nämlich kaum anzunehmen ist, dass zwei Menschen sich eine so ausserordentliche Abirrung von sagagemässer Sprache erlauben, so spricht die Wahrscheinlichkeit dafür, dass der Text der Flateyjarbók (FMR) mit seinen krasseren Erbauungsformeln die ursprünglichere Gestalt hat, die von dem Schreiber der Hauksbók wenigstens in gewissem Masse beschnitten und abgedämpft wird."

This brief but acute observation of Vera Lachmann at first went unobserved by scholars. But when Sigurður Nordal took up the idea in the series Íslensk fornrit, first in the introduction to Borgfirðinga sögur (1938) and later in greater detail in the introduction to Vestfirðinga sögur (1943), it at once gained wide acceptance. Moreover, Sven B.F. Jansson demonstrated in his book Sagorna om Vinland (1945) that Fóstbræðra Saga is abridged in Hauksbók, not expanded in the other manuscripts. This is especially true of the first part of the saga, which Lawman Haukr Erlendsson wrote in his own hand; in the middle of the saga his scribe took over, and after that there is little abridgement.

Even so, there were those who remained unconvinced of

the originality of the digressions. Thus Hannes Pétursson, in an article in Tímarit máls og menningar (1957), professes to find a discrepancy between the digressions and the saga itself in their characterization of Þorgeirr Hávarsson, and therefore maintains that the two cannot be the work of a single author. This theory is supported by J.M.C. Kroesen in her book Over de compositie der Fóstbræðra Saga (1962). She claims, moreover, to have observed that the digressions have the appearance of being of relatively late date, and this opinion is more forcefully urged by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his book Ritunartími Íslendingasagna (1965). Both of these scholars accordingly doubt whether the digressions formed part of the original saga. But Miss Kroesen has also observed that the same ideas and the same stylistic features occur elsewhere in the saga, so she goes a step further than other scholars and divides the whole saga between two authors of different dates.

In a monograph on Fóstbræðra Saga which I hope to publish before long the problem of the digressions is once again taken up for detailed consideration. I believe I have been able to demonstrate conclusively that the digressions are original in the saga, the work of the author himself. Various arguments can be adduced in support of this view.

(1) It has never been clearly specified by scholars where in the saga digressions are to be found. The two

scholars who have cited the largest number of instances are Rudolf Meissner in his book Die Strengleikar, und Björn K. Þórólfsson in the introduction to his edition of the saga. Between them they list 26 different digressions, but of these only 16 are common to both lists. Whether all the passages cited can properly be regarded as digressions remains a matter of opinion, and there are, moreover, other passages, cited by neither Meissner nor Björn K. Þórólfsson, which could with equal justice be counted among the digressions. There seems to be no possible way of establishing a common criterion for all the supposed digressions or of drawing a clear line of demarcation between digressions and saga.

(2) The four main manuscripts fall into two classes, consisting on the one hand of Möðruvallabók and Flateyjarbók and on the other of Hauksbók and Regius. This was demonstrated by Hofker, and I have found additional evidence to support his classification. It may be regarded as certain that the differences between the two groups of manuscripts are due to Hauksbók and Regius going back to a separate prototype, for several of their readings appear to be less original than the corresponding readings in Möðruvallabók and Flateyjarbók. Since the digressions are found in Regius, it follows that they must have been in this prototype and thus also in the archetype of all the manuscripts of the saga.

(3) Copyists objected to the digressions and abridged them or even omitted them altogether. But their practice suggests the same difference of opinion and judgement regarding the digressions as we find among scholars of later times. The elimination of digressions is carried to its farthest point in Hauksbók. Yet even there we find traces of two of the digressions listed by Meissner and Björn K. Þórólfsson, and the subject matter of a third one is retold by Haukr Erlendsson in fewer and different words.

(4) Various connecting threads, both verbal and thematic, run from the digressions to other parts of the saga which must be original. I shall here discuss only one example of this. In one of the best-known digressions we are told how after the slaying of the great champion Þorgeirr Hávarsson his heart was cut out because people

wanted to see what it was like, he having been such a valiant man. And it is said that it was very small, and some hold it for true that the hearts of valiant men are smaller than of the cowardly, for they say that there is more blood in a large heart than in a small one and that fear goes with the heart-blood, and they say that the heart sinks in men's breast for this reason, that then the heart-blood moves the heart. <sup>1</sup>

This passage certainly runs counter to our conception

of popular Icelandic saga style, but it must nevertheless be original in the saga. In Hauksbók it is reproduced in a condensed form: "They cut open his body and wanted to see his heart, and it was no bigger than a walnut and hard as a callus and no blood in it." <sup>2</sup> And the passage is linked to other ideas and similes of the saga in a variety of ways. When Þorgeirr Hávarsson has avenged his father and slain the first of the thirteen men he was to kill in the course of his brief life, his mother speaks to him "with a joyful breast". Of an indigent farmer, distressed at the arrival of guests, we are told that "his heart shook", and when still more guests arrive, "fear came into Þorkell's breast, and his heart dropped". And the idea of Þorgeirr's hard and bloodless heart recurs several times:

The most high maker of things had created  
and placed in Þorgeirr's breast so trusty  
a heart and hard that he did not fear.

His heart was not like the gizzard of a  
bird; it was not full of blood so as to  
tremble with fear, but tempered in every  
hardihood by the most high maker of things.<sup>3</sup>

The first discussion of the theories in Fótbæðra Saga about the constitution of the heart seems to have been that of I. Reichborn-Kjennerud in Festskrift for Hjalmar Falk (1927). The matter has since been touched upon by

Lars Lönnroth, in his article Kroppen som själens spegel, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, in Ritunartími Íslendingasagna. Both of them think that the author of Fóstbræðra Saga (or of the digressions) formed these theories himself on the basis of ancient Northern or Germanic ideas. As evidence they cite two passages in old poems: Sá hafði hilmir / hart móðakarn ("that king had a. hard mind-acorn") in Helga kviða Hundingsbana I, and Bjarki átti hugarkorn hart ("Bjarki had a hard mind-grain") in Málsháttakvæði. They also refer to Snorri's words in his Edda, where he tells us that in kennings the heart may be called "a grain or a stone or an apple or a nut or suchlike". But these poetical terms listed by Snorri apply to the heart in general, and their use is therefore not limited to the hearts of valiant men. The heathen poetry of the North does not show that a valiant heart was believed to be small, and there is just as much reason to assume that it was thought to be great. Hugr, which means both "mind" and "courage", has its seat in the heart. And the minds of brave men are hard and great, as is shown by such adjectives as harðhugaðr, harðgeðr, "hard-minded", and hugstórr, hugumstórr, stórgeðr, "great-minded". The hearts harbouring such minds are described as being hard and may therefore be presumed to have also been great.

On the other hand, it so happens that in learned southern works we come across the belief that courage goes



with a small heart and cowardice with a large one. In his Historia naturalis the elder Pliny has this to say about the heart: Bruta existimantur animalium quibus durum riget, audacia quibus parvum est, pavida quibus praegrande; that is to say, "Those animals are considered stupid that have a hard heart, those brave that have a small one, those cowardly that have a large one." He then goes on to enumerate various animals whose hearts are large in proportion to their body-size - hares, asses, bulls, leopards, weasels, hyenas - and tells us that they all have this in common, that when frightened they are either cowardly or dangerous. Pliny differs from Fóstbræðra Saga in attributing dullness or stupidity to creatures with hard hearts - though, as a matter of fact, Þorgeirr Hávarsson is better endowed with other qualities than intelligence, so that there is no inescapable conflict between our two authorities. Pliny no doubt has his information from some older author, although probably not from Aristotle, who appears to have been the chief authority for the section on animals in the Historia naturalis. And the author of Fóstbræðra Saga in all probability did not draw directly on Pliny but on some medieval work where this doctrine was set forth in a manner similar to that of the saga.

In Fóstbræðra Saga we find the idea that fear dwells in the heart-blood, which seems a reasonable conclusion, since the hearts of the cowardly are large and therefore hold a

large quantity of blood. No doubt this was stated in so many words in the author's foreign source. But elsewhere in the saga we find various other qualities spoken of as having their seat in particular organs or parts of the body, and there a particular foreign model - or parallel, at any rate - can be pointed out.

When Þormóðr is staying at Brattahlíð in Greenland, where he has gone to avenge the slaying of his sworn brother, a woman is assigned the chore of pulling off his clothes, as was the custom in Iceland well into the present century. Her companion, Loðinn by name, finds that she tarries rather too long in Þormóðr's sleeping quarters, and, in the words of the saga:

"It seemed to him that she laid her ten fingers around his neck less often than before. Then his anger rose somewhat in its dwelling place, and each man's

anger is in the bile,  
life in the heart,  
memory in the brain,  
pride in the lungs,  
laughter in the spleen,  
lust in the liver." <sup>4</sup>

Þormóðr's attendant in Greenland is named Egill the Fool. After Þormóðr has killed Þorgeirr's slayer, a chieftain of the Greenlanders, he contrives to have Egill

pursued instead of himself. When Egill is caught, we are told:

he quaked in every limb for fear. All his bones shook that were in his body, and those were two hundred and fourteen. His teeth chattered; they were thirty. All the veins in his flesh shivered; they were four hundred and fifteen.

This passage, while pretty certainly original in the saga, is actually found in only one manuscript. We therefore cannot turn to other manuscripts for help in correcting conceivable scribal errors, such as the number of teeth being short by two. In other comparable works, foreign and native, the full number of adult teeth is correctly given as thirty-two. But it may, of course, have seemed appropriate to the author to have Egill the Fool lack two wisdom-teeth.

This lore about the seat of the various faculties and the number of bones, teeth and veins is found in a number of classical and medieval works. The earliest enumeration of the centres of the affections that I have come across is in Lactantius, but no doubt all these things derive from one or another of the natural histories of antiquity. In his De opificio Dei Lactantius says:

Adfectum iracundiæ in felle constitutum putant  
pavoris in corde, lætitiæ in splene. Timidiora  
plus cordis, salaciora plus iecoris, lasciviora

plus splenis habuissent.

That is: "The affection of anger is believed to be settled in the bile; that of fear, in the heart; that of gladness, in the spleen. The cowardly have a large heart, the lecherous a large liver, the merry a large spleen."

Isidore has this information in much the same form in his Etymologiae, while Bede gives the number of bones, veins and teeth in his De nativitate infantium. Both of these authors, it may be pointed out, were well known in medieval Iceland. But the work most likely to have promoted the dissemination of this kind of learning in Iceland is the medical poem Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum.

The Regimen Sanitatis is a poem, or collection of poems, on medical theory and practice, going back to the school of medicine at Salerno. Its nucleus is formed by the so-called Epistola Aristotelis ad Alexandrum de conservatiōe corporis humani, which is a partial translation of an Arabic medical work, made by John of Seville in the first half of the twelfth century. From this nucleus the poem gradually grew by accretion; in S. de Renzi's edition in the first volume of Collectio Salernitana (1852) it consists of 2130 verses. The poem soon gained a wide circulation and was translated into many vernacular tongues and finally printed; in vol. V of Collectio Salernitana (1859) de Renzi lists 246 editions. In the fourteenth century the poem was certainly

known in the northern countries, for from that time we have two fragments of manuscript containing the Latin text, one of them from Iceland, the other from Norway.

The passages in Regimen Sanitatis that are related to Fóstbræðra Saga run as follows:

Cor sapit, pulmo loquitur, fel commovet iram,

Splen ridere facit, cogit amare jecor.

The heart understands, the lungs speak, the bile stirs up anger, the spleen causes laughter, the liver impells to love.

Ossibus ex denis bis centenisque novenis

Constat homo; denis bis dentibus et duodenis,

Ex tricentenis decies sex quinque venis.

Man is made up of two hundred and nineteen bones, thirty-two teeth, and three hundred and sixty-five veins.

The correspondence of the poem with Fóstbræðra Saga is not perfect. According to the saga, life resides in the heart and pride in the lungs, whereas the Regimen assigns to these organs understanding and speech respectively. (As a matter of fact, another version of the poem agrees with Fóstbræðra Saga in making the heart the giver of life.) It is of less significance if the numbers of bones, etc., differ, for Roman numerals are apt to be copied wrong in manuscripts. Indeed, Lars Lönnroth has shown how the figures given in the saga are likely to have resulted from a misreading of the corresponding figures in the Regimen.

He assumes, like other scholars, that the saga dates from about 1200, but states on the authority of Karl Sudhoff that the poem probably did not come into existence until the middle of the thirteenth century - and then in a form containing only a fraction of the verses printed in de Renzi's edition. And if Sudhoff and others are right about the probable age and evolution of the poem, it cannot have influenced Fótbæðra Saga, even if the latter was not written until late in the thirteenth century, as I think most likely.

The same teachings about the number of bones, teeth and veins and the seats of the emotions are found in various Icelandic works dealing with natural history or of an encyclopaedic character. Two of them have all the items from the Regimen quoted above and in the same order, and the conclusion is hard to avoid that these are instances of the immediate influence of the celebrated poem. On the other hand, one of these two works cites ~~Samundr~~ Sigfússon the Learned, which seems to suggest that his writings included something on this subject.

In the saga, the statement that God had placed a brave heart in Þorgeirr's breast is followed by this comment:

And as all good things are made by God, so courage is made by God and placed in the hearts of valiant men, and with it freedom to use their strength for what they will, good or evil...but [Christ] will requite each one as he merits.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars appear to take this as an instance of a kind of free will on the part of the author, his original inference and independent judgement of Þorgeirr. But as Hermann Pálsson has pointed out in his writings on Hrafnkels Saga, this was an exceedingly common idea in medieval religious works. St Augustine wrote a separate work on the question of free will, De libero arbitrio, and among later works on the subject, one might mention the De gratia et libero arbitrio by St Bernard of Clairvaux.

One of the digressions in Fóstbræðra Saga tells of the founding of Rome; the story is the familiar one of Romulus and Remus, and it is found in a similar form as an interpolation in one of the manuscripts of Rómverja Saga. There is, however, one element in the account in Fóstbræðra Saga which I have so far not come across in any other work, foreign or Icelandic, and it would be interesting to know whether anyone present is familiar with the source of the passage, which is undoubtedly some medieval Latin work. The passage runs as follows:

The city was modelled on the fearless beast [i.e., the lion]. The [shape of the] beast was incised on the ground, and thereon were erected city walls. The head of the beast is north of the river. That part of the city is called Rome, but the part that is across the river is called Latransborg, or Latran or Latera, which means flanks.

As already mentioned, Björn K. Þórólfsson considers that both in Hauksbók and in the other manuscripts Fósthæðra Saga shows signs of the influence of the translated romances. He refers in particular to the style and diction of certain passages, but he also cites the following exaggerated description of Þormóðr's conduct at the battle of Stiklarstaðir:

Men have highly praised the manner in which Þormóðr fought at Stiklarstaðir, where King Ólafur fell, for he had neither shield nor coat of mail. He constantly wielded his broad-axe with both hands and waded through the enemy's ranks, and none of those who crossed his path was pleased to have his night-quarters under his axe.

But if Þormóðr acquitted himself well at Stiklarstaðir, Þorgeirr showed himself to be no less proficient at manslaughter during his last fight at Hraunhöfn, where the saga tells us he killed thirteen men. Such ebullitions of valour are comparable to those of late-born champions like Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi or Kári Sölmundarson, who unquestionably are of chivalric extraction.

In their attitude towards women the sworn brothers differ considerably, but both of them exhibit chivalric traits. Þormóðr is fond of women, easily infatuated, and inconstant. The authentic gentleness of chivalric love



marks the description of Þórdís's love for Þormóðr after he has transferred to her the verses originally written in praise of Þorbjörg Kolbrún. But not all knights were ladies' men; some of them refused to squander their vital energies in too close an association with women. This of course had a motive different from the ordinary Christian mortification of the flesh; the object was to have more energy left for killing enemies. Thus Dínus the Proud despised all ladies and damsels in the world and covered his face with a mask in order that they should not see his beauty. The Lay of Guigemar ( Norwegian Guimarsljóð ) was composed by a woman, who cannot contain her wonder at the hero's curious behaviour. "But this was the strangest thing in his nature," she says, "that he utterly refused to love women." It is his kind of chivalry that we find in Þorgeirr Hávarsson. "It is said," the saga tells us, "that Þorgeirr was not much given to women; he called it a debasement of his strength to crawl around women. He seldom laughed."<sup>6</sup>

If the author of Fóstbræðra Saga has gone to foreign works of learning and southern romances for elements of subject matter, influences of this kind are no less evident in the language and style of the saga. It is customary, ever since Nygaard's time, to distinguish between two styles in Old Icelandic literary works: "lærd stil" and "folkelig stil", learned style and popular style. Briefly, the

learned style is Latinized, while the popular style is largely free from Latin influence, and therefore thought to come closer to the contemporary spoken language. As a third variety we have what has been called "hövisk stil", court style; this style is a kind of offshoot of the learned style and closely related to it, but with certain characteristics of its own, which are especially associated with the chivalric romances and other works of a like nature. Furthermore, as the thirteenth century draws on, the learned style gradually begins to undergo a change which reaches its culmination in the fourteenth century. The result is a style which, at least in the hands of some authors, becomes very diffuse and pretentious, loaded with emotionally coloured adjectives and adverbs, compound nouns, and verbs in the present participle. The evolution of this style has been described by Ole Widding, in the book Norron Fortællekunst and elsewhere, and he has named it "den florissante stil" or the florid style.

The style and diction of the digressions in Fóstbræðra Saga show a decided affinity with the learned style, particularly with its sub-types, the courtly style and the florid style. The very custom of introducing digressions into a narrative is typical of the learned style of the middle ages. "Digressio ... ampliatur et decoratur materia," says Geoffrey of Vinsauf. Digressions are found in various other Old Icelandic works of history, although Fóstbræðra

Saga is without parallel among the Sagas of Icelanders.

But digressions were always felt to be an offence against the popular saga style. A good instance of this feeling is provided by Alexanders Saga, where the translator is constantly apologizing for and explaining the digressions of his original.

In individual passages from Fóstbræðra Saga already quoted in illustration of other matters, we have seen some of the family features of the learned varieties of style. It is not possible to deal exhaustively with this question here, but I should like to touch upon a few more characteristics of the same kind.

Among the clearest signs of court style in Fóstbræðra Saga are similes involving the lion, and other references to it óarga dýr, or the fearless beast, as it is also called.

Porgeirr warded them off with great agility and attacked them with great strength and boldness, intrepid as the fearless beast.

He was as undaunted in all perils as is the fearless beast.

Everyone feared them as cattle the lion, when he comes into the herd.

It was a greater peril to advance under the rain of Porgeirr's blows than against the lioness when her whelps are taken from her, which is when she is fiercest in her nature.<sup>7</sup>

Lions are, of course, found in literature before the arrival of the romances, but they are, nevertheless, above all chivalric creatures. And in Old Icelandic literature we very rarely find brave men being compared to lions except in the romances and related works. Such comparisons are, on the other hand, quite common for instance in Tristrams Saga, Karlamagnús Saga (especially Agúlandus Páttr B), and Alexanders Saga. The same is true of the literary device of giving such heroes of olden times as Óláfr Páir shields emblazoned with images of lions; this idea seems to have found its way to Iceland only in the company of other chivalric ideas during the thirteenth century.

It is more difficult to establish clearly the connections between Fóstbræðra Saga and works composed in the florid style, among other things because this variety of style has never been precisely defined and to some extent shades into the ordinary learned style. Still, there is no doubt that some of the digressions of the saga exhibit unmistakable features of the florid style. I shall illustrate this with a few examples, taking first a digression in Fóstbræðra Saga and then comparable passages from works in the florid style.

(1) I have already referred to the following poetic description of Þórdís's love for Þormóðr:

And as a dark squall comes from the sea and  
a light snowfall overlays the ground, and then

the snow melts in a mild breeze and is followed by bright sunshine and pleasant weather, so the poem lifted all umbrage and darkness from Þórdís's mind, and the inner light of her ardent love returned to Þormóðr with gentle warmth.<sup>8</sup>

Parallels:

Klárus Saga (describing Princess Serena's anger when the prince drops the egg on his chest): Here there was a sudden change, as if a fierce snowstorm met gentle sunshine or contrary winds a ship till then running before a fair breeze.

Tveggja Postula Saga Jóns ok Jakobs: The western world flourished nobly in those times on account of the precious jewel who took up his abode in those regions, shedding all around the rays of power and miracles, until the fog of the unrighteousness of his cruel enemies covered the rays so densely that they could not shine.

Jóns Saga Baptista II (by the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson): The son of God who from on high...rose to illuminate all the world with spiritual brightness, as the sun rises to illuminate the world with physical radiance, for this reason visited the hearts of those who sat in darkness, that is, in the thick fog of black sins, and were confined in

blindness of heart and the shadow of sins...that the road to heaven might be opened to them.

(2) Þorgeirr's reaction to the news of his father's slaying is thus described in Póstbraðra Saga:

He did not redden, for anger did not enter his flesh; neither did he pale, for anger did not enter his breast; neither did he turn blue, for anger did not enter his bones, but instead he altered his mien in no wise at the tidings; for his heart was not like the gizzard of a bird; it was not full of blood so as to tremble with fear, but tempered in every hardihood by the most high maker of things.<sup>9</sup>

Parallels:

Maríu Saga: He who assents to this will not be tossed by the wind of vainglory, neither will he be wrecked on the reef or skerry of contrary things, nor will he be drowned in the vile vortex of carnal lust, but he will happily reach, safe and sound, the eternal rest of a joyful harbour.

Jóns Saga Postula I: After that the whole populace looked at the Blessed Apostle John for three hours of the day, and never did they see him redden or pale or in any way alter in his appearance, but instead he remained unchangingly gentle and cheerful and pleasant in his appearance.

And finally, Tómas Saga I (a description of the saint's dead body): His countenance did not pale from such great blows and great wounds, neither did it wither, nor did heavy wrinkles furrow his brow, nor did the eyes in any way shrivel, neither did they settle or sink, nor did any kind of fluid run from his nostrils or mouth, nor was the neck shrunken nor did the shoulders droop, neither was the body itself stiffer nor its skin looser, and in no part or limb of his body was there any kind of sign to be seen that it withered or shrank or pressed in on him.

Fóstbræðra Saga uses a number of other rhetorical figures characteristic of the learned style and the court style, such as, for instance, personification, and even kennings, as in the skaldic poetry.

Frost and Snow chant deadly spells over the  
house roofs and show those who look outside  
their rough games with little fatigue and  
terror aplenty. <sup>10</sup>

In the heart of Þorkell of Gervidalr "Stinginess and Low-mindedness forgathered".<sup>11</sup>

And Egil the Fool is often "the plaything of Self-deception and Misjudgement - those daughters of Dullness".<sup>12</sup> Such personifications are, of course, common in foreign

learned works, but northern authors and translators were averse to their use at first, and they do not appear with any frequency until about or after the middle of the thirteenth century, as for instance in KonungsSkuggsjá and, even more, in Alexanders Saga, where they are derived from the Latin original.

Kennings are found in two places in the story:

The daughters of Rán tested the young men and offered them their embraces.

The dog of the alder-tree howled all that night with untiring jaws and gnawed the ground far and wide with fierce fangs of cold.<sup>13</sup>

The "daughters of Rán" are, of course, the waves, but "the dog of the alder-tree" is here used of the storm, although it is more commonly a kenning for fire. In prose, such genuine kennings do not occur at all except in late works in the court style; the oldest known examples are in the Agúlandus Pátttr of Karlamagnús Saga. Let me conclude this part of my discussion with one illustration from this work. It has a particular relevance to the digressions of Fótbæðra Saga, for in it occur not only kennings but also a bold heart and a lion.

All the French fought gallantly, so that they often redden their bright weapons in red streams of blood, but most of all was it to be admired



what prowess Roland showed in this battle, for he had as bold a heart as the lion, the fiercest of animals. He rode from troop to troop, wielding his sword in such wise that the hard battle-wand stoutly cleft many a man's heart-fortress asunder.

The stylistic features so far dealt with are primarily found in passages which can either be described as digressions or else as being on the borderline between digressions and the narrative proper. These passages, of course, constitute only a small fraction of the saga, while the major portion of it bears the stamp of the popular Icelandic saga style. Still, I wanted to examine whether the learned scholar might not be concealed under the innocent-looking surface of popular language. To that end I made a list of certain words and expressions in the saga and checked it against dictionaries and other scholarly works of reference. Among other things I made use of the great card index of the Old Norse dictionary now in preparation in Copenhagen under the editorship of Dr Widding. It turned out that quite a number of these words and expressions are limited to the learned style, or court style, and that some of them are only found in late works. I shall mention some of the words of this kind, which do not occur in the digressions but in the saga itself.

Hráskinn occurs twice. Outside the sage it only occurs in two learned works of the fourteenth century: Stjórn (the youngest part) and Vitæ Patrum. The word means "protection", "shelter", or "refuge" and is used to translate Latin refugium or perfugium. Its etymology is uncertain.

The adjective kurteiss occurs once, as also the noun kurteisi. These French loan-words are found in very old northern works, but they are naturally commonest in the romances.

The following words occur once each:

The verb lykna, "give at the knees", which is found in two places outside the saga - in a late learned work and a romance: Mariu Saga and Vilhjálm's Saga Sjóðs.

Samvitandi, a present participle of an active verb, used as a predicate adjective: at vér sém samvitandi þessa illvirkis - "that I am an accessory to (or have connived at) this evil deed". Such a use of the present participle is counted by Nygaard among the characteristics of the learned style. The word itself, moreover, belongs to the learned style, like most compounds with sam-, as Nygaard points out.

The verb sortna, "turn black", which occurs in Völuspá, whatever the age of that poem may be. In prose, all the instances, some twenty in all, are found in learned works or romances. The construction in question - sortnar um

einhvern - is found only here and in the Vitæ Patrum.

Vandlæti, of which something over forty instances are known, and also the verb vandlæta. Practically all the instances outside Fóstbræðra Saga are in religious works. In translated works vandlæti is used to render Latin zelus.

I expect that my listeners are by now beginning to doubt whether Fóstbræðra Saga can be as old as it has been thought to be, that - along with Heiðarvíga Saga - it is the oldest of all Sagas of Icelanders and written about 1200. The saga shows clearly the influence of the romances, both on its subject matter and, especially, on its language and style. It is generally believed that such chivalric elements do not begin to appear in Sagas of Icelanders until close to the middle of the thirteenth century or even a little later. Many considerations concur to support this belief.

(1) The influence of chivalric culture grows rapidly in Norway during the time of Hákon the Old, or from the third decade of the thirteenth century. This appears clearly from Sturla Þórðarson's Hákonar Saga.

(2) One element in King Hákon's efforts to direct the current of European civilization to Norway consisted in having various French romances translated into the Norwegian tongue. In the manuscripts of many romances it is expressly stated that they were translated at his instigation, but it is considered likely that he was also responsible for the

translation of a number of other works. In addition, he was presumably behind the composition of Konungs Skuggsjá, a work permeated with the chivalric spirit.

(3) In Iceland, chivalric influences begin to make themselves felt in earnest from 1240 on, which accords fully with developments in Norway. A new era may be said to begin when Þórðr Kakali Sighvatsson returns from Norway in 1242 with his head full of chivalric ideals, according to what Sturlunga Saga tells us.

(4) In the Sagas of Icelanders which for one reason or another give the impression of being old, no influence from the translated romances is to be seen.

But it seems possible to assign a still more precise date to the elements of the court style and the learned style that we find in Fóstbræðra Saga. They derive chiefly from late works, composed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Particularly noteworthy are the stylistic features characteristic of that variety of the learned style which I have been calling the florid style.

According to Widding, the florid style first appears in Norwegian manuscripts dating from the second half or the last quarter of the thirteenth century. As one of the oldest of these he lists the principal manuscript of Barlaams Saga og Jósafats, i.e. Perg. fol. No. 6, in the Royal Library in Stockholm. This manuscript is Norwegian, and the translation is also thought to be Norwegian, made about

the middle of the thirteenth century.

One of the works Widding cites as a typical example of the florid style is Jóns Saga Baptista II, by the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson. This work was composed some time between 1264 and 1298, the latter being the year of the author's death. The florid style had thus certainly begun to be used in Iceland in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. And Jóns Saga Baptista is precisely one of the works with which I had occasion to compare Fóstbræðra Saga a moment ago. But the flowering of the florid style comes in the first half of the fourteenth century. This is the time of Abbot Bergr Sokkason, and in all the numerous works ascribed to him by Peter Hallberg the florid style is prominent. Fóstbræðra Saga cannot, however, be the work of Abbot Bergr, for he was still a child when the saga was written down in Hauksbók just after 1300. The likeliest time of writing for the saga is thus during the last decades of the thirteenth century.

But now many will surely ask: What about Sigurður Nordal's dating of the saga? I shall now try to answer that question very briefly.

In his Über die Ausdrücke (1867) Konrad Maurer dealt with the relationship between Fóstbræðra Saga and the sagas of St Ólaf. To this day no one has tampered with his theories on the subject. Sigurður Nordal took them up in his doctoral dissertation, Om Olaf den helliges Saga, and at the same time assigned Fóstbræðra Saga a place in a system

of relationships between the various sagas of St Ólaf; this system was in turn largely based on the theories of Gustav Storm. As already indicated, Nordal concludes from this evidence that the saga was written about 1200 or in the first years of the thirteenth century.

In the National Archives in Oslo there are some scraps of parchment containing fragments of a very old saga of St Ólaf. Storm took these fragments, tacked on to them two leaves from an old book of the miracles of St Ólaf, which are preserved in the Arnamagnæan Collection (AM 325 4to), and published the whole under the title of Otte Brudstykker af den ældste Saga om Olav den hellige (1893). The leaves in the Arnamagnæan Collection date from the fourteenth century, but from the names of persons and the events referred to Storm deduced that the saga must have been written shortly after the middle of the twelfth century, most likely during the years 1160-1180. According to Sigurður Nordal's theory, this so-called Oldest Saga of St Ólaf and Fóstbræðra Saga were independent of each other, although both had things to tell about Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld. On the basis of the Oldest Saga, but with additions from Fóstbræðra Saga, there was then supposed to have been composed the so-called Middle Saga of St Ólaf; but the difficulty with this saga has always been that not one jot or tittle of it is in existence. From the lost Middle Saga two other sagas of St Ólaf were in turn supposed to be derived: the so-called

Legendary Saga, which is preserved in its entirety, and the Saga of St Ólaf by Styrmir the Learned, of which only fragments have survived. Finally, Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf was thought to be in all probability based on Styrmir's work. The Legendary Saga is exceedingly muddled, and this was blamed on the large number of additions incorporated into the saga from other sources, mainly in the composition of the Middle Saga.

By now, however, this old structure is beginning to totter on its foundations. Gustav Storm believed that the leaves in the Arnamagnæan Collection (fragments 7 and 8 in his edition) had been copied from the Oslo manuscript while it was still intact. In a recent edition of the fragments, Jonna Louis-Jensen demonstrates that Storm's arguments will not hold up at all. She doubts whether fragments 7 and 8 have anything at all to do with the Oldest Saga, and I believe these doubts are reinforced in my forthcoming book on Fóstbræðra Saga. The Arnamagnæan fragments are, as Árni Magnússon states in a note, ex Miraculis Sancti Olavi. The fragments of the Oldest Saga are thus only six in number. On them and on the Legendary Saga we must base our ideas about the Oldest Saga.

Now the fact is that all the significant arguments relating to the age of the Oldest Saga were based on the Arnamagnæan fragments. On their evidence, the Oldest Saga truly deserved its name and was indeed the oldest preserved

saga of a Norwegian king, older than both Theodoricus and Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum. But with the Arnamagnæan fragments ruled out of consideration, it has become necessary to re-examine the question of the age of the Oldest Saga this time with reference to the Oslo fragments alone. And there seems to be no evidence that the work represented by these fragments is older than from about 1200.

One of the principal differences between the Oldest Saga and the Legendary Saga was supposed to be that the latter contains additions taken from Ágrip; according to the traditional dating, the Oldest Saga could not have included such additions, since Ágrip had to be of a younger date. But if the Oldest Saga was not written until about 1200, there is no reason to think that it differed from the Legendary Saga in this respect. It is true that the few surviving fragments of the Oldest Saga cannot be shown to contain any additions from Ágrip, but neither do the corresponding passages in the Legendary Saga.

Various flaws in the composition of the Legendary Saga have been blamed on interpolations from Ágrip and Fóstbræðra Saga. But it is clear that in the composition of the Oldest Saga there were serious flaws that cannot have been due to interpolations from these works; in many places where comparison is possible we can see that the author or scribe of the Legendary Saga has attempted to mend these flaws, as was indeed demonstrated by Sigurður Nordal in Om Olaf den helliges



Saga. The natural thing to do is therefore to assume that structural flaws in the Legendary Saga are generally part of its inheritance from the Oldest Saga, as long as there is no proof to the contrary.

The stylistic characteristics of the Oldest Saga recur in the Legendary Saga, for instance the persistent tendency to begin sentences with nú. This characteristic is also very noticeable in the passages which Maurer and Nordal believe to have been taken from Fóstbræðra Saga.

The Legendary Saga is most properly regarded as a separate version of the Oldest Saga. In this version the original has been changed especially in three respects:

(1) Its diction has been made more concise: "systematically, from first to last, so that the Legendary Saga appears not to have reproduced unchanged a single passage of any length in the Oldest Saga," as Sigurður Nordal puts it.

(2) An attempt has been made to repair certain serious weaknesses in the composition, as has already been mentioned.

(3) Two Norwegian works have been added to the saga. (The manuscript of the Legendary Saga is Norwegian.) One of these, the so-called Kristni Pátr, dealing principally with St Ólaf's missionary activities, is split up and inserted in two different places. The other, a book of the miracles of St Ólaf, is added at the end. Kristni Pátr is also used

in Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf, in a form largely identical with that found in the Legendary Saga; the form of the book of miracles is the same as in the Norwegian Homily Book. Of course these additions do not exhibit the stylistic features of the Oldest Saga. Nor have they been abridged, which is one indication that they did not form part of the Oldest Saga.

Among Sagas of Kings, the Oldest Saga has its place alongside Oddr Snorrason's Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar and Morkinskinna. All three of these sagas have served, directly or indirectly, as sources of Fagurskinna and later Heimskringla. The extant versions of Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar and Morkinskinna differ from the original form of these works, probably no less than the Legendary Saga differs from the Oldest Saga.

Where Fóstbræðra Saga towards the end enters the sphere of the Saga of St Ólaf, the author clearly takes it for granted that the latter is widely known. There are direct literary connections between the Legendary Saga and Fóstbræðra Saga, and by far the likeliest explanation in that the last part of Fóstbræðra Saga is based on some version of the Saga of St Ólaf which in turn was derived from the Oldest Saga. This cannot, however, have been Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf, which exists both as a separate work and as a part of Heimskringla, nor has Snorri made use of Fóstbræðra Saga. Still the position of Heimskringla in relation to the

Legendary Saga is parallel to that of Fóstbræðra Saga.

The Legendary Saga is a primitive work from the infancy of saga-writing and gives us an idea of the oral traditions current in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Heimskringla and Fóstbræðra Saga are highly developed works of literature, both of which have improved on the Legendary Saga in comparable ways. Indeed, I have found that Heimskringla and Fóstbræðra Saga have in common many elements not found in the Legendary Saga, which suggests that they both drew on the same version of the Saga of St Ólaf. It is considered certain that Snorri made use of Styrmir's Saga of St Ólaf, which is preserved in fragmentary form, as I have already mentioned. The likeliest thing is, therefore, that the author of Fóstbræðra Saga also drew on Styrmir's work, which is the only "middle saga" of St Ólaf of which we have certain knowledge.

I mentioned earlier that Fóstbræðra Saga has long been the corner-stone for dating the oldest Sagas of Icelanders. When, for instance, scholars have wished to refute Paul Rubow's theories about the origin of these sagas, they have customarily pointed to Fóstbræðra Saga: here at least was one saga that was demonstrably older than the Norwegian translation of Tristrams Saga. If I am right in trying to remove this corner-stone, we must search for another one to replace it. While it still remains to be found, we can toy with the idea that the Sagas of Icelanders as a literary

genre may be rather younger than has been thought. What is certain is that no Sagas of Icelanders are found in a single scrap of manuscript believed to antedate the middle of the thirteenth century. At least it seems to me that without further evidence we can no longer conclude that since Fóstbræðra Saga was written about 1200, then Heiðarvíga Saga must have been written about the same time.

## NOTES

1. ...Því at menn vildu sjá hvílíkt væri, svá hugprúðr sem hann var. En menn segja at hjartat væri harla lítit, ok höfðu sumir menn þat fyrir satt at minni sé hugprúðra manna hjörtu en huglaussa, því at menn kalla meira blóð í miklu hjarta en í litlu, en kalla hjartablóði hræzlu fylgja, ok segja menn því datta hjarta manna í brjóstinu at þá hrærir hjartablóðit hjartat.
2. Þeir skáru upp líkam hans ok vildu sjá hjarta hans, ok var þat eigi meira en valhnot ok hart sem sigg, ok ekki blóð í.
3. Inn hæsti höfuðsmiðr hafði skapat ok gefit í brjóst Þorgeiri svá öruggt hjarta ok hart at hann hræddisk ekki.  
  
Eigi var hjarta hans sem fóarn í fogli; eigi var þat blóðfullt svá at þat skylfi af hræzlu, heldr var þat hert af inum hæsta höfuðsmið í öllum hvatleik.
4. Þykkir honum hon leggja sjaldnar tíu fingr upp sér um háls en verit hafði. Lyptisk þá lítt þat reiði hans í rúmi sínu, en reiði hvers manns er í galli, en líf í hjarta, minni í heila, metnaðr í lungum, hlátr í milti, lostasemi í lifr.
5. Ok af því at allir góðir hlutir eru af Guði gervir, þá er öruggleikr af Guði gerr ok gefinn í brjóst hvötum mönnum, ok þar með sjálfreði at hafa til þess kraptinn er þeir vilja, góðs eða ills... en þat mun hann [Kistr] hverjum gjalda sem til vinnr.
6. Svá er sagt at Þorgeirr væri lítill kvennamaðr. Sagði hann þat vera svívirðing síns krpts at hokra at konum. Sjaldan hló hann.

7. Þorgeirr versk þeim með miklum mjúkleik, en sækir at þeim með miklu afli og öruggleik, óhræddr sem it óarga dýr.

Svá var hann óhræddr í öllum mannraunum sem it óarga dýr.

Váru allir menn hræddir við þá sem fénaðr við león, þá er hann kemr í þeira flokk.

Meiri raun var at ráða at Þorgeiri undir högg hans en at leóni, þá er teknir eru frá henni hvelpanir; er hon þá grimmust í sínu eðli.

8. Ok svá sem myrkt éll dregr upp ór hafi ok fellr nökkut fól, ok leiðir af með litlum vindi ok kemr eptir bjart sólskin með blíði veðri, svá dró kvæðit allan órækðar þokka ok myrkva af hug Þórdísar, ok renndi hugarljós hennar heitu ástar aptr til Þormóðar með varmri blíðu.
9. Eigi roðnaði hann, því at eigi rann honum reiði í hörund; eigi bliknaði hann, því at honum lagði eigi heipt í brjóst; eigi blánaði hann, því at honum rann eigi í bein reiði; heldr brá hann sér engan veg við tíðenda sögnina, því at eigi var hjarta hans sem fóarn í fogli; eigi var þat blóðfullt svá at þat skylfi af hræzlu, heldr var þat hert af inum hæsta höfuðsmið í öllum hvatleik.
10. Fjúk ok frost kveða helgaldra of húsþekjur ok sýna þeim er út sjá sinn snarpan leik með lítilli mæði ok mikilli ógn.
11. Í hans hjarta mættusk þær sínka ok lítilmennska.
12. Léku opt at honum dætr heimskunnar, þær dul ok rangvirðing.

13. Reyndu Ránar dætr drengina ok buðu þeim sín faðmlög.  
Gó elris hundr alla þá nótt óþrotnum kjöptum ok tögg  
allar jarðir með grimmum kulda tönnum.

HALLVARD MAGERØY  
THE LITERARY BACKGROUND OF THE ACCOUNT OF ÓSPAKR'S  
REVENGE IN THE BANDAMANNA SAGA

At present it seems to be generally accepted that for the most part Bandamanna saga has no basis in oral tradition. But the end of the saga, with the stanza of Óspakr Glúmsson, stands apart, and is still regarded as a reminiscence of an older transmission, which people think was probably oral. While working on this saga many years ago I did not reach any definite opinion on this question. But in the present paper I shall, tentatively, try to adduce some evidence in favour of the view that this part of the saga too, with Óspakr's stanza, is an invention of the saga author.

In the last chapter of Bandamanna saga we are told how the chief villain of the saga, Óspakr Glúmsson, takes vengeance on three men whom he seems to have felt to be his main enemies. They are the farmer Bergþórr at Bøðvarshólar (who had formulated the charge against him when he was outlawed on account of the slaying of Váli, the saga's saint), Már Hildisson (who had married his wife, Svála, after Óspakr's condemnation), and Oddr Ófeigsson (who had brought the law-suit against him). To execute his revenge on Bergþórr and Oddr Ófeigsson, Óspakr kills cattle belonging to them. Már Hildisson



is attacked and killed by Óspakr one morning while still in bed. Having wounded Már, Óspakr recites a stanza, and after that he is mortally wounded by Már's brother, the silly but strong Bjálfi.

As is well known, Bandamanna saga is extant in two main versions, one the text of Möðruvallabók (the M-text), generally taken to be from the middle of the fourteenth century<sup>1</sup>, the other the text of Gl. kgl. saml. 2845, 4to (the Konungsbók or K-text), probably from "the first quarter of the fifteenth century"<sup>2</sup>.

Óspakr's stanza stands apart, being transmitted in both versions of the saga, whereas the M-text has five additional stanzas attributed to Ófeigr Skíðason. It is generally accepted that the stanza of Óspakr formed part of the original saga. But, as mentioned, there is still dispute as to the origin of the stanza itself. There are three possibilities:

(1) The stanza is authentic, i.e. it was composed by Óspakr and recited in the situation that the saga describes.

(2) The stanza is not authentic, but was included in the saga by the saga author, who got it through older, oral or literary transmission.

(3) The stanza was composed by the saga author himself.

Finnur Jónsson always maintained that the stanza was authentic<sup>3</sup>. Andreas Heusler, on the other hand, seems

to doubt whether a stanza recited under such circumstances would have any chance of being transmitted<sup>4</sup>. Björn Magnússon Ólsen believed this stanza, like the rest of the stanzas in the M-text of the saga, to be the invention of the saga author<sup>5</sup>, while Sigurður Nordal is inclined to believe that the stanza is older than the saga<sup>6</sup>.

I suppose that hardly anybody nowadays believes in the authenticity of the stanza. The reciting of a stanza in a situation of such disturbance and danger as that described in the saga is improbable per se. And as mentioned before, scholars in our time have ceased to regard Bandamanna saga in general as a trustworthy historical source. This opinion I shall try to back up still more in what follows. Our alternatives, then, are only the following: either the stanza is older than the saga but not authentic, or the stanza was invented by the saga author.

\* \* \* \*

The stanza of Óspakr in Bandamanna saga and the preceding prose contain some personal names, Svala, Már, Bergþórr, Bjálfi or Ólvir, Hildir or Hildir. We first have to give a brief commentary on the textual variants of the names.

In the M-text of the stanza Már is said to be arfa Hildis, in the K-text arfa Hildar. Norse people were most frequently designated by means of the names of their

fathers. The reading Hildis must also be regarded as lectio difficilior, Hildir being rarely used as a name by Icelanders in historical times, whereas Hildr is comparatively common<sup>7</sup>.

Of persons named Hildir Landnámabók has four, all of them living in the landnámsöld.

Except for our Hildir in the M-text of Bandamanna saga we find in the Sagas of Icelanders only one person bearing this name, Hildir Geirleifsson inn gamli in Njáls saga, who was converted by the missionary Pangbrandr.

Sturlunga saga knows only one Hildir, the father of Ólafr Hildisson. Ólafr was killed in the year 1119.

In addition to this the name Hildir is in Norse literature connected with some kings, heroes and giants in the fornaldarsögur.

Finnur Jónsson, who also gave preference to the variant Hildis, tried to explain Hildar in the K-text as a dittography, the syllable ar being an anticipation of ar in the following word fagrvaxinnar<sup>8</sup>.

Már in our saga has a brother, a half-wit, who in the M-text is named Bjálfi, in the K-text Qlvir. Both names are well known, but Qlvir is the more common. Here, too, one would presume that the rarer name, Bjálfi, is the original one. The variant Bjálfi is also supported by another argument, which I consider to be important.

Bjálfi is not only a proper name, but a common noun as well, meaning "skin rug". The word is also used in the sense "fool", "blockhead". The name Bjálfi, therefore, as already stated by Finnur Jónsson, corresponds to the character of the person in question.<sup>9</sup> Bjálfi is a name borne by six men in the Sagas of Icelanders. One of them is an óeirðarmaðr (Flóamanna saga), another a leysingi, the paternal grandfather of Björn hvíti in Njála, a third the obscure father of Kveld-Úlfr in Egla. Respectable persons are the ship-owner Bjálfi of Gísla saga and the Greenland farmer Bjálfi in Flóamanna saga.

Correspondence between name and character is a feature that is visible to some degree in several sagas<sup>10</sup>. In Bandamanna saga the correspondence between the names and the characters of some of the central persons is so manifest that I cannot help finding it very tempting to suppose that this is a conscious feature of the composition. On the one hand we have the main hero of the saga, the man who successfully opposes and conquers the forceful alliance of the chieftains. His name is Ófeigr, a name that may be interpreted as "he who will survive". On the other hand there is the villain of the saga, who spoils his good position at the farm of Oddr and causes his own outlawry. His name is Óspakr, "the unwise", and he is the son of Glúmr (Óspaksson). The word glúmr is a bjarnar heiti in the Skáldskaparmál of Snorra-Edda and seems to be related inter alia to the noun "glum" ("person with a gloomy, sinister face")

found in the dialect of Telemark in Norway, to the verbs "glum" ("look suspicious") of Shetland, "glum" ("have a gloomy look") of English dialects and the adjective "glum" ("terrible") of Jutlandish.

I am well aware of the fact that these two names, like the name of Oddr Ófeiggsson, were inherited through older transmission. But I suppose that the author of the saga found that these two names (Ófeigr and Óspakr Glúmsson) fitted excellently into his saga plan. Consequently he made use of them, giving the two persons Ófeigr and Óspakr Glúmsson characters corresponding to their names<sup>11</sup>.

Accordingly I also think Bjálfi of Möðruvallabók, not Ólvir of Konungsbók, to be the original name of this man in the saga.

Moving on from the subject of the textual variants, we will consider next the name Svala. Svala is the only woman who takes part in the action of the saga. I shall try to show that her name, too, was chosen with a view to her role in the saga.

Svala was the owner of the farm Svølustaðir. We are not told how she came into possession of this farm. The saga only states that Svala was væn kona ok ung. She has no husband and does not seem to have been married before. Most likely therefore we have to infer that she has inherited her farm Svølustaðir.

There is an obvious correspondence between the girl's name Svala and the farm's name Svölustaðir that cannot be accidental. The saga gives no information about this correspondence. We are not told that the farm got its name from the girl Svala herself. Moreover such an origin of the farm's name would be improbable from a historical point of view.

Icelandic farm names ending in -staðir most frequently seem to have a personal name as the first part of the compounds.<sup>12</sup> Such a personal name is generally believed to be the name of the first settler of the farm, or the name of a prominent owner from later times.<sup>13</sup> But it would be as improbable to think the young girl Svala was the first settler on the farm as to think she was reason for the farm-name as an owner in a later period. Hence the coincidence of the owner's name Svala and the farm-name Svölustaðir does not seem to have its origin in historical facts, but must be by design.

Our doubt as to the historical reliability of the account of Svala will be still more increased if we consider the general nature of oral tradition. It is well known that oral tradition is mainly concerned with outstanding persons or events; for instance, in Norwegian folklore Saint Olaf or the great pestilence of the years 1349-1350 named "Svartedauen", in Icelandic folklore *Samundr inn fróði* or *Guðmundr inn góði*. Minor persons are apt to be forgotten. In Bandamanna saga Svala is a

secondary person, a wheel necessary for the action but of little interest herself.<sup>14</sup> It therefore seems improbable that her name would have been preserved in oral tradition for hundreds of years. The person Svala, and also the woman's name, Svala, are both totally unknown in saga literature outside Bandamanna saga.<sup>15</sup> For these reasons it does not seem too audacious to infer that Svala is invented.

Whereas the girl Svala is most probably a conception of the author's, the farm Svǫlustaðir really existed. It is the only farm known in Iceland with this name. It is mentioned in medieval documents and in the land-register of Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín. Ruins of the farm still remain.<sup>16</sup>

From this I am inclined to conclude that the saga author, whether he knew this name for a woman beforehand or not, derived the name Svala from the farm-name Svǫlustaðir.<sup>17</sup>

It is well known that names of people in the sagas frequently originate in place-names.<sup>18</sup> I suppose the saga author brought the farm-name Svǫlustaðir into the saga because he thought that it contained a woman's name that would be useful to him for the composition of his saga.

The personal name Svala is probably the same word as the common noun svala "swallow" - a bird known in Iceland. Whether the farm-name is built up from the personal name Svala or from the bird name I shall not discuss.<sup>19</sup> But it is important here that Svala can also be interpreted as a weak declension form of the adj. svalr "cool"; compare the woman's name Ljót and adj. ljótr, Helga and heilagr. To be sure

the etymology of the bird-name svala is, according to modern theories, different from that of the adj. svalr. But the saga author certainly had no idea of their etymologies. He most likely interpreted the name Svala as a form of the adjective. This adj., svalr, was also used as a man's name in medieval Iceland. Svala would then correspond to Svalr just as Ljót corresponds to Ljótr and Helga to Helgi.<sup>20</sup>

If the author of Bandamanna saga interpreted the woman's name Svala as "the cool" or "the cold", there is complete correspondence in the saga between the name and the character of this woman. In Old Norse, as in modern usage, the word "cold" could indicate a special type of mind or temperament. Compare the proverb: Köld eru kvenna ráð. Like kaldr the adj. svalr could have the connotation of disagreeable coolness (cf. Fritzner and Lexicon poeticum), and also the figurative meaning "cold-hearted", cf. the compound svalbrjóstaðr, which also means "cold-hearted" (Fritzner).

Svala in Bandamanna saga is indeed a cold-hearted and cynical person. As often in the sagas, this is not stated openly but revealed by behaviour. In chapter four of the saga she forms a liaison with Óspakr in an impudent manner. She betroths herself to him against the betrothal rules and without her family's consent. In the absence of Oddr Ófeigsson and without his permission, she moves from Svǫlustaðir to Melr,



the farm of Oddr, and settles there with Óspakr. After Óspakr's subsequent murder of the innocent mediator Váli, she helps Óspakr to conceal the murder by lying to Oddr. When Óspakr has become an outlaw, she abandons him and marries Már Hildisson. (Cf. the contrary behaviour of Auðr Vésteinsdóttir in Gísla saga.)

In the case of Svala the correspondence between name and character is no less manifest than in the cases of Ófeigr and Óspakr Glúmsson.

As already stated, Svala is very probably a person invented by the saga author. But Svala is also the central figure of the sixth stanza of the saga. This leads to the conclusion that the stanza too is an invention of the saga author.

Although Svala cannot be a person who really lived, this does not make it impossible for the other person who is mentioned in the sixth stanza of the saga, Már Hildisson, to have been an historical person, or for at least some sort of older tradition of him seems to have existed. But, as we shall soon see, certain circumstances suggest that he is not an historical person either.

To make the villain Óspakr's failure total, the author of the saga not only lets him become an outlaw, but also lets him be deceived by his wife. For this reason the author needs a new husband for Svala. This husband is Már Hildisson, the brother of Bjálfi. Both brothers are

unknown from other sources. The half-wit Bjálfi is not mentioned in the stanza, only in the saga prose. He is trivial, introduced just to take Óspakr's life. His name suits his character. He is most probably an invention of the saga author.

Már, on the other hand, is mentioned in the stanza with Svala. Now it is suspicious that both these persons Svala and Már, bear names that are at the same time bird-names. This looks as if it must be by design: the "mew" marries the "swallow".

Furthermore both Már's brother, Bjálfi, and Már's wife, Svala, as we have seen, have names that correspond to their characters, and although it does not seem possible to interpret the name Már in the same way, the stanza also mentions the name of Már's father, Hildir, and this name may, possibly, have a connection with Már's character. The meaning of the root syllable of the name Hildir, hild- ("fight") was well known to all Icelanders. So the name of Már's father alluded to conflict and fight. In medieval times the idea of inheritance of character was commonly accepted. Cf. Old Norse words like ættarbragð and ættarsviðr.<sup>21</sup> This idea is verbally expressed in the Möðruvallabók text of our saga, in the second chapter, where Óspakr asks Oddr for employment on his farm. Oddr says: "Ekki ertú mjök lofaðr af mönnum, ok ekki ertú vinsæll. Þykkir þú hafa brögð undir brúnum, svá sem þú ert ættborinn til." Later on Oddr says: "Miklir

eruð þér, frændr, ok torsóttir, ef yðr býðr við at horfa."<sup>22</sup>

Eyrbyggja saga gives a picture of Óspakr's grandfather, Óspakr á Eyri, and the similarity to the character of our Óspakr is obvious. The correspondence cannot be fortuitous. And, as shown above, the meaning of the name of Óspakr's father, Glúmr, fits very well into this pattern.

Accordingly it seems possible that the name Hildir in Bandamanna saga is not primarily intended to describe Már's father, Hildir, but Hildir's son, Már. The name of Már's father may give a hint that the new husband Svala chose after betraying Óspakr was an aggressive type, perhaps an ójafnaðarmaðr (like another Már, of whom we shall soon learn more). This picture of Már fits in well with the saga's picture of his brother, the strong and silly Bjálfi.

I shall now try an admittedly somewhat hazardous reconstruction of the saga author's chain of reasoning.

To start the conflict in the saga the reckless villain Óspakr is given a perhaps still more reckless wife with the characteristic name Svala. To increase Óspakr's failure the author lets this wife deceive him. To this end a new husband is provided, Már, who gets a bird's name like Svala herself. He too is a reckless character, demonstrated by his father's name, Hildir. The new husband has to be a victim of Óspakr's revenge. Óspakr, being an outlaw, can approach people's homes only at night-time. Már consequently must be killed when lying in his bed. To fulfill the

villain Óspakr's deserved fate the author lets Már be revenged. For that purpose Már's brother, Bjálfi, is invented.

\* \* \* \*

I hope that this attempt at reconstruction has hit at least some of the main points. But at any rate this cannot be a complete solution. One can still ask: if Svala's new husband had to have a bird's name, why did he then get the name Már? Why not for instance a name like Hrafn, Haukr or Qrn, one that would indicate an aggressive character still more clearly?

And second: why has the first victim of Óspakr's revenge got the name Bergþórr? (To be sure, this name is now found only in Möðruvallabók. But the corresponding text of Konungsbók is obviously corrupt in other respects, and I hope to corroborate the belief in the reliability of the name in what follows.)<sup>23</sup>

To my two questions concerning the names Már and Bergþórr I cannot find any answer based on internal logic. But another explanation is still left, viz. influence from literary patterns.

The author of Bandamanna saga, like many other saga authors, was inevitably familiar with older Icelandic literature. The authors of the Sagas of Icelanders never hesitated to make use of older literature as materials for

their own creations. The characters and the details of events of these sagas must to a great extent have been the products of their own imaginations. But it seems to have been a sort of principle that they preferred to seek the names of their main heroes in historical sources and older literature. This manner of composition is one of the qualities that give these sagas that seductive flavour of real history.

We also know examples of the transfer of details of subject-matter originally connected with one person to another person with the same name.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, where two analogous patterns of subject-matter already existed, we must take into account the possibility that a name might be transferred from one of the patterns to the other one.<sup>25</sup>

Like other authors of his time the author of Bandamanna saga seems to have made use of literary models, e.g. Olkofra þáttur and Laxdæla saga.<sup>26</sup> When setting out to frame the account of Óspakr's revenge and death, he appears to have had mainly two literary sources in his mind, Porgils saga ok Hafliða and Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu.

Porgils saga ok Hafliða, the first part of the Sturlunga collection, is generally considered to have been written in the later part of the twelfth century or the first half of the thirteenth.<sup>27</sup> The main substance of this

saga is the account of a conflict between the chieftains Þorgils Oddason and Haflíði Másson in the years 1118 to 1121. But this conflict originated in contests between men who were followers of these chieftains. One of these was a nephew of Haflíði Másson, Már Bergþórsson, another a casual labourer named Ólafr Hildisson.

Már Bergþórsson had a boat and carried on fishing in the district of Strandir, the district where Oddr Ófeigsson in Bandamanna saga earned his living by sea-transport in his youth. Ólafr Hildisson was one of Már's crew. Már, being brutal and rough, got into a quarrel with Ólafr, deprived him of all his property and drove him away. Ólafr resorted to Þorgils Oddason at Staðarhóll, who furnished him with clothes and an axe. With this axe Ólafr returned to Ávík on Strandir, where Már Bergþórsson was then staying in the home of the farmer Hneitir:

Már lá útar í bekk ok hafði lagt höfuð sitt í kné Rannveigar, dóttur Hneitis bónda. Hann settiz þá upp, er hann heyrði til Óláfs, ok hafði annan fótinn niðr fyrir bekknum; hann var í loðkápu. Óláfr srýr at pallinum útar fyrir Má ok spyrr: "hversu máttu Már? eða hvé líkar þér?" Hann sagði: "hvat mun þik undir vera? fyrir þat mun þér ganga, sem ek mega illa ok mér líki ok illa." Síðan mælti Óláfr linliga til, ef hann mundi vilja bæta honum fyrir fjárupptökuna, ok mælti til vel. Már svarar illa ok sagði ekki mundu tjá

um orð né tilloggur Þorgils Oddasonar. Síðan hæggr Óláfr til Más, ok verðr þat svǫðusár ok eigi beinhogg. Síðan gengr Óláfr út, en Már vill hlaupa eptir honum. Þorsteinn hleypr upp ok heldr Mávi, ok þægir honum í bekkinn. 28

After this assault Ólafr Hildisson became the centre of a long-lasting and complicated legal procedure which touched the summits of Icelandic society and no doubt was well known in Iceland in the thirteenth century.

We shall now compare this scene in Þorgils saga ok Hafliða and the account of Óspakr's revenge in Bandamanna saga.

The similarities are of two types. On the one hand there are some similarities that are non-exclusive, that is to say parallels to them are to be found elsewhere in Norse literature:

- (1) A man is assaulted when lying in his bed.
- (2) The assault is an attempt at revenge.
- (3) If we take into account the Konungsbók text of Bandamanna saga, the man is assaulted when in the company of his woman.
- (4) The assault is performed in the same part of Iceland, in the neighbourhood of Húnaflói.

As to exclusive similarities we have two:

- (1) The assaulted man is named Már.
- (2) Connected with the story of the revenge are the two

names Hildir and Bergþórr.

These exclusive similarities are never found together elsewhere in saga literature. I also want to emphasise that the name Hildir, as previously shown, is very rarely connected with persons living after the landnámsöld.

This combination of similarities between the two accounts I find too striking to be fortuitous. I am therefore inclined to believe that Bandamanna saga was here influenced by Porgils saga ok Hafliða, or if not, then by oral accounts of the same events that are told in that saga. The author of Bandamanna saga has, so to speak, created the name Már Hildisson by combining the names of the antagonists Már Bergþórsson and Ólafr Hildisson in Porgils saga ok Hafliða. He has also made use of the name Bergþórr by giving it to the first enemy on whom Óspakr takes his revenge.<sup>29</sup>

This theory of influence will explain why the author of the saga, when he wanted to give Svala a husband with a bird's name, chose the name Már, and also why the names Már, Hildir and Bergþórr are so closely connected in Bandamanna saga.

But at the same time this theory gives fresh support to the view that the sixth stanza of Bandamanna saga is a creation of the saga author, and that the account of Óspakr's revenge has no base in tradition older than the saga.

\* \* \* \*



Again some words about the disagreement between the texts. As mentioned, the similarity that the assaulted man has his woman by him is to be found in only one of the two main texts of Bandamanna saga, the Konungsbók version. One might easily believe this to be a secondary addition, since this motif is very well known and widespread for instance in eddaic poetry and in sagas. On the other hand only a slight correction of the other main text of Bandamanna saga, the Möðruvallabók text, is necessary to bring it in harmony with the Konungsbók version.

In the Konungsbók Óspakr's entrance into the house in order to kill Már is described by the words einn morginn, er þau Már ok Svala lágu í rekkju sinni, kom þar inn maðr -. Möðruvallabók has: þerr svá til, at maðr gengr inn á Svölustöðum ok í hús þat, er Már hvílir í -<sup>30</sup> In several places in the Möðruvallabók text one single word, or a short sequence of words, that must have stood in the original text of the saga, has been dropped.<sup>31</sup> This may be the case here too. If the original of the Möðruvallabók had: - maðr gengr inn á Svölustöðum ok í hús þat er (þau) Már hvíl(a) í -, the harmony between the main texts as to this point would be complete. The view that this motif - the husband wounded while lying beside his wife in his bed - belongs to the original text of Bandamanna saga is also supported by the fact that the same motif is found in Gunnlaugs saga.

It is well known that there exists some sort of connection between Gunnlaugs saga and Bandamanna saga. Particularly obvious is the similarity between our sixth stanza of Bandamanna saga and a famous speech in the twelfth chapter of Gunnlaugs saga.

We here read that the scald Gunnlaugr Ormstunga, during their last fight, brought his enemy Hrafn Qnundarson drinking-water in his helmet and so approached Hrafn bare-headed. Hrafn made use of this opportunity to give Gunnlaugr a mortal wound in the head. The saga continues as follows:

Pá mælti Gunnlaugr: "Illa sveiktu mik nú, ok ódrengiliga fór þér, þar sem ek trúða þér."

Hrafn svarar: "Satt er þat," segir hann, "en þat gekk mér til þess, at ek ann þér eigi faðmlagsins Helgu innar fǫgru." <sup>32</sup>

The sixth stanza of Bandamanna saga has:

Unnak eigi  
arfa Hildis  
fagrvoxinnar  
faðmlags Svǫlu.<sup>33</sup>

Between Hrafn's speech in Gunnlaugs saga and the stanza of Bandamanna saga there is correspondence not only in subject-matter but also in the choice of words (unna eigi faðmlags; fagr). A literary relationship is here evident.<sup>34</sup>

Between these two sagas there are similarities in other respects too. Common to both is the brother of

Gunnlaugr, Hermundr Illugason, although the picture of him in Gunnlaugs saga - in accordance with the different plans of the two sagas - is more sympathetic than that in Bandamanna saga. But in both sagas he is a distinguished person. Cf. Gunnlaugs saga, ch. 4 (on the two brothers): Hermundr var þeirra vinsælli ok hafði höfðingjabragð á sér,<sup>35</sup> and Bandamanna saga, M-text ch. 10: "Þar sitr þú, Hermundr, mikill höfðingi", and K-text: "Þá sitr þú, Hermundr, höfðingi mikill".<sup>36</sup>

Egill Skúlason, a particularly prominent bandamaðr in Bandamanna saga, but known only from this saga, is the son of Skúli Þorsteinsson, who in Gunnlaugs saga is a hirðmaðr at the court of Earl Eiríkr in Niðarós, where he willingly gives Gunnlaugr assistance and saves him in a very dangerous situation. Skúli's sister is Helga in fagra.

In Gunnlaugs saga ch. 4 we read that Gunnlaugr at the age of 12 asks his father for equipment for a journey to foreign countries. The father rejects this:

Ok einnhvern morgin var þat, alllitlu síðar,  
at Illugi bóndi gekk út snimma ok sá, at útibúr  
hans var opit, ok váru lagðir út vgrusekkar  
nökkurir á hlaðit sex ok þar lénur með; hann  
undraðisk þetta mjök. Þar gekk þá at maðr ok  
leiddi fjögur hross, ok var þar Gunnlaugr, sonr  
hans, ok mælti: "Ek hefi sekkana út lagit,"  
segir hann. Illugi spurði, hví hann gerði svá.

Hann sagði, at þat skyldi vera fararefni hans.  
 Illugi mælti: "Engi ráð skalt þú taka af mér  
 ok fara hvergi, fyrr en ek vil," ok kippði inn  
 apr vgrusekkunum. Gunnlaugr reið þá í brott  
 þaðan -. <sup>37</sup>

In the beginning of Bandamanna saga Oddr Ófeigsson, at  
 the age of 12, asks his father for equipment to leave home.  
 This is contemptuously refused. The M-text continues:

Annan dag eptir tekr Oddr vað af þili ok gll  
 veiðarferi ok tólf álnar vaðmáls. Han gengr nú  
 í brott ok kveðr engan mann.

K-text: Annan dag eptir ferr Oddr ok tekr vað  
 af þili ok gll veiðarferi ok tólf álnar vaðmáls  
 ok gengr í brott ok kveðr engan mann -. <sup>38</sup>

It may also be mentioned that only in these two sagas  
 do we find the mountain name Valfell in Borgarfjörður, a  
 name that is now forgotten. <sup>39</sup>

A similarity of particular interest to us is found in  
 the twelfth stanza of Gunnlaugs saga. <sup>40</sup> After describing  
 how Helga in fagra is married to Hrafn against her will  
 the saga continues:

Hrafn fór heim til Mosfells með Helgu, konu  
 sína. Ok er þau hfðu þar skamma stund verit, þá  
 var þat einn morgin, áðr þau risu upp, at Helga  
 vakir, en Hrafn svaf, ok lét hann illa í svefni.  
 Ok er hann vaknaði, spyrr Helga, hvat hann hefði

dreymt. Hrafn kvað vísu:

Hugðumk orms á armi  
 ý döggar þér hoggvinn,  
 væri, brúðr, í blóði  
 beðr þinn roðinn mínu;  
 knættit endr of undir  
 ǵlstafns Njǵrun Hrafni,  
 líka getr þat lauka  
 lind, hoggþyrnis binda.

Helga mælti: "Þat mun ek aldri gráta," segir hon,  
 "ok hafi þér illa svikit mik, ok mun Gunnlaugr út  
 kominn."<sup>41</sup>

Here we see the idea of the husband wounded and blood-stained while lying in bed beside his wife quite clearly expressed. In this respect the similarity is greater between Bandamanna saga and Gunnlaugs saga than between Bandamanna saga and Porgils saga ok Hafliða. In the latter saga the woman is not the wounded man's wife and not lying in bed beside him, nor is the wounded man killed.

A literary relationship between Gunnlaugs saga and our stanza of the Bandamanna saga is undoubted. But what was the direction of the influence? Which of them was the prior one, Gunnlaugs saga or the account of Óspakr's revenge in Bandamanna saga?<sup>42</sup>

As stated before, I am inclined to regard the sixth stanza of Bandamanna saga as having been an invention of

the saga author himself. If this conclusion is correct, I think it will help to some extent to determine the relationship between these two sagas.

Most scholars assign the composition of both sagas to the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>43</sup> But as yet the question of their age relative to each other has been left unsolved.

The question of the age of Gunnlaugs saga is complicated. The rivalry between Gunnlaugr and Hrafn about Helga in fagra is mentioned in Egils saga. A vísuhelmingr ascribed to Gunnlaugr is quoted in Snorra-Edda. Both Gunnlaugr and Hrafn are named in Skáldatal<sup>44</sup> and Gunnlaugr in the Sturlubók of Landnáma.<sup>45</sup> But as Sturla Þórðarson does not seem to have made use of Gunnlaugs saga in his Sturlubók, Sigurður Nordal supposed the saga to be of comparatively late origin, viz. the 1270s.<sup>46</sup> Bjarni Einarsson points out the possibility that there existed an older Gunnlaugs saga, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and that the preserved Gunnlaugs saga may be a remodelled version of that older saga.<sup>47</sup> At any rate, the dispute between Gunnlaugr and Hrafn was evidently well known in Iceland throughout the thirteenth century. If the sixth stanza of Bandamanna saga was composed by the author of that saga in the latter half of the thirteenth century, the conflict between Gunnlaugr and Hrafn must have been well known to the author of this stanza too. And nothing seems to prevent the

assumption that the author of the stanza may also have known the prose of our existing Gunnlaugs saga.

On the other hand, if Óspakr's stanza is as young as the saga itself, it will for chronological reasons be rather difficult to regard it as a source of Gunnlaugs saga. In addition, this stanza, and the obscure persons named there, are totally unknown in Old Icelandic literature outside Bandamanna saga. I am therefore inclined to believe that this stanza, like the whole account of Óspakr's revenge, is built up by means of material from three sources: Bandamanna saga itself, Porgils saga ok Hafliða and Gunnlaugs saga.

## NOTES

1. Stefán Karlsson's recent investigations into the hand of the Möðruvallabók-writer supports this conclusion. Cf. Stefán Karlsson, *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile*, Vol. VII: *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops* (Copenhagen 1967), p. 28.
2. Jón Helgason, *Manuscripta Islandica II* (København 1955), p. XII.
3. Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie I (København 1920), pp. 514-5; cf. idem: *Bandamannasaga med Oddspátttr ... udgivne for Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur* (København 1933), p. IX.
4. Zwei Isländer-Geschichten, die Hønsna-Póres und die Bandamanna saga (Berlin 1913), p. XIV.
5. Um Íslendingasögur, p. 272, in *Safn til sögu Íslands VI* (Reykjavík 1929-1939).
6. *Nordisk kultur VIII:B Litteraturhistorie* (Uppsala 1953), p. 257.
7. Cf. E.H. Lind: *Norsk-isländska dopnamn och fingerade namn från medeltiden* (Uppsala 1905-1915), Supplementband Oslo 1931; Hallvard Magerøy: *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, *Bibliotheca Arnemagneana XVIII* (København 1957), p. 106.
8. Edition 1933 (cf. note 3), p. VII. - As to anticipatory dittographies cf. also Dagfinn Åsen in *Mål og Namn. Heidersskrift til Olav T. Beito* (Oslo 1971), p. 349.
9. Edition 1933, p. VII.



10. The name Svartr is borne by 15 persons in the Sagas of Icelanders and Landnámabók. Except for Svartr, the son of Úlfr aurgoði in Landnámabók, they are as a rule characterised by low rank or by a brutal nature (outlaws, vikings, berserks and so on). The adjective svartr can be a sign of evil character also when used outside names. Cf. Gunnlaugs saga, stanza 2: illr ok svartr (Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 69; P. G. Foote: Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu, London 1957, p. 13). In Eiríks saga rauða Þórhallr veiðimaðr is svartr ok þursligr, hljóðlyndr ok illorðr ... illa kristinn (Ísl. fornrr. IV, p. 222).- Of 15 persons in the Sagas of Icelanders bearing the name Kolr 6 are thralls or servants, 1 is a viking. Of the others 1 (Kolr Egilsson in Njála) is a typical ójafnaðarmaðr, and some of the rest rather hard and aggressive. - In these sagas there are 3 persons named Sóti. Two of them are vikings, the third a man who unjustly tried to deprive Hrútr Herjólfsson in Njála of his inheritance. In other saga types persons bearing the name Sóti are frequently of evil character. Cf. Ísl. fornrr. XII, p. 12, note 1. - Ljótr is the name of 12 men in the Sagas of Icelanders. Some of these are most respectable persons. But in the cases of the berserk Ljótr inn bleiki in Egils saga and the viking Ljótr inn bleiki in Svarfdæla saga the correspondence of name and character is evident. The choice of name is also certainly deliberate in the cases of Ljótr, the companion of Hrollaugr inn mikli in Vatnsdæla saga, Ljótr inn svartí, the relative of Hallgerðr in Njáls saga, and Ljótr, the nephew of Þorgrímr trolli in Fóstbræðra saga. A hofgoði named Ljótr in Rcykdæla saga advises in a bad year at gefa til hofs, en bera út börn ok drepa gamalmenni. An outstanding man is Ljótr inn spaki of Landnáma. But in Laxdæla saga and Hávarðar saga

Ísfrðings he is named Hólmgöngu-Ljótr, inn mesti hólmgongumaðr (Ísl. fornrr. VI, p. 336). - Sámr ("the dark one") is in the Sagas of Icelanders the name of 6 persons, one a troll, one a viking. Sámr Bjarnason, found only in Hrafnkels saga, scarcely got his name by chance. - The same is to be said of Hildigunnr Starkaðardóttir in Njála. - In the case of Gunnhildr, the famous queen of King Eiríkr Blóðøx in the Kings' Sagas and the Sagas of Icelanders, the name is probably historical, but it seems possible that her character in the sagas has been influenced by her name.

11. Cf. Magerøy, Studiar i Bandamanna saga, pp. 234-5. Cf. n.10 on Gunnhildr; and what of Víga-Glúmr?
12. Finnur Jónsson, Bæ, unöfn á Íslandi, p. 428, in Safn til sögu Íslands IV (København and Reykjavík 1907-1915); Nordisk kultur V Stedsnavn (Stockholm 1939), pp. 65-6 (Ólafur Lárusson); Hans Kuhn, Upphaf íslenskra örnefna og bæjarnafna, in Samtíð og saga V (Reykjavík 1951), p. 188.
13. Cf. Oluf Rygh, Norske Gaardnavne. Forord og Indledning (Kristiania 1898), pp. 17-18; Nordisk kultur V, pp.24-6 (Magnus Olsen); Hans Kuhn, op.cit., p. 191. Kuhn does not regard the Icelandic farm-names ending in -staðir as the original names of farms bearing such names now (op. cit., pp. 188 ff.). But this view cannot affect our problem: the name Svplustaðir was at any rate taken to be as old as Svala herself by the author of Bandamanna saga (cf. Magerøy: Studiar i Bandamanna saga, p. 117, note 26). The same is true of the recent theories of Þórhallur Vilmundarson, who explains a great many Icelandic farm-names ending in -staðir, that have hitherto been considered to contain personal names, as derived from natural features or

human activities.

14. Cf. Andreas Heusler, *Zwei Isländer-Geschichten* (1913), p. XLVI.
15. E.H. Lind supposed the woman's name Svala to be preserved in the Norwegian farm-names Solerud and Sulerød (cf. note 7). The former of these farm-names O. Rygh derived from the personal name Sóli (*Gamle Personnavne i norske Stedsnavne, Kristiania 1901*).
16. The earliest example in *Diplomatarium Islandicum* is from the year 1385 (*Dipl. Isl. III, No. 326*). Cf. Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín, *Jarðabók VIII* (København 1926), p. 231; Kr. Kålund, *Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk Beskrivelse af Island II* (Kjøbenhavn 1879-1882), p. 24; *Isl. fornrr. VII*, p. 305, note 2.
17. Cf. Magerøy, *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, p. 117.
18. Cf. Paul Rubow, *Smaa kritiske breve* (København 1936), pp. 9-10; Sigurður Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, *Studia Islandica* 7 (Reykjavík 1940), pp. 21 ff.; Bjarni Einarsson, *Brákarsund*, in *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 1969, pp. 57-60; idem, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* (Oslo 1971), pp. 44-5. This view is also supported by Þórhallur Vilmundarson (cf. note 13).
19. On my inquiry Þórhallur Vilmundarson has informed me of his opinion in the case of *Svölustaðir*. He is inclined to believe in the possibility of still other explanations.
20. Cf. *Nordisk kultur VII Personnamn* (Oslo 1948), pp. 33-4.
21. Cf. A. Bley, *Eigla-studien* (Gand 1909), pp. 93-4; Hallvard Lie, *Jorvikferden*, in *Edda XLVI* (Oslo 1947), pp. 188 f.

22. Ísl. forn. VII, pp. 299-300; Hallvard Magerøy, *Bandamanna saga* utgjeven for Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur (København 1956), pp. 7<sup>11-13</sup>, 8<sup>1-2</sup>.
23. Cf. Magerøy, *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, p. 106.
24. See for instance H. Magerøy, *Guðmundr góði og Guðmundr ríki*, in *Maal og Minne* 1959; Lars Lönnroth, *Studier i Olav Tryggvasons saga*, in *Sammlaren LXXXIV* (Uppsala 1963).
25. Bjarni Einarsson takes this to be the origin of Oddný (eykyndill) in Bjarnar saga Hitðelakappa, Porkell (i Tungu) in Kormáks saga, Ketill (gufa) in Egils saga. See his *Skáldasögur* (Reykjavík 1961), pp. 50-51, 63-4; *Litteraire forudsætninger for Egils saga*, pp. 61-2.
26. Ísl. forn. VII, pp. LXXXIV-LXXXVII; Magerøy, *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, pp. 241 ff.; Walter Baetke, *Bandamanna saga und Ólkofra þátr* (Halle a. Saale 1960), pp. 26-34.
27. Ursula Brown, *Porgils saga ok Hafliða* (London 1952), p. XXIX; Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *Skírnir* 1952, pp. 251-2; Sigurður Nordal, *Nordisk kultur VIII:B*, pp. 215-6; Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte II* (Berlin 1967), p. 310. Peter Foote's investigation into the frequency of of/umb in this saga points to "the opening years of the thirteenth century". See *Studia Islandica* 14 (Reykjavík 1955), pp. 67-8.
28. Kr. Kálund, *Sturlunga saga I* (København 1906-1911), p. 12<sup>15-26</sup>; Ursula Brown, *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*, pp. 6<sup>17</sup> - 7<sup>2</sup>.
29. The theory of influence from Porgils saga ok Hafliða on Bandamanna saga seems to be corroborated by still other similarities or connections between them. In Bandamanna saga Oddr Ófeigsson's two most exasperated

enemies among the bandamenn are Styrmir Þorgeirsson from Ásgeirsá and Hermundr Illugason of Gilsbakki. Both of them are relatives of important persons in Þorgils saga ok Hafliða. In Þorgils saga we read: Kolfinna hét kona Þorgils, dóttir Halls Styrmissonar, Þorgeirssonar, frá Ásgeirsá (Kálund, Sturlunga saga I, p. 8<sup>28-29</sup>). Hallr Styrmisson is also mentioned in the M-text of Bandamanna saga. Hermundr Illugason is not mentioned in Þorgils saga. But his son Hreinn was the father of Styrmir Hreinsson of Gilsbakki, who is one of Þorgils Oddason's supporters, and who also plays a prominent part in the reconciliation of Þorgils and Hafliði. Styrmir Þorgeirsson from Ásgeirsá was also a brother of Styrmir Hreinsson's mother.

In Þorgils saga Hildir, the father of Ólafr Hildisson, varð sekr skógarmaðr (Kálund, Sturl. I, p. 9<sup>30</sup>) - another probable correspondence between name and character, though obviously fortuitous if he really existed.

As mentioned before, the events of our two sagas to a great extent take place in the same part of Iceland, and the sagas therefore have several place-names from these districts in common, e.g. Hrútafjörðr, Strandir, Bitra, Skriðinsenni, Ásgeirsá.

In Bandamanna saga Ófeigr Skíðason is described in this way in the M-text: Ófeigr var spekingr mikill ok hinn mesti ráðagørðamaðr. Hann var í gllu mikilmenni, en eigi var honum fjárhagrinn hoegr, átti lendur miklar en minna lausafé. Hann sparði við engan mann mat - ; In the K-text: Ófeigr var spekingr mikill ok ráðagørðamaðr. Ekki var honum fjárhagr sinn hoegr, átti lendur miklar en minna lausafé. Hann sparði við engan mann mat (Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 293-4; Magerøy: Edition 1956, pp. 1<sup>8</sup> - 2<sup>1</sup>, 1<sup>17</sup> - 2<sup>17</sup>). In Þorgils saga the priest Ingimundr Einarsson is described in similar

terms: Hann var vinsæll maðr ok þó nokkut févani ok var þó bæði orr af peningum ok it mesta stórmenni í skapi (Kålund, Sturl. I, p. 9<sup>8-9</sup>).

Ólafr Hildisson having come to Þorgils, the Þorgils saga continues: Hann (i.e. Þorgils) svarar; kvað þat vænst at hann færi norðr á Strandir ok aflaði þar fjár, sagði þat margra manna siðvenju. Síðan fór hann (i.e. Ólafr) norðr á Strandir með gagn sitt - (Kålund, Sturl. I, p. 10<sup>7-9</sup>). Cf. Oddr Ófeigsson's growing wealth from sea-transport in this district in chapter 1 of Bandamanna saga.

Between the two sagas there are also similarities in the use of some characteristic words and expressions.

Þorgils saga ok Haflíða

(Kålund: Sturl. I)

Már ... sækir mjök eptir, ok þar kemr, at Þorsteinn neitar eigi skipvist með Mávi (10<sup>14-16</sup>)

þá leitar Ólafr eptir (12<sup>7</sup>)

honum hæfði at leita eptir (12<sup>8</sup>)

at þú leitar eptir (12<sup>10</sup>)

Hon sækir eptir mjök (15<sup>9</sup>)

þá skorar hann til mjök (10<sup>16-17</sup>)

skorar á hann til viðtöku (25<sup>19</sup>)

at Þorsteinn réðisk frá skipi hans ok í sveit með Mávi (10<sup>17-18</sup>)

Bandamanna saga

(Isl. forn.VII; Magerøy:Ed.)

M: Oddr leitar eptir, en Óspakr ferr undan ok er þó óðfúsi til; ok þar kemr, at hann biðr Odd ráða (p. 302; 10<sup>1-3</sup>)

K: Oddr sækir nú eptir, en Óspakr ferr undan, ok þar kemr, at hann víkr til ráða Odds (p. 302; 10<sup>18-19</sup>)

M: er þú skorar á mik til viðtöku (p. 300; 8<sup>2-3</sup>)

K: Nú er þú skorar þetta svá hart (p. 300; 8/19)

M: réðsk þar í sveit með vermönnum (p. 295; 3<sup>8</sup>)

K: ræzk í sveit með þeim mönnum, er váru í veri

(p.295; 3<sup>24-25</sup>)

Már Bergþórsson vegr til við  
Þorstein (10<sup>10-11</sup>)

M: Oddr vegr til við Óspak  
(p. 307; 14<sup>10</sup>)

Ólafr Hildisson vegr til við  
Hneiti (10<sup>20-21</sup>),  
at þú vektir til (10<sup>24</sup>)

vegr síðan til við Má (10<sup>25</sup>)

Þá vegr Ólafr til (11<sup>13</sup>)

Heyr þar á endimi (11<sup>17</sup>)

M: Heyr á endemi (p. 333;  
44<sup>4</sup>)

Már sagði, at þeir væri  
sáttir (14<sup>17</sup>) [in this case  
a lie]

M: segi hon, at vit sém  
sáttir (p. 315; 26<sup>6</sup>)

K: segi hon honum, at vit  
sém menn sáttir (p. 315;  
26<sup>21-22</sup>)

M: segir þá sátta (p. 315;  
26<sup>10</sup>)

K: sagði hon honum þa Vála  
ok Óspak menn sátta  
(p. 315; 26<sup>25-26</sup>) [a lie  
here too]

It can be seen that the most notable verbal correspondences with Bandamanna saga in Porgils saga ok Haflíða are mainly concentrated in the short section dealing with Már Bergþórsson and his dealings with Ólafr Hildisson. The explanation of this may partly be parallelism of subject-matter. But it is also probable that this section of Porgils saga, being of special interest to the author of Bandamanna saga, had some influence on his choice of words.

30. Ísl. fornrr. VII, pp. 361-2; Magerøy, Edition 1956,  
p. 72<sup>18-20</sup>, 28-29.
31. Magerøy, Studiar i Bandamanna saga, p. 119; cf. Kr.  
Kålund, Laxdæla saga (København 1889-1891), pp. XXXVII-  
XXXVIII.
32. Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 102; Foote, Edition 1957, p. 36.
33. Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 362; Magerøy, Edition 1956,  
p. 73<sup>5-8</sup>, 20-23.
34. As to this similarity see Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 362;  
Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 102, note 4; Helga Reuschel, Gunn-  
laugs saga Ormstungu (Halle a. Saale 1957), pp. 7-8;  
Baetke, Edition of Bandamanna saga 1960, pp. 32-33;  
H. Magerøy in Arkiv för nordisk filologi 1966, p. 99.
35. Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 59; Foote, Edition 1957, p. 6.
36. Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 348; Magerøy, Edition 1956,  
p. 59<sup>10</sup>, 24-25.
37. Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 59; Foote, Edition 1957, pp. 6-7.
38. Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 295; Magerøy, Edition 1956,  
p. 3<sup>5-7</sup>, 21-24; idem in Arkiv för nordisk filologi  
1966, pp. 99-100. The word faðmlag in this sense is  
extremely rare in the Íslendingasögur; cf. Wolfgang  
Krause, Die Frau in der Sprache der altisländischen  
Familiengeschichten (Göttingen 1926), pp. 140-1.
39. Kr. Kålund, Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk  
Beskrivelse af Island I (Kjøbenhavn 1877), pp. 369-370,  
382; Ísl. fornrr. VII, p. 360, note 3; Ísl. fornrr. III,  
p. 53, note 2.
40. Sigurður Nordal takes this stanza to be older than  
Gunnlaugs saga and one of the saga's sources (Ísl.  
fornrr. III, pp. XLVII-XLVIII). Peter Foote agrees  
with this (Edition 1957, p. XIV). Helga Reuschel



on the other hand is inclined to believe that the author of the stanza is the same person as the author of the saga. She points inter alia to the similarity between the beginning of this stanza and of the beginning of the last stanza of the saga: Hugðumk orms á armi / Lagðak orms at armi (Edition 1957, p. 17). This may be right or not. At any rate the twelfth stanza of Gunnlaugs saga is of particular interest to us when it is part of the existing Gunnlaugs saga.

41. Ísl. fornrr. III, p. 88; Foote, Edition 1957, p. 27.
42. Helga Reuschel seems to consider that Gunnlaugs saga was influenced by Bandamanna saga (Edition 1957, pp. 7-8). Walter Baetke supposes that Bandamanna saga was influenced by Gunnlaugs saga, but his argument is very vague (Edition of Bandamanna saga 1960, p. 33).
43. Ísl. fornrr. VII, pp. XCI-XCII; Ísl. fornrr. III, p. LX; Nordisk kultur VII:B, p. 261; Foote, Gunnlaugs saga 1957, p. XXII; Helga Reuschel, Gunnlaugs saga 1957, p. 28; Magerøy, Studiar i Bandamanna saga, pp. 292-3; Jan de Vries, Altnordische Literaturgeschichte, II, pp. 359, 405. - Peter Hallberg nowadays stands apart in considering Bandamanna saga to be one of the older Sagas of Icelanders (Arkiv för nordisk filologi 1965, p. 179). Cf. also B.M. Ólsen, Um Íslendingasögur, p. 264.
44. Edda Snorra Sturlusonar III (Copenhagen 1880-1887), pp. 252-284.
45. Finnur Jónsson, Landnámabók (København 1900), p. 181; Ísl. fornrr. I, p. 214.
46. Ísl. fornrr. III, p. LX; Nordisk kultur VIII:B, p. 261. B. M. Ólsen considered Gunnlaugs saga to be dependent

on Hœnsa-Póris saga (Om Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu, København 1911, pp. 26, 36). This view, although not taken as proved by Sigurður Nordal (Ísl. fornrr. III, p. XLIX), is supported by Helga Reuschel (Edition 1957, p.19). Björn Sigfússon has tried to show that Hœnsa-Póris saga was composed in the years 1275-1280 (Saga 1962). These opinions, too, if right, would point to a comparably late date for Gunnlaugs saga.

47. Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder V (1960), art. Gunnlaugs saga; Skáldasögur, pp. 269-270, 299.

MARINA MUNDT

OBSERVATIONS ON THE INFLUENCE OF PIÐRIKS SAGA ON  
ICELANDIC SAGA WRITING

In two of the Icelandic sagas a group of armed men is observed while resting under some trees. The shepherd who has noticed them later on describes them thoroughly to the main person in that part of the saga, so that the latter is able to guess correctly the identity of them all. The group in Laxdœla saga ch.63 consists of ten men who are described to Helgi Harðbeinsson, and in Njáls saga ch.69 it consists of twenty-four men described to Njáll. The discussion as to the possibility of influence from Laxdœla saga on Njáls saga at this point may be summarized as follows: Finnur Jónsson believed in it, Einar Ól. Sveinsson was sceptical about it, Theodore Andersson and Heimir Pálsson do not think it necessary to speak of direct influence. Irrespective of which side you may take concerning this question, most people will agree that both these descriptions remind the reader of Piðriks saga ch.200<sup>1</sup>, although each of them does so in its own way. This is reflected in Heimir Pálsson's sketch, in as much as he is most inclined to reckon on a common "erlend fyrirmynd" for both Laxdœla and Njála<sup>2</sup>. Whether or not this model was Piðriks saga is not discussed by him.

And this question was of course of less importance for him, since he only intended to explore the dependence of Njála on Laxdæla.

Description of a whole group, by means of which A enables B to identify all the people observed, may be used as a motif in rather different contexts, and it is, no doubt, to be found in languages and texts other than the three under consideration. But the third book of the Iliad, which has been mentioned in this connection several times, has actually very little in common with the Icelandic texts, as may be readily understood. Beautiful Helena and old King Priamos are sitting together, looking down at the recently arrived Greek army. Priamos asks for the names of some men who are conspicuous by their appearance. Helena has grown up amongst these Greek heroes and consequently knows them well. Thus it is easy for her to identify them to Priamos, seeing the heroes in front of her. The difference is obvious.

Piðriks saga ch.200 is not handed down in exactly the same way in all manuscripts. In the Norwegian vellum from the second half of the thirteenth-century - and Einar Ól. Sveinsson obviously judged the text by this only - the story is told as follows:

Sigurðr sveinn is watching some magnificent tents on the plain near the stronghold of King Ísungr. He does not see the strangers; they are supposed to be sitting inside their tents. But Sigurðr sees thirteen shields with different coats of arms attached to the outside of the tents. He goes to King Ísungr and describes the shields to him. While Sigurðr is giving his report, the story-teller interposes an identification of each shield after its description: "There he saw ..." or "That is the shield of ..." and so on.

Sigurðr apparently does not recognize the significance of the emblems on the shields. The same seems to be true of King Ísungr, since he afterwards asks Sigurðr to go to these strangers in order to enquire who they are. This is most probably not the original shape of the story. The enumeration of the thirteen coats of arms does not serve any purpose. And in view of the fact that the thirteen men in question are introduced as being among the most important heroes of their time, it rather casts doubt on King Ísungr's knightly education if he is unable to identify any of the coats of arms described to him.

I therefore prefer the reading in the Icelandic manuscripts, which in this case seem to be nearer to the original. In some of these manuscripts it is quite

clear that Sigurðr himself, after describing each shield, makes a remark concerning whose shield it ought to be. In accordance with this, all that is said afterwards is that Sigurðr should go to the strangers to make sure who they are.

After this we may look at Njála ch.69. As well as the incredible things in this paragraph noted by Einar Ól. Sveinsson<sup>3</sup>, we should be aware of three more:

- (1) While being observed, the twenty-four men slept - obviously all in company.
- (2) They are said to have hung up their shields on branches above them.
- (3) The shepherd later describes their weapons and clothing - but not their shields.

The number of men who go to attack someone in Icelandic family sagas is not usually twenty-four. The number varies of course, but if we were to find a classic number for such occasions, it would be eighteen. If we look for groups consisting of twenty-four men, we find one in Hallfreðar saga, and some examples in Piðriks saga - perhaps not merely by chance. Turning back to the three points first mentioned, we have to consider:

- (1) In Laxdæla ten people were observed, eating breakfast, sitting on their saddles. In Njála the twenty-four men suddenly get tired, lie down and sleep soundly. People

may get tired on the way, of course, but the normal thing to do on such an occasion would be for at least one of them to keep watch, as is found in Njála ch.62, where Gunnarr is resting with far fewer companions. Thus, it is rather beyond belief that twenty-four men should all sleep at the same time, especially when the purpose of their ride is taken into consideration.

(2) The shields hung up above the heroes are not paralleled in Laxdœla, but only in Piðriks saga. One may say that in Njála they hang there just for decoration, being of no use later in the saga. But I cannot help calling it rather thoughtless behaviour, since they are intent on taking a man's life, to sleep on the way without a guard, and then above all to hang up twenty-four shields, which must draw the attention of anyone passing within a reasonable distance.

(3) It would not have been an easy thing for a shepherd to remember twenty-four different coats of arms, perhaps not even for the story-teller to invent them! Consequently the topic is dropped when the shepherd arrives at Njáll's house. We are then told only that the shepherd describes the strangers' weapons and clothing - although it is rather dubious just how much he could have seen of the clothing on people who were sleeping - the scene is said to take place at night, which, Icelandic conditions taken into consideration, probably means at dawn. Let

us remind ourselves of the strangers in Laxdœla, who were awake, sitting on their saddles in broad daylight, and there were only ten of them. From the first paragraph in Njála one would have thought that only the shields were visible, and so possible to describe plainly, because they were hanging on branches. But the storyteller did not like to go into details about this, and I believe for good reasons. So in fact, the feat of identifying a whole group of persons after receiving a good description is here already used as a cliché, a feature typical of the later stages of saga-writing. But even if the author of Njála knew Laxdœla, which for other reasons it is reasonable to suppose he did, a detail obviously came to him which is not in Laxdœla, but only in Piðriks saga: the shields hung up above the partly or totally invisible group under consideration.

While arguing the case that the author of Njála knew Piðriks saga, I would like to remind you of two other points which may be due to his use of the same source. One of these is Gunnarr's dressing up as Kaupa-Heðinn in ch.23; the other one concerns some details relating to Skarpheðinn.

In ch.23, when as a result of a dream Hqskuldr gets interested in the person he had put up the night before, one man says: þat sá ek, at fram undan erminni kom eitt



gullhlað ok rautt klæði; á hœgri hendi hafði hann gullhring. Hǫskuldr realizes then that the guest had been nobody else but Gunnarr frá Hlíðarenda. Jan de Vries has pointed out that the same motif occurs in Qrvar-Odds saga and that we have here a typical fornaldarsaga motif. He may be right, but when trying to get further back in time, it is once again Piðriks saga we come upon, as perhaps the oldest example in Iceland. In ch.132 Vildifer comes to Piðrikr in poor clothing and with a hat hanging down over his face, as Gunnarr did, whilst Qrvar-Oddr has only váskufl einn mikinn ok síðan yfir klæðum sínum (ch.36) - no hat, you see. The fact that Vildifer is of noble kin is detected in the same way as in the case of Gunnarr, though neither of them has taken off his poor coat. The thick gold ring is seen by chance, because of a sudden movement of the arm. In the case of Vildifer one sleeve is pushed up while he is washing his hands, and so Viðga gets a chance to notice it. The case of Qrvar-Oddr is somewhat different in this respect as well: the heavy gold ring is mentioned only when he takes off his coat. So I would say that even if it is the same motif as in Njála and Piðriks saga, it is used in a different way, and of these two texts there is no doubt which was the earlier.

Skarpheðinn, who once performed a real piece of villainy in killing an innocent young man attached to

his family , and who at last stands alone in a burning house, has much in common with Hogni as depicted in Piðriks saga. I cannot here deal in extenso with the details which might be considered, but would just like to mention one. Theodore Andersson discusses in a special chapter, "The heroic legacy", the impact of heroic lays on the Icelandic sagas. He mentions, with reference to Knut Liestøl, that Skarpheðinn reminds us of Hogni<sup>4</sup>. Doubtless he is right; the comment is nevertheless only part of the truth. Hogni as a person standing erect against a wall in a burning house does not occur in the Poetic Edda, but in Piðriks saga.

I assume we are right in tying up the loose ends now and concluding that the author of Njála knew Piðriks saga. Njála is dated at approximately 1280. Since the main purpose of my paper is to discuss how far back in time we may trace examples of reasonably certain influence of Piðriks saga on Icelandic saga-writing, I will not say anything about later examples such as Erex saga, Mágus saga, Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans, and others. Neither will I spend long on Grettis saga, since it does not really lead us back in time, but in passing I may just mention the dynbjöllur with which Þorsteinn's bridge in ch.53 is equipped to warn Þorsteinn of anyone crossing it. According to Guðni Jónsson, these dynbjöllur have no

parallel elsewhere in Old Icelandic literature save in Piðriks saga.

We move on to Laxdoela saga, which gives the description of a whole group of men in ch.63. Here the shepherd has been told to watch any mannaferðir near Helgi Harðbeinsson's shieling (sel). The man comes back and describes the ten men he has seen, sitting in a circle on their saddles. No special remark is made on their shields or coats of arms. Their weapons are scarcely mentioned. There is however one thing, neatly outlined for five men and thus remarkable in a way, and that is what kind of saddle they had. Apart from this special feature most emphasis is put on the men's appearance, the colour of their hair, their eyes, the shape of their faces and their figures, and a little is said about their clothing. This description, which at first sight may appear rather realistic, is, however, anything but that. It is for instance difficult to imagine how the shepherd from a reasonable distance was able to see not only that a man had strong arms, but also that he had beautiful hands. Or - in view of the fact that there were ten men to be remembered - that he got the following impression of Bolli's eyes: he was eygðr allvel, bláeygr ok snareygr ok nokkut skoteygr (he had very fine eyes - blue and sharp and seldom still). But the minute details

are in this case due to the fact that the reeling off in Laxdæla ch.63 is a refined edition of a description of a group to be found in Íslendinga saga ch.84. In this saga we are concerned with real people and the descriptions were not part of a guessing game. Thus there was nothing unreasonable in including such details as that Snorri Loftsson was kurteiss um hendr sínar. The disproportion in Laxdæla has arisen simply because the author did not distinguish strictly between what is possible in a literary portrait and what is meaningful in a description which has a practical purpose<sup>5</sup>. Beyond that the parallel in Íslendinga saga is of no further importance to our case, since we are mainly concerned with the guessing-game, which is not found in Íslendinga saga.

In Laxdæla ch.63 the guessing-game is managed more logically than in Njála and Piðriks saga. The author makes use of the occasion to revel in forms and colours. Therefore it is not strange that Finnur Jónsson believed that Piðriks saga was secondary and influenced by Laxdæla saga. In fact, I pondered for a long time wondering whether he was right. But I do not think he was. The motif, a guessing-game in connection with description of a group, could have been invented by the author of Laxdæla without knowing Piðriks saga. The

descriptions themselves can on no account be traced back to the corresponding scene in Piðriks saga. That these descriptions on the other hand have much in common with descriptions in other parts of Piðriks saga can hardly be called significant either, since there might have been other texts, lost texts, where the same details were emphasized. Besides, the "Catalogue of heroes" in Piðriks saga ch.172-88, which Kålund especially alluded to, has often been suspected of being added later, although the passage is to be found in the Norwegian vellum. Here we are treading on uncertain ground, and when I hold that the author of Laxdoela knew Piðriks saga, then I do so mainly for other reasons. I assume that the same is true for Paul Schach, when he speaks of Laxdoela "whose author drew on both Piðriks saga and Tristrams saga".<sup>6</sup>

As far as I can see, a paragraph of primary importance for the question under consideration is to be found in the description of Bolli Bollason in ch.77:

Bolli rode away from the ship with eleven men. They were all attired in scarlet clothes, and rode in gilded saddles . . . He (Bolli) was dressed in silk clothes which the king of Miklagarðr had given him. He wore a scarlet red cloak, and was girded with Fótbítr; its hilt was inlaid with gold and its haft wound with gold. He wore a gilded helmet and had

a red shield at his side, on which a knight was traced in gold. He carried a lance (glaðel) in his hand, as is the custom in foreign countries. Wherever they took lodging, the women could not help gazing at Bolli and his companions with all their finery.

The shield with a knight traced on it in gold Rolf Heller suggested was a literary loan from Knýtlinga saga. Paul Schach wrote some years later, in the paper cited above, that Heller might be right, but that the description as a whole "reminds us of Tristram and of his father Kanelangres". The description of Kanelangres cited by Schach shows no direct parallel to the items above except the ladies' gazing upon the hero. Besides, neither Kanelangres nor Tristram nor anyone in Knýtlinga saga holds a glaðel in his hands. Therefore I do not feel entirely convinced that the description of Bolli demonstrates that the author of Laxdoela knew Tristrams saga. Even if he actually knew both Knýtlinga saga and Tristrams saga (which I do not intend to discuss here and now), it is still more likely that he knew Piðriks saga. This is shown by the fact that he wrote: hann hafði glaðel í hendi, sem títt er í útlöndum (He carried a glaðel in his hand, as is the custom in foreign countries). Even if we were inclined to suppose that this special type of lance originally occurred in Knýtlinga saga or in Tristrams saga, and that it is only

because of bad preservation that the word is not to be found in these texts nowadays, that would still be of little help. For the simple fact is that these two sagas take place mainly in one country. Piðriks saga is quite different - the scene changes unceasingly, the glaðel occurs in different places and twelve times in all. The first man carrying a glaðel is the knight Samson frá Salerni in ch.3. The next one is Piðrikr himself in ch.91. In ch.92 Viðga, recently arrived from Denmark, bears a glaðel. In ch.206 it is king Ísungr from Bertangaland and his fellows who have a glaðel (glafel) each. In ch.243 we meet Valtari frá Vaskasteini, at the moment riding on horseback, on his way from Attila, with whom he had been staying for seven years. Íron frá Brandinaborg (ch.263) and the Niflungar (ch.377) use "gladels", Íron as part of his hunting-equipment, the Niflungar as part of their herneskjá while riding to see Attila. And so on.

Apart from the texts under consideration the word glaðel only occurs in Karlamagnús saga and Elis saga, later on also in Konungs skuggsjá, Mírmanssaga, and Kirjalax saga. Even if we suppose a handful of other texts to be lost, which maybe included the word glaðel, I think most people would agree that there is only a very slight chance that any text other than Piðriks saga could have offered as good a foundation for the remark in Laxdœla, "as is the custom in foreign countries".

The same clause also indicates yet another important fact: the author of Laxdoela had obviously rather limited experience when it came to knowing what the custom in foreign countries really was at that time: at least in Hákonar saga and Knýtlinga saga the word glaðel does not occur even once. As for the ladies gazing upon the hero, we must realize that the picture occurs in Piðriks saga as well, so there was no need to resort to Tristrams saga to get this idea. Further, the paragraph about Bolli can hardly be suspected of having been added later: the picture outlined of Bolli as he comes riding from the ship, with a precious sword, with a golden helmet, with an emblazoned shield, and with a following all dressed in coloured clothing - this is a picture the reader has seen before, in ch. 44, when Kjartan was riding home from the coast.

There are some more words to be said about the first glaðel-bearing hero in Piðriks saga, Samson. In Hákonar saga ch. 332 we read of King Hákon, that he was eygðr mjök, ok þó vel . . . blíðr maðr var hann við fátaka menn ok þurftuga, svá at aldri var hann í svá þungu skapi, at eigi svaraði hann þeim blíðliga. This is of course one of the virtues often attached to a rex iustus, and most people would probably feel inclined to think of something like Konungs skuggsjá as a suitable background for such



a remark. But here we are in danger of being led astray. The fact is that the author or his oral source did not need to know anything but the beginning of Piðriks saga to get the idea that this detail could be included with advantage in the current literary portrait. We are told of Samson in ch. 1: Hann var nokkut hofugeygðr, bliðr ok litilatr við alla menn ríka ok úríka, sva at hinum minzta manni svaradi hann hlæiandi. ok engi var sva fatækr at hann firirliti. I feel reluctant to press the texts, but it would not be especially astonishing if there were a connection between these two paragraphs. Piðriks saga was a well-known story when Hákonar saga was composed, a fact which is evidenced by Volunga saga, for example, whose author took over the whole description of Sigurðr and a bit more than that.<sup>7</sup>

We turn back to Laxdoela, whose author in my opinion knew Piðriks saga fairly well. There are, apart from the description of Bolli in ch. 77, two other features which seem to be of significance in this connection. One of them is the quarrel between Guðrún and Hrefna. The struggle between them begins in the scene where Guðrún, who was used to having the best seat at the table at Hjarðarholt ok annars staðar, is disregarded in favour of Hrefna. However it is not she, but Kjartan who says in ch. 46: "Hrefna is to sit in the highseat, and she is

always to be placed first as long as I am alive...Guðrún heard this and looked at Kjartan and coloured, but said not a word." It has in fact been pointed out several times that the antagonism between the Guðrún and Brynhildr of the heroic party here appears dimly in the background. But considering the occasion on which the enmity becomes audible and visible for the first time, we find that it is neither in the Poetic Edda nor in the Nibelungenlied that placing at table proves to be a matter of consequence. It is so however in Piðriks saga ch. 343, where Brynhildr demands the best seat in the hall, since she, Gunnarr's wife, has become first lady í Niflungalandi. Guðrún does not deny that, but emphasizes that it is her own mother's seat, and that she is no verr til komin to take it. In both cases it is a clash between an honour attained by marriage and a kind of customary right. Brynhildr, who is then humiliated by being told how she was deceived on her wedding-night, brings the scene to an end exactly as Guðrún does in Laxdoela: she blushes and goes off without saying a word. So even if the heroic legacy is a factor in this scene of Laxdoela, we should add the remark "in the version we otherwise know from Piðriks saga".

Another feature of interest is the number twelve, in particular where the age of a young man is concerned.

In Laxdoela ch. 16 we are told about Óláfr Peacock: "When he was twelve years old he rode to the Assembly, and people from other districts thought it worth their while to come just to see how exceptionally well-built he was." In ch. 37 we read: "One of Hrútr's sons was called Kári; he was then twelve years old, and was the most promising of all Hrútr's sons." When Helgi Harðbeinsson is attacked in ch. 64 only a few people are staying with him: his twelve-year-old son Harðbeinn, the shepherd, and two outlaws. In ch. 74 we are told of Gellir, that he was a manly and well-built youth from his earliest years. When he was twelve years old, he went abroad with his father. And finally Bolli Bollason, the posthumous son of Bolli, avenges the death of his father at the age of twelve (ch. 64), a fact which from the point of chronology both within the saga and in other sources is rather dubious. This revenge has made more than one scholar rack his brains and most probably the suggestion that the whole episode was invented for the purpose of enhancing Bolli Bollason's prestige is right. Moreover, five boys at the age of twelve in the same saga, all of them undertaking something of interest at that age, seems to be rather a lot. Emphasis on facts about twelve-year-old boys does not seem to have been a convention from the very beginning of Icelandic saga-

writing. In Heiðarviga saga and Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa no twelve-year-old boy is mentioned and the same is true of Fóstbroeðra saga. In Hallfreðar saga nobody's age is mentioned at all. Then, at last, in Kormáks saga, we meet one twelve-year-old boy. The Kings' Sagas do not show anything totally different. Twelve-year-old boys occur, indeed, but then we are concerned with the main character of the saga and, besides, even in these cases no firm tradition seems to have existed. The most eminent example is, no doubt, Óláfr Tryggvason, who according to Historia Norvegiae and Ágrip avenged his foster-father at the age of twelve. This tradition was scarcely a very old or very strong one, since it did not prevent Oddr Snorrason, Snorri Sturluson or the compiler of Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta from maintaining that Óláfr was nine years old when he achieved his revenge. In addition, in the most famous of the translated sagas, Tristrams saga, there are no twelve-year-old boys. On the other hand, looking at Piðriks saga, we find it teeming with heroes performing all kinds of stunts at the age of twelve. The feature occurs so many times that it is detrimental rather than enjoyable. The series begins with Péttmarr, Piðrikr's father, in ch. 9. Piðrikr himself is knighted at the age of twelve in ch. 14. Exactly the same happens to

Hildibrandr in ch. 15. When Attila is twelve years old, in ch. 39, he is ranked above all other chieftains in the country by his father. In ch. 57 Velent at the age of twelve is already returning home from Mimir after a training period of three years. Viðga, Velent's son, on attaining the age of twelve, asks for equipment to go abroad; he has made up his mind to see Piðrikr and he really does so (ch. 80-81). And so on. Finally, we also meet in this saga a posthumous son avenging the death of his father at the age of twelve: it is Aldrian, Hogni's son, in ch. 423-6. The revenge of Aldrian has sometimes been suspected as a late invention, but it is in the Norwegian vellum<sup>8</sup>. And even if it were theoretically possible that Piðriks saga borrowed from Laxdoela (or from Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar) in the matter of Aldrian's revenge, we must admit that the explanation is not adequate to cover all the other promising youngsters of the same age. Besides, the dependence of Piðriks saga on Laxdoela is most unlikely because of what has been said concerning the word glæðel. Obviously it was the author of Laxdoela who knew Piðriks saga.

In reference books we find Piðriks saga dated about 1250 with the greatest regularity. Laxdoela saga is usually dated at 1244-50; more recently it has been assigned to a later date. Rolf Heller goes as far as

to date it to the years after 1270, but he does not seem to find support for this view. Dating it to a time after 1255, however, has proved reasonable in the opinion of some scholars. I do not intend to go into details concerning the dating of Laxdoela saga, but I must emphasize that there is no need to make Laxdoela younger because of its dependence on Piðriks saga. Piðriks saga is, as far as I can see, considerably older than from about 1250. The only place where I have found this thought expressed in print is in the above-mentioned article by Paul Schach, published in 1969. There he speaks of Piðriks saga "which was probably compiled at the Norwegian court not long after the translation of Thomas's Tristan romance" (p.93). I do not know, of course, exactly what Schach meant by saying "not long after", but if he thought of a space of roughly ten years, implying that Piðriks saga was written between 1230 and 1240, he is right in my opinion. This agreement is based not only on a consideration of the features discussed above, but also on consideration of the sources used by the compiler of Piðriks saga. The most thorough treatment of this question in more recent times is Roswitha Wisniewski, Die Darstellung des Niflungenunterganges in der Thidreks saga, Tübingen 1961. Her results, which seem to have convinced Jan de Vries, imply, to put it briefly, that the compiler of Piðriks saga used mainly two sources.

One of these was an older and rougher version of the Nibelungenlied, a version which in the opinion of most scholars in the field must once have existed and which is usually called the Ältere Not. The second source was a kind of chronicle, in Latin or in Low German translation from Latin, which for many good reasons may be connected with Weddinghausen, a monastery situated only about 14 miles away from Soest, a town belonging to the Hanseatic league; this chronicle was most probably written between 1210 and 1230. The compiler of Piðriks saga did not make use of the courtly Nibelungenlied. That is a fact which people realized long ago, and it is not least for this reason that I find it difficult to imagine that Piðriks saga was written as late as c. 1250. The Nibelungenlied was composed about 1200 and it is preserved in 24 manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Since the compilation of Piðriks saga is usually thought of in connection with the interest in a refined courtly culture which began to stamp itself on the literary life of Norway early in the reign of King Hákon, it is remarkable that the writer of Piðriks saga did not try to get hold of the courtly Nibelungenlied as his model. A satisfactory explanation may be found if we assume that Piðriks saga was compiled considerably earlier than 1250. The part of Germany with which Bergen maintained relations was

not the district where the courtly epic hailed from, and we do not know how fast the epic displaced the older version or versions in different parts of the country. It is an attractive conjecture that an older manuscript was sold or given away just because the owner had got hold of a new and better edition, which we know under the name of Nibelungenlied. But this and any other possible explanation sounds less convincing, the later we date Piðriks saga. As far as I can see, about 1250 people would have preferred another text to the Áltene Not even in Bergen. Besides, the Norwegian manuscript from the second half of the thirteenth century already combines two different versions of Piðriks saga: most likely these needed more than a few years to get established. For these reasons I feel inclined to conclude that Piðriks saga is from before 1250 and probably from the decade 1230-40.

On this basis it may be reasonable to reappraise other parallels between Piðriks saga and the Icelandic sagas. When, for example, Finnur Jónsson says that the raw oxhide which is spread out in order to make the heroes slip in Niflungasaga reminds us of the same cunning trick in Eyrbyggja saga, we have to ask if the direction indicator should perhaps be reversed. Though the storytelling is generally of a different kind, elaborate knightly equipment is occasionally mentioned in Eyrbyggja



saga. Thus we read in ch. 13 of a nicely coloured saddle, which is a rather rare feature in Icelandic saga-writing:

Þorleifr had bought the finest horse he could find, and he also had a magnificent stained saddle. He carried an elaborately ornamented sword and a spear inlaid with gold, a dark blue shield richly gilded, and his clothes were of the finest material.

Before coming to an end I should like to mention one other well-known feature. As Hermann Pálsson tells us in Art and Ethics in Hrafnkel's Saga, blue clothing is conventionally worn in the sagas by killers (p. 28). I still remember how I used to puzzle over this fact when I first began to read Icelandic sagas. Why just blue clothing? The feature did not seem to have been a convention since the very beginning of Icelandic saga-writing. There was no blue clothing in Heiðarviga saga, Kormáks saga, Hallfreðar saga. We find blue cloaks in Bjarnarsaga Hitðöslakappa and in Fóstbrœðra saga, in the latter on a rather peaceful occasion: the blue cloak is mentioned only when Þormóðr gives it to Lúsa-Oddi. Neither here nor in Bjarnarsaga is the blue cloak worn by a man who is going to kill anyone in the next chapter. I did not really understand it, until I found the explanation in Piðriks saga. In ch. 174 we read in the description of Heimir's coat of arms: Oc merkir blár litr kallt

brióst oc grimt hiarta. There was no need to state that when everybody knew it already. Well, I would not dare to assert that this meaning was completely unknown in Iceland, before Piðriks saga was imported. Probably the statement may be defended, however, that people became aware of how they could make use of it, just at the time when Piðriks saga became well-loved by Icelandic readers.

## NOTES

1. References to chapters are given according to the edition by C.R.Unger, Oslo 1853.
2. "Rittengsl Laxdælu og Njálu", Mimir 11 (1967), p. 10.
3. Um Njálu, Reykjavík, 1933, p. 324.
4. The Icelandic Family Saga, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 28, 1967, p. 69.
5. On the difference between these forms see F. De Tollenaere in the introduction to his book De schildering van den mensch in de oudijslandsche familiesaga, Leuven 1942.
6. "The influence of Tristrams saga on Old Icelandic Literature", 1969, p. 99.
7. On this relationship see e.g. Jan de Vries in his Altnordische Literaturgeschichte, 1967.
8. For a fuller discussion of the problems concerning Aldrian see Kurt Wais, Frühe Epik Westeuropas und die Vorgeschichte des Nibelungenliedes, Tübingen 1953, esp. pp. 131-57.

JOHN M. SIMPSON

EYRBYGGJA SAGA AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCHOLARSHIP

It may be instructive to look at one of the best known of the Sagas of Icelanders, and see what nineteenth-century scholarship (using that word in a fairly broad sense) made of it. I did not undertake this task in the confidence that any grand overall pattern would emerge, and I do not now believe that one does emerge. But it may be thought a proper act of piety, within the Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, to mention some of the great scholars of the past, who have made the efforts of present-day scholarship possible. We shall be praising, to use the words of Ecclesiasticus, not merely famous men but our fathers that begat us.

Chronologically, our story starts with the first printed edition of Eyrbyggja Saga, edited by Thorkelín and appearing in Copenhagen in 1787, and with Scott's Abstract of the saga, published in Edinburgh in 1814. But let us begin with an even more prestigious name than those of Grímur Thorkelín and Sir Walter Scott, that of the Emperor Napoleon. One of the key manuscripts of the saga comes from the Wolfenbüttel Library.<sup>1</sup> Árni Magnússon was enabled to transcribe it through his friendship with Leibnitz. In 1806, after the decisive battle of Jena, Napoleon ransacked the Wolfenbüttel Library and carried this manuscript off to Paris. He had

his stamp put on it in two places, and it was only after his fall in 1814 that it was restored to its rightful owners.<sup>2</sup> I suppose that stealing manuscripts is a scholarly activity, of an unorthodox sort, and certainly Napoleon, if the story is true that in his own library the Bible and the Koran were classified under "Politics", used his exalted position to give practical expression to his rather downright views on scholarly questions. My story has no logical terminal date, since it is upon the basis of nineteenth-century scholarship that more recent work on the saga, such as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's Íslensk Fornrit edition, the Schach and Hollander translation, and critical work by men like Theodore Andersson and G.N. Garmonsway, has been built.<sup>3</sup> But as a concluding figure I select Konrad von Maurer. He is a typical late nineteenth-century figure: his life-span corresponds, within a year or two at each end, with that of Queen Victoria, and, more important, his work is an epitome of much that is best in nineteenth-century German scholarship.

I divide my theme in three: first, editions of the saga; second, translations and adaptations; and finally, a few scholarly and critical comments. I put Sir Walter Scott in the third section, since I believe that his comments on the saga retain a good deal of interest for us.

# I

The first edition of Eyrbyggja Saga appeared in Copenhagen in 1787,<sup>4</sup> though in fact the Latin translation

that accompanied it had been done ten years previously.<sup>5</sup> The work could be described as an early fruit of the royal charter issued to the Arnamagnæan Commission in 1760. But we ought to remember that the Commission's publishing programme, like many since, was costly and slow. We owe the edition of Eyrbyggja Saga, and three other editions of Old Icelandic texts, to the generosity of the historian P.F. Suhm, who paid for them and turned them over to the Commission. The overall editor of Eyrbyggja was Grímur Thorkelín, one of the Icelanders domiciled in Copenhagen. The edition, like others at the time, was a co-operative job, and it is not completely clear who did what. But I take the text and translation to be essentially Thorkelín's. He was in his thirties when the edition appeared and in his twenties, therefore, when the translation was made. He offered the work to the reader as the "first essay of my youth consecrated to the immortal muses".<sup>6</sup> The preface is brief, with a certain amount of information about manuscripts; and it offers what is perhaps to this day the only suggestion about dating this saga that commands pretty general assent, namely that the saga can be dated to before 1264, in "that golden age, sacred not less to the Muses and Apollo than to Mars, before our island came under the Norwegian sceptre".<sup>7</sup> By modern standards there is an absence of scholarly apparatus, but footnotes provide a great battery of variant readings.

It would be impossible to over-estimate the significance of the editions published in Denmark in this period. Other highlights were the publication of Njáls Saga (text in 1772, Latin translation in 1809) and of Laxdæla Saga in 1826. The texts of the Sagas of Icelanders became available to the whole world of scholars, and the Latin versions assisted translations into the modern languages. The importance of this is world-wide, but may be illustrated with particular reference to Great Britain. If you asked an educated Britisher of the late eighteenth century what the phrase "Old Norse Literature" brought to his mind, it is odds on that it is the figure of Ragnarr Loðbrók that would writhe its way into view. Today, the educated Britisher might think of Njáll or of Grettir. The real world of medieval Iceland, no less grand than the legendary and mythological one, has been opened to us, and it is with these early editions that this momentous development begins.

The next full edition appeared in Leipzig in 1864, and again it was the work of an emigré Iclander, Guðbrandur Vigfússon.<sup>8</sup> It comes at the end of his first period of editing, and of the first phase in his scholarly life. Previously he had been in Copenhagen, first as a student and then as stipendiarius Arnamagnæanus. In 1864, the year his edition of Eyrbyggja appeared, Sir George Dasent persuaded him to go to London to begin his work on the Icelandic-English Dictionary (published in Oxford ten years

later).<sup>9</sup> The edition shows other distinguished circles in which Vigfússon moved. His friend Theodor Möbius of Leipzig saw the book through the press, and the dedication is to another Iclander and friend of student days, Jón Sigurðsson.<sup>10</sup> Sigurðsson is best known generally (though not as generally as he ought to be) as the central figure in the nineteenth-century Icelandic independence movement.<sup>11</sup> He was also the man who fought a rear-guard action against Worsaae and the opportunist archaeologists when they grabbed the funds of Det nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab.<sup>12</sup> It was Jón Sigurðsson too, who taught Vigfússon his method of temporarily bringing up the faded letters of manuscripts. As Vigfússon says, the method involved no chemical reagents, but a saucer of pure water in which the vellum was placed.<sup>13</sup> These were gentlemanly scholars, and their method did not involve spitting on the manuscript, as I believe has been practised in some quarters.

In development of editorial technique, the eighty years that separate Thorkelín from Vigfússon seem a much longer span of time than does the full century that divides Vigfússon from us. Vigfússon presents us with a recognisably modern critical edition. It may be true that, as the later editor Gering says, Vigfússon's textual modus operandi is too simple.<sup>14</sup> He follows one transcript of the Vatnshyrna text, whose original was lost in the 1728 fire, and emends it from other manuscripts, to quote Gering, "here and there ... and certainly not always happily".



But at least he did have a modus operandi. And his valuable introduction contains full discussions of the transmission of the manuscripts, of the date, style and composition of the saga, and of the orthographic and phonological features peculiar to each of the various manuscripts. As an example of his thoroughness in this last matter, when he suggests an isogloss for /v/ occurring before /r/, he mentions its presence in the language of much of southern Norway, and cites Ivar Aasen's Norsk Grammatik, which appeared in the same year as his own edition.<sup>15</sup> Vigfússon's introduction reflects his worries about the apparently multifarious nature of the saga, and its lack of a clear narrative line.<sup>16</sup> He uses what Lee Hollander calls "nineteenth-century 'higher criticism' "<sup>17</sup> to explain the saga's lack of coherence by distinguishing several interpolated passages: it is an interesting hypothesis, but, if one does not share Vigfússon's worries about the coherence of the saga, then the necessity for some such hypothesis may be thought to disappear.

I come now to two editions published in Iceland. The significance of these is obvious. In Iceland, an edition was of value to the reading public at large, not merely to scholars, and Halldór Hermannsson has described how keenly the difficulty of obtaining the Sagas of Icelanders was felt in the late nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Þorleifur Jónsson published his edition of Eyrbyggja at Akureyri in 1882.

The text of this edition contains some errors, since Porleifur was prevented from checking the edition as he would have wished.<sup>19</sup> When Valdimar Ásmundarson published his own edition of the saga at Reykjavík in 1895, he mentioned that he had just received from Porleifur the material prepared for a second version of Porleifur's edition.<sup>20</sup> I know no evidence that this second version appeared, which suggests that Porleifur felt that Valdimar had fully catered for Icelandic demand for this saga. Valdimar's edition was volume 12 in a series of thirty-eight little books, the overall title of the series being Íslendinga sögur. These appeared between 1892 and 1902. Their appearance was very welcome to Icelanders, and credit for it is to be divided between the publisher, Sigurður Kristjánsson, and Valdimar himself, a journalist and the editor of the entire series.<sup>21</sup>

Both these editions published in Iceland were based on Vigfússon's edition rather than on the manuscripts, though both editors, and Porleifur in particular, suggested some corrected readings for the verses. But of course the essentially derivative nature of these editions did not at all detract from their specifically Icelandic purpose.

In 1897 Hugo Gering published his edition of Eyrbyggja at Halle. This was volume 6 of an imposing series of annotated editions, the Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek, which had been begun in 1892, and of which Gering was one of the general editors.<sup>22</sup> He dedicated his Eyrbyggja to Barend

Sijmons, the Dutchman who was to edit the Poetic Edda.

Some of the scholars with whom I am dealing might not have relished an International Saga Conference, but I imagine that Gering would have done. Enough differing ideas about Eyrbyggja had been expressed by his day for him to have great scope for marshalling and drilling them like a squad of recruits. On the question of the manuscript stemma, one which interested him particularly and where he sought to bring a new precision to the discussion, he became, I suppose, one of the first to accuse Guðbrandur Vigfússon of sometimes letting his imagination run away with him. He specifically charged Vigfússon with making "frivolous assertions" (leichtfertige Behauptungen).

## II

To turn to the translations. Danish was the first modern language in which Eyrbyggja appeared in full translation. N.M. Petersen translated ten of the more important Sagas of Icelanders and these appeared in four volumes, the Historiske Fortællinger, published by Det nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab in the years 1839-44. Eyrbyggja is to be found in the fourth volume. These were very popular books in Denmark. A publishing house took them over, and there was a second edition in the 1860s edited by Guðbrandur Vigfússon, and a third edition in 1901 in which Finnur Jónsson had a hand.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting that even at the

time of first publication Petersen's versions had their critics, and in his notes at the back of Eyrbyggja, he took the opportunity to defend himself against critics of his earlier volumes, one of whom wanted him to adopt a more polished style, and another of whom urged on him a more popular style.<sup>25</sup> In the 1920s once again, the shortcomings of the Petersen translations were pin-pointed by, for instance, the novelist Gunnar Gunnarsson, and the result of this was the formation in 1927 of a Society for Publishing Icelandic Sagas in Danish, in order to supersede Petersen.<sup>26</sup> Without seeking to make a detailed comparison between the Petersen translations and the translations into English by Morris and Magnússon, I would say that there is a similarity at least in the following respect: in each case a set of translations that had introduced the sagas to very many people over a long period was in due time superseded, a very proper scholarly development. But further, this supersession in each case took place amid a certain amount of denigration of, and ingratitude towards, the old versions, which is a typically scholarly occurrence too, but perhaps not such a proper one.

C.J.L. Lönnberg may have hoped to do in Swedish what Petersen had achieved in Danish. His translation of Eyrbyggja was published in Stockholm in 1873, as the second volume in a planned series of Fornnordiska sagor. He says in his introduction that other translations, including one of Njáls Saga are in hand.<sup>27</sup> But these did not appear,

and the work of Swedish translation was taken up by others.

The most famous nineteenth-century translators of the sagas into English were, of course, William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon. Their Saga Library - by no means their first venture in the field - was issued in six volumes from London in the years 1891 to 1906. The first two volumes contained five Sagas of Icelanders, and the rest of the series was devoted to their translation of Heimskringla. Eyrbyggja Saga and Heiðarviga Saga are together in volume 2, the translations being called "The Story of the Ere-Dwellers, with the Story of the Heath-Slayings". It is worth noting how the translators provided an introduction and indexes on a scale that probably few publishers of translations would encourage today. In the introduction to Eyrbyggja Morris and Magnússon subscribe to the theory of interpolations in the saga.<sup>28</sup> They instance the fact that the last eighteen years of Snorri goði's life are not covered by the saga, and suggest that to fill the supposed gap someone has "dashed in" the two chapters that tell about the bull Glæsir, and the last news of Björn Breiðvíkingakappi. One wonders if they were at all uneasy as they added this comment on the interpolations: "The language of these chapters, however, appears in no marked manner to differ from the rest of the book, so they must be from a contemporary hand."

The dispute over the quality of the Morris and

Magnússon translations is well known.<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to their 1959 translation of Eyrbyggja, Schach and Hollander put forward a view that most people would have some sympathy with. They say that the Morris and Magnússon translation of this saga, "because of the unfortunate misconception ... that the sagas require an antiquarian language flavoured with English dialecticisms, is almost unreadable today".<sup>30</sup> Now we did need a mid-twentieth-century translation, and are grateful to Schach and Hollander for providing it. But perhaps they are a wee bit hard on their predecessors. Morris as a translator was interested in linguistic creation as well as in linguistic conservation. And the Morris and Magnússon version of Eyrbyggja was read by many people with great pleasure at the time. I am inclined to side with Cowan and Hamer in their view that even today "the persistent reader will discover that Morris's prose has a compelling power".<sup>31</sup>

One of the most interesting comments on the Morris and Magnússon translations comes from Robert Louis Stevenson, the Scottish writer who was resident in the South Pacific when the translation appeared. A letter that Stevenson sent to Morris is worth quoting in full. It was inspired by the volume of the Saga Library containing the translations of Eyrbyggja and Heiðarvíga saga. It displays some of the reservations that later scholars have had about the Morris and Magnússon translations. But above all it exhibits

Stevenson's gratitude for the way that the Saga Library had made the sagas available to readers of English: 32

MASTER, - A plea from a place so distant should have some weight, and from a heart so grateful should have some address. I have been long in your debt, Master, and I did not think it could be so much increased as you have now increased it. I was long in your debt and deep in your debt for many poems that I shall never forget, and for Sigurd before all, and now you have plunged me beyond payment by the Saga Library. And so now, true to human nature, being plunged beyond payment, I come and bark at your heels.

For surely, Master, that tongue that we write, and that you have illustrated so nobly, is yet alive. She has her rights and laws, and is our mother, our queen, and our instrument. Now in that living tongue where has one sense, whereas another. In the Heathslayings Story, p. 241, line 13, it bears one of its ordinary senses. Elsewhere and usually through the two volumes, which is all that has yet reached me of this entrancing publication, whereas is made to figure for where.

For the love of God, my dear and honoured Morris, use where, and let us know whereas we are, wherefore our gratitude shall grow, whereby you shall be the more honoured wherever men love clear language, whereas now, although we honour, we are troubled.

Whereunder, please find inscribed to this very impudent but yet very anxious document, the name of one of the most distant but not the youngest or the coldest of those who honour you ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

And in another letter, Stevenson said apropos the Saga Library: "I cannot get enough of Sagas; I wish there were nine thousand; talk about realism!"<sup>33</sup>

Stevenson was inspired by Eyrbyggja to write a story called The Waif Woman, closely based on the Þórgunna episode and the hauntings at Fróðá.<sup>34</sup> He is even more relentless in his handling of characters than is the author of the saga, since not only Þórgunna's host but also her hostess, the characters equivalent to Þóroddr and Þuríðr in the saga, meet their deaths through disregarding Þórgunna's instructions, and the curse is lifted only by the next generation, their son and daughter. Stevenson intended this story for his collection Island Nights' Entertainments, but his wife dissuaded him from publishing it, and it appeared only after his death. It may well be that her argument was the straightforward one, that the story is too closely derivative from the saga. But the mainspring of the action in this part of the saga, and in Stevenson's adaptation, is the harm that comes from a wife's greed and her husband weak acquiescence in her demands. At least one critic has been unchivalrous enough to suggest that it was this that Mrs Stevenson, a bit of a character by all accounts, could not stomach.<sup>35</sup>

There were various nineteenth-century translations (as well as editions) of parts of the saga, by people interested in the settlement of Iceland, or Greenland and American voyaging, or ghosts.<sup>36</sup> I shall mention only one. In 1897



the Scots writer and folklorist, Andrew Lang, published a miscellaneous Book of Dreams and Ghosts. He needed a translator for his Gaelic and Old Norse material, and he chose W.A. Craigie. Craigie, later the great lexicographer, and an Old Norse scholar revered both in Scotland and in Iceland, was then about thirty. Among the material he translated for Lang was the account in Eyrbyggja of the marvels at Fróðá.<sup>37</sup>

It may be instructive to compare part of the account of the first marvel at Fróðá, as given in four nineteenth-century translations and in one recent one. The passage occurs in Chapter 51 of the saga in the Islenzk Fornrit edition, but I quote the text of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's edition, on which three of the translations were based - Lönnberg's, Morris and Magnússon's, and almost certainly Craigie's. It will be seen that Schach and Hollander follow Einar Ólafur Sveinsson<sup>38</sup> in preferring the reading "Þóroddr", from several manuscripts, to the reading "Þuríðr", from the Vatnshyrna-derived manuscripts.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1864).

... sá menn, at blóði hafði rignt í skúrinni. Um kveldit gjörði þerri góðan, ok þornaði blóðit skjótt á heyinu öllu, nema því er Þórgunna þurkaði; þat þornaði eigi, ok aldri þornaði hrífan er hón hafði haldit á. Þuríðr spurði hvat Þórgunna ætlar, at undr þetta man benda. Hón kvaðst eigi þat vita, en þat þykkir mér

líkligast, segir hún, at þetta mundi furða nökkurs þess manns, er hér er.

N.M. Petersen (1944).

Man saae da, at det havde regnet Blod; men da det blev godt Tørrevejr om Aftenen, saa tørredes Blodet snart af alt det andet Hø, men Thorgunnes blev ikke tørt, og heller ikke den Rive, hun havde holdt paa. Thuride spurgte hende, hvad hun mente, dette Under skulde betyde; hun svarede, hun vidste det ikke, men dette maatte varsle Ondt for nogen i Huset.

C.J.L.Lönnberg (1873).

...folk såg, att det hade regnat blod under skuren. Om qvällen blef det godt torkväder, och blodet torkade hastigt på allt höet, utom på det, som Torgunna räfsade; det torkade icke, och aldrig torkade räfsan, som hon hade hållit i. Turid sporde, hvad Torgunna tänkte, att detta under mände betyda. Hon sade sig icke veta det; "men det tyckes mig líkligast", yttrar hon, "att detta mände vara varsel för någons död af dem, som här äro."

William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon (1892).

Then men saw that it had rained blood in that shower. But that evening good drying weather set in again, and the blood dried off all the hay but that which Thorgunna had spread; that dried not, or the rake either

which she had handled. Thurid asked Thorgunna what she thought that wonder might forbode. She said that she wotted not. "But that seems to me most like," says she, "that it will be the weird of some one of those that are here."

W.A. Craigie (1897).

...it was seen that blood had fallen amid the rain. In the evening there was a good draught, and the blood soon dried off all the hay except that which Thorgunna had been working at; it did not dry, nor did the rake that she had been using.

Thurid asked Thorgunna what she supposed this marvel might portend. She said that she did not know, "but it seems to me most likely that it is an evil omen for some person who is present here".

P. Schach and L.M. Hollander (1959).

Then people saw that it had rained blood. During the evening the weather again became good for drying the hay, and the blood quickly dried on all the hay except where Thorgunna had been working. There the blood did not dry, nor did it ever dry on the rake she had been using.

Thórodd asked Thorgunna what she thought this strange occurrence might signify. She said she did not know - "but it seems most likely to me," she replied, "that it

forebodes the death of someone here."

No doubt nothing dramatic emerges from the comparison. But one sees that even the small piece of Morris and Magnússon given here is characteristic. Some people might be happy to do without "wotted" and "weird", but on the other hand the construction "dried not", "wotted not" shows the translators seeking the effect of the Old Norse construction with eigi, a construction that is available to Scandinavian translators. This particular piece of archaic English syntax occurs at points in the passage where economy of style is surely particularly appropriate: whether we like their work or not, we can see that Morris and Magnússon were more alive than many translators to the fact that literary effects are produced by particular linguistic means, and that a good translation reflects this.

### III

I shall now turn to a few of the scholars who have contributed to the general discussion on Eyrbyggja. In 1814 Sir Walter Scott published his Abstract of the saga, incorporating comments on it, in the volume called Illustrations of Northern Antiquities.<sup>39</sup> This book was an early exercise in the study of comparative literature. Scott's backing for the book, which was compiled by two of his friends, Henry Weber and Robert Jamieson, shows that he was as whole-hearted a promoter of interest in medieval litera-

ture as he was himself a student of it. The Edinburgh publishers were, reasonably enough, sceptical about the potential appeal of such a book, but Scott nevertheless prevailed on Longman of London and John Ballantyne of Edinburgh to bring it out. Henry Weber was a refugee from the same troubles in Germany that had led to the Wolfenbüttel manuscript's going to Paris. Scott employed him as a secretary, and after Weber's complete mental collapse in 1814, Scott supported him for the rest of his life.<sup>40</sup> Weber contributed material on the Nibelungenlied and the Deutsches Heldenbuch to the Illustrations of Northern Antiquities. Robert Jamieson contributed material on Danish and other ballads, which, as he and Scott appreciated, bore a family relationship to the Scottish ballads. Scott's contribution to the book was his Abstract of Eyrbyggja. In this single piece of work, Scott showed that, despite sharing his contemporaries' over-romanticised picture of the blood-thirsty Viking, and despite having only a limited knowledge of the vocabulary of Old Norse, and a minimal knowledge of its morphology and syntax, he was nevertheless as a critic capable of seizing upon the essential qualities of one of the Sagas of Icelanders.

My explanation of Scott's insight is that he and the author of Eyrbyggja had a close literary kinship: both were social realists. This is not the place to debate whether the author of this saga or the writers of others were realists in the sense in which Georg Lukács saw

Scott as a realist - that he bore truthful and unflinching witness to the most crucial social changes.<sup>41</sup> I think it safer simply to assert that Scott and the author of Eyrbyggja were both social realists in the more limited sense used by W.H. Auden (when writing specifically about the sagas):<sup>42</sup> "The social realist begins by asking: 'What do I know for certain about my fellow human beings?' and his answer is: 'What they do and say in the presence of others who can bear witness to it.'" Perhaps not everyone will be convinced by this demonstration of literary kinship. But in any case the reader may reach a lower estimate than mine of Scott's ability as a saga critic, and the need to account for Scott's perspicacity will thus be removed.

Scott starts his account of Eyrbyggja with a bad error, because, following Thorkelín in saying that the saga was written before 1264, he describes this as the period "when Iceland was still subject to the dominion of Norway".<sup>43</sup> In fact, of course, the 1260s saw the formal beginning of this subjection. Scott could be a careless writer, and probably knew the truth perfectly well.

He next tells the story of the saga with gusto, and has great fun with the ghosts at Fróðá. But it is, paradoxically, as historian, lawyer, and literary realist that he is best pleased with the ghosts, and with the duradómr, the court set up to expel the ghosts: here, Scott feels, light is cast on the way that Icelandic society worked. If the

Icelanders took even ghosts to court, then despite all their feuding, their respect for the law must have been considerable. In the course of a long description of the duradómr, Scott says:<sup>44</sup>

All the solemn rites of judicial procedure were observed on this singular occasion; evidence was adduced, charges given, and the cause formally decided...it is the only instance in which the ordinary administration of justice has been supposed to extend over the inhabitants of another world, and in which the business of exorcising spirits is transferred from the priest to the judge. Joined to the various instances in the Eyrbyggja-Saga, of a certain regard to the forms of jurisprudence, even amid the wildest of their feuds, it seems to argue the extraordinary influence ascribed to municipal law by this singular people, even in the very earliest state of society.

I do not wish, on the basis of Scott's random comments, to overstress his modernity as a saga critic, still less to suggest that any of the subsequent debate on the big questions he touches on has been a waste of time. Some of the big questions occur to a fairly casual reader, but it is only amid intensive and prolonged scholarly debate that we can each work out our own considered conclusions.

On the historicity of Eyrbyggja, for instance, Scott says merely that "the name of the author is unknown, but the simplicity of his annals seems a sufficient warrant for their fidelity".<sup>45</sup> We know that this assessment is insufficient in itself: Scott is thinking of the historicity of a history-book, and not the historicity of a work of literature. Scott's point is not the same as, say, Liestøl's remark that "the family sagas claim to be history", which as Theodore Andersson argues is "an aesthetic statement aimed at clarifying the relation of the saga writer to his material".<sup>46</sup> Still, one does have the feeling that, for realists like the author of Eyrbyggja and Sir Walter Scott, historical and literary truth would be found at the deepest level to take their source from a common spring. But then that is an aesthetic statement too.

Scott is very interesting on the problem of coherence in Eyrbyggja. Theodore Andersson says that "Eyrbyggja saga is the most amorphous and troublesome of the family sagas".<sup>47</sup> And at least three different critical emphases, over the years, have encouraged us to believe that this saga is basically incoherent and disparate in its materials. Firstly, there is the stress that, as we have seen, Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Eiríkur Magnússon placed upon supposed interpolations. Then there is the emphasis on the saga's function as history: G.N. Garmonsway described it as "a series of 'provincial annals', giving the whole work the



impersonal character of a chronicle",<sup>48</sup> and Felix Niedner has written that "none of the greater Sagas of Icelanders is to such an extent history and in such small degree a novel as that of Snorri goði".<sup>49</sup> Finally, there is G. Turville-Petre's kindly emphasis on the artlessness of the saga: "it is a series of scenes and stories, which follow the disordered course of life itself."<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, and purely as a reader responding to the saga, I feel that it does have a basic unity. Two recent critics, Lee M. Hollander and Vésteinn Ólason, favour this point of view.<sup>51</sup> Lee M. Hollander stresses the saga author's technique of interbraiding many strands of narrative, and suggests that this produces an effect like "the leisurely amplitude of the English Victorian novel". And he cites Konrad von Maurer and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson in support of his views. He could have gone farther back and cited the father of the Victorian social novel himself, Sir Walter Scott.

Scott's comments show that he saw the thematic unity of the saga as lying in its depiction of a society in process of development. He writes:<sup>52</sup>

(These annals) contain the history of a particular territory of the Island of Iceland, lying around the promontory called Snæfells, from its first settlement by emigrants from Norway: and the chronicle details, at great length, the feuds which took place among

the families by which the land was occupied, the advances which they made towards a more regular state of society, their habits, their superstitions, and their domestic laws and customs.

The community of Snæfellsnes is for Scott in one sense the main character in the saga.

And if Scott and the author of Eyrbyggja are realists as I have suggested, we will not be surprised if Scott's remarks on the personality and rôle of Snorri goði are pertinent. For Snorri goði is, in his unobtrusive way, the symbol of the saga's unity. He does not hold the centre of the stage as a tragic hero does: when he disappears for a chapter or two, we imagine him in the wings, patiently building up his political power base. His place in society and his place in the saga are the same, unobtrusive but central. Scott puts it thus: <sup>53</sup>

That such a character, partaking more of the juriconsult or statesman than of the warrior, should have risen so high in such an early period, argues the preference which the Icelanders already assigned to mental superiority over the rude attributes of strength and courage, and furnishes another proof of the early civilisation of this extraordinary commonwealth. In other respects the character of Snorro (sic) was altogether unamiable, and blended with strong traits of the savage. Cunning and

subtlety supplied the place of wisdom, and an earnest and uniform attention to his own interests often, as in the dispute between Arkill and his father, superseded the ties of blood and friendship. Still, however, his selfish conduct seems to have been of more service to the settlement in which he swayed, than would have been that of a generous and high-spirited warrior who acted from the impulse of momentary passion.

Edith Batho has pointed out that Scott twice laid aside unfinished the draft of his first novel Waverley, and then finished it in a rush a few months after completing the Abstract of Eyrbyggja.<sup>54</sup> She suggests that the saga may have served as a powerful unconscious stimulus to Scott at the time when he became a novelist. This hypothesis cannot be proved, but in view of the type of novelist that Scott became, it is a particularly fascinating hypothesis.

Peter Erasmus Müller fitted Eyrbyggja into place in his Sagabibliothek, published in Copenhagen in the years 1817 to 1820.<sup>55</sup> This work is perhaps the first overall attempt made since the seventeenth century to classify the sagas, and within the general category of Sagas of Icelanders Müller carefully explains links between them. He shows, for example, which of the characters of Eyrbyggja are to be found in other sagas, and in turn which other texts and authorities are referred to in Eyrbyggja itself. While many of Müller's suggestions for dating the sagas have

been discounted by later writers - and this reflects no discredit whatsoever on a pioneering book - his preference for a fairly early thirteenth-century date for Eyrbyggja is something to which Einar Ólafur Sveinsson has returned.<sup>56</sup>

A very useful piece of work on the saga was contributed in 1861 to the second volume of Safn til sögu Íslands. This was an article by Árni Thorlacius on the locations mentioned in the saga.<sup>57</sup> Eyrbyggja is particularly fitted for this treatment. Árni Thorlacius showed that the local knowledge of nineteenth-century Icelanders often stretched back with remarkable strength over most of a millennium. But even in Iceland some doubts as to the exact locations mentioned in a saga will arise after that lapse of time, and it was therefore valuable to prevent further loss of knowledge by committing it to print. One example from his article may be given: he gives the exact location of Arnkelshaugr, the burial mound of Arnkell goði, gives its measurements, says that it has borne its correct name as long as can be remembered, and adds that it is now overgrown with grass and shows signs of caving in or having been broken into. In this type of study, there is clearly no substitute, as Árni showed, for local knowledge plus local investigation.

Towards the end of the century we have a contrast in scholarship: on the one hand, the light and brilliant touch of W.P. Ker; on the other, the achievement of Konrad von Maurer, a monumental achievement in the best

sense of that phrase.

If W.P. Ker's leisurely approach to medieval literature, as exemplified in his Epic and Romance, first published in 1897, has not made him unfashionable in the very different world of today, then it must be because he has the cardinal virtue of the literary critic. We respond with him to the works he deals with, and we come to understand his reasons for his responses, particularly for his enthusiasms. He seeks to restore to us the responses of the original audience of Eyrbyggja, or, better, of the audience of the Sagas of Icelanders as a group. He makes a relevant comparison with the works of Balzac as a whole:<sup>58</sup>

This solidarity and interconnexion of the Sagas needs no explanation. It could not be otherwise in a country like Iceland; a community of neighbours ... The effect in the written Sagas is to give them something like the system of the Comédie Humaine. There are new characters in each, but the old characters reappear ... [He instances the appearances of Gudmund the Great, and then adds:] So also Snorri the Priest, whose rise and progress are related in Eyrbyggja, appears in many other Sagas, and is recognised whenever he appears with the same certainty and the same sort of interest as attaches to the name of Rastignac, when that politician is introduced in stories not properly his own. Each separate mention of Snorri the Priest finds

its place along with all the rest; he is never unequal to himself.

The great Munich scholar Konrad von Maurer was basically a jurist and legal historian, who wrote massively on the Old Norse legal system.<sup>59</sup> But that does not mean that saga scholars can assign him, however honourably, to a box labelled "auxiliary studies". Not only did he edit some texts himself, but in 1871 he published an exemplary study of one of the Sagas of Icelanders. This was his article, "Über die Hœnsa-Póris Saga", in the publications of the Royal Bavarian Academy.<sup>60</sup> Of this article Theodore Andersson has written:<sup>61</sup> "Maurer's essay represented an extraordinary advance in saga research. It anticipated most of the techniques of present investigation... With Maurer we enter the stage of research which does not have mere historic interest but brings us face to face with the issues still under debate."

But it is with a couple of Maurer's other insights that I wish to deal now. Firstly, in reviewing Guðbrandur Vigfússon's edition of Eyrbyggja,<sup>62</sup> his comments strikingly complement the point I quoted from W.P.Ker. His suggestion is that the author of Eyrbyggja had a priority, namely to tell the story of a local society as fully as possible, insofar as that story was not already known to his audience from related sagas. There is an implication that for Maurer this did disrupt the aesthetic unity of the story

seriously, but the point he makes is crucial even for those people who do not share his aesthetic response. The saga is the story of Snorri goði only insofar as he is the embodiment of the society which he dominates. That society is the saga author's main character.

In 1896 Maurer dealt with Eyrbyggja again, in one of his studies of law in the sagas, also contributed to the publications of the Royal Bavarian Academy.<sup>63</sup> Here he argues that, for instance, the jury that heard the accusations of witchcraft against Geirríðr, and the duradómr that sat in judgment on the ghosts at Fróðá, are almost certainly described in the saga as they had existed in early Icelandic history, even though this cannot be proved from the surviving written law. It is very pleasant to obtain, from such a scholar, an affirmation of the detailed factual veracity of a work of art so deeply rooted in concrete social reality.

If my study has illustrated anything, then it is the way that, while editions may build up a successively clearer picture of a saga for us, many other types of saga scholarship contain a certain subjective element. No matter: readers will not, and should not, adjust their level of enjoyment of a saga to accord with the wishes of the scholars. I have inevitably left out of my story the great body of those who read Eyrbyggja with enjoyment, in the original or in translation, throughout the nineteenth century. I shall end, therefore, by recalling to mind what

we mean by the cliché that "sagas are literature": we mean that they are worthy of the most intensive scholarly study because they continue to be read by people other than intense scholars.



## NOTES

I wish to thank Margaret Orme and Ingi Sigurðsson for their help with this paper. I use the following abbreviations below:

- Andersson, Problem      Theodore M. Andersson, The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins (New Haven and London, 1964).
- Andersson, Reading      Theodore M. Andersson, The Icelandic Family Saga: An analytic Reading (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967).
- ES                                = Eyrbyggja Saga.
- ES/IF                            Eyrbyggja Saga, Eiríks Saga Rauða etc., ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson (Íslensk Fornrit IV. Reykjavík, 1935).
- ES/T                              Eyrbyggja Saga sive Eyranorum Historia, quam Mandate et Impenses Faciente perill. P.F. Suhm. Versione, Lectionum Varietate ac Indice Rerum auxit G.J. Thorkelin (Havniæ, 1787).
- Illustrations                Henry Weber and Robert Jamieson, Illustrations of Northern Antiquities (London and Edinburgh, 1814).

1. ES/IF, lviii - lix.
2. ES, ed. Þorleifur Jónsson (Akureyri, 1882), 3.
3. ES/IF: ES, trans. by Paul Schach and Lee M. Hollander (University of Nebraska Press, 1969); Andersson, Problem, passim; Andersson, Reading, 153-62; G.N. Garmonsway, "ES", Saga-Book XII (1945), 81-92.

4. ES/T.
5. Halldór Hermannsson in Islandica I (1908), 18-21, lists editions, translations and commentaries up to 1908. I have also drawn extensively on Halldór's Old Icelandic Literature: A Bibliographical Essay (Islandica XXIII, 1933).
6. ES/T, xii.
7. ES/T, vii.
8. ES, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Leipzig, 1864).
9. O. Elton, Frederick York Powell: A Life (Oxford, 1906) I, 31 ff. et passim.
10. ES, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, ix - x, liii.
11. Páll Eggert Ólason, Jón Sigurðsson (5 vols., Reykjavík, 1929-33); Jón Sigurðsson, The Icelandic Patriot. A biographical sketch. Published by one of his relatives (Reykjavík, 1887).
12. Islandica XXIII, 12.
13. O. Elton, Frederick York Powell: A Life (Oxford, 1906) I, 35: Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale (Oxford, 1883) I, 543n.
14. ES, ed. Hugo Gering (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek VI. Halle, 1897), xxviii - xxix.
15. ES, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, xlix; Ivar Aasen, Norsk Grammatik (Christiania, 1864), p. 110.
16. ES, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, xvii - xviii.
17. Lee M. Hollander, "The Structure of ES", Journal of English and Germanic Philology LVIII (1959), 222 - 227.

18. Islandica XXIII, 5.
19. ES, ed. Þorleifur Jónsson, 6.
20. ES, ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson (Íslendinga sögur XII. Reykjavík, 1895), iii - iv.
21. Islandica XXIII, 5.
22. Islandica XXIII, 24.
23. ES, ed. Hugo Gering, xxviii.
24. Islandica I, 19: Islandica XXIII, 11, 16.
25. Historiske Fortællinger, trans. N.M. Petersen, IV (Copenhagen, 1844), 314ff.
26. Islandica XXIII, 16.
27. Eyrbyggarnes Saga, trans. C.J.L.Lönnberg (Fornnordiska sagor II. Stockholm, 1873), intro.
28. The Story of the Ere-Dwellers with the Story of the Heath-Slayings, trans. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon. (Saga Library II. London, 1892), xxix.
29. Einar Haugen, "On translating from the Scandinavian", in Old Norse Literature and Mythology, ed. Edgar C. Polomé (Austin and London, 1969), 3-18, esp. 11-12 and works cited there.
30. ES, trans. Paul Schach and Lee M. Hollander (University of Nebraska Press, 1959), xx.
31. E.J. Cowan and A.J. Hamer, The Sagas in English: A Bibliographical Introduction (cyclostyled, Edinburgh, 1971), 29.

32. ed. S. Colvin, The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson (new edn., London, 1911) IV, 20 - 21: Stevenson to Morris, Feb. 1892. The editor describes Stevenson's draft letter, found among his papers after his death, as having "touches of affectation and constraint not usual with him" and suggests that "it is no doubt on that account that he did not send it". But Ruth Ellison tells me that there is a copy of the letter among the Morris Papers. The reference in the letter to Sigurd is to Morris's poem Sigurd the Volsung, published in 1876.
33. ibid, IV, 72-3: Stevenson to E.L.Burlingame, Summer 1892.
34. Scribner's Magazine LVI (1914), 687-701: The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson (Tusitala ed., London, 1914) V.
35. George S. Hellman, The True Stevenson: A Study in Clarification (Boston, 1925), 216-20. Hellman implies wrongly that the story was not published till 1916.
36. For a list of such translations and editions; see Islandica I, 18-20.
37. W.A. Craigie, "The Marvels at Fróðá", in Andrew Lang, The Book of Dreams and Ghosts (London, 1897), 273-87.
38. ES/IF, 140.
39. Sir Walter Scott, "Abstract of the ES", in Illustrations, 475-513; for Scott's interest in Old Norse literature see my paper in the forthcoming proceedings of the Sir Walter Scott Bicentenary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1971.

40. For Weber, see J.G. Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart (Edinburgh, 1837-8), II, 16, 138, 168, 215, 331; III, 58, 109, 112, 114; VI, 259; and Edgar Johnson, Sir Walter Scott, The Great Unknown (London, 1970), esp. 434-5.
41. Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. H. and S. Mitchell (London, 1962), 30-63. See further, my paper referred to in note 39 above.
42. W.H. Auden in the Observer, 12 March 1972.
43. Illustrations, 477.
44. Illustrations, 508-9.
45. Illustrations, 477.
46. Andersson, Problem, 50.
47. Andersson, Reading, 160.
48. G.N. Garmonsway, "ES", Saga-Book XII (1945), 81.
49. Die Geschichte vom Goden Snorri, trans. Felix Niedner (Thule: Altnordische Dichtung und Prosa VII, new ed. with postscript by Professor H.M. Heinrichs. Düsseldorf and Köln, 1964), 1.
50. G. Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic Literature (Oxford, 1953), 242.
51. Lee M. Hollander, "The Structure of ES", JEGP LVIII (1959), 222-7; Vésteinn Ólason, "Nokkrar athugasemdir um Eyrbyggja sögu", Skírnir CXLV (1971), 5-25.
52. Illustrations, 477.
53. Illustrations, 512.

54. Edith Batho, "Sir Walter Scott and the Sagas: Some Notes", Modern Language Review XXIV (1929), 409-15: Edith Batho, "Scott as a Mediaevalist" in Sir Walter Scott Today, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (London, 1932), 133-57. includes the same arguments in slightly amended form.
55. Peter Erasmus Müller, Sagabibliothek (Copenhagen, 1817-20) I, 189-98. For Müller see Andersson, Problem, 22-30.
56. ES/IF, xlv-111.
57. Árni Thorlacius, "Skýringar yfir örnefni í Landnámu og Eyrbyggju", Safn til sögu Íslands II (1861), 277-98.
58. W.P.Ker, Epic and Romance (London, 2nd ed., 1908), 187 ff.
59. Karl von Amira, Konrad von Maurer. Gedächtnisrede gehalten in der öffentl. Sitzung der Kön. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München am 25. November 1903.
60. Konrad von Maurer, "Über die Hænsa-Póris Saga", Kön. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, München, philos.-philol. Classe, Abhandl. XII (1871), Part 2, pp. 157-216.
61. Andersson, Problem, 39-40.
62. Konrad von Maurer, "Zwei Rechtsfälle aus der Eyrbyggja", Kön. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, München, philos.-philol. u. histor. Classe, Sitzungsberichte (1896), 3-48.

Pray, gentle Reader, do not fret or rage  
At loss (apparent only) of a page,  
But, of your charity, be pleased to put  
The blame on frail arithmetic - and Foote.

A. B. TAYLOR†

ORKNEYINGA SAGA - PATRONAGE AND AUTHORSHIP

I

This paper offers a re-assessment of certain aspects of Orkneyinga Saga in its original form - the element of patronage, if any, that was involved in its preparation, the character of the author, and his identity<sup>1</sup>.

Scholars have so far agreed that this saga can be divided into six main parts, of which three form what survives of the "original". The contents of these six parts are as follows:

I A pseudo-mythological prologue.

II The first eighteen earls, the last and greatest being Thorfinn; c.900-1065.

III The next six earls, notably Earl Magnús the Saint and Hákon Pálsson who had him put to death; 1065-1130.

IV The Miracle-book of Saint Magnús.

V Earls Rognvald Kali, Páll, Erlend, and Harald Maddaðarson; c.1103-1192.

VI Earl Maddaðarson and his sons; c.1190-1214.

Parts II, III and V can be dated from internal evidence as having been completed c.1192-1206. Parts I, IV and VI were added, probably at different times, in the first



half of the thirteenth century. Parts II, III and V taken together, therefore, are what we now have of the "original" saga, and in this paper will be referred to as "the Saga".

The sources of the Saga are many and various. They include lost written sagas of the kings of Norway, several family genealogies, a Latin life of Saint Magnús, over eighty skaldic verses and a great deal of oral testimony.

From internal evidence it is clear that the author was an Icelfander, and his work purports to be a history in literary form.

The early date of the Saga and its ambitious conception render it a fascinating subject for study. My translation and commentary of 1938 have long been out of print, and I have in preparation a new translation and a greatly revised study of its historical and literary characteristics. The present paper gives the result of some studies of patronage and authorship by myself and others.

## II

Any Icelfander writing this long and detailed history of the distant Orkney earldom must have found it a time-consuming, arduous and expensive task. The anonymous

author may have been actuated by a simple urge to write a history on a subject of his own choice. But it is more likely that he was commissioned, or encouraged, to do so by a patron.

A historian in medieval Europe commonly had a noble patron unless he lived in a monastery or had his own ecclesiastical income.

If we are to look for a noble patron, we must first consider Harald Maddaðarson, a sole earl from 1158 to 1206. Between 1185 and 1190, King Sverrir commissioned a saga about himself from Abbot Karl Jónsson of Þingeyrar while Karl was on a visit to Norway. Independently, or possibly in imitation of Sverrir, Harald could have commissioned a visiting Icелander to write a saga to illustrate the dignity of the long line of earls who had preceded him and the independence of the earldom. Bishop Bjarni of Orkney, who assisted him in diplomatic matters, might have so advised him, for Harald and Sverrir were very far from being on good terms, as ch. 112 of the Saga shows.

This general argument is supported by some evidence of a slightly pro-Harald attitude in two passages of the Saga. The first consists of the final sentences in chs. 52 and 53 where the author rehabilitates the

character of Earl Hákon Pálsson, who has appeared in the preceding death-story of Earl Magnús as a traitor and murderer. It is all rather forced, and may have been written so as not to offend Harald, who was Hákon's grandson. The second passage is in the latter half of ch. 103 where Harald himself, caught unawares by the killing of his co-earl Rognvald Kali is shown skilfully steering a difficult course between the pressures of rival groups of chieftains.

These passages, however, might also be attributed to the Icelandic saga-writer's habit of presenting more than one side of a situation involving moral issues. It will also be observed that, except in this last passage, Harald nowhere holds the centre of the narrative stage; and indeed after he became sole earl this place is held in chs. 105-8 by Svein Ásleifarson of Gairsay.

Although possible, therefore, Harald's patronage is not proved. Still less probable is that of Bishop Bjarni who, if he had commissioned the Saga, would surely have required more ecclesiastical matter than it in fact contains. Both, however, cannot but have been aware of its preparation, and probably helped with information and perhaps hospitality on a visit by the author. The author's accurate knowledge of the Earl's Hall at Orphir in ch. 66 could have been acquired only by a stay there.

The Saga shows no particular leaning towards a Norwegian point of view, and we therefore turn to Iceland to look for a patron. There were three centres of scholarship in the south of Iceland, Haukadalr, Skálaholt and Oddi. Oddi claims attention because it had been a school for historical, legal and other studies since at least the time of Sæmund the Learned (d.1133)<sup>2</sup>. There were family connections between the family of Oddi - the Oddaverjar - and the Orkney earls, and there were comings and goings between the two families round about 1200. Einar Ól. Sveinsson has described these connections and the following account leans largely upon him<sup>3</sup>.

In the 1190s Oddi was in the hands of Jón Loptsson, grandson of Sæmund the Learned; and Jón was succeeded on his death in 1197 by his son Sæmund (d.1222). In his time, Jón was one of the leading men in Iceland, and at Oddi he was a patron of letters. His family connection with the Orkney line was of long standing. According to ch. 6 and a corresponding passage in Landnámabók, Hrollaug, brother of Earl Turf-Einar, migrated from Norway to Iceland and founded an honourable family there. Hrollaug, according to Landnámabók, was also the progenitor of the Oddaverjar.

The many voyages between Iceland and the islands mentioned in other sagas include several about the time when this Saga was being composed. Bishop Páll, another son of Jón Loptsson, stayed with Harald Maddaðarson on his way to study in England in the 1180s. Lopt, son of Bishop Páll, visited Bishop Bjarni in Orkney while on a voyage abroad, about 1209-10. Before 1206, some Orkney merchants stayed a winter with Snorri Sturluson at Borg and later with Sæmund at Oddi. Their leader was Thorkel Walrus, son of Kolbein Hrúga and brother of Bishop Bjarni. Soon afterwards there were negotiations between Harald and Sæmund with a view to Harald's giving him his daughter Langlíf in marriage; but the matter fell through because Sæmund would not go to Orkney and Harald would not send his daughter to Iceland.<sup>4</sup>

Here at Oddi, therefore, one would expect to find some of the author's sources, such as a saga of Turf-Einar, an early collection of Lives of the Kings of Norway, one or two skalds with repertories of court poetry, and perhaps Master Roðbert's Vita Sancti Magni. Here he might have been encouraged by Jón Loptsson, or someone else in the household, to start and to carry through his long work. Here he might also have received suitable messages of introduction to descendants of Kol Kalason

in Norway and to Earl Harald and Bishop Bjarni in Orkney.

If this theory of sponsorship in Iceland and local investigation in the earldom is correct, it would explain among other things how the Saga seems to be directed primarily to an Icelandic audience and only secondarily to an audience in the islands.

At this point we may digress to see whether any other informants can be reasonably identified. For the adventures of Svein, the most likely informant is his son Andrew, married to Friða, daughter of Kolbein Hróga, and probably resident in Svein's hall in Gairsay (chs. 92, 108). Svein's father Ólaf had held an estate at Duncansby; and the author very probably gained his considerable knowledge of places, events and persons in Caithness on a stay with a descendant of Olaf at the farm there. From Duncansby it would be easy for him to ride to Thurso, trace out the fatal journey made by Rognvald Kali to his death at Forsie (ch. 103), and explore the fortress and cliffs at Freswick from which Svein and Margað climbed down to the sea (ch. 83).

There is another family whose members, as Finnbogi Guðmundsson brings out, are especially mentioned as actually present at a number of important episodes<sup>5</sup>. This family consists of Hávarð Gunnason and his sons

Magnús, Thorstein, Dufnjal and Hákon Claw. Hávarð is chief peacemaker between Hákon Pálsson and the sons of Earl Erlend (ch. 35), and leaps overboard dramatically from Hákon's ship on the way to Egilsay when he discovers that Hákon is about to play the traitor to Magnús (ch. 48). His sons Thorstein and Magnús are given posts as wardens in the North Isles by Earl Páll when Rognvald Kali's invasion is imminent (ch. 66). Thorstein is named as one of the two mediators in the truce between the earls (ch. 73). Rognvald Kali appoints Dufnjal as captain of a ship given to Svein (ch. 82). Magnús is captain of one of the ships on the pilgrimage (ch. 85). Magnús, Thorstein and Hákon Claw play a very important part in turning Earl Maddaðarson against the killers of Rognvald Kali (ch. 103). All of this leads to the conclusion that one of these four sons was an important informant - or more than one of them.

It is more difficult to put a name to the author than to some of his informants. Some of the attempts to do so will be discussed. But the first step is to find out what the Saga itself tells us about the kind of man he was.

First and foremost, he must have been a man of sufficient social status and personality to move at ease

among noble families in Norway and the west to collect his material. In his last chapter (ch. 108) he reveals a significant respect for rank; Svein, he says, was the greatest "among men not above his own rank". He was a bookish person, and must have learned his letters in a monastery or from a family priest. He was a skilled genealogist and probably something of a skald. His preoccupation with political intrigue suggests that he was himself involved in such conflict in his own country; historical research has been a not uncommon avocation of men of affairs at all period of history.

It is not clear whether he was a cleric or a layman. If we take the original Saga, Parts II, III and V only, and exclude two or three "pious" interpolations, we find evidence in it of both pagan and Christian elements but of a neutral sort of attitude towards them.

The pagan elements include the ceremonial killing by blood-eagle (ch. 8), magic raven-banners (chs. 11, 12), a magic shirt (ch. 55), soothsaying (chs. 9, 36), Svein's second sight (chs. 77, 93), Svein Breast-rope's "out-sittings" (ch. 66); some bad omens such as Rognvald Brúsason's slip of the tongue (ch. 29) and the wave that broke over Magnús's boat (ch. 47); and the concept of innate luck : "Hávarð was a good ruler, lucky in his



härvests" (ch. 9), "Thorkel was a lucky man and fated to live longer" (ch. 16), and Svein Breast-rope who was "rather unlucky-looking" (ch. 65), like Skarpheðin in Brennu-Njáls Saga.

Apart from the story of St Magnús, the church and churchmen do not play a central part. Bishop William appears briefly at intervals. Bishop John of Atholl visits the islands and the author describes the episode with scant reverence (ch. 77). Other episodes are the enforced baptism of Sigurð the Stout, the pilgrimages of Thorfinn and Hákon Pálsson to Rome, and the visits of Rognvald Kali to holy places in Palestine. There are occasional references to the various services of the church.

These episodes and topics do not seem to be important to the author as matters involving belief. They have the appearance of being merely part of his thematic material, requiring no comment. It is true that he gives a hint of disapproval of Svein Breast-rope's "out-sittings" when he quotes the Bishop's remark that his death was "a good riddance". He also seems to have his tongue in his cheek when he tells the story of the Swedish soothsayer (ch. 36). Generally, however, his attitude is one of detachment.

Allied to his detached attitude is his avoidance of explicit moral judgments. For the most part he takes conflict and killing as inescapable elements in human life. One can sense through his reticence, however, a clear disapproval of treacherous killings, and he lifts this reticence once in an expression of unease about the fate of Earl Páll (ch. 75).

It would be reading too much into the evidence to call him a sceptic or a twelfth-century humanist. He could be described more safely as a worldly man. If he was a cleric, he must have had a strongly secular side to his personality. A man like this could have lived at Oddi or within easy reach of it. Sæmund, son of the great Jón, could himself have been the author, or even his brother Bishop Páll; both are known to have travelled abroad and might have visited the Orkney earldom in the 1190s or earlier. In 1938, I suggested Sighvat Sturluson (1170-1238), Snorri's brother. He might have made the usual young man's voyages abroad in the 1190s, and would have had access to historical writings at Snorri's house at Reykjaholt or even at Oddi; but he seems less probable than a man more closely connected with the Oddi family.

Finnbogi Guðmundsson makes a detailed case for a northerner, in the person of Ingimund the Priest, son

of Thorgeir Hallason of Hvassafell in Eyjafjörður<sup>6</sup>. Space permits only a summary of his fascinating array of evidence, most of it drawn from the Saga itself and from Sturlunga Saga. Like the Oddaverjar, Ingimund's family was descended from Hrollaug. There was another, more recent, family connection with Orkney, suggested by the marriage of Ingimund's niece Guðný to Eric Hákonarson of Orkney. Ingimund was a scholarly man; he rescued and dried out a chest of books after a shipwreck in 1180, and left them with a foster-son when going abroad a few years later. He was in Norway in 1165; in Nidaros with Abbot Karl in 1185; and in Bergen and England in 1188. He could thus have made at least one visit to Orkney. He died after a shipwreck in Greenland in 1189.

The identification of Ingimund as the author, however, presents certain difficulties. He has no apparent connection with Oddi. The period 1165-1189 is rather early for the composition of the Saga. It requires us to assume that the reference in ch. 104 to Rognvald Kali's canonisation in 1192 is a later interpolation, and this is possible, although not textually probable. Many of the sources, including Eric Oddsson, would be available at this period, but it is not certain that the main collection of Kings' Lives that the author used could have been written by then. The style of the Saga is also more mature than seems likely at this period;

although this may be arguable.

In a review of Finnbogi Guðmundsson's edition, Hermann Pálsson presents a case for another northerner, Snorri Grímsson, who was brought up at Hof in Skagafjörður and whose story is told in Sturlunga Saga and Biskupa Sögur<sup>7</sup>. Snorri's mother was of good family. She was sister of Ingimund the Priest and aunt of the learned Bishop Guðmund Arason, and also aunt of the Guðný already mentioned as making an Orkney marriage. Snorri had a clerical education and was ordained as a deacon, but had to leave home in 1192 as the result of involvement in a local lawsuit. He went south to Oddi, presumably at the invitation of Jón Loftsson. He was killed in another struggle between rival leaders in 1208. The notice of his death in Sturlunga Saga describes him as "an intelligent man and a popular one". He was thus resident at or connected with Oddi throughout the time when the Saga was written. He could also have visited the Orkney earldom during this period, perhaps as an envoy of Jón for the purpose of furthering the Sæmund-Langlíf marriage. Snorri Sturluson was being brought up at Oddi as a foster-son while Snorri Grímsson was there; and as Snorri Sturluson afterwards made use of the Saga in his Heimskringla, this strengthens further the connection between the Saga and Oddi at this particular period.

The canonisation of Rognvald Kali in 1192 took place about the time of Snorri Grímsson's arrival at Oddi and may have prompted a start to a saga of the Orkney earls.

This is a very plausible case. It might be added that the author's premature death in 1208 would explain why the original Saga did not include a full-length sub-saga of Harald Maddaðarson. But other scholars may still suggest other plausible solutions.

I prefer, therefore, to rest content with the general picture of the author that we obtain from reading his work - a scholarly Icelfander who belonged to the school of Oddi which provided him with intellectual stimulus, much source material, and possibly financial and other assistance for journeying abroad, and who - almost a generation before Snorri - composed a long and detailed historical saga in literary form.

## NOTES

1. Text: Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Orkneyinga Saga (Íslensk Fornrit XXXIV, Reykjavík 1965).  
Translation: A.B.Taylor, The Orkneyinga Saga: a new translation with introduction and notes (Edinburgh 1938).
2. G.Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic Literature (Oxford 1953).
3. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Sagnaritun Oddaverja (Reykjavík 1937), 16-39; "Orkney-Shetland-Iceland", The Viking Congress, proceedings ed. D.Simpson (Edinburgh 1954), 271-83.
4. Biskupa Sögur (Copenhagen 1858-78), I, 127, 143.  
Sturlunga Saga (Reykjavík 1946), I, 240-242.
5. Orkneyinga Saga (1965), cvii-xcx.
6. Op.cit., xc-cvi
7. Hermann Pálsson, Tímarit Máls og Menningar XXVI (1965), 98-100; also in Tólfta Úldin (Reykjavík 1970), 21-31.

R. GEORGE THOMAS

MEN AND SOCIETY IN HRAFNKELS SAGA FREYSGOBA

For many years, now, my own area of special study has been Sturlunga saga. When I was much younger I believed that an intense study of the political history and social and economic problems of the Sturlung Age would, in time, provide a new slant on the aims and activities of the writers of sagas. This view I still hold, but with considerable modifications. They are principally these. First, since only a few sagas survive which can confidently be attributed to the Sturlung period, and since the collation of such early versions with later versions of the same sagas frequently reveals considerable re-writing, one must hesitate to treat even the oldest versions of any sagas as precise records of the climate of opinion during the Sturlung Age. I use the word "precise" in the sense that Skelton's Magnificence is a contemporary artistic comment on Cardinal Wolsey or that Jane Austen's Persuasion is one necessary viewpoint which is essential to any complete understanding of Regency England. The second modification is this. Most of the Family Sagas, as we now know them, were actually written after the loss of the independence of the old republic. Some of these post-Sturlung sagas have a claim - a legitimate claim - to be considered as part of the select body of world literature. (I am thinking here, in particular

of Njála and Grettla). It is just possible that the authors of such sagas grew to manhood during the last bitter clashes of the Sturlung civil war. So one may argue, a knowledge of the institutions, aspirations and dashed hopes of the Sturlung Age may help us to understand the point of departure, at least, of some of the greatest saga writers. For we must remember the power of oral memory in a small compact society which has received a deep shock to its constitution and, by implication, to its view of its own past history.

I believe that many small compact societies have utilised historical interest - disguised in fictitious, literary clothes - in order to revitalize themselves. In such societies, periods of past magnificence are easily recalled and when the accuracy of memory is worn by the passage of time and changing literary taste, then invention supplies the defects of memory. Even then, a hard core of fact can survive the activities of the fabricator. Following this gleam of hope I have slowly learned to link my study of Sturlunga to one group of Family Sagas which have come out of a very isolated community - the Eastfirths - whose real isolation in winter time was forced on my attention during the last War when I was stationed for some time at Seyðisfjörður.

Some day, I shall bring together my scattered thoughts on Droplaugarsona saga, Brandkrossa þáttur and Fljótsdæla saga (late though it is) - but today, I wish to examine



the most perfectly executed (and one of the more fictitious) of the short sagas: Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða. This talk will be an examination of the social relationships between the characters in the saga as the author presents them to us. Concern with this narrow and minor problem is forced on me, partly because Sigurður Nordal and others have left any other student of this saga with practically nothing to say; partly, too, because this is the one saga which, in its extant form, is so largely a work of fiction. Therefore we can legitimately ask questions about the author's intention in writing the saga, because we know that he was not an historian who had to make his characters act according to the facts as they had come down to him.

Fortunately (because of its inclusion in Arnold Taylor's revised Gordon's Reader) we are all familiar with the story. At first glance we can say one thing about it: this is no Family saga. Remove the almost obligatory introduction (based on Landnámabók) and the pious conclusion, and we are left with a saga which hinges exclusively around one remarkable man - Hrafnkell Freysgoði: his family simply do not exist within the context of the saga's vital action. But we must first consider the possibility that our author's intention was constrained by oral tales. If any oral tradition about this Hrafnkell had survived until the last quarter of the thirteenth century, our author used only those fragments of it which throw light on his eponymous hero. His worship of Frey is in no way presented to

us as a laborious antiquarian study of old pagan ideas. The close bond between Hrafnkell and the god's foster-horse has no religious overtones, unless it is a half-memory of Snorri Sturluson's revival of Yule-tide at Reykholt: it merely supplies a reason for the one inevitable act which could lead to Hrafnkell's downfall. This relationship is used for implicit comment. Until this moment in his life Hrafnkell had been quite capable of ordering his life and shaping his own destiny. His father, Hallfreðr, we remember, believed in dreams and acted on their supernatural promptings. But from early adolescence Hrafnkell has made all his own decisions until, in pursuit of his ambition to cement his secular and religious function as a goði, he makes an oath to the god Frey. It is as a result of this oath that his career suddenly moves out of its controlled orbit; Hrafnkell is compelled to make a choice, which he knows to be wrong, and which leads to the cold-blooded killing of a very promising and well-connected young man.

In the end it is more satisfactory to deny the author any serious antiquarian interest in tales of the old pagan religion of Frey and, instead, to accept the simpler explanation that all these picturesque details which are introduced into his tale draw their significance from the light they throw on the character of the saga-hero. The same conclusion applies to our author's use (or misuse) of place-names and the mysteries that surround the various

references to Hrafnkell's spear. Such examples of our author's handling of possible relics of oral material - at least they all are of the Stoff of folk-tales - suggest where his true interest lay and in what area of interest he deliberately concentrates our attention. None of these things are of value to him in and for themselves as they are, for instance, to the author of Eyrbyggja saga: they have no intrinsic interest for him if they do not help to throw light on the character and achievement of Hrafnkell Freysgoði. (The same results could prove fruitful if a structuralist approach was made to the saga.)

Ostensibly the author emphasizes Hrafnkell's achievement and not his nature: he is presented to us as a man of action. Almost everything that he does in the saga is performed quickly and described speedily. The actions of the other characters are related in a careful and thrifty fashion: the author lingers over the minutest details of their acts (not, I suggest, as Nordal thinks, in order to create the utmost impression of realism; but in order to slow down the pace and contrast it with Hrafnkell's spring-like energy).

There is special significance in the contrast of narrative speed and tone between the description of Hrafnkell's exile from Aðalból, his second rise to power and prominence - borrowing money, building a house, raising new stock and carving out new areas of authority (over

recently-arrived settlers) - and the sudden return of our story to Sámr and the sons of Þjóstarr. They are still engaged in carrying out the necessary formalities of the court of execution and coping with the destruction of Freyfaxi and the temple-buildings. Here, as elsewhere in the saga, our author places side by side two ways of life - or two attitudes towards life - the one petty and destructive, and the other forceful and creative. He does so without direct comment: the manner of narration is the only possible clue to his intention. A similar differential in narrative speed (speed of relation) is used when Eyvindr sails into Reyðarfjörður. The author devotes ample time and leisure to details of packhorses, of fine clothes and armour, and of the minute twists and turns of the journey Eyvindr has to traverse. Even the female servant's actions are itemized. But once Hrafnkell is goaded into activity he acts quickly; catching up with Eyvindr - whose progress over difficult terrain accounts for most of this part of the story - Hrafnkell goes straight into the attack. When the long-standing account against Sámr has been well and truly paid, he rides off and, although riding tired horses, he escapes from Sámr's pursuit. At this point in the knife-edge balance of Hrafnkell's fortune, our author allows only the details of action to point his moral: Sámr waits until morning before setting out on his punitive expedition; Hrafnkell assembles his men at once. In next to no time, and without much waste of detailed relation, the balance of

power has been upset and Hrafnkell is back in the saddle at Aðalból with his younger son. The wheel has come full circle; at once the tension of the narrative slackens, and the lesser character of Sámur is presented to us. The loose ends left over - the power and attitude of Þorkell and Þorgeirr to this re-emergence of a defeated rival - are worked into a slightly comic episode; Hrafnkell's new, enlarged authority is mentioned and, almost before we know what is happening, Hrafnkell has died and is buried.

Now, judged by the actual space given in the saga to Hrafnkell's own deeds, he does not dominate the saga's action. He is no mature Njáll; unlike Egill, we are not asked to witness his declining years. The unhappy, haunted last years of Grettir are beyond our author's interest. His attention, it seems to me, is concentrated on the problem of power - its exercise and its abuse. Everything in the saga is shaped to illustrate this problem, and I have found very few details in the saga which cannot be interpreted in terms of this single authorial intention.

Such a view of the author's intention in writing this story is not diminished, but strengthened, if we consider the inordinate amount of dialogue in Hrafnkels Saga. For though Hrafnkell acts quickly and effectively, he talks at great length, as though he were own brother to Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Chaunticleer. On a rough count, Hrafnkell

speaks a quarter of the dialogue in the saga: Sámrr and Þorkell are the other ready talkers, but few of the characters are silent. The incidence of Hrafnkell's speeches has some interest. Two-thirds of them occur in the first quarter of the saga: i.e. when we first need to understand him. I believe that this need to give the listener a point of entry into a character's motivation is part of the inherited technique of any oral narrator. (I am thinking especially of the early speeches of Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, as well as, say, the early soliloquies of Hamlet and Shakespeare's early clowns. This is an argument that could be extended from the medieval drama generally, and also from the works of Malory.) Once the legal action goes against him at the General Assembly and then at Aðalból, Hrafnkell makes one short speech and the cryptic comment that he thinks it folly to believe in pagan gods. Again, when the moment comes to take revenge, he replies to the servant woman's thirteen-line tirade with five lines, sharply to the point. But he virtually takes his leave of the listener with twenty-five lines of talk while he is deciding Sámrr's fate. These four long speeches of Hrafnkell - three at the beginning and one at the end of the saga - are responsible for our sense of knowing him as intimately as, say, we know Richard II or Bully Bottom. All three characters are presented to us through the medium of soliloquies, by direct address to the listener, by an appeal to the judgement of all men who read

the tale or hear the play. For Hrafnkell's speeches are about himself and his views on life. Ostensibly they concern practical things: prohibitions, dispensations of justice, or the execution of legal redress; actually, they are self-revelatory speeches and, at times, self-exculpations. The saga writer consistently presents Hrafnkell to us as a man who exercises power consciously, naturally, and according to fixed principles, even though his principles may undergo alteration. For this hero is vocal to a high degree and it is this verbal quality which tempts me to call this a political saga about a hofðingi and the exercise of power. I don't really understand my own thought-processes here very clearly. Except that, as I read and translated and collaborated on a translation of Sturlunga with Professor Julia McGrew, I was most impressed by the need of the compilers of that book of sagas to explain themselves at length. Thirteenth-century Icelandic rulers and churchmen seemed to be very concerned about the politics of "dominion".

Of course, Hrafnkell is not the only character in the saga who is burdened with the gift of loquacity: the other speakers, however, fall more neatly into the character of Goodman Verges in Much Ado About Nothing who, according to Dogberry (that prince of ambiguous critics), "speaks a little off the matter. A good old man, sir; he will be talking: as they say, when the age is in the wit is out. God help us! it is a world to see." To understand the difference between their speeches and Hrafnkell's it is

necessary to make a fine, yet necessary distinction. Consider Sámur. He is a notorious blab; and he is conceived in comic terms, as he must be if we are to take the central action of Hrafnkell's downfall and recovery with any seriousness. But the effect of Sámur's speeches is to fill in the outlines of his character as they are delineated for us by the author's comment or by the reports of other characters. When Sámur has spoken we seem to know more about Sámur, about what kind of a man he is, than we did before. And yet our knowledge of his inner character is not gained merely, or solely, through his words: rather, he confesses to the character we already know him to possess. In sharp contrast it is Hrafnkell who actually provides the very words and ideas by which we are to judge his own conduct. This distinction may be too finely drawn, but I think it exists. The saga writer manipulates Sámur's speeches - as many other saga writers do - in order to fill out aspects of his character that are not fully brought out in the action of the saga; Hrafnkell's speeches, on the other hand, manipulate and direct our opinion of the hero. Þorkell, the other great talker, is much more of a fairy-tale character and the washerwoman, too, is a mere stock figure. Theirs is the kind of flat character that abounds in medieval Miracle plays, in the comedy of Ben Jonson and in Restoration comedy generally. She supplies motives for the conduct of others, but she, herself, is a mouthpiece with no character development of her own. One could say that



while Hrafnkell (and Sámr and Þorkell) make speeches, she gives tongue to functional, conventional patter.

If I seem to have paid too much attention so far to the author's intention, it is merely to try to indicate the great care with which our author has moulded every detail in his tale in order to achieve one particular end: that is, to define the nature of a hofðingi by describing a speculatively conceived goði of the Saga Age. The author's sense of symmetry, and his polemical aim, are so intense that he cuts across one of the staple saga conventions - the proliferation of characters - at least, saga conventions as we have so far accepted them. Not many sagas are played out with so few actors as there are in Hrafnkatla: and only a mere handful of this depleted cast carry and sustain the action. Nordal has already analysed their characters. My single concern here is to suggest that all these actors are placed unerringly in their social setting. The entire social structure of an imaginary Fleetsdale district is outlined for us, with ramifications reaching backwards in time and ranging far afield from Iceland or Norway.

Let us consider the layers in this geological time-cake. Very much in the background - though in the saga's opening words - are the kings of Scandinavia; then, from time to time in this saga we are made aware of Byzantine rulers, too. Then there is Hrafnkell; the very mention of whose full title, Freysgoði, is used significantly like

an Honours Roll-call. At the General Assembly we hear of other leaders (hofðingjar) and meet two sons of Þjóstarr, with a goðorð between them. In this way our author fills in the top layer of his hierarchy. Nearer home, in the East-firths, and much more down to earth, is Bjarni, an ordinary farmer with two differently gifted sons and an over-burdened, poverty-depressed brother, Þorbjörn. But we are not left free to imagine Þorbjörn as a beggar. He explains to Einarr, in the language of decayed gentility, why it is that he has been forced to send Einarr to seek menial jobs. The same care is shown over Einarr's jobs with Hrafnkell: we learn that Hrafnkell's estate has many avenues open for employment and that while, for the present, Einarr must tend sheep and fetch wood, this is only a temporary measure. This close attention to Hrafnkell's magnificence is not left to the chance working of the reader's imagination. When Freyfaxi escapes to Aðalból he arrives at a manor house where the lord and master has servants to do his every bidding, as in the royal courts of Norway or York. In this phase of the story Hrafnkell's only personal actions are talking, mounting horses, and using weapons.

For our author never slips up on this point. Certain people in his tale possess the money (and position) which buys them servants, and absolves them from menial work. His omissions of this fact are as significant as his inclusions. When Þorbjörn rides to ask his brother, Bjarni, for assistance we are told that they meet: there is no

account of servants. But when Þorbjörn arrives at Leikskálar, the door is opened by a servant who is dispatched to bring Sámur out of doors. We now notice that Sámur always has his horse caught for him and that Hrafnkell sends men on messages around his thing-district, and that Sámur can only get "landless men" for his journey to the General Assembly. Certainly, the long exchange between Sámur and Þorkell Lock has its elements of comedy, but it equally serves to emphasize the author's (and our) conception of a goði and a goðorð. In one single chapter, after we have learned about the behaviour of chieftains at the General Assembly we encounter the words goðorðsmaðr, bóndi, einhleypingr and we meet a man who was a courtier of the Greek Emperor. I think that too much has been made of the so-called "image-clusters" in studies of Shakespearean imagery, but this concatenation in one passage of similar words of status written by an author who is so careful over details surely has some connection with that author's purpose in writing the saga.

One notable exception to the rule (that great men do not perform menial tasks) shows how careful our author is in its application. He is, above all things, eager to rehabilitate the fallen Hrafnkell in our eyes. Yet he records that Hrafnkell had to work with his hands while the new farm was being built at Hrafnkellsstaðir. At this point Hrafnkell is a bankrupt and an outcast. There is no artistic blemish here. Everything is consonant with

Hrafnkell's low estate: even the name of the house is based on a personal name; nothing grandiose-sounding like Aðalból. And in sharp contrast to Hrafnkell's toil - back at Aðalból, Sámur and the sons of Þjóstarr are sending men to fetch and carry and destroy for them. This is one of many slight touches: but it is very effective. Yet, in order to erase the necessary fact of Hrafnkell's loss of social status we are told in advance of Hrafnkell's second rise to prosperity as a prelude to an account of his changed character. The reality of his new power is not placed concretely before us until the washer-woman triggers off the revenge. She is outside washing; Hrafnkell is asleep, at 9 a.m.; there are some favoured retainers lying in the hall and the farm labourers have long been out to work. Add to this picture the strange non-Icelandic flavour of Eyvindr's skósveinn, the use of the word húskarl in this latter part of the saga, and the final position of Sámur as Hrafnkell's undirmaðr, and it becomes somewhat clearer that in this very short saga the author seems to cover all the possible kinds of social and economic relationships that could have existed in his fanciful picture of the Saga Age. For the purposes of his tale he has placed side by side conditions and titles which, I suspect, belong to different periods in the first 400 years of the history of the Icelandic Republic.

A fuller understanding of this author's vital interest in the ordering of society will benefit from a thorough

study of the development and use of the word hofðingi in the sagas. (I should begin such a study with the two versions of Bandamanna saga, but this is too big a topic to be touched on here.) Compared, say, with Bandamanna saga we must accept our good fortune in possessing one single early version of Hrafnkatla which leaves no doubt about the certainty with which the author draws the boundaries of his world picture. Nordal has shown - over-demonstrated, perhaps - how this firm disposition of places, men and events, stems from the author's steadfast refusal to be bound by anything so intractable as historical fact; though he admits that fragments of oral tradition and the memory of other sagas have a powerful, if subconscious, influence on his finished work of art. As free as Ariel - within the Prospero-like limits of the laws of oral tradition - our author presents his hofðingi, an unhistorical Priest of Frey, within the most suitable context of a society designed to show off his unique qualities as a leader of men in a frontier community. These qualities were so unique and memorable that the author of Brandkrossa þáttr incorporated them into his work as fact of equal value with the historical record of Landnámabók.

Now to come closer to the central position held by Hrafnkell in our saga. Hrafnkell has five competitors for our attention beside himself: his father, Hallfreðr; Sámrr; Þorkell and Þorgeirr; and Eyvindr. All five throw much

light on Hrafnkell's fitness to be a leader in this particular community.

Hallfreðr is an original settler, a man who obeys dreams and is lucky in ordinary affairs. A friendly father who lets his ambitious son have his head. Otherwise he is a cipher. In this he is very like Bjarni and Þorbjörn (who occupies an apparently more central place to provide comic relief). These are necessary "props" to the setting of a stage which Hrafnkell can dominate. We have met their kind in most sagas. The formula begins: "There was a man called X, the son of Y" - and at once we know that either X is to push the tale forward by killing, or being killed, or this initial account of his family connections will have repercussions later on in the saga during the eptirmál. But there is a slight but significant difference in Hrafnkels saga. Hallfreðr, Bjarni and Þorbjörn are also used to convey the sense of a tight community with really close family relationships. They are used economically to point to one of the saga's many concealed themes: that there are outstanding individuals from time to time, who attract history to themselves, but behind them, as the normal pattern of life in society, is the small family or district group. This is a very powerful sub-theme in Sturlunga saga.

Sámr reinforces our interest in the small-time community group. For Sámr is a typical "one-horse-town" product. He has made a pile of money; how, we are not

told. (My guess is that his prosperity came from two sources: (1) small-scale legal actions pursued for quick profits, and (2) gifts from successful plaintiffs who had benefited from his skill in petty legal affairs.) We are left to infer that Sámur was a good farmer: while he managed Aðalból, the stock multiplied. Characteristically, Hrafnkell allows Sámur to keep his brother Eyvindr's cargo, i.e. his trading profits: similarly, the sons of Þjóstarr, knowing Sámur of old, believe that they can placate Sámur's sulky reception of their final refusal of help by offering him a substantial present. Sámur, who is now an ex-gaði, refuses the proffered gifts and treats them like petite bourgeoisie. He is annoyed because they have read his character aright. We treat it as a comic scene.

Sámur, I suggest, is presented throughout with an edge of comedy; his special function in the saga is to underline rather heavily Hrafnkell's natural qualities as a born leader of men. For Sámur gains the very real trappings of power solely because of the aid Þorkell and Þorgeirr give him; not because of any quality in himself. Once Hrafnkell is safely exiled, Sámur maintains a majority rule (there were a significant number of dissenters) by using kindness, joviality, bribery, and by being all things to all men. Above all, Sámur seizes on the opportunities for self-display which his new dignity affords him and, thereby, he earns Hrafnkell's profound contempt. For Hrafnkell, the genuine man of power, allows Sámur to keep his shadowy authority

until Eyvindr, the one really worthwhile man in Sámrr's family, appears on the scene: and then Hrafnkell strikes at him and takes a fitting revenge. After his defeat, Sámrr's forlorn visit to Þorskafjörður convinces us that Sámrr's character has not really changed during his stay at Aðalból: he is no Hrafnkell who develops in adversity. Once more Sámrr seeks a return to power with aid external to this closed Eastern community in which he lives. Once this aid is refused, he relapses into the position of Hrafnkell's underling. Looking back we can see that although his life and deeds are neatly caught up into this fictitious life of Hrafnkell, his special function in the saga is a thematic one: to show what happens when an unworthy man apes (or usurps) the position of a genuine aristocrat or leader.

For our present purpose, the sons of Þjóstarr can be taken together. They are absolutely central to the action of the saga: without them, Hrafnkell would have remained an entry in Landnámabók and very possibly (?) a touchline spectator in two or three other sagas. They add nothing to our knowledge of Hrafnkell's character, although the author is careful to give each of them a separate and recognizable identity which is quite superfluous for the necessary acts they have to perform. But novels concerned with ideas (as well as things) require some active men to sustain the reader's interest. (This is very true of sagas or poems intended for oral relation.) In Njáls saga,



Gunnarr, Skarpheðinn and Kári, in turn, supply the springs of action while Njáll's personality becomes the battleground for the central ideological struggle. Þorgeirr and Þorkell belong to this class of activist saga character. They supply us with an effective commentary on Hrafnkell's stature among other leaders of men. More significantly, they share an inherited goðorð; they are well connected by marriage and, between them, they give a fairly clear picture of the wide range of authority of a goði in the Saga Age - I mean, of course, as that office and its function were conceived by later thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writers in their literary attempts to reconstruct the Golden Age of the early Republic.

Though he is accurately located in place and time, Þorkell is the easily-recognized adventurous viking hero of the opening chapters of many sagas who eventually settles down to manage his affairs in Iceland; Þorgeirr is the equally well-known stay-at-home careful manager. Together they are able to provide an acceptable, if unexpected, opposition to Hrafnkell. We are left to infer that only such a combination of the best strains of ancient goði authority could bring about the downfall of our superman-hero. They - and not Sámur - are his formidable opponents with a widespread authority in the Westfirths; and at the General Assembly they attract a large, unexpected following. (Unexpected, that is, to Hrafnkell and to us; in fact, unexpected to all

of those who, following the author's guidance, have viewed the world and its affairs from the restricted and narrow angle of life in the Eastfirths!) Eventually, we are made to understand the kind of popular opinion which alone could force Hrafnkell to mend his ways, reform his nature, and change his outlook on the proper exercise of power in an isolated community, cut off from the checks and balances of more populous districts. They, too, destroy the temple which is one sanction of Hrafnkell's authority as goði. And then, their function in the saga is clear and completed. They have no desire to take on the new Hrafnkell and this, the author implies, is the true measure of Hrafnkell's successful rehabilitation.

Similarly, Eyvindr throws much light on this saga's concentration of interest on the possible ways of attaining distinction and leadership. He is first introduced to us in perfunctory, economical fashion, although the chords of our memory of him are stirred when Þorkell says that he has returned from Byzantium. When Eyvindr puts in at Reyðarfjörður, a new note is struck. His obvious worldly success and martial prowess are treated as common knowledge. (They had reached the slave-woman, on the bush telegraph: the whinbush.) The saga writer, at this point, is eager to develop Eyvindr's quixotic qualities rapidly. He had adopted his poor, distant cousin; he offers lofty, quixotic replies

to those who urge him to run away from the pursuing Hrafnkell; he interferes so little in ordinary, everyday things that he really believes that Sámur and Hrafnkell have achieved a permanent state of social equilibrium. Gradually we are forced to recognize that his quixotic ineptitude is an effectual foil to Hrafnkell's new return to the realities of power. When the testing time comes, Eyvindr, quite naturally, will fight well and courageously: this is his occupation. But he does not dispatch the boy in order to fetch Sámur: he does it merely to save the boy's life. In political understanding, in the ability to appreciate the closely-knit feelings and enmeshed hatreds of the Eastfirths, Eyvindr is woefully deficient. He is as deficient in this respect as many other men of good will during the Sturlung civil war. He pays for this deficiency with his life; while Hrafnkell, as ruthless and as self-justified in this death as in the original killing of Einarr, climbs once more to the top of Fortune's wheel. We realise, once again, that the saga writer has an obvious admiration for Hrafnkell's qualities and, when he makes his final award to Sámur, we are made to feel that Eyvindr, despite his splendid esoteric qualities, does not count for much within the context of Fleetsdale district. Like Sámur, he lacks the accidental qualities of birth and good connections: a fact which is never overtly stressed in the saga, perhaps because an interest in sound genealogy is a

shared sine qua non between saga-man and saga-listener. Thematically, he stands for the outsider - someone who represents a foreign, yet irrelevant, mode of success which already has been exemplified for us in the ruthless conduct which Porkell displayed in torturing the humiliated Hrafnkell. But, on this final occasion, it is Hrafnkell who tackles the problem of revenge with Byzantine grimness and promptitude; and, as a result, he dies prosperously in his bed and, so we are led to believe, he leaves an established future to his sons. The mood in which our saga writer conceived his fictitious life of Hrafnkell must have been close to that of the author of Vatnsdela saga who says, in an explanatory aside, "at that time it was usual for important men's sons to have some kind of job". The author of Hrafnkatla, too - I am suggesting - was conversant with a privileged way of life led by a small aristocracy; his tale was designed to show how such privileges could be obtained, enjoyed, maintained, and passed on to sons.

In conclusion, I would like to retrace the principles that lie behind this preliminary discussion of a very fine saga. First of all, there is the belief that different versions of the same saga can be made to yield some reflection of the tastes and preoccupations of their authors and the readers for whom they were first intended. Hrafnkatla is a special case here, since all the known versions apparently stem from the same source. If Professor Dorothy

Whitelock will forgive the plagiarism, this talk is a first essay towards understanding the "Audience of Hrafnkatla". Then, secondly, there is the assumption that the best saga writers knew precisely what they were doing when they composed and adapted an old tale. Consequently, patient analysis of their treatment of oral reports, topographical details, ancient customs, and the inter-relationship between major and minor characters should give some clues to the artistic purpose of the saga writer, although not as much as was once thought by the inspirers of the Islenzk Fornrit edition to which we are all heavily indebted. Thirdly, that not every saga is worth such close critical or scholarly attention, and we should be bold to say so. But those that are worth such scrutiny - and Hrafnkatla is one of them - extend our knowledge of human nature and deepen our experience of life in this world. Lord David Cecil once made a significant comment on the novels of Charles Dickens: "It is Dickens' peculiar triumph that he has created a world as solid as it is soaked in imagination. Dickens' London may be different from actual London, but it is just as real, its streets are of firm brick, its inhabitants genuine flesh and blood. For they have that essential vitality of creative art which is independent of mere verisimilitude. It does not matter that Dickens' world is not life-like; it is alive." The author of Hrafnkels saga draws his essential vitality from a profound understanding of the secular struggle for power in a closed, self-contained and isolated

community. He has laid the foundations of this understanding so deeply in observed human nature that his tale can still interpret the present-day reader's self and world to himself. His world may not be historically accurate, it is magnificently and imaginatively alive.

J. E. VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS - POSSIBILITIES OF ETHICAL  
CRITICISM

There is much truth in the assertion that the "Icelandic family sagas are works easy to enjoy, powerful in their effect, but difficult to criticize".<sup>1</sup> The Sagas of Icelanders (or family sagas) can be critically examined for the purposes of establishing their origins or they can be investigated for the purposes of refuting or confirming their historicity. I have always been interested in the Sagas of Icelanders mainly as examples of imaginative writing. I, therefore, welcomed T.M. Andersson's book, The Icelandic Family Saga (1967). At that time he wrote: "The saga is plane narrative with no vertical dimensions" . "there is no guiding principle laid down by the author in order to give his material a specific import" ... "the saga comes very close to pure narrative without ulterior motive of any kind, much closer, for example, than the modern practitioners of objectivity, whose work is, after all, socially or philosophically loaded" (p. 32). According to this view the saga writer in his objectivity produces a work of non-judging, non-questioning neutrality.

Andersson admits that the sagas are not "free of moralism" (p. 31), but the moral or ethical concern is

presumably merely external or peripheral. The people of the sagas live and act in a society, and it is false to consider that social life is one thing, morality and ethics another, and that there exists merely an external and contingent relationship between them. The truth rather is that ethical concepts are embodied in forms of social life.

If the saga is considered as imaginative literature, then the character of a saga figure is the sum total of his actions and words. A meaningful interpretation of these words and actions will enable us to understand what he is. In making this interpretation, we must take into account the ethical norms of the period in which the work was created or in which the story is set, or both periods.

Ethics are concerned with human actions, human behaviour in situations. This behaviour serves a purpose which constitutes part or whole of the agent's intention in doing what he does. Furthermore, the agent's purpose is only to be made intelligible as the expression of his desires and aims. In considering a saga for the purposes of ethical criticism, one should keep in mind questions such as these: Does the saga reflect the intellectual or social or ethical pre-occupations of its time? What view of man does it present? How or why does a man assert himself or his will (or refrain from asserting himself or his will)?



Richard Hoggart has said very wisely:

Every writer - not necessarily in a tragic or comic or in any other manner - means what he says. Sometimes he will deny that there is a meaning. 'I only wanted to write an interesting tale' he will say, ignoring that the interest of a story almost always comes from seeing the human will in action against chaos or against order ... By his choice and arrangement of materials, by the temper of his treatment of them, a writer is implicitly saying: this is one way in which we can face experience or succumb to it or seek to alter it or try to ignore it. <sup>2</sup>

The saga writer seems to be doing just that. Auerbach asserts that

He who represents the course of a human life, or a sequence of events extending over a prolonged period of time, and represents it from beginning to end, must prune and isolate arbitrarily. Life has always long since begun, and it is always still going on. And the people whose story the author is telling experience more than he can ever hope to tell. <sup>3</sup>

What is isolated in this sense in the sagas is the conflict; the reaction of the individual to a particular situation; the assertion of the individual will, or the non-assertion of it. The method of story-telling is ethically-oriented. The saga writers do not see social forces, they see the vices and virtues, strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of individuals.

What then are the primary ethical assumptions of the saga heroes? For many years honour has been extolled as ethically the "key-concept". T.M.Andersson has in a recent article<sup>4</sup> examined the "primacy of honour" and has come to the conclusion that honour is not the writers' chief concern: the "primacy of honour" can be justified only on the basis of an episodic reading of the sagas. P. G. Foote<sup>5</sup> places the ethical emphasis elsewhere, although his concept is not entirely unrelated to the idea of the preservation and defence of honour at all costs. He writes:

They (saga writers) were dealing with pre-Christian men and women ... and it suited neither their philosophy nor their prejudices to make their characters mentally and morally subject to the heathen pantheon. The gods might be held responsible for a man's good or bad fortune, but they had nothing to do with his character - and it is the individual human character in which the writers were most deeply interested. A code of conduct must exist, however, and the writers endowed their characters with a heroic outlook: they saw them ultimately at the mercy of an inexorable fate and interpreted their careers as examples of courage and defiance in the face of misfortune and death that fate brought upon them.

Foote is right about the deep interest in human character, but the importance of fate is overemphasized.

Andersson, as I have said, has raised doubts about the importance of honour:

It is perhaps time to raise the question of theme; is a given saga just a story, or is there some underlying concern which informs the events and which requires interpretation? Does the author impose values on the action, and if so, is the chief value really honour? Are the real heroes of the sagas the men who guard honour sedulously, and if not, who are the real heroes? (p. 577).

After an examination of ten sagas (or more correctly the behaviour and attitudes of certain important persons in them), Andersson dethrones "honour" and enthrones "moderation" in its place. His conclusions are:

What gives a consistency to the ethical temper of these sagas is precisely a sense of proportion and moderation. They are written against excess ... I can find no better key to the spirit of these sagas than the concept of *sophrosyne* (p. 577).

The heroic ethics of honour and valiant struggle against fate have now been replaced by the social ethics of moderation. As Andersson says:

They (the sagas) tell the stories of strong individuals who disrupt the social fabric, but despite the respect paid to many of these strong personalities, the sagas are ultimately opposed to social disruption. This is why the heroic lay regularly ends on a note of individual grandeur while the saga, from its social vantage

point, always ends with conciliation and with the restoration of social balance (p. 593).

It seems that from "plane narrative" without "vertical dimensions" the sagas have now become exempla either extolling moderation or condemning excess.

Now there is justification for according honour and its implications a high place in the scale of values celebrated in the Sagas of Icelanders; there is even more justification for asserting the primacy of moderation. In the "moderation" view the author's chief concern is taken to be society, whose highest values are "flexibility and moderation" (Andersson, p. 593), and man's aim is now the restoration and/or preservation of social balance.

That the characters of the Sagas of Icelanders lived in a society implies some degree of social interaction and a recognition of (not necessarily obedience to) the strictures imposed on individual freedom of action and speech. Nevertheless, the centre of gravity seems to me still to be the individual and his actions. Social forces as such are not much taken into account; the "countryside" may make what are presumably value-judgements on an action, but the action is the result of the individual's exercise of his will and his self-determination. He is not restrained from acting by an acute awareness of social forces, by a desire for social harmony and social balance, but by his disposition and inclinations. His actions are

mostly self-oriented (with implications for his kin) and the result of the exercise of his individual will and choice.

From the Sagas of Icelanders one gains a picture of a society that was static and oriented towards tradition, in which people did not question the customs and basic assumptions that governed their lives. This social structure is in the background; in the foreground are the individuals and their actions. What Auerbach says about the realistic literature of antiquity may well be applied to the saga writers' view and use of society:

The existence of society poses no historical problem, it may at best pose a problem in ethics, but even then the ethical question is more concerned with the individual members of society than with the social whole. No matter how many persons may be branded as given to vice or as ridiculous, criticism of vice and excesses poses the problem as one for the individual; consequently social criticism never leads to a definition of the motive forces within society (*Mimesis*, p. 32).

In support of his "moderation" view Andersson examines Hávamál and concludes that Hávamál "propounds the values of the middle way and social accommodation" (p. 592). I am, however, inclined to accept Foote's view:

Many verses in Hávamál counsel caution and moderation, but these are essentially regarded as pragmatic aids to the maintenance of life and a tolerable position of equality in society. The need for effectiveness was necessarily stressed where in the end a man had only himself to rely on, so much so that the poet of Hávamál also recommends cold guile ... Doubtless the average man's aim was to attain just such self-preserving efficiency.<sup>6</sup>

The Social Contract framed by the Icelanders shows that the individual was more important than the collective or society. As Foote observes:

The absence of any central executive authority is in keeping with the love of independence which had brought them to the island in the first place. They seem to have been prepared to accept a system designed rather to preserve them from interference than to ensure their complete security - they had little doubt of their ability to look after themselves (p.58).

This lack of a strong central authority meant that uniformity could not be imposed; that personal liberty was more a fact than an ideal; that a man could choose for himself what action he would take and how he would handle any given situation.

I view the Sagas of Icelanders as embodying a system of ethics that I should like to call personalism. This system upholds values that each individual considered he required for his own survival or for his self-esteem;

they are values produced by his own desires, emotions, aspirations and needs. Life is an end in itself, so every human being is an end in himself. The suffering of others is of little concern; what matters is the preservation of one's self-esteem.<sup>7</sup> This system contains no abstract concept of a "social whole" whose claims could override the actions of individuals - a man acts the way he wants to. There are, admittedly, laws, the transgression of which could lead to an imposition of a sentence, but the execution of that sentence was an individual matter.

Each man is responsible for his actions; he asserts his will or refrains from asserting it according to his own reason and disposition; he aspires to power for himself, even at the expense of others. Personalism upholds a man's right to his own property and the right to dispose of it as he wishes; it recognises that man must never accept an unearned guilt, but if he has earned it, he must not leave it uncorrected. Within the framework of this system the saga hero is neither a puppet nor a paragon, but his conduct, whether or not it outrages our sensibilities and sense of justice and morality, depends upon his self-determination. A man makes his choices largely for the benefit of himself, not in order that he may sacrifice himself to the welfare of society, or that he may restore social balance. When the "countryside"

expresses its approbation or disapproval, such moral judgment is applied to the conduct of man as man, without implicit or explicit reference to the general welfare of society. The blood-feud is perhaps for us the most abhorrent feature of the ethics of personalism, but for the Icelanders it was valid.

I shall briefly examine two sagas and one páttir to illustrate some of the tenets of personalism. These works are all either discussed or cited by Andersson in his article in Speculum as examples of sagas praising moderation.

#### Hoensa-Póris Saga<sup>8</sup>

I suggest that the central ethical principle of this saga is stated by Þorvaldr, son of Tungu-Oddr, and it is the violation by individuals of this principle that leads to conflict:

Bærr er hverr at ráða sínu (p. 20).

Everyone has the right to dispose of his own property. Tungu-Oddr is introduced as an unjust man. It was his practice to fix the price of traders' property and to determine how they are to dispose of it. The Norwegian merchant Qrn lands in the district and refuses to comply with Tungu-Oddr's demands. Qrn is granted lodging by Blund-Ketill, and this is bound to lead to conflict between Tungu-Oddr and Blund-Ketill: the instrument will



be Porvaldr, son of Tungu-Oddr. Both Hersteinn, Blund-Ketill's son, and Qrn predict that father and son will incur the hatred of others in return for this hospitality. However Blund-Ketill has made his choice - forebodings do not deter him. Tungu-Oddr hears of this, and the talk is that Blund-Ketill has shown himself no friend to Tungu-Oddr. Tungu-Oddr is prepared to let the matter lie for the moment, recognising that Blund-Ketill is a man blessed with friends and as brave as they come. Neither is concerned with what others say. They act or refuse to act out of their sense of self-determination.

Blund-Ketill, a man of great bravery, greater wealth and the greatest popularity, handles his own property as he considers best, although always with generosity. During a particularly severe winter he gives his tenants of his own hay, until he has no more to spare. Two more tenants come to request hay. Blund-Ketill goes to Hønsa-Pórir, offers to buy hay from him at a very generous price, but he refuses. Hønsa-Pórir's behaviour is perhaps to us irrational in the situation, but nevertheless true to the type of man he is: a pathetic, mean, miserly, wretched scoundrel, who demands his pound of flesh, and because he is a self-made man, wishes to cling tenaciously to his own property, as he has every right to do. Blund-Ketill, conscious of his superiority over him, appropriates hay, but pays for it:

Blund-Ketill mælti: "Þá muni fara verr, ok munu vér allt at einu hafa heyit, þó at þú bannir, en leggja verð í staðinn ok njóta þess, at vér erum fleiri." (p. 16)

Blund-Ketill said: "So much the worse then, for we are minded to have the hay all the same, even though you forbid it, and put down money here, and take advantage of this that we are more strongly placed."

The fact that he pays for the hay and that, previous to taking it, he made extremely generous offers does not entirely excuse him. Hoensa-Þórir is enraged and goes around whimpering that he has been robbed. Those to whom he complains range themselves on the side of Blund-Ketill, not because they have a fine sense of justice, but because of Blund-Ketill's reputation.

Þorvaldr, son of Tungu-Oddr, takes up Hoensa-Þórir's case in return for money: he is interested only in the fact that Blund-Ketill took another man's property against his will. The scene in which Þorvaldr accepts the case is central to the story. Þorvaldr asks for news:

Hann svarar Þórir: "Raun var þetta, er Blund-Ketill rænti mik." Þorvaldr spurði: "Er sæzk á?" "Fjarri ferr um þat," segir Þórir. "Hví gegnir þat, Arngrímr," sagði Þorvaldr, "at þér hefðingjar látið þá skomm fram fara?" Arngrímr svarar: "Lýgr hann mestan hlut frá, ok er alllitit til haft." "Var þat þó satt, at hann hafði heyit?" segir Þorvaldr. "Hafði hann

víst," segir Arngrímr. "Bærr er hvern at ráða sínu," sagði Porvaldr ..." (pp. 19-20)

Pórir answered him: "It was an ordeal, when Blund-Ketill robbed me."

Porvaldr asked: "Has that been settled?"

"Far from it," said Pórir.

"How does it come about, Arngrímr," said Porvaldr, "that you chieftains allow such things to take place?"

"He lies for the most part," said Arngrímr, "and there is very little in it."

"Was it nevertheless true that he took the hay?" said Porvaldr.

"He took it indeed," said Arngrímr.

"Everyone has the right to dispose of his own property," said Porvaldr ...

Blund-Ketill is summoned. His guest Orm notices his anger, rushes out, shoots, and the arrow strikes Helgi, son of Arngrímr. Pórir announces that Helgi's dying words were: "Brenni, brenni Blund-Ketil inni" (p. 23). The burning is duly carried out. The surprising thing is that there is no comment from the "countryside" about this atrocious deed. Here Blund-Ketill passes out of the story.

Revenge must obviously be taken. Þorbjörn and Hersteinn go to Tungu-Oddr. He promises help out of self-interest: instead of giving aid he simply expropriates the dead Blund-Ketill's property. They then secure an offer of help from Þorkell Trefill, but before he knows

of the burning. He states quite clearly that he would not have been so ready to offer his help if he had known of the burning beforehand. Next they go to Gunnarr Hlífarsen, ostensibly to ask for his daughter Þuríðr to be betrothed to Hersteinn. Gunnarr is at a loss to understand why they are so eager to have an immediate answer. After threatening him they secure his agreement to a betrothal - then they tell him of the burning of Blund-Ketill. What is his reaction?

Gunnarr svaraði fá, lastaði lítt, enda lofaði eigi.  
(p. 30)

Gunnarr said few things in reply, blamed little, but did not praise either.

Gunnarr now takes them to Þórðr Gellir, his brother-in-law, who was fostering Þuríðr. Gunnarr forces Þórðr to pledge Þuríðr, then tells him of the burning. He realizes he has been fooled, but is bound to help. Finally Hersteinn himself kills Hoensa-Þórir, winning for the deed great honour and warm commendation.

The epilogue to the main action again involves the misuse of another's property. Þóroddr, son of Tungu-Oddr, asks for the hand of Jófriðr, daughter of Gunnarr Hlífarsen, but he is refused because of family hostility. Meanwhile Gunnarr and Hersteinn have exchanged properties so that Gunnarr now occupies Blund-Ketill's land which Tungu-Oddr had expropriated. Tungu-Oddr decides to press his claim to the land. The first attempt is frustrated and Tungu-

Oddr now plans a direct attack on Gunnarr. Þóroddr assures Gunnarr that they want a reconciliation and Gunnarr agrees. Tungu-Oddr is ignorant of this supposed desire for reconciliation and is ready to burn Gunnarr's house and everyone in it. Þóroddr informs his father of the reconciliation between Gunnarr and himself. This infuriates Tungu-Oddr. Þóroddr's opinion is that a fight between him and his father will be the only way to settle things, if nothing else proves acceptable. Men, however, intervene between them. Jófríðr is promised to Þóroddr, to Tungu-Oddr's intense displeasure. It is clear that the reconciliation between the opposing parties here is the result of Þóroddr's emotional self-interest, not the result of a desire to restore "social balance".

An important question arises: If Blund-Ketill is the hero (as he is according to Andersson in Speculum) exemplifying moderation and deserving of universal respect, why do the chieftains hang back from helping to avenge his burning? Those chieftains who render aid are implicated in the feud through the use of guile! They hang back because they put themselves before any considerations of healing disruptions in the social fabric. Everyman has a right to his own property; every man has a right to his own life. Given the choice and opportunity he will not allow himself to be sacrificed by others in the interests of society.

Þorsteins Páttur Stangarhoggss<sup>9</sup>

Here again the plot springs from the words and deeds of individuals. Þórarinn, a fierce viking in his day, is now nearly blind and has only his weapons as symbols of his former martial glory. Nevertheless, he still adheres firmly to the old concept of honour, and in his impotence still makes the appropriate heroic gesture. When he learns about the horsefight at which his son received the blow, he says:

"Ekki mundi mik þess vara, at ek munda ragan son eiga." (p. 70)

"I'd never have expected that I would have a coward for a son."

When at the end of the story Bjarni comes to challenge Þorsteinn to a duel, Þórarinn says:

"Þykki mér ok betra at missa þín en eiga ragan son." (p. 75)

"It seems to me better to lose you than to have a coward for a son."

At the end of the duel Bjarni falsely announces to him that his son has been slain. He immediately asks whether he had put up any kind of defence. Bjarni then offers to take the old man in and to give him a seat of honour. Þórarinn replies:

"Svá er mér farit," kvað karl, "sem þeim, er ekki eigu undir sér, ok verðr heitum heimskr maðr feginn. En svá eru heit yður hqfðingja, þá er þér vilið fróa manninn eptir slíka

atburði, at þat er mánaðarfró, en þá erum vér virðir eptir þat sem aðrir framfærslumenn, ok fyfnask við þat seint várir harmar." (p. 77)

"I am now in the same position as those who have little in their power," said the old man, "and fair words make a fool's heart leap for joy. And such are the promises of you chieftains, when you wish to comfort a man after any such mishap, that the comfort lasts for a month, but then our worth is fixed at that of other paupers, and with that our sorrows are slowly forgotten."

To lose his independence, to compromise his sense of honour and his own worth as a man, is anathema to him, so he tries to kill Bjarni. His ethical values are valid for himself. The fact that physically he can no longer assert them does not invalidate them. He does nothing else in the story, but he has made his point.

Bjarni's servant, Þórðr, is an ójafnaðarmaðr (a characteristic apparently not restricted to chieftains) and behaves accordingly. Þórhallr and Þorvaldr are scandal-mongers and pay with their lives for meddling in affairs that do not concern them. Bjarni is not characterized. Þorsteinn, son of old Þórarinn, is strong, but even-tempered (vel stillr); yet he kills Þórðr for having struck him in the face.

When Bjarni learns of the killing of Þórðr he succeeds in getting Þorsteinn outlawed for manslaughter. Þorsteinn

ignores the sentence and continues working on his father's farm. Bjarni does nothing about enforcing the sentence of outlawry. They both obey the dictates of their own consciences: Þorsteinn has to help his father; Bjarni allows him to do so.

Months pass. Rannveig, Bjarni's wife, in traditional manner proceeds to goad him to take revenge on Þorsteinn. She tells him:

"... menn þykkjast eiga vita, hvat Þorsteinn stangarhogg mun þess gera, at þér muni þurfa þykkja at hefna. Hefir hann nú vegit húskarla þína þrjá. Þykkir þingmönnum þínum eigi vant til halds, þar sem þú ert, ef þessa er óhefnt, ok eru þér mjök mislagðar hendr í kné." (p. 74)

"... men do not seem to understand what Thorsteinn Staff-Struck must do so that it would seem necessary for you to take revenge. He has now killed three of your housecarls, and it seems to your thingmen that there is no hope of support where you are concerned if this is unavenged. You do all the wrong things and leave the right undone."

The point is not as she puts it - he acts the way he considers right. His opinion is that Þorsteinn has killed few without good reason.

The next day he goes alone to settle the matter with Þorsteinn, much to his wife's alarm. He goes because his patience has been tried beyond endurance by



all the taunting of his wife and others, not because a social disruption has to be breached.

Bjarni challenges Þorsteinn to single combat. They play at fighting. After a while Þorsteinn says:

"en gjarna vilda ek nú hætta þessum leik, því at ek em hræddr, at meira muni mega gæfa þín en ógipta mín, ok er hverr frekr til fjörsins um alla þraut ..." (p. 76)

"and I would gladly leave off this game, because I am afraid that your good luck will prove stronger than my bad luck, and every man is eager for life in the last resort ..."

Perhaps Þorsteinn is afraid that either of them will be provoked into making the fight a real one. If this happens, then good luck or bad luck will be blamed for the consequences, since they do not themselves want it to happen. The main characters in the story all wish to pursue their lives in their own way. Some suffer for it; others do not.

#### Vápnfirðinga Saga<sup>10</sup>

Attitudes towards other people's property rights run strongly through the plot of this saga. Brodd-Helgi is introduced as a big man, strong, sturdy, comely, outstanding, not much of a talker in his youth, overbearing, headstrong, tricky and capricious. He does not have to develop as a character. He will no doubt manifest behaviour in accordance with this catalogue without consideration for social forces.

Brodd-Helgi kills Svartr who had been outlawed. The dying Svartr predicts that such kin-hurt will persist in Brodd-Helgi's family that it will be remembered as long as the land is inhabited. This prophecy is a literary device to heighten tension, to rivet interest. The events will take their course in spite of Svartr's prophecy, without regard for social order and balance, because individuals will act according to their own ethical standards.

Brodd-Helgi becomes rich and ostentatious. Great friendship develops between him and Geitir. A ship comes in belonging to Hrafn, a Norwegian, a miserly, taciturn, self-contained man. He is rich and renowned for his treasures. Helgi offers him a place to stay, but he refuses, having learnt that Helgi is haughty and greedy for money. Geitir takes him in. At a feast Geitir and Helgi are deep in conversation. Later Geitir strongly urges Hrafn to attend the games. Hrafn does so and is killed. Þorleifr, Hrafn's partner, collects Hrafn's property and sails off. The attempt of Helgi and Geitir to intercept him is frustrated. Helgi then asks Geitir about the box that belonged to Hrafn; Geitir in turn enquires about Hrafn's gold ring. Each denies knowledge of the respective objects. A coolness begins to develop between them.

Porleifr returns to Iceland, having handed over Hrafn's property to his heirs. Helgi now wants Porleifr summoned for non-payment of temple-tax, and uses a certain Ketill for the purpose. Porleifr, a Christian and an individual, is of the opinion that what is paid to a temple is put to very bad use. Because Porleifr takes a personal view of a public matter, Ketill is prompted to reply:

"Þat er mikil dul, at þú þykkisk betr kunna en allir aðrir menn." (p. 34)

"That is very conceited of you that you think you know better than all other men."

Ketill goes to summon Porleifr, but receives from him such hospitality before departing that he promises to see that the charge against Porleifr falls through. This happens later. Helgi blames Geitir for this humiliation and their friendship is on the wane.

Halla, Geitir's sister and Helgi's wife, now leaves her husband. Geitir comes to ask for Halla's property, but Helgi refuses to hand it over. In the spring Geitir goes to claim the property a second time - again without success. Geitir summons Helgi, but is overborne by sheer force both at the Sunnudalr Thing and the Althing. Open hostility now develops between them.

Þórðr, one of Helgi's thingmen, quarrels with Þórmóðr, one of Geitir's thingmen, over pasturage and timber. Helgi supports Þórðr by maliciously slaughtering

Pormóðr's cattle and felling his timber. After some reluctance to help Pormóðr, Geitir finally advises him to go for aid and summon Helgi for tree-felling. However, some of the party of summoners are killed and left to lie unburied. A plan to recover the bodies is now put into operation. Geitir and a few men loiter near Helgi's house. There is an exchange of words between Helgi and Geitir, who expresses distress at not being able to bury kinsmen.

Helgi answers:

"Þat er enn líkligra, at inn lægri verði at lúta."

(p. 43)

"That is only to be expected that the weaker must bow down."

Society can neither sanction nor condemn this manifestation of personalism, but other individuals can, and no doubt will, if they have the personal resources. The bodies are recovered and Helgi admits:

"ok er ávallt, at Geitir er vitrastr vár, þótt hann verði jafnan ofríki borinn." (p. 43)

"and it is always so that Geitir is the cleverest of us, though he is always borne down by force."

Halla, who is now very ill, sends for Helgi. His callous behaviour at this point perhaps alienates our sympathy, but it is quite in keeping with the type of man he is. Halla dies, Geitir is told the whole story, and everything is quiet for a while.

Helgi continues his encroachments, and at last Geitir's thingmen take counsel and Þórarinn, their spokesman, issues an ultimatum to Geitir:

"Hversu lengi skal svá fram fara," segir hann, "hvárt þar til er yfir lýkr með öllu? Nú gengr margt manna undan þér, ok lagask allir til Helga, ok virðum vér þér þrekleysi eitt til ganga, er þú hlífisk við Helga. Þú ert ykkar snarari, en þó hefir þú eigi með þér minni garpa en hann hefir með sér. Ok eru nú tveir kostir af várri hendi, at þú farir heim í Krossavík á bú þitt, ok flyt þaðan aldri síðan, en ger í mót Helga, ef hann gerir þér nokkurn ósóma heðan í frá, elligar munum vér selja bústaði vára ok ráðask í brottu, sumir af landi, en sumir ór heraði." (p. 46)

"How long must this go on?" he said, "Until there is an end to everything? A lot of men are now leaving you, and are all drawn to Helgi, and we consider that your lack of fortitude is the only reason why you hold back from Helgi. You are the sharper-witted of the two of you, and besides you have no worse fighters with you than he has with him. There are now two choices at our hands: that you go back to Krossavík to your farm and never move again from there, but take action against Helgi if he does you any dishonour from now on, or else we will sell our dwellings and move out, some from the country, and some from the neighbourhood."

It is clear that the thingmen strongly object to Geitir's moderate views and reactions. Roused by these threats

Geitir prepares to return home. He consults, among others, Ólvir inn spaki, who asks after Helgi. Geitir surprisingly speaks of Helgi as an outstanding man, quarrelsome and headstrong, but a good fellow in many respects, but admits that he has suffered a great deal from Helgi's injustice. Geitir is not being ironical when he expresses a kind of admiration for some of Helgi's qualities. This is his assessment of Helgi as a man.

Later (from a reconstruction of the lacuna in the manuscript) Geitir kills Helgi. Bjarni, Helgi's son, is goaded by his stepmother, Þorgerðr, into avenging his father. He kills Geitir in a contemptible way, but is repentant and drives his stepmother away. In the spring the bændr do away with the local Thing:

Þótti óvænt í millum at ganga þeira manna,  
er í slíkum stórmælum áttu hlut. (p. 53)

They considered it hopeless to intervene  
between men who were engaged in such great feuds.

This shows that a public institution is powerless to deal with people who subscribe to the ethics of personalism.

Porkell, son of Geitir, returns to Iceland. Bjarni offers him honourable redress and the right to award his own damages. He ignores these offers and everyone assumes he is bent on revenge. His first two attempts fail. On the day agreed on for the third encounter, the proposed burning of Helgi, Porkell falls ill. Helgi, son of

Droplaug, accuses Porkell of cowardice, and he and his brother withdraw their help.

The following spring Porkell and Bjarni set out for the Althing together. At the end of the meeting Porkell leaves first. A fight between the contending parties then takes place on a small farm owned by a certain Eyvindr, a fight which ends in a most unheroic manner: Eyvindr rushes between the fighters with a beam, while women throw clothing over their weapons. Both Porkell and Bjarni are wounded.

Porkell, although his wounds are healed, remains unfit for much work. That summer there is little haymaking, and the outlook was so unpromising that it seemed that the stock would have to be killed off. Bjarni comes to Porkell's aid and the two are reconciled. Bjarni is perhaps still repentant; Porkell is prevented by his reduced circumstances and physical incapacity from pursuing the feud. The reconciliation arises from their personal decision and choice, not because they are opposed to social disruption.

I hope sufficient evidence has been presented to justify the tentative conclusion that the authors of the Sagas of Icelanders were chiefly interested in individual man and his personal ethical values: man in his successes

and failures; his cowardice and bravery; his moderation and brutality; his affection and hatred; his respect for and encroachment on the rights of others; man, the creature who believes he is an end in himself; whose system of values is what I called personalism.



## NOTES

1. Richard F. Allen, Fire and Iron (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 3.
2. Richard Hoggart, "Why I Value Literature", Speaking to Each Other (London, 1970), pp. 11-12.
3. Erich Auerbach, Mimesis (trans. Willard Trask, Princeton, 1968), pp. 548-9.
4. T. M. Andersson, "The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas", Speculum XLV (1970), pp. 575-93.
5. P. G. Foote, "An Essay on the Saga of Gisli", in The Saga of Gisli (trans. G. Johnston, London, 1963), p. 63.
6. In Peter Foote and David Wilson, The Viking Achievement (London, 1970), p. 425.
7. Sometimes this attitude did not imply a life that was reasoned and sensible, cf. the behaviour of the ójafnaðarmaðr; sometimes it was no more than making the right gesture at the right time. There are also instances where what is celebrated as a stirring example of the maintenance of one's honour is nothing but savagery and brutality.
8. Page-references are to the edition in Íslenzk Fornrit III (1938).
9. Page-references are to the edition in Íslenzk Fornrit XV (1950).
10. Page-references are to the edition in Íslenzk Fornrit XI (1950).

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SAGA CONFERENCE 1971

LIST OF MEMBERS

Mrs Lise Præstgaard Andersen	Nordens Plads 4 28 sal nr. 13 2500 Valby, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Professor T.M. Andersson Mrs T. M. Andersson	Professor of German and Scandinavian, 420 Boylston Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 02138, U.S.A.
Miss V.E.C. Balfour-Browne	12 Braid Hills Road, Edinburgh 10.
Miss A.C.P. Bethel	833 Rozel Crescent, Ottawa 13, Ontario, Canada.
Mr Hans Bekker-Nielsen	Afdelingsleder, lektor, Odense University, Hjallesevej 230, DK-5000 Odense, Denmark.
Mr A.J. Berger Mrs A.J. Berger	c/o M. Laursen, Københavns Ejendoms kontor, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Mr P. Bibire	English Department, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales.
Mr A. Binns	Senior Lecturer, The University, Hull.
Professor F.W. Blaisdell	Professor of Germanic Languages, Indiana Univer- sity, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, U.S.A.

- Dr N.F. Blake  
Senior Lecturer,  
University of Liverpool,  
Liverpool L69 36X.
- Dr A.E. Boucher  
Lecturer,  
University of Iceland,  
Fálkagata 18,  
Reykjavík,  
Iceland.
- Professor R. Boyer  
12 rue André-Thieuot,  
51 - Reims,  
France.
- Miss A. Brennan  
Nýja Garði,  
Reykjavík,  
Iceland.
- Dr Wolfgang Butt  
23 Kiel,  
Bremerstr. 19,  
West Germany.
- Professor K.G. Chapman  
Department of Scandinavian,  
University of California,  
Los Angeles,  
U.S.A.
- Mr M. Chesnutt  
Lecturer,  
Department of English,  
Gothenburg University,  
Nordostpassagen 52,  
413-11 Gothenburg,  
Sweden.
- Dr G. Clark  
Department of English,  
Queen's University,  
Kingston,  
Ontario.
- Miss P.L. Conroy  
Department of Scandinavian,  
University of California,  
Berkeley,  
California,  
U.S.A.
- Mr R.G. Cook  
Suðurgata 13,  
Reykjavík,  
Iceland.

Mr E.J. Cowan	Dept. of Scottish History, William Robertson Building, 50 George Square, Edinburgh.
Professor A. Desnitskaya	Universitetskaya 5, Institute of Linguistics, Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, U.S.S.R.
Professor Reidar Djupedal	University of Trondheim, Trondheim, Norway.
Mr Martin Dreher	8 München 13, Adalbertstr 74/III, Germany.
Mr Thomas G. Duncan	Milford Lodge, Donaldson Gardens, St. Andrews, Fife.
Dr Else Ebel	463 Bochum, Germanist. Institut der Ruhr Universität, Germany.
Dr Bjarni Einarsson	Sverrestien 21, N-1310 Blommenholm, Norway.
Miss Ruth C. Ellison	Department of English, The University, Heslington, York.
Miss E.J. Emberson	National Library of Scotland George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, 1.
Mr Robert Fallenstein	355 Marburg, Ockershauser Str. 55, Germany.
Miss Christine Fell	School of English, The University, Leeds 2.
Mr B. Fidjestøl	Nordisk Institutt, Universitetet i Bergen, Bergen, Norway.

- Professor P. Foote  
University College,  
Gower Street,  
London, W.C.1.
- Professor Denton Fox  
Victoria College,  
University of Toronto,  
Toronto 5,  
Ontario, Canada.
- Dr Roberta Frank  
161 St George Street,  
Apt. 105,  
Toronto 180,  
Ontario, Canada.
- Mr Ian A. Fraser  
School of Scottish Studies,  
27 George Square,  
Edinburgh EH8 9LD.
- Mr Tryggvi Gíslason  
Nordisk Institutt,  
avd for norrøn filologi,  
University of Bergen,  
Norway.
- Mr Jan Ragnar Hagland  
Nordisk Institutt,  
University of Trondheim,  
Bjørnsongt. 12, 70  
7000 Trondheim,  
Norway.
- Dr Peter Hallberg  
Iskallareiden 5A,  
416 55 Göteborg,  
Sweden.
- Mr and Mrs Óskar Halldórsson  
Miðbraut 10,  
Seltjarnarnes,  
Iceland.
- Professor Pierre Halleux  
24 rue Forgeur,  
B-4000 Liège,  
Belgium.
- Mr C.G. Harlow  
21 Christ Church Crescent,  
Radlett,  
Herts.
- Mr Joseph C. Harris  
Adams House A-13,  
Harvard University,  
Cambridge,  
Massachusetts 02178,  
U.S.A.

- Professor and Mrs Einar Haugen 45 Larch Circle,  
Belmont,  
Massachusetts 02178,  
U.S.A.
- Professor H. M. Heinrichs 1 Berlin 33,  
Boetticherstrasse 7a,  
Germany.
- Dr Anne Heinrichs 1 Berlin 33,  
Boetticherstrasse 7a,  
Germany.
- Dr Guðrún P. Helgadóttir Aragata 6,  
Reykjavík,  
Iceland.
- Dr I. Henderson National Library of Scotland,  
George IV Bridge,  
Edinburgh.
- Mrs Joan Hitchman Garden Flat,  
102 Haverstock Hill,  
London, N.W.1.
- Mr Frank Hugus Gammel Kongevej 167,  
1850 Copenhagen V,  
Denmark.
- Professor Alfred Jakobsen Nordisk Institutt,  
Universitetet i Trondheim,  
Norway.
- Miss Helle Jensen Schlegels Allé 11,  
1 th 1807 København V,  
Denmark.
- Miss Jonna Louis-Jensen Det Arnamagnæanske Institut,  
Chr. Brygge 12,  
1219 København K,  
Denmark.
- Mrs G. Kähler 8 München 8/23,  
Funderplatz 9,  
Bei Killemann,  
Germany.
- Mr Stefán Karlsson The Manuscript Institute of  
Iceland, Árnagarði við  
Suðurgötu,  
Reykjavík,  
Iceland.

Professor R. Kellogg	115 Wilson Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901, U.S.A.
Mr S.D. Keynes	3 Herschel Road, Cambridge.
Dr D.P. Kirby	History Department, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales.
Professor I.J. Kirby	University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland.
Miss Elizabeth Knowles	Cliff Cottage, Ramshill, Petersfield, Hants.
Miss Helga Kress	Fálkagata 6, Reykjavík, Iceland.
Mr Gert Kreutzer	23 Kiel, Nordisches Institut, Olshausenstr.40-60, W. Germany.
Mr Jónas Kristjánsson	The Manuscript Institute of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland.
Mrs Helle Degnbol Lande	Frederik VI Allé 2, Copenhagen F-2000, Denmark.
Mr John Lindow	3 Third Street, Lexington 02173 Massachusetts, U.S.A.
Dr E.B. Lyle	School of Scottish Studies, 27 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD
Professor and Mrs Lars Lönnroth,	1026 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Miss M. Mackay           | 3 Roseneath Terrace,<br>Edinburgh, 9.  |
| Miss H.S. Maclean        | Department of English,<br>Manchester University,<br>Manchester.  |
| Mrs Margaret I. McKeand, | Sulwath,<br>Kirkcudbright.   |
| Mr J.S. McKinnell        | Department of English Language<br>and Medieval Literature,<br>Elvet Riverside,<br>New Elvet,<br>Durham City. |
| Dr O.D. Macrae-Gibson    | Department of English,<br>King's College,<br>Old Aberdeen,<br>AB9 2UB.                                       |
| Mr R.W. McTurk           | University College,<br>Dublin.   |
| Mrs Dora Maček,          | Zaprude 37B,<br>41020 Zagreb,<br>Yugoslavia.   |
| Miss Joan Magee          | 111 Riverside Drive East,<br>Windsor, Ontario,<br>Canada.  |
| Dr H. Magerøy            | Blomsterkroken 8,<br>1344 Haslum,<br>Norway.   |
| Miss Henrietta Martin    | 16 Lyndewode Road,<br>Cambridge.   |
| Mr M.G. Michlein         | Skipasundi 56,<br>Reykjavík,<br>Iceland.   |
| Dr Marina Mundt          | Hunstadsvingen 14,<br>5000 Bergen,<br>Norway.  |
| Mr Njörður P. Njarðvík   | Fornhaga 25,<br>Reykjavík,<br>Iceland.   |



Mr Vésteinn Ólason	Hvissingeparken 7, 2600 Glostrup, Denmark.
Mr Thorkil Damsgaard Olsen	Ved Bommen 16, Dk-2820 Gentofte, Denmark.
Miss Margaret Orme	Department of English Language, University of Edinburgh, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh, 8.
Dr R.I. Page	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.
Mr Einar Pálsson	Sólvallagata 28, Reykjavík, Iceland.
Mr Hermann Pálsson	Department of English Language, University of Edinburgh, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh, 8.
Dr and Mrs Fritz Paul	D-8000 München 80, Wilramstr. 23, Germany.
Mrs Carolyn A. Pearce	"Highfield", Egham Hill, Englefield Green, Surrey.
Mr D. Pelteret	324 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
Mrs Edda Petri-Bean	8162 Schliersee, Box 106, West Germany.
Mr Leon J. Podles	Box 3881, Charlottesville, Va. 22903, U.S.A.
Mr John Porter	3/161 West End Lane, London N.W.6.

- Dr Gerd Enno Rieger D-44 Münster,  
Am Burloh 22,  
Germany.
- Mr Hartmut Röhn 1 Berlin 46,  
Charlottenstr. 9,  
Western Germany.
- Dr Erberhard Rumbke Inst.für Nordische Philologie  
der Universität zu Köln,  
5 Köln 41,  
Weyertal 143,  
West Germany.
- Mr Ing1 Sigurðsson 6 Ross Gardens,  
Edinburgh, EH9 3BS.
- Mr J. Simpson Department of Scottish History,  
William Robertson Building,  
50 George Square,  
Edinburgh.
- Mr A. Small University of Dundee,  
Department of Geography,  
Dundee.
- Miss E.M. Smith 6 Benwell Hill Road,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- Dr D. Slay University College of Wales,  
Aberystwyth,  
Wales.
- Dr Folke Ström Gotabergsgatan 32,  
411 34 Göteborg,  
Sweden.
- Dr A.B. Taylor 35 Balgreen Road,  
Edinburgh 12.
- Mr and Mrs A.R. Taylor School of English,  
The University of Leeds,  
Leeds 2.
- Professor P.B. Taylor Department of English,  
University of Geneva,  
Geneva,  
Switzerland.
- Professor and Mrs R.G.Thomas 10 Towy Road,  
Llanishen,  
Cardiff,  
CF4 5NS.

- Mrs E. Thomson                      National Library of Scotland,  
George IV Bridge,  
Edinburgh.
- Professor Carl-Eric Thors           Knektvägen 3 C,  
Helsinki 40,  
Finland.
- Mr D.J. Tittensor                   Department of English Language,  
University of Edinburgh,  
David Hume Tower,  
Edinburgh 8.
- Mr J.A.B. Townsend                Royal Hospital,  
Chelsea,  
London, S.W.3.
- Mrs A. Ufimtseva                   Institute of Linguistics  
Marx-Engels str. N 1/1Y,  
Moscow, G-19.  
U.S.S.R.
- Mr D. Valentine                    71 British Grove,  
London W4 2NL.
- Miss P. Vermeyden                Stalpaertstraat 40,  
Rotterdam 14,  
Holland.
- Mrs D.J. Waugh                    18 Dean Park Street,  
Edinburgh 4.
- Mr J.F. West                        4 Walsingham Road,  
Woodthorpe,  
Nottingham.
- Mr John E. van der West-  
   huizen                    Department of English,  
University of Cape Town,  
Private Bag,  
Rondebosch, Cape,  
Republic of S.Africa.
- Professor Victoria Yartseva        Institute of Linguistics,  
Marx-Engels str. N 1/1Y,  
Moscow G-19,  
U.S.S.R.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE HELD ON  
SATURDAY 20 AUGUST 1971

Peter Foote was in the chair. He paid tribute to the initiative, energy, cheerfulness and efficiency of Hermann Pálsson in organising the conference. Hans Bekker-Nielsen then presented Hermann with three tankards, a gift from the conference members.

The chairman introduced the topic of the desirability of a saga society and a saga journal. Mr Pálsson suggested that a saga society might help to clarify and elevate the position of the sagas as a subject of university study. Lars Lönnroth welcomed the opportunity that the conference had given for the exchange of views, and hoped that another conference would be organised. The chairman asked the meeting if another such conference should be organised. Mr Macrae-Gibson and others objected to the use of the word "saga" in the title of such a conference. It was agreed that a conference, of a scope to be defined, should be perpetuated.

The chairman asked whether the conference should concentrate on the sagas, or be devoted to the whole literature of mediaeval Scandinavia. Mr Bekker-Nielsen favoured the former, and Professor Heinrichs the latter alternative. George Clark thought that the sagas was the topic that provided the necessary breadth for a conference, in terms of the number of scholars working in the field. Jónas

Kristjánsson agreed, but suggested that other topics could be worked into the conference.

The chairman asked the conference to indicate if they favoured another conference, at least mainly on the sagas, in the foreseeable future: the great majority were in favour. At such a conference, most discussion would be on the sagas, but no one would object to room being found for other literary forms of mediaeval Scandinavia.

The place of the conference was discussed. Jónas Kristjánsson hoped that the conference would come to Iceland, but explained that 1974 was a difficult year. Lars Lönnroth hoped that Reykjavík in 1973 would be suitable. The chairman welcomed the Icelandic offer, and it was agreed that the conference would meet in 1973, or in 1975, if that was not possible.

The formation of an international advisory committee was discussed. Lars Lönnroth hoped that such a committee would co-operate with the hosts of a future conference, and that another committee elected by ballot should frame the programme. The idea of the second committee was not accepted by the meeting. The following 12 persons were elected to the advisory committee:

Hermann Pálsson, Lars Lönnroth, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Denton Fox, Jónas Kristjánsson,\* Pierre Halleux, H. Matthias Heinrichs, Jonna Louis Jensen,

Theodore Andersson, H. Magerøy, Peter Foote, Peter Hallberg. (These have powers to co-opt others.)

\*(Chairman)

The Chairman said that details of programming the conference must be left to the discretion of the organisers in the host country. Among comments from the meeting: the organisers should consult the international committee on the exact date of the conference; August was too late in the summer; the programme of the present conference had been too crowded; translation facilities should be available at future conferences; a four-year cycle was better than a two-year one; members of the conference should give the committee the names of persons who would care to know about future conferences.

The question of publishing conference proceedings was raised. Hermann Pálsson suggested that the proceedings of one conference could include an announcement of the next conference, and proposed a committee to consider publication of the proceedings of the present conference. Other speakers hoped that, if full publication was impossible, the papers could be reproduced in cheaper form. It was proposed that the meeting appoint members of the advisory committee to consider publication: Hermann Pálsson, Peter Foote, Jónas Kristjánsson and Jonna Louis-Jensen were appointed, with power to co-opt.

The question of texts suitable for teaching purposes was raised. Hermann Pálsson favoured an English equivalent of the Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek, with texts prepared with the help of the manuscript institutions in Reykjavík and Copenhagen: he hoped that the conference could help organise this. Jonna Louis-Jensen asked for more practical details. Carl-Eric Thors mentioned the current Scandinavian series, and suggested that the same publishers might be interested in a parallel series in an international language. There was a general welcome for the idea behind Hermann Pálsson's proposal.

John Simpson.

THIS BOOK  
HAS BEEN PRODUCED  
BY  
S.J.HALLET  
IN THE DUPLICATING SECTION  
OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON