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What did the Future hold for them? Different Types of Foreshadowing in Various Saga Genres

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to show that foreshadowing in various types of Old Norse saga differs in both content and form. In the individual chapters typical features of foreshadowing in family, king's and legendary sagas are described. These features are shown through the following categories: the form in which the given foreshadowing occurs (a dream, premonition, curse, etc.), the content of the given foreshadowing, the time extent of the foreshadowing (how far into the future the given foreshadowing extends) and geographical range (to what places the given foreshadowing is bound). The subsequent comparison of foreshadowing in various saga genres reveals great differences between these four categories. In the article's conclusion, possible causes of these differences are suggested.

A lot has already been written about destiny, dreams and foreshadowing in Old Norse saga literature. However, the majority of scholarly works concentrate on the research of dreams and other types of foreshadowing in a particular saga genre, predominantly in family and king's sagas.[1] Only a small number of studies cross the borders between saga genres and reflect on differences in the form and content of dreams in various saga types.[2] Moreover, these reflections are often limited to only a short comment on the existence of such differences, and possible causes of this heterogeneity are not fully investigated. For example, in

1 The following works primarily concentrate on the research of dreams in family sagas: Haeckel 1934, Hallberg 1962, Turville-Petre 1972. The most extensive work focusing mainly on the study of dreams in king's sagas is Löbner 1992. An analysis of dreams in both family and king's sagas can be found in: Loescher 1956.

2 Probably the most complex works dealing with dreams and dream symbolism in Old Norse literature are Alexander Argüelles's doctoral dissertation about dreams in the different saga types, the extensive compilation of dreams in the various Old Norse genres (both prosaic and poetical) by Georgia Dunham Kelchner and the very first study of dreams in Old Norse literature in general by Wilhelm Henzen (Argüelles 1994; Henzen 1890; Kelchner 1935).

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his short study of dreams in sagas Lars Lönnroth states that dreams in family sagas are in certain respects different from dreams in legendary sagas (*fornaldarsǫgur*) and the *Edda*.[3] This statement is, as the author writes, based on the compilation of dreams in Old Norse literature put together by Georgia Dunham Kelchner. Kelchner herself makes the observation that dreams in family and legendary sagas differ with regards to the symbolic images that appear in them.[4] However, neither Lönnroth nor Kelchner examine these interesting observations in detail.

In this article I would like to briefly investigate dreams and other kinds of foreshadowing in three different saga types, namely family, king's and legendary sagas. The aim of my research is to show that foreshadowing differs amongst the particular saga genres in terms of form and content. Subsequently, I would like to find the probable causes of these differences. To what extent could they be connected to the gradual shift of religion, the shift from heathendom to Christianity that took place in the background of saga composition and writing? Or do they merely arise from the pluralised character of different saga genres? And finally, what can the existence of these differences tell us about the ways in which Old Norse people understood destiny? The diverse depictions of foreshadowing in various saga genres indicate that several distinct views of fate may have coexisted in Old Norse society.

Before we try to answer the questions posed above, we need first to define the aspects in which foreshadowing usually differs. The most substantial differences regarding the structure of foreshadowing can be divided into the following four categories: the form, content, time extent and geographical range of the foreshadowed events. A foreshadowing may take on many forms, not only that of a dream. It can also be a prophecy, an omen, a premonition or simply a warning. Similarly, the content of a foreshadowing can also vary. It can be either negative or positive, symbolic or literal. What we will refer to as time extent describes how far into the future a foreshadowing extends. Geographical range tells us whether the foreshadowing is bound to concrete places or whether it concerns the entire land as is often the case in king's sagas – or even the entire world as sometimes happens in legendary sagas. Let us first take a closer look at these four categories in connection to foreshadowing in family sagas. We will then proceed to examining king's and legendary sagas in a similar manner.

3 "Dreams in the *Edda* and the *fornaldarsögur* are not only generally shorter and simpler than dreams in family sagas, but the content of the dreams is also different." (Lönnroth 2002, 456).

4 "The fetches found in the dreams of the legendary sagas are somewhat different." (Kelchner 1935, 23).

Foreshadowing in Family Sagas

Generally, in family sagas we encounter a great deal of foreshadowing. Apart from dreams (we find on average three or four dreams per saga [Hallberg 1962, 81]) there are numerous warnings, premonitions and various omens in the majority of family sagas. It can be claimed that almost every 'significant' event in the story such as the deaths of saga heroes, a killing or a battle is preceded by some type of foreshadowing. If no foreshadowing remained in oral tradition, it was often artificially inserted into the saga. As Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Wilhelm Heizmann point out, one of the dreams preserved in *Njáls saga* is almost definitely taken from Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (Sveinsson 1971, 15; Heizmann 1999, 53).[5] Sveinsson notes that this famous work from the end of the 6th century was known to Iceland when *Njáls saga* was written: "The author of *Njála* must have been familiar with the story in the *Dialogues*, which were widely read in Iceland" (Sveinsson 1971, 15). The original occurrence of the dream, i. e. the one included in the *Dialogues* (Book I, Chapter 8), is not exactly a dream but rather a mysterious experience that happened to Saint Anastasius, Abbot of an Italian monastery in Suppentonia. One night Anastasius heard a voice coming from on top of a rock, calling out his name and the names of some of the other monks:

> [...] a voice was heard from the top of that rock, which very leisurely did cry out: 'Come away, Anastasius'; who being so called, straight after, seven other monks were severally called by their names. And then the voice stayed for a little time, and then called again the eighth monk [...] wherefore not many days after, before the rest, Anastasius himself, and then the others in order, departed this mortal life, as they were before called from the top of the rock. And that monk who was called after some pausing did a little while survive the rest, and then he also ended his life. (Gardner 2010, 29)

In chapter cxxxiii of *Njáls saga*, we find a dream with content almost identical to that of Saint Anastasius's vision. A man named Flosi dreams that he is standing under a peak and sees a man wearing a goatskin, an iron staff in his hand, emerging from inside the peak. The man is calling out the names of Flosi's friends.

5 As Heizmann writes, the similarity between the dream from *Njáls saga* and the foreshadowing from the *Dialogues* has long remained unnoticed probably because of the fact that the passage from the *Dialogues* has been adjusted to saga style by the author of the saga: "Daß der Zusammenhang zwischen beiden Episoden erst in der Mitte dieses Jahrhunderts aufgedeckt werden konnte, zeigt, wie geschickt der Autor der *Njáls saga* vorging, um seine Anleihe soweit zu tarnen, daß Flosis Traum sich bruch- und nahtlos in die Saga einfügte." (Heizmann 1999, 54). Dreams that were included in family sagas seem to be adapted to the indigenous native tradition of dream description – contrary to king's sagas, for instance, where the literary loans from hagiographical dreams are often clearly visible as will be shown later on in this article.

Similarly to the voice in Anastasius's vision, the man in Flosi's dream takes short pauses between some of the names. Flosi wakes up and tells his friend Ketil about the dream. Ketil says: "It is my foreboding that all those who were called must be fey (*þeir muni allir feigir*)." Indeed, later on in the story, all the men die in the order in which their names had been called out by that mysterious man from the peak. Those whose names were called out after a pause die a little later. It is obvious that the similarities between these two visions of the future are not accidental. The author of *Njála* knew the *Dialogues* and borrowed Anastasius's vision for the purpose of foreshadowing the events of the saga. Flosi's dream anticipates a large part of the story: the killings and battles in which the men named in the dream are dying one after another.[6] The dream thus has an important narrative function in the saga, for it gives a greater overarching structure to the otherwise disjointed occurrences of death found throughout the story.

Some scholars consider foreshadowing and dreams to be essential literary means in family sagas, used by the narrator to unify the story.[7] This would hold true in the case of such dreams as Flosi's, which were artificially added to the narration, but the question is: Can we say the same about dreams in general? They may have a narrative role in the story, but it is more likely only a secondary effect and not the main intention of the narrator. It is probable that foreshadowing in most cases became a part of sagas simply because it already was a part of the stories; one should not associate this 'natural' process with artistic intentions. Other scholars, such as A. U. Bååth, Peter Hallberg or Steblin-Kamenskij, emphasize the fact that foreshadowing in family sagas is primarily a reflection of the Old Norse people's belief in fate.[8] With regards to this, one can inquire about the nature of the image of fate as presented in sagas. As mentioned earlier, a wide variety of foreshadowing is typical for family sagas, varying from a prophetic dream to a sense of grim foreboding. However, the different types of foreshadowing have a common pattern: they are based on the belief that man's destiny is already decided, which sometimes manifests itself in 'the present'. Concerning prophetic dreams, Simone Horst states the following: "Der Glaube an die Bedeutung von Träumen setzt voraus, dass man das Schicksal für vorherbestimmt hält. Die Zukunft wird nicht als etwas Offenes gesehen, sondern ihr Verlauf ist bereits

6 The dream is described in chapter cxxxiii of the saga. The last two men, whose names were mentioned in it, Gunnar Lambason and Kol Þorsteinsson, die in the very last chapters (*Nj* clv, clviii).

7 Among these scholars are, for example, Gerhard Loescher and Hans-Werner Löbner, whose works about foreshadowing in sagas were mentioned above, and Hartmut Röhn with his study on the literary composition of family sagas (Röhn 1976).

8 See Bååth 1885, Hallberg 1962 and Steblin-Kamenskij 1968.

festgelegt. Daraus folgt auch, dass man an seinem Schicksal nichts ändern kann" (Horst 2010, 79). The same could be said of prophecies, premonitions and omens in which this predefined destiny reveals itself to the people. Peter Hallberg writes about fatalism, during which people conceive of their existence as ruled by an inescapable and immutable necessity (Hallberg 1962, 88).[9] This necessity is not solely seen as an outside force but also presented as residing within man. As Hallberg points out: "Destiny, the inexorable course of human events, seems to rest partly in the character of the individual concerned and partly in external circumstances" (Hallberg 1962, 89). Dreams and other kinds of foreshadowing serve as warnings of the gradual and inevitable fulfillment of a man's tragic fate.

The content of foreshadowing in family sagas is almost always negative. And the most commonly predicted event is death.[10] It will come as no surprise when we say that foreshadowing is usually very dramatic and scary. This is especially true of dreams that often include fighting, weapons and blood. It is not only that the man is dreaming about his own death which is frightening but also the events taking place in the dream: the dreaming person often experiences negative feelings such as fear, pain or anger. Dramatic dreams such as these can be found in nearly every family saga. The following dream is taken from *Njáls saga* (*Nj* lxii); it is dreamt by Gunnar the night before his enemies are to attack him:

> 'Þat dreymði mik,' segir Gunnar, 'at ek þóttumsk ríða fram hjá Knafahólum. Þar þóttumsk ek sjá marga varga, ok sóttu þeir allir at mér, en ek snerumsk undan fram at Rangá. Þá þótti mér þeir sœkja at ǫllum megin, en vér vǫrðumsk. Ek skaut alla þá, er fremstir váru, þar til er þeir gingu svá at mér, at ek mátta eigi boganum við koma. Tók ek þá sverðit, ok vá ek með annarri hendi, en lagða með atgeirinum annarri hendi. [...] Drap ek þá marga vargana ok þú með mér, Kolskeggr, en Hjǫrt þótti mér þeir hafa undir ok slíta á honum brjóstit, ok hafði einn hjartat í munni sér. En ek þóttumsk verða svá reiðr, at ek hjó varginn í sundr fyrir aptan bóguna, ok eptir þat þóttu mér stǫkkva vargarnir.
> (I thought I was riding on by Knafahólar. I seemed to see very many wolves, and they all attacked me; but I retreated toward Rang river. Then I thought they came upon me from all sides, but I defended myself. I shot all those which were foremost, until they made at me so that I might not use my bow. Then I took my sword and fenced with it in one hand,

9 The Old Norse people believed that a person who is destined to soon die cannot be saved. In Old Norse language there exists a specific adjective, *feigr*, used to mark a man who is fast approaching his death. This word still exists in English as *fey* or *to be fey*, in modern German as *feig*, in Danish as *fej* (however, in modern German and Danish the adjective is used in the altered sense of "cowardly") and in Dutch as a *veeg man* (Cleasby-Vigfússon 1874, 149).

10 Margarete Haeckel points out that there are only two examples of dreams with positive content in family sagas: "Es sind nur zwei Beispiele zu nennen in denen der Traum Gutes voraussagt." (Haeckel 1934, 61). These examples are namely the dreams in the first chapter of *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* and in the seventh chapter of *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*.

> and thrust with my halberd with the other. [...] Thereupon I killed many of the wolves, and you, Kolskegg, did likewise; but it seemed that they had Hjǫrt down and were tearing at his breast, and that one had his heart in its mouth. I thought that I became so furiously angry that I hewed the wolf asunder just behind the withers; after that the wolves fled.) (Kelchner 1935, 112)

In connection with this dream, it is interesting to notice that certain negative tension slowly rises as the wolves come closer and closer to the dreaming man. At first he is defending himself with a bow, then he is forced to use his sword. The situation further deteriorates and culminates in the death of a fellow fighter. This atmosphere of what could be called a gradually escalated tension is typical of family sagas. Very often it is created by a repetition of the dream or some other type of foreshadowing that anticipates the same event. For example, in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* the final fight between Gunnlaug and Hrafn for Helga is foretold four times. The first time is in the dream had by Helga's father Þorstein which is about two eagles fighting for a swan (*Gunnl* ii). The second time, the foreshadowing takes the rather indefinite form of Þorstein's remark about Helga's tragic destiny (*Gunnl* iii). Then, the fight is foretold in Hrafn's threat to Gunnlaug, that is, that he will harm him eventually (*Gunnl* ix). The fourth and final time is a dream that foreshadows the death of the saga heroes, this time dreamt by Hrafn who sees himself dying wounded in the arms of Helga (*Gunnl* xi). A saga famous for an especially high concentration of fearful dreams and escalated tension is *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. As the time for Gísli to die approaches, his dreams become gradually more terrifying until they are literally full of blood. An example of this is the following dream in which Gísli's bad dream-woman (*draumkona in verri*) appears and washes his head in blood (*Gísl* xxxiii):

> 'Þat dreymði mik enn,' sagði Gísli, 'at sjá kona kom til mín ok batt á hǫfuð mér dreyrga húfu ok þó aðr hǫfuð mitt í blóði ok jós á mik allan, svá at ek varð alblóðugr.'
> ('I dreamed again', said Gísli, 'that that woman came to me and bound a gory bonnet on my head, and before this washed my head in blood and bespattered me so that I was all bloody.') (Kelchner 1935, 91)

As Hallberg points out, the emergence of Gísli's dreams begins with the onset of autumn and an encroaching winter: "It is especially during autumn, when the nights begin to grow longer, that the dream visions beset Gísli" (Hallberg 1962, 86). A connection of dreams to night and darkness is also typical of family sagas. Under the cover of darkness, the people are plagued by dreams that often contain apparitions of dead relatives or various supernatural beings (Starý 2008, 175).

Based on the fact that foreshadowing is often connected to negative feelings and escalated tension, some scholars consider its role in the narrative to be the

invocation of a gloomy or even tragic atmosphere. In connection with dreams in family sagas, Hans-Werner Löbner writes: "Als Stilelement zur Erzeugung bestimmter Stimmungen spielen Träume eine wesentliche Rolle: Sie schaffen eine tragische, unheilvolle, düstere Atmosphäre" (Löbner 1992, 63). On the one hand, it is true that the content of dreams and the context in which they occur is almost universally dramatic and dark. However, it is hard to believe that the linking of foreshadowing to negative events or darkness is always intentional. For instance, Margarete Haeckel considers this to be merely a result of what she calls "pesimistischer Zug des germanischen Schicksalsglauben" (Haeckel 1934, 61). In her opinion it is primarily the Old Norse people's belief in fate that is mirrored in the numerous scenes of foreshadowing in family sagas. The characteristic feature of this belief is that of being negative: "Es liegt in der Eigenart der germanischen Weltanschauung, dass der Schicksalsglaube der Germanen nicht positiver, wenn man will, eudaimonistischer Art ist" (Haeckel 1934, 60). The various types of foreshadowing are perceived as forewarnings of a threatening fate, made intrinsically negative by fate's very nature. It is the character of destiny itself, the fact that it is inevitable, that arouses tension.

Apart from being negative, the content of foreshadowing in family sagas is usually symbolic and ambiguous. As Lönnroth makes a claim with reference to dreams: "they are sometimes so extraordinarily complex and ambiguous that their precise meaning will remain unclear" (Lönnroth 2002, 456). Foreshadowing in family sagas can therefore be easily misunderstood by the heroes and interpreted the wrong way. However, in many cases the person destined to die denies the negative content of the foreshadowing intentionally and misinterprets it in a way that allows a positive reading of the dream, bad omen, etc. For example, Þorkel Eyjólfson in *Laxdæla saga* dreams that he has such a big beard that it covers over all of Broadfirth and claims that the meaning of this vision is that he will become the most powerful man in Broadfirth. (*Laxd* lxxiv) His wife Guðrún gives a different interpretation of the dream: Þorkel will soon be drowned in the firth, which later comes true. In family sagas the negative interpretation of a foreshadowing is always the correct one, while its positive reading is only the victim's desperate attempt to avoid his/her destiny.

The dream symbolism in sagas has been studied before in the past; detailed enumerations of the symbols used were made as a result of these studies.[11] The

11 In the beginning of this article, what was mentioned is the extensive survey of dreams in sagas conducted by Georgia Dunham Kelchner in *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore*. Her predecessor in this field of study was Wilhelm Henzen whose dissertation *Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur* Kelchner often refers to in her work. The results of their research have been summed up by Gabriel Turville-Petre in *Dreams in Icelandic Tradition*.

symbols that appear most frequently in family sagas are animals. This is probably related to the belief in *fylgjur*, namely to a belief that each person has his/her own *fylgja*, a guardian spirit who follows and protects him/her. There are two kinds of *fylgjur* in the Old Norse sources: the animal *fylgja* and the woman *fylgja*. The animal *fylgja*, which is similar to a man's alter ego and often mirrors his character, commonly becomes visible during sleep or in visions. Living people are frequently symbolized in dreams by animals. For instance, very common is a depiction of the enemy as a dangerous animal – in most cases a wolf or a bear. A typical example of this is the above-cited dream from *Njáls saga*, dreamt by Gunnar the night before he is to fight his enemies; in his dream he sees a wolf pack attacking him. However, people can be represented in dreams by inanimate symbols, too. This is the case in *Laxdæla saga*, where the four future husbands of Guðrún are depicted as headgear, silver and gold rings and a golden helmet. The inanimate objects that appear most often in dreams are probably various kinds of weapons, jewels and clothing. They may, as Kelchner observes, either "stand for persons (the inanimate thus representing the animate) or provide indication of the ultimate destiny of individuals [...]" (Kelchner 1935, 54). The objects seen in dreams often suffer the same fate as the person they represent. Dreams of broken weapons on the night before a hero is to be killed are of a regular occurrence. It is such a dream that Þorbjǫrn Brúnason has in the *Heiðarvíga saga* before he is to be slain in battle (*Heið* xxvi):

> Þar þóttumst ek vera staddr, er eigi þótti öllum einnug, ok þóttumst ek hafa sverðit þat, er ek hefi vanr verit at hafa í hendi mér, enn nú er eigi heima, ok brotnaði í sundr, þegar ek hjó fram.
> (I thought I was where men appeared not to be all of like mind, and I thought I had the sword which I have been accustomed to have in my hand, but which is now not at home. It broke asunder as soon as I struck out with it [...].) (Kelchner 1935, 142)

With regards to object symbolism Kelchner writes about the traces of an animistic belief-system that can be found in sagas, i. e. the belief that inanimate objects possess a spirit (Kelchner 1935, 61). A more probable and simple explanation of the inanimate dream symbols in family sagas would be that – in the minds of the Old Norse people – things could somehow become adjoined to their owner and share his/her destiny.

The appearance of a dream person is also typical of dreams in family sagas. As Turville-Petre states, a dream person can take the form of various beings, for example, the dead relatives of the dreamer, Valkyrjes, Norns, elves, legendary heroes, etc.[12] The dream person often foretells a man's destiny and warns him

12 See Turville-Petre: *Dreams in Icelandic Tradition*.

of the bad times to come. In the chapter related to *fylgjur* and guardian spirits from her aforementioned study of dreams in Old Norse literature, Kelchner writes that "these symbolic images relate primarily to pre-Christian thoughts and partake of the heathen conception of the unknown" (Kelchner 1935, 17). As Kelchner observes, the dream images that appear in family sagas are often to be found in Old Norse folklore, too. These motifs are most likely products of the original native tradition. This holds true for not only the content of the dreams but also their interpretations. Although foreign dream motifs and certain ways of being interpreted penetrate family sagas, generally the domestic tradition seems to have prevailed over these influences in this saga genre.[13] Horst gives an instructive example of this fact in connection to the previously mentioned dream from *Laxdæla saga*, in which Guðrún's fourth husband Þorkel sees himself with such a large beard that it covers the whole of Broadfirth. Subsequently, Þorkel and Guðrún give each other different explanations of the dream: he claims that it foretells a future gain in power, whilst she believes that it instead prophesies his death. With regards to this fact Horst points out that „Þorkels Interpretation stimmt mit dem überein, was die mittelalterlichen Traumbücher wie das *Somniale Danielis* nahelegen: In ihnen sind Bärte Symbole der Macht. Je länger und prächtiger sie sind, desto mächtiger ihr Besitzer [...]. Guðrúns Deutung bedient sich der traditionell isländischen Auslegung einen solchen Traums" (Horst 2010, 84). According to Guðrún, the dream predicts Þorkel's death as the result of him drowning in the firth. A pessimistic view of fate and the negative reading of foreshadowing as a bearer of tragic events prevail and overcome the foreign interpretation.

Let us now move on to the time extent of the various forms of foreshadowing in family sagas. Generally, it can be claimed that only a near future is predicted here. By near future we mean the important events during the lifetime of a man – in the case of family sagas most often his death. It is almost exceptionally the destiny of the saga heroes that is predicted and not of their descendants. Similarly, it is usually the destiny of the main characters of the saga and not of the side characters that appear in the story only for a limited time and will go on to disappear from the narrative. Thus the foreshadowed events are always fulfilled in the story, and the foreshadowing never reaches beyond the scope of the narrative. In chapter li of the *Eyrbyggja saga*, for example, we are told about a sudden blood rain falling from a mysterious cloud. The blood dries quickly after the precipitation except on the hay that a woman named Þorgunn had spread. Þorgunn then says: "Most likely it forebodes (*þetta muni furða*) the death of someone here" (*Eyrbyggja*

13 By foreign influences we mean Latin dream books from continental Europe.

saga 1973, 159). The bad omen does not predict the destiny of the whole land (or district) here, for example, by means of a bad harvest, which it certainly could, but is automatically linked to the life of the saga heroes and to the near future. Foreshadowing in family sagas is closely bound to the 'time of the story'.

As to the geographical range, it is not surprising that the dream or foreshadowing relate rather to local places in Iceland than to greater indefinite parts of the land (*Nj* cxxxiii, *Laxd* lxxv):

> Mik dreymði þat," segir Flosi, "at ek þóttumsk vera at Lómagnúpi ok ganga út ok sjá upp til gnúpsins.
> (I dreamed," says Flosi, "that I was at Lómagnúpr, and went out and looked up at the peak.) (Kelchner 1935, 113)
> Þá svarar Halldórr: "Fyrr muntu spenna um þǫngulshǫfuð á Breiðafirði en ek handsala nauðigr land mitt.
> (Then Hallðór answered: "Sooner you will be embracing the sea-tangle in Broadfirth than I sell my land against my own will.) (*Laxdæla saga* 1899, 263)

Foreshadowing in family sagas mostly refers to a concrete event that is going to happen in a concrete place. Less frequently, it can relate to a series of events or, in rare cases, to a greater part of the story. As Haeckel writes: „Die Untersuchung der funktionalen Bedeutung des Traums in der Saga hat ergeben, dass in einigen wenigen Fällen der Traum, der jeder Situation vorhergeht, die Aufgabe hat, eine gedrängte Vorschau über die Haupthandlung der Saga zu geben, dass er die ganze Saga umfasst und sich auf sie bezieht" (Haeckel 1934, 42).[14] But regardless of how much of the story the dreams predict, it can generally be claimed that they stay connected to the narrative in terms of their temporal and geographical extent. This close bond between foreshadowing and story has its roots in the very character of family sagas. At the forefront of all family sagas stand stories of Icelandic men, especially stories about conflicts and feuds. Almost everything that is included in the narration is somehow connected to the conflicts that the particular saga is depicting. So, too, do the various dreams, prophecies and omens that have become a part of the saga since they were connected to the events described in the story.[15] As a part of the story, foreshadowing cannot be extracted without disrupting the compactness of the narrative.

14 Haeckel thus divides dreams in family sagas into three groups according to how extensive a part of the saga they anticipate: it can either be one event, a sequence of events or the main plot of the whole saga (Haeckel 1934, 35–54). Examples of the last mentioned scenario could be Guðrún's four dreams anticipating her future marriages in *Laxdæla saga* (*Laxd* xxxiii) or Þorstein's dream about the misfortune that will rise via his daughter Helga in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (*Gunnl* ii).
15 The exception would of course be the dreams that were artificially added to the saga.

In the following part of the article we will move on to foreshadowing in king's and legendary sagas, which will be compared – as to both its form and content – to foreshadowing in family sagas.

Foreshadowing in King's Sagas

In king's sagas there is generally less foreshadowing than in family sagas, and it offers less variety. The prevalent form of foreshadowing is a dream or a prophecy, often itself presented in a dream. While in family sagas almost anybody can have a prophetic dream, in king's sagas it is mostly the dreams that royal family members have that are depicted.[16] They are often dreamt by the king himself; or if the dream anticipates the birth of the king, it is revealed to his mother. The restriction of foreshadowing to solely members of the royal family is probably a result of the overall concentration on the personhood of the king. The central motif of royalty is typical of this saga genre as is mentioned by Ármann Jakobsson: "A unifying feature of this saga category, which separates it from the sagas of Icelanders, if not from the legendary sagas which are for the most part concerned with a more ancient past, is the figure of the king" (Jakobsson 2005, 388). The king and especially his dreams become an important tool used to reaffirm the ideology of monarchy and state formation being imposed on the society.

As to their content, time and geographical extent the dreams in king's sagas can be of a very different nature. Based on this, I decided to divide them into three groups which will be described separately. The first group comprises dreams similar to the ones found in family sagas, i. e. negative dreams that foretell events during the lifetime of a man. In light of this fact, the name that seems to fit this group the best would be 'individual dreams'. The second group consists of dreams that are not connected to individual destiny but foretell the fate of more generations and thus could be called 'dynastic dreams'. Finally, the last group is that of the 'Christian dreams', i. e. dreams featuring Christian symbolism that also appear in king's sagas.

'Individual dreams' in king's sagas strongly resemble family saga dreams. They are negative in their content and often use similar symbols, e. g. animal symbolism. It is interesting to note that unlike 'dynastic' and 'Christian' dreams, which are mostly dreamt by the king himself, 'individual' dreams are not always revealed to the members of the royal dynasty. It can also be common people who have this

16 With the exception of some dreams that in regard to their structure and content strongly smack of family saga dreams and that we will later refer to as 'individual dreams'.

kind of dream. A typical example of individual dreams would be the dreams predicting a king's death (*Abberufungsträume*) or a defeat in a battle (that also usually leads to his death).[17] A lot of dreams of this kind foretell, for instance, the battles of King Harald Sigurðson (Snorri, *HHarð* lxxx–lxxxii). Two soldiers of Harald's who are, as the narrator points out, sailing on board the king's ship (or on a ship which does not lie far from the king's) have terrifying dreams that anticipate the battle:

> [...] en fyrir liði landz-manna reið trǫllkona mikil ok sat á vargi, ok hafði vargrinn mannz hræ í munni, ok fell blóð um kjaptana; en er hann hafði þann etit, þá kastaði hon ǫðrum í munn honum ok síðan hverjum at ǫðrum; en hann gleypði hvern. (*HHarð* lxxxi)
> (And before the army of the people of the country was riding a huge witch-wife upon a wolf; and the wolf had a man's carcass in his mouth, and the blood was dropping from his jaws; and when he had eaten up on body she threw another into his mouth, and so one after another, and he swallowed them all.) (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 223–225)

As to time extent, individual dreams do not surpass the limits of a man's life (i. e. one generation's life). Like the prophetic dreams in family sagas, they only anticipate the near future. As to geographical range, foreshadowing is often bound to exact places and concrete events such as battles. However, as Alexander Argüelles claims, in the whole corpus of king's sagas there is only a small number of this type of dream, i. e. dreams similar to those found in family sagas: "There are some dreams in the *Konunga sǫgur* that betray an affinity to the indigenous Norse tradition of dreaming, but these are a small minority" (Argüelles 1994, 403).

The second type of dream in king's sagas is what I have called 'dynastic dream'. The first difference between these dreams and the aforementioned individual dreams is in their content. The events foreshadowed are, with few exceptions, positive. Most of the dynastic dreams announce great moments to come not only with regard to the king but more often to the whole land (*Verkündigungsträume*).[18] On the level of a king's life, what is at play is the birth of the king as well as the birth of his descendants. On the level of the land, it can be the future unification of the country, an incorporation of new territories or the spreading of Christianity throughout the kingdom.

17 The term *Abberufungstraum* ("dream of recall"), the term for dreams that anticipate the death of the dreamer, was introduced by Gerhard Loescher in his already mentioned work *Gestalt und Funktion der Vorausdeutung in der isländischen Sagaliteratur*.

18 This is another term of Loescher's that could be translated as "dream of annunciation". This kind of dream foretells great events for the future that need not be (and usually are not) a part of the story being told in the saga.

A very popular motif that appears in dynastic dreams is the motif of a tree symbolizing the family line and offspring of the dreaming king. It appears, for example, in the following dream of Queen Ragnhild, wherein the birth of the first king of all of Norway, Harald the Fairhaired, is foreseen (Snorri, *HSv* vi):

> Ragnhildr drótning dreymði drauma stóra; hon var spǫk at viti; sá var einn draumr hennar, at hon þóttisk vera stǫdd í grasgarði sínum ok taka þorn einn ór serk sér, ok er hon helt á, þá óx hann svá, at þat varð teinn einn mikill, svá at annarr endir tók jǫrð niðr ok varð brátt rótfastr, ok því næst var brátt annarr endir trésins hátt í loptit upp; því næst sýndisk henni tréit svá mikit, at hon fekk varla sét yfir upp; þat var furðu digrt; inn nezti hlutr trésins var rauðr sem blóð, en þá leggrinn upp fagrgrœnn, en upp til limanna snjóhvítt; þar váru kvistir af trénu margir stórir, sumir ofarr, en sumir neðarr; limar trésins váru svá miklar, at henni þóttu dreifask um allan Nóreg ok enn víðara.
> (Ragnhild, who was wise and intelligent, dreamt great dreams. She dreamt, for one, that she was standing out in her herb-garden, and she took a thorn out of her shift; but while she was holding the thorn in her hand it grew so that it became a great tree, one end of which struck itself down into the earth, and it became firmly rooted; and the other end of the tree raised itself so high in the air that she could scarcely see over it, and it became also wonderfully thick. The under part of the tree was red with blood, but the stem upwards was beautifully green, and the branches white as snow. There were many and great limbs to the tree, some high up, others low down; and so vast was the tree's foliage that it seemed to her to cover all Norway, and even much more.) (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 47–48)

The shape of the tree represents the king himself and his relation to the land. As he gains control over the land – that is, as "he becomes firmly rooted in it" – and as his kingdom broadens, he becomes "wonderfully thick" and one can "scarcely see over" his kingdom. The colours of the tree tell us about the different periods of the king's life and reign. It is in the *Saga of Harald the Fairhaired* that the explanation of the dream is given (Snorri, *HHár* xlii): "He was a great warrior in his youth; and people think that this was foretold by his mother's dream before his birth, as the lowest part of the tree she dreamt of was red as blood. The stem again was green and beautiful, which betokened his flourishing kingdom; and that the tree was white at the top showed that he should reach a grey-haired old age" (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 82–83). Finally, the many branches of the tree symbolize the king's many descendants.

A similar structure can also be found in another dream from *Halfdan the Black's Saga* (Snorri, *HSv* vii). In this dream King Halfdan sees himself with long hair full of ringlets of various sizes and colours that symbolize the king's offspring. In particular, "one ringlet surpasses all the others in beauty, luster and size [...] and it was the opinion of people that this ringlet betokened King Olaf the Saint" (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 48). As Paul Schach notes in connection to this dream: "The use of hair as a symbol of present or future renown is not surprising,

for both long hair and a full beard signified power" (Schach 1971, 67).[19] At this point one may recall the aforementioned dream from the *Laxdæla saga*, where Guðrúns husband Þorkel sees his beard grown so long that it covers the whole of Broadfirth, a motif that foretells Þorkel's drowning in the firth. With regards to this dream, the *Laxdæla saga* favours the standard domestic interpretation (i. e. the death of Þorkel) over the atypical (that is, for the Old Norse people) way of interpreting the dream (as the future power and fame of Þorkel). Thus two dreams of a similar content – a man sees his beard to be extraordinarily long – are read differently when in a family saga as opposed to when in a king's saga, the king's saga being susceptible to foreign influences.

What has also been discussed by many scholars is whether or not the aforementioned tree motif had been taken from foreign literary sources. This is a very complicated issue. On the one hand, the tree dreams seem to have a Biblical parallel, namely the tree that in a vision appears to King Nebuchadnezzar. The Biblical tree as well as Queen Ragnhild's tree grow large and tall until they become enormous and their tops reach the sky. However, as Schach claims, the tree motif is also to be found in Christian legends as well as in the works of Latin classical writers (Schach 1971, 71). On the other hand, the same motif also appears in family sagas, e. g. in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (*Bárð* i), as well as in the fifth stanza of *Hamðismál*, where Guðrún compares herself to a lonely aspen tree without twigs and leaves while she mourns her daughter Svanhild. Thus we come into contact with the symbol of a tree with branches which represents a person with their offspring whilst reading the poem considered to be one of the oldest in the *Poetic Edda*. Based on this fact, it is rather uncertain whether the dynastic tree dreams in king's sagas can be labeled as Christian, or not.

Let us now examine the temporal and geographical extent of dynastic dreams. These two categories show some essential differences when compared to family sagas and also to the individual dreams in king's sagas. In terms of geographical range, dynastic dreams are not solely connected to one concrete place but rather to the whole country. Here we can mention another dream from *Heimskringla* that uses the popular tree symbol – but this time in a very specific way. In the dream the Norwegian king Sigurd the Crusader sees a tree far away on the sea moving towards him (Snorri, *MS* xxv):

> Ek þóttumk hér á Jaðri vera úti staddr ok sá ek út í haf ok leit ek þar sorta mikinn ok var fǫr í ok nálgaðisk hingat, þá sýndisk mér, sem þat væri mikit tré eitt, ok óðu limarnar uppi, en rœtrnar í sjá. En er tréit kom at landi, þá braut þat ok rak brot trésins víða um landit, bæði

19 Such an interpretation of the beard symbol can be found in the already mentioned *Somniale Danielis*.

> um meginland ok úteyjar, sker ok strandir; ok þá gaf mér sýn, svá at ek þóttumk sjá um allan Nóreg it ýtra með sjá ok sá ek í hverja vík, at rekin váru brot af þessu tré, ok váru flest smá, en sum stœrri.
> (I thought that I was in Jæderen, and looked out toward the sea; and that I saw something very black moving itself; and when it came near it appeared to be a large tree, of which the branches stretched far above the water, and the roots were down in the sea. Now when the tree came to the shore it broke in pieces, and drove all about the land, both the mainland and the out-islands, rocks, and strands; and it appeared to me as if I saw over all Norway along the sea-coast, and saw pieces of that tree, some small and some large, driven into every bight.) (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 307)

The dream predicts the arrival of Harald Gille, the future king of Norway, who is symbolized by the tree. The pieces of the tree being driven everywhere along the coast of Norway depict Harald's offspring spreading throughout the land with greater or lesser influence depending on the size of the various pieces of the tree. In contrast to foreshadowing in family sagas, the dream does not solely relate to a definite place. It has a much wider geographical range, namely, the whole kingdom. What is predicted here is the destiny of the future kings of Norway going back to Harald Gille, who is said to be the illegitimate son of Magnus the Barefoot and thus the remote descendant of Harald Fairhair. Thus it relates to the destiny of the whole land since the king and his family are understood to be the personification of the country. The dynastic dreams seem to have been firmly rooted in the royal ideology that stands behind king's sagas as they are closely connected to the idea of monarchy and state.

It is obvious that the time span of a foreshadowing in king's sagas is in a similar way much wider than in family sagas because it is not the destiny of an individual that is anticipated but that of many future generations. While in family sagas foreshadowing does not usually exceed the lifespan of one man (i. e. the lifetime of one generation), the dynastic dreams in king's sagas often exceed these boundaries. Unlike family sagas, the foreshadowed events can in this way reach beyond the scope of the narrative. Although we also find dreams that relate to the events of the story in king's sagas (i. e. individual dreams), the majority of dreams foretell events that, from the viewpoint of the story, are yet to come (e. g. the 'future' christianization of the country). These dreams could be removed from the saga without having a significant influence on the story as a whole. This is very different from family sagas, where foreshadowing is inextricably linked to the story and the people and places contained in the story. This fact could be explained by the following: While in family sagas it is the *telling of the story* that is most important, in king's sagas it is the *recording of the history of the land* that is the narrator's main goal. Thus in family sagas foreshadowing is centred on the heroes of the

story, whilst in king's sagas it is connected to the land and exceeds the destiny of the individuals.

The last type of dream to be found in king's sagas is the 'Christian dream', i. e. a dream using Christian symbols taken from hagiographies and the Bible.[20] An example would be the motif of climbing up to the sky, which seems to have a parallel in the Bible with Jacob's ladder. A dream using this motif can be found in Odd Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Oddr, *ÓT* xiii). When considering this dream, I would also like to point out another interesting fact. In contrast to the individual dreams, which are usually frightening, Christian dreams possess a typical magnificent atmosphere and feeling of amazement. This is often achieved through sensory, mostly visual, perceptions experienced by the dreaming person. In this respect Christian dreams seem to have been strongly influenced by medieval hagiographies. Let us now take a look at the aforementioned dream of Olaf Tryggvason, in which pleasant sensory perceptions are used to describe Paradise:

> Honum syndiz einn mikill stein oc þottiz hann ganga lanct up eptir honum allt til þess er hann com at ovan verþum. [...] Oc er hann hof up augu sin þa sa hann agetliga staði fagra [...]. Þar kendi hann oc sætan hilm oc allzsconar fagra bloma. oc meiri dyrð þotti honum þar vera en hann mætti hug sinum til coma fra at segia.
> (He saw a great rock and seemed to be climbing high up on it until he reached the top. [...] And when he lifted his eyes, he saw fair and splendid places [...] He perceived a sweet fragrance and all sorts of beautiful flowers, and it seemed to him that there was more splendor there than his mind sufficed to relate.) (Oddr Snorrason 2003, 54)

This kind of description awakens and encourages the imagination of the audience as it visualizes Paradise. In hagiographic literature Paradise is commonly described as an astonishingly light, dazzling place; likewise, Jesus and the Saints are portrayed as being surrounded by great light and radiance. The visions of figures enveloped in light are to be also found in the Christian dreams in king's sagas.[21] Just as it is for the Saints, it can also be the king himself whose appearance is accompanied by glaring light. For example, in *Sverris saga* we read that, a short time before the king's birth, his mother had a dream in which she saw herself giving birth to a shining stone (*Sv* i):

> [...] henni sýndist sem þat væri einn steinn vel mikill ok snjóhvítr at lit: en hann glóaði svá mjök, at allavega gneistaði af honum, sem af glóanda járni [...]

20 For the various symbols see Loescher 1956.

21 As Schach points out, this so-called radiance motif, which often appears in king's sagas, "occurs only infrequently in the Sagas of Icelanders, probably because this symbolism is so closely associated with Christianity." (Schach 1971, 71).

(It seemed to her that it was a rather large stone, snow-white in colour; it shone so that sparks flew in all directions as with glowing iron [...].) (Kelchner 1935, 123)

It is very interesting to compare the presence of what Schach calls the 'radiance motif' and what C. Grant Loomis refers to as 'white magic' to the situation in family sagas (Schach 1971, 53).[22] As mentioned earlier, in family sagas it is often darkness, night and the gloom of winter that define the backdrop of foreshadowing. The feelings linked to foreshadowing are also of a nature somewhat different from those found in the Christian dreams in king's sagas. Instead of amazement, it is primarily fear, tension and stress that are awakened in the audience. Earlier in this article we stated that foreshadowing in family sagas mirrors the original Germanic view of destiny: it typically shows negative and pessimistic images of fate. Fate in family sagas is presented, to use Hallberg's words, as a "cold and inexorable necessity" (Hallberg 1962, 91). Christian dreams in king's sagas are not understood to be forewarnings of fate but rather messages revealing the future, sent by God to those who have been chosen to rule and guard the land, i. e. to the kings and the royal family.

As for animate dream symbols, we can observe that the variety typical for family sagas is replaced in the Christian dreams by a more repetitive choice of dream persons. Instead of the variegated supernatural beings connected to the native pagan tradition, it is angels and Saints that reveal themselves to the dreaming person.[23] Among the Saints it is most often the Norwegian king Olaf II. Haraldsson, known as Saint Olaf of Norway, who appears to the dreamer. So is the case in the two dreams had by King Magnus the Good, Saint Olaf's son. The first one of them is depicted in *Saga of Magnus the Good* (Snorri, *MG* xxvii), the second one in *Saga of Harald the Stern* (Snorri, *HHarð* xxviii). The first time Saint Olaf appears to his son – in the dream he has the night before the battle of Lyrskog Heath, he encourages him and foretells his victory in the battle. The second time, it is in a dream that King Magnus has shortly before his death:

22 Loomis uses the term in the title of his book *White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948).

23 The situation in king's sagas is thus similar to what takes place – according to observations made by Kelchner – in the late layers of Old Norse folklore as a part of the general progression from the heathen to the Christian mode of thinking. As Kelchner claims: "One of the most striking developments of the dream representation is the way in which in folklore all the supernatural or extra-human beings of heathendom tend either to become confused with each other and with various members of Christian hierarchy, or to be completely ousted by the latter." (Kelchner 1935, 73).

> Þat var eina nótt, þá er Magnús konungr lá í hvílu sinni, at hann dreymði ok þóttisk staddr þar sem var faðir hans, inn helgi Ólafr konungr, ok þótti hann mæla við sik: "Hvárn kost viltu, sonr minn, at fara nú með mér eða verða allra konunga ríkastr ok lifa lengi ok gera þann glœp, at þú fáir annathvárt bœtt trautt eða eigi?" En hann þóttisk svara: "Ek vil, at þú kjósir fyrir mína hǫnd." Þá þótti honum konungrinn svara: "Þá skaltu með mér fara."
> (One night, as King Magnus lay in his bed, it appeared to him in a dream that he was in the same place as his father Saint Olaf, and that he spoke to him thus: "Wilt thou choose, my son, to follow me, or to become a mighty king, and have a long life, but to commit a crime which thou wilt never be able to expiate?" He thought he made the answer, "Do thou, father, choose for me." Then the king thought the answer was, "Thou shalt follow me.") (Snorre Sturlason 1930, 181)

I would like to point out two factors in this dream that markedly differentiate it from the dreams in family sagas. Firstly, in the dream Saint Olaf offers two possibilities to Magnus, that of death or that of a long life in which he will commit a crime. This strongly indicates the influence of Christianity, in which a man's fate was not given ab initio but depended on his deeds. One could either commit sins or live virtuously, and his fate would be decided accordingly.[24] And secondly, although it is the king's death that is foreseen in this dream, it is perceived positively and thus in contrast to the negative perception found in family sagas. It is better to die innocent than to commit a sin, and death is presented here as the more favourable option. Moreover, death also manifests a return to God, who calls Magnus to himself and allows the king to join his forefathers in eternity.

Foreshadowing in Legendary Sagas

Legendary sagas are, just as family sagas are, rich in foreshadowing. We will now examine the differences in structure of foreshadowing between these two saga genres. The first category to be described will be that of the forms foreshadowing can take. First of all, in legendary sagas we encounter numerous dreams. They are usually similar to the dreams in family sagas since they predict future tragic events that have already been predetermined. For example, we can mention the many prophetic dreams had by Kostbera, the wife of Hǫgni in *Vǫlsunga saga*, which occur before he rides with his brother Gunnar to King Atli's court, where both of them are killed (*Vǫls* xxxiv). Side by side with prophetic dreams stand prophecies. Unlike such dreams, prophecies are not always negative in their content. We

24 The question is whether King Magnus is choosing the option of following his father willingly or whether it is Saint Olaf who is making the choice for him.

will return to the prophecies later when describing the content of foreshadowing in legendary sagas. Apart from dreams and prophecies, the foreshadowing in legendary sagas often takes a somewhat different form, namely that of a curse. The curses that hardly ever, if at all, emerge in family and king's sagas seem to be very popular in legendary sagas. A typical motif appearing is that of a cursed object, for example, the ring and treasure belonging to the dwarf Andvari in *Vǫlsunga saga* or the sword Tyrfing in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. The ring and the sword can be understood as symbols of the curse put on the heroes of the sagas. As the cursed objects pass into the hands of the hero's descendants (or other persons), the curse is passed on with them and pursues the current owner of the item. Thus, in legendary sagas an evil fate can be transmitted from one person to another; this is something we do not find in either family or king's sagas. This kind of fate is not ascribed to a man from the moment of his birth but comes to him from without.

With regards to content we can generally state that there are two types of foreshadowing in legendary sagas: negative and positive. The first of these foretells tragic events in the hero's life and the decline of his kin. This is especially the case in the prophetic dreams that mostly predict somebody's death. Dreams in legendary sagas are often symbolic much like dreams in family sagas; the most commonly used symbols are still animals, though of a different kind. As Kelchner writes: "Other animals, some fabulous and some foreign, make their appearance, and even such as we are accustomed to from the historical sagas may assume a brilliance and splendor consistent with retreat from the stern requirement of reality" (Kelchner 1935, 23). Two examples of this are found in Guðrún's dreams in *Vǫlsunga saga* that foretell the arrival and the slaying of her future husband Sigurð (*Vǫls* xxv). In the first dream she sees him as a beautiful hawk with golden feathers, in the second as a large stag with golden hair, exceeding all other animals in his greatness. The *fylgjur* of the legendary saga heroes seem to far outdo the *fylgjur* of the 'ordinary' men from the family sagas. This could be connected to the general tendency of legendary sagas towards what Argüelles calls 'heroic exaggeration' (Argüelles 1994, 362).

To the negative type of foreshadowing along with the numerous dreams belong also the aforementioned curses. The curses are generally connected to magic, supernatural beings or the heathen gods, especially Óðin; this fact becomes very interesting when we consider that gods hardly ever appear in connection with foreshadowing in family sagas. However, they quite often intrude into the lives and destinies of legendary saga heroes. In regard to legendary sagas Bröndsted writes the following: „[...] Hinter und über dem Menschenleben wird das Einwirken von Göttern, Riesen und Zwergen geahnt" (Bröndsted 1989, 218). In the

beginning of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, for example, King Sigrlami captures two dwarves and will not set them free until they make a sword for him.[25] The dwarves make the sword, but they place a curse on it that brings a great misfortune not only to the king himself but also to his descendants. A similar fate befalls King Heiðrek who after cutting off the tail feathers of Óðin who has taken the form of a hawk is punished for his deed, as we read in the same saga (*Heiðr* x):[26]

> Ok þá bregðr Heiðrekr Tyrfingi ok höggr til hans, en Óðinn brást þá í valslíki ok fló á brott. En konungr hjó eptir ok af honum vélifiðrit aptan, ok því er valr svá vélistuttr ávallt síðan. Óðinn mælti þá: "Fyrir þat, Heiðrekr konungr, er þú rétt til mín ok vildir drepa mik saklausan, skulu þér inir verstu þrælar at bana verða."
> (And then Heiðrek draws Tyrfing and slashes at him, and Óðin changed into the form of a hawk and flew out through a window of the hall. But the king hacked after him and cut off his tail-feathers, and that's why to this day the hawk has a stubby tail. Óðin said, "For that, King Heiðrek, because you lunged at me and wanted to kill me groundlessly, the lowest thralls shall be your slayers.")[27]

In the following chapter of the saga we read about the death of the king, killed by the thralls he had captured on his Viking trips. Murdered in his bedroom by his slaves, who to boot steal his sword, the king dies in a rather inglorious way. His dishonest attack on Óðin is punished with a dishonest death. Considering the great number of similar examples where somebody is cursed or punished at the whim of a supernatural being, fate in legendary sagas shows itself to be of what we can call an 'outward nature'. As already indicated in the article, curses are based on the assumption that the hero's destiny is not fully determined and can be affected from the outside. To use Bröndsted's words, "die Determination in der Vorzeitsaga hat ein recht äußerliches und diffuses Gepräge [...]" (Bröndsted 1989, 223). The initiators of interventions into man's fate are heathen gods or supernatural beings, and these act in reaction to the hero's deeds.

Let us recall here that family sagas present a very different vision of fate than the one just described. As Hallberg states, in family sagas, "events 'roll' or 'draw onward' toward their completion – without any interference from supernatural, mysterious powers" (Hallberg 1962, 89). A man's destiny is determined from the very beginning by a higher power that operates in the background of the world; it becomes an inseparable part of the man. However, to make things more compli-

25 The H manuscript of the saga.

26 The R manuscript.

27 The Saga of Hervor & King Heidrek the Wise. Transl. Peter Tunstall (2005). Retrieved from <http://www.germanicmythology.com/FORNALDARSAGAS/HervararSagaTunstall.html> (01/12/2016).

cated, this conception of fate is also found in legendary sagas, namely in the aforementioned prophetic dreams. Two different views of destiny, one represented by a dream and the other by a curse, thus seem to coexist in one saga genre. As opposed to that of dreams, the content of curses is usually not symbolic but fairly straightforward; often the hero knows how and when he will die. In this manner, Arrow Odd is aware of the fact that he will live for three hundred years and that his horse will cause his death. This fate of Odd comes as a punishment from the *vǫlva* who visits the farm where Odd lives and is offended by his disbelief of her words (*Qrv* ii). As Torfi Tulinius claims in his short description of *Qrvar-Odd saga*, "the narrative structure created by the prophecy is highly productive since it conveys in advance the ending to Odd's story, while creating at the same time suspense in relation to whether Odd will manage to escape his destiny or not. The time frame of his exceptionally long life allows the narrator to multiply his adventures" (Tulinius 2005, 456–457). The fact that the hero is familiar with the circumstances of his death allows him to literally go from one adventure to another with little regard for his own life, for he knows that no fate but the one foretold can harm him. As Bröndsted notices, it is in fact not destiny that challenges the hero but the hero who challenges destiny: „nicht das Schicksal fordert ihn heraus, sondern er fordert das Schicksal heraus" (Bröndsted 1989, 216).

The second type of foreshadowing to be found in legendary sagas is positive in its content as it predicts the future fame of the saga heroes. The aforementioned positive prophecies belong to this group. So it is in *Vǫlsunga saga* that Sigmund, father of Sigurð Fáfnisbani, foretells that his son's name "shall live as long as the world shall stand" (*ok hans nafn mun uppi, meðan verǫldin stendr*) (*Vǫls* xii). The future renown of Sigurð is predicted four times in the saga: shortly before the hero is born (*Vǫls* xii), then approximately in the middle of the saga after the slaying of the dragon Fáfni (*Vǫls* xix) as well as in the chapter describing Sigurð's appearance (*Vǫls* xxii) and finally in the ultimate part of saga following the hero's death (*Vǫls* xxxii). In all four cases the narrator uses the phrase *meðan verǫldin/heimrinn stendr* ("as long as the world shall stand") when mentioning the time span of the prophecy.

This brings us to the question of the time extent of foreshadowing in legendary sagas. We can see that positive foreshadowing in legendary sagas, similarly to foreshadowing in the dynastic dreams in king's sagas, refers to a distant future. But whereas in king's sagas this future is still a part of the historical time (the future fate of the kingdom and land), in legendary sagas it is an indefinite future, namely the end of the world. The negative foreshadowing in legendary sagas also concerns a wide time extent. Although it is not as vast as

in the case of positive prophecies, it is still greater than the time extent of the foreshadowing found in family sagas.[28] While in family sagas a foreshadowing usually relates to a definite event, curses in legendary sagas often spread over a longer period of time as the evil fate pursues not only the hero but his relatives and descendants as well. For legendary sagas in general, a certain 'indefiniteness of time' is typical. In regard to this, Bröndsted writes about a certain *märchenartige Zeitlosigkeit* ("fairytale-like timelessness").[29] Time spreads from an indefinite past in which the stories of legendary sagas take place into the indefinite future.

The geographical range of foreshadowing in legendary sagas is also somewhat broader and more indefinite than that in family or king's sagas. We have already mentioned that dreams and prophecies in family sagas are connected to definite places, while dreams in king's sagas can relate to the destiny of the whole country. The negative foreshadowing in legendary sagas is connected to neither one location nor a land since a precise location for the hero's death is not clearly stated. With regards to geographical range this type of foreshadowing far exceeds the border of a country. The curse chases the hero literally all around, and his unfortunate destiny can be fulfilled anywhere. The positive prophecies also have a large geographical extent as can be seen in the following example taken from the *Vǫlsunga saga*. In a prophecy that has already been mentioned in this article, the future glory of Sigurð Fáfnisbani is predicted (*Vǫls* xxii):

> Ok þá er taldir eru allir inir stærstu kappar ok inir ágæztu hǫfðingjar, þá mun hann jafnan fremst taldr, ok hans nafn gengr í ǫllum tungum fyrir norðan Grikklands haf, ok svá mun vera, meðan verǫldin stendr.
> ([...] and whenas folk tell of all the mightiest champions, and the noblest chiefs, then ever is he named the foremost, and his name goes wide about on all tongues north of the sea of the Greek-lands, and even so shall it be while the world endures.) (*The Volsunga saga* 2001, 114)

As his fame spreads throughout the world and exceeds all predefined space and time borders, Sigurð becomes what we can call 'a universal hero'. He is not connected to a specific place and time; his adventures can happen anywhere and at any time. Legendary sagas do not restrict images of fate to a definite place or country but rather allow them to become universally relevant through their ambiguity.

28 The exception would be the prophetic dreams which are, as to their time extent, similar to the dreams in family sagas, that is to say, only the near future is predicted in them.

29 See Bröndsted: *Dichtung und Schicksal*.

Conclusion

The subject of this article was a brief analysis of foreshadowing in family, king's and legendary sagas. In conclusion, it can be said that foreshadowing in these saga genres differs not only in terms of form and content but in terms of temporal and geographical extent. Foreshadowing in each of the three examined saga groups has a specific appearance that is typical of a certain type of saga. We can fully agree with Hallberg when he claims that "dreams in family sagas are often stereotyped in content and construction" (Hallberg 1962, 82), but we have to add that the same could be said of dreams in king's and legendary sagas. A typical dream in a family saga has a negative, dramatic and symbolic content, using symbolism from the domestic tradition. The dream usually focuses on an individual's destiny and is closely connected to the story. A typical dream in a king's saga is dynastic and a Christian dream (the third type, an individual dream, being of the same nature as dreams in family sagas). Dynastic dreams are of a wider temporal and geographical extent as they foretell the destiny of the land and thus go beyond narration. Christian dreams can be characterized by an atmosphere of astonishment and splendour and in contrast to family sagas use symbols taken from hagiographical literature. A foreshadowing typical of legendary sagas is a curse put on the hero by a supernatural being in reaction to the hero's deeds. Such foreshadowing usually anticipates not only the destiny of the hero but also of his kin and often goes beyond all borders, that is, both temporal and geographical.

When searching for possible causes of the aforementioned differences between foreshadowing in sagas, one should be aware of one thing. Foreshadowing never stands alone; it always exists as part of the saga, and only in this context can it be examined. Haeckel (who is considering only dreams, but her words could be applied to foreshadowing in general) writes the following: „Der Traum ist nicht losgelöst von der Saga zu behandeln, er steht in dieser Art Dichtung und gehört zu ihr" (Haeckel 1934, 2). Foreshadowing is always in some respect bound to the content, form and character of the particular saga type. This connection between foreshadowing and saga could explain some of the differences between foreshadowing in various saga types. It may be the simple fact that the sagas themselves are different that lies behind the various forms foreshadowing takes. Family sagas tell the stories of individuals that are connected to a definite time and place in Iceland. It is these stories and the destinies of their heroes that the narrator pays most attention to; and both the form and content of the foreshadowing correspond to this. King's sagas, in contrast, have a much broader perspective as they primarily tell the history of a royal dynasty and the whole land and thus exceed the level of an individual life and destiny. This is reflected in the dreams found in king's

sagas which can be distinguished by a much wider temporal and geographical extent than those in family sagas, not to mention by different content. Legendary sagas depict, similarly to family sagas, the stories of individuals, but this time the hero does not belong to a definite place or time but is instead a 'universal' hero. Foreshadowing that relates to his destiny crosses the borders of the given land and even extends past the borders of historical time. Foreshadowing shows a certain indefiniteness in terms of both time and geography that is typical of legendary sagas in general.

What has been described above may explain some of the formal and contextual differences between foreshadowing in sagas, but it does not explain the fact that in the examined saga type different views of fate are presented. As has been shown, in family sagas fate is predetermined and becomes an integral part of the man. Foreshadowing is understood to be a forewarning of fate's inevitable fulfillment. In king's sagas the visions of fate do not always have to be threatening. With respect to the Christian dreams, the images of heaven and Saints that appear to the dreamer are of a nature similar to the images in dreams in hagiographies. In legendary sagas the given fate can be of what we have called an 'outward' nature; it is not fully predetermined and can be influenced from the outside.

We can label the view of fate depicted in family sagas, i. e. such predetermined fate typically manifested via prophetic dreams and omens, as the original and domestic view held by the Old Norse people. We have shown that negative prophetic dreams emerge in all of the three examined saga genres. Although these images of fate are mostly presented in family sagas and legendary sagas, they can also be found in king's sagas, albeit in smaller amounts. Under the influence of medieval hagiographies and other religious texts, foreign visions of destiny penetrate king's sagas to a great extent in the form of Christian dreams. The last type of dream in king's sagas, i. e. dynastic dreams, is connected to royal ideology (that is clearly of great importance to king's sagas) rather than heathen or Christian views of fate. It will be more difficult to explain the situation of legendary sagas where the fate of the hero is commonly decided by heathen gods and supernatural beings as a punishment for his unwarranted interventions in the supernatural world. This reminds us of the techniques of fairy-tales or ballads in which a hero's fate is formed according to his dealings with the supernatural realm or to his interventions therein.

In my opinion, the great diversity of foreshadowing in sagas is not only caused by the fact that family, king's and legendary sagas belong to different literary genres. The causes of the differences in foreshadowing seem to have deeper roots. They could stem from different visions and understandings of fate and of

the world as a whole and be connected to different ideologies.[30] This interesting fact raises yet another question, namely: how is it possible that one culture could understand fate in so many diverse ways? In this article only three saga genres were examined; a more detailed analysis of the other saga genres conducted in a similar manner would be needed if we were to answer this question.

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Abbreviations

Bárð	*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmson
Eb	*Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson
Gísl	*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Björn K. Þórólfsson
Gunnl	*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, ed. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson
Heið	*Víga-Styrs saga ok Heiðarvíga saga*, ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson
Heiðr	*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson
Laxd	*Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson

30 I am aware of the objection one could make to this statement: in how many areas can we draw conclusions about the mentality of Old Norse people, following an analysis of their literary works. According to some scholars, the images of fate found in sagas are of a pure literary construction. The heathen, Christian and royal ideologies may be seen as literary images that do not necessarily need to correspond with historical reality. However, this is something we can neither confirm nor disprove.

Nj	*Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson
Oddr, *ÓT*	Oddr Snorrason, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Snorri, *HSv*	Snorri Sturluson, *Hálfdanar saga svarta*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Snorri, *HHarð*	Snorri Sturluson, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Snorri, *HHár*	Snorri Sturluson, *Haralds saga hárfagra*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Snorri, *MG*	Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga góða*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Snorri, *MS*	Snorri Sturluson, *Magnússona saga*, ed. Finnur Jónsson
Sv	*Sverris saga*, ed. C. Ch. Rafn and Finnur Magnússon
Vǫls	*Vǫlsunga saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson
Qrv	*Qrvar-Odd saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson

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