

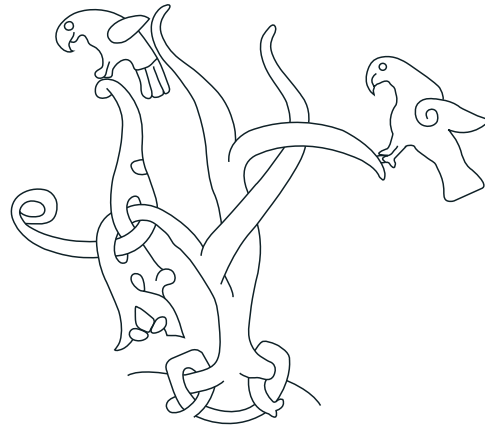
Preprint papers of
The 14th International Saga Conference
Uppsala, 9th–15th August 2009

Volume 1

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Á austrvega

Saga and East Scandinavia



Preprint papers of

The 14th International Saga Conference
Uppsala, 9th–15th August 2009

Volume 1

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Plenary lecture

From Accusation to Narration: The Transformation of *senna* in *Íslendinga þættir*

Elena Gurevich, Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences

The paper deals with the transformation of the genre of verbal duelling (*senna*) in the stories of Icelanders abroad, the so-called *útanferðar þættir*. *Senna* is a stylised verbal duelling, which from the first phrase to the last develops according to a traditional pattern elaborated in every detail. One of the most vivid examples of the *senna*-pattern in Old Icelandic literature is provided by *Ölkofra þáttur*. In *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* (ch.6), where the quarrel of two rivals, the skalds of Haraldr Harðráði, is described, the *senna* acquires some novel features. First of all, the important role in the conflict is given to the representative of the audience, whereas the audience in the *senna* is always silent and only watching the development of the debate. In this case the spokesperson happens to be the *konungr* himself. The whole argument of the skalds is guided by the king's questions and remarks and their assaults take place only with his sanction. However, the most significant innovation in *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* is that, instead of the – not always completely articulated – remarks about the opponents' past (or hints about some shameful past events) which are typically found in *senna*, a detailed linear retrospective story is introduced, similar to other first-person narratives which can occur in *útanferðar þættir*. There are good grounds for believing that one of the reasons for this transformation consists in the impossibility of appealing to the collective memory. This arises as a consequence of the inclusion of a verbal duel between heroes who are Icelanders into a narrative whose action is set in Norway; hence the other characters of the story, who are witnesses of the unfolding scene, do not possess any preliminary information about the relevant past events. A no less important influence on the transformation of the *senna* in *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* is exerted by another genre, the anecdote.

Plenary lecture
Old Norse Texts as Performance

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In recent years some scholars, inspired by speech act theory or performance theory, have analysed Old Norse texts as performative acts in which the words are used not only to convey meaning but to achieve specific results with people in a social context. One may, for example, analyse a court scene in a saga as an exemplary piece of judicial action, an exchange of insults as a method of provoking violence, a skaldic *drápa* as an act of rhetorical celebration, or a *galdr* as a magic ritual aimed at destroying one's enemy.

Such studies may become even more interesting, however, if they are combined with some consideration of how the Old Norse texts were originally performed in front of an audience. Were they, for example, recited, chanted, or sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument? Were they dramatically enacted by one or more actors? Who were the performers, and how did these performers relate to their audience? In my book *Den dubbla scenen: Muntlig diktning från Eddan till ABBA* (1978), I tried to answer such questions, and other scholars have since that time provided interesting new answers. A new and partly updated edition of *Den dubbla scenen* came out in 2008, but there are still many unsolved problems that deserve to be further discussed with regard to the oral performance of Eddic poems, skaldic poems, and sagas during the early Middle Ages.

My lecture will discuss some saga passages in which the performance of the saga characters is likely to have merged with the performance of the actual saga as it was told or read aloud to its audience, thus creating what I refer to as a "double scene", in which the narrative and its narration become almost indistinguishable.

Plenary lecture

Ynglingatal: A Minimalist Interpretation

John McKinnell, Durham University, England

Ynglingatal is usually read alongside the prose account of the early Swedish and Norwegian kings in *Ynglinga saga*, in which it is embedded, and sometimes also in conjunction with other prose sources that date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Understandably, most commentators have tended to interpret the poem through the eyes of Snorri (or whoever the writer of *Ynglinga saga* was), but in this paper I will try to limit my discussion to the poetic text itself. Admittedly, we have to depend on the prose writers for the order of stanzas, since Þjóðólfr (as I shall call the poet) does not explicitly say that any of the kings he names is the *immediate* successor of any other; there are also some textual variants which seem to have been intended by later medieval revisers to modify the reputations of particular kings. However, I shall suggest that these can be detected, that the overall structure of the poem itself can still be studied, and that what it does *not* say may be as important as what it includes. For example, its early stanzas do not claim that any king is directly the son of a god, nor do its final ones make any connection with the lineage of Haraldr hárfagri, or, therefore, with any of the subsequent kings of Norway.

I will suggest that Þjóðólfr probably used a number of different oral sources:

1. A list of kings of Vestfold, including details of where each one is buried (and in some cases, also where he died); this may derive from a claim of inheritance.
2. A single legendary figure (Óláfr of Vermaland), who is used to link the kings of Vestfold to the ancient kings of the Swedes at Uppsala.
3. A list of legendary kings of the Swedes at Uppsala, each of whose names begins with a vowel, and most of whom are also known in other legendary sources that seem not to be dependent on *Ynglingatal*.
4. A rather disparate sequence of quasi-mythological stories, beginning with Fjölfnir and probably ending with Agni, into which is inserted
5. A sequence of four kings whose names begin with *d* (Dómaldi to Dagr).

Together, these provide a total of twenty-seven generations of kings, a number that I shall argue is probably significant and deliberate. It is noticeable that Þjóðólfr says almost nothing about three of his Swedish kings (Dómarr, Dyggvi and ǫnundr). No deeds or manner of death are attributed to them, and while two of them seem at first sight to have the sites of their funerals mentioned, even these are probably either commonplace or poeticism. It is possible that Þjóðólfr knew only their names, but perhaps more likely that he invented them in order to make up a predetermined number of generations.

There has been much debate about the intended function of *Ynglingatal* and Þjóðólfr's attitude towards the kings who are his subject. Despite its (rather faint) praise of Rǫgnvaldr heiðumhæri in the final stanza, the poem as a whole certainly does not look like praise of his glorious ancestors; but while some kings are viewed in a hostile or ironic way, many are not, so it seems equally difficult to take the whole poem as an attack or satire on the kings. In the last part of my paper I will consider Þjóðólfr's probable personal contribution to the tradition; I will try to show:

1. That he makes no attempt to valorise either death in battle (as is clearly done in *Háleygjatal*, for example) or death by human sacrifice.
2. That most of his expressions of disapproval and his most biting examples of irony are reserved for those who commit violence against their own kin; this attitude is

consistent whether the king is the agent or the victim of such violence.

3. That in at least two cases, Þjóðólfr probably alters his received stories in order to express this viewpoint more forcefully.
4. That the epithets applied to the more recent Norwegian kings seem generally more complimentary than those given to the more remote Swedish ones; some of them may be intended ironically, but we cannot assume this without some hint to that effect.

I shall conclude by suggesting a possible structure and function for the poem as a whole.

Plenary lecture
To the letter: Philology as a core component
of Old Norse studies

Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Iceland

At the beginning of a new century it is time to take stock and review the situation of textual editions in our field. A lot remains to be done. Many of us still rely on the fruits of C.R. Unger's heroic labours (to name but one of that productive generation), and although the arnamagnæan institutes have ventured to carry on the ambitious projects begun in the heyday of the cultural-political strife over the Icelandic manuscripts, they have not managed to keep up the impressive output of the 1960s. Meanwhile, almost everything around us has changed. There are drastically different views on what constitutes a text, manuscripts are scrutinized in new ways, the printed book is no longer the only – not even the preferred – medium for editions, and last, but not least, the concept of collaboration has a whole new significance in the age of the internet. In the paper I will explore these issues and the consequences they ought to have for Old Norse studies, for the scholar and for the student; or rather: for the community of scholars and students.

Karelia, Finland and *Austrvegr*

Sirpa Aalto and Ville Laakso, University of Joensuu and University of Turku

The lack of written sources from within Finland and Karelia (see for example Uino 1997: 13–16)¹ during the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages – also called the Crusade period by Finnish archaeologists and historians – has led Finnish scholars to rely on archaeological records to perceive the region’s settlement and culture during this time. However, in spite of the continual accumulation of material from excavations, it is still impossible to get a full picture of settlement and culture in the Viking Age. The sagas may offer some help depicting these places since they have a few mentions of a *Finnland* and of a *Kirjálaland*, which is generally acknowledged to denote Karelia. This in itself is remarkable because they are one of the first written documents mentioning Karelia (“Karelians” in *Erikskrönikan*, Lind 1981: 174–177)². The sagas, however, do not give detailed descriptions of these lands and their peoples, but as such they are interesting. The purpose of this article is to present the possible role *Finnland* and *Kirjálaland* had on *Austrvegr* and to impart what new information the latest excavations can provide on this matter. The question then is: How were *Finnland* and *Kirjálaland* connected to *Austrvegr*?

In the Finnish archaeological record, Viking Age contacts with Scandinavia are represented by artifacts of Scandinavian origin. These artifacts have been found in several parts of the country, but the areas with the greatest contact are recognised to be Southwestern Finland and Karelia, in the East. In the historical province of Finland Proper, which refers to the most southwestern area of Finland, the people had their own distinctive culture, which is demonstrated by the indigenous jewelry. In Western Finland, Scandinavian artefacts are undoubtedly a result of direct contacts with Sweden: weapons found in graves confer contacts to Gotland and to Middle Sweden. Artifacts deemed to be of foreign origin have been found to be concentrated in the coastal area, but they also have been found spread to some parts of the inland. Settlement in Western Finland by the Viking Age was already long established, with no traces of a Scandinavian population visible (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984: 296–298). Trade contacts must thus have existed, but other contacts we cannot be sure of confirmed other contacts. It seems that the Finns in Finland Proper did not adopt the hierarchical society system of the *Svear*, and the lack of typical graves of the type found in *Svealand* suggest that the *Svear* did not have a foothold in Finland (Lehtosalo-Hilander 2001: 101. Still, it seems that some of the rune stones imply that the *Svear* made plundering expeditions to *Finnland* and *Tafeistaland* (Fi. Häme) (Palm 2004: 55).

In Karelia, the Viking Age was a dynamic period of growth: the number of known settlements was much higher than in the previous periods of the Iron Age (Uino 1997: maps on pp. 104 and 110). Archaeological finds have been concentrated on the western shore of Lake Ladoga. Further to the west, there was also settlement in the Savo region, but large uninhabited or sparsely populated territories separated these centres from each other. Important new archaeological evidence, mainly in the form of cemeteries, has also come to light – for example in the Kymenlaakso area of southeastern Finland, which is at the westernmost edge of Karelia (Miettinen 1998: 93–129). In addition, recent palaeoecological studies from lake and

¹ The area of Karelia can be defined in several ways, but here the term refers to the historical province that now belongs partly to Russia and partly to Finland. After the Second World War the most central areas of the province have been a part of Russia.

² The Karelians are mentioned in the Swedish *Erikskrönikan*: they were supposed to have attacked Sigtuna in the end of 1100s. This view is disputed, and for example John Lind has stated that we cannot be sure who the attackers were. *Erikskrönikan*, p. 43. “Swerige haffde mykin vadha aff karelom ok mykin onadha[...]En tima fiöl them en luna, at the brändo Sigtuna[...]”.

bog sediments have revealed pollen evidence of Viking Age agriculture in several areas where archaeological evidence of permanent settlement is lacking (see e.g. Vuorela *et al.* 2001; Alenius *et al.* 2004; Alenius & Laakso 2006; and Tomminen 2006).

Finnar and Kirjálár

It is important to point out that in the Viking Age people who lived in the areas of what are now present day Finland and Karelia were not a homogenous people. The people in Karelia were, according to present understanding, a mixture of an autochthonous population and immigrants from the Western part of Finland. In the eyes of the contemporary Scandinavians, Karelians did not differ from Western Finns; for example the Karelian women wore ornaments and brooches that were fashionable in Western Finland in the 8th–11th centuries (Uino 1997: 176). They also spoke a Baltic Finnic language as did the Finns in Finland. The biggest difference would have been in their language and belief system. These are not, however, mentioned in the sagas. In the sagas, the name of the people, *Kirjálár*, seems not to be mentioned as often as that of the place, *Kirjálaland*.³

Finnar in the sagas do not usually refer to the Finns, but to the Sámi people (Aalto 2005; Aalto 2003; Mundal 1996). However, in some a few cases it is possible that the word *Finnar* actually refers to the Finns: in *Óláfs saga ins helga* the young Óláfr Haraldsson is plundering with his men in *Finnland*. The people are called *Finnar* in the prose text, but in the poem that is connected to this episode, they are interestingly referred to as *Finnlendingar*. The poem also mentions two place names: *Bálagarðssiða* and *Herdalar*.⁴ The meaning of these place names has brought about much discussion (Gallén 1984: 256; Holmberg 1976: 175–176). – for example Inger Zachrisson has suggested that *Herdalar* actually refers to Härjedalen in Sweden (Zachrisson 1991: 192). It is probably impossible to pinpoint the exact geographical locations on the basis of these place names, but maybe they should be viewed in another light; they show that there was a need to give names to these places and not just refer to the area as *Finnland*. The problem with the sagas and the scaldic poetry is that they were produced by Norwegians and Icelanders who had little or no knowledge of the areas east of *Svíþjóð*. If we had written sources from the *Svear* the situation might be different. In chapter 80 of the previously mentioned *Óláfs saga ins helga* the Swedish *lagmaðr* Þorgnýr mentions how the earlier kings of the *Svear* made plundering expeditions to “*Finnland ok Kirjálaland, Eistland ok Kúrland ok víða um Austrlönd*.”⁵ It seems that *Finnland* and *Kirjálaland* were interesting and prosperous enough to be targets for plunder. *Kirjálaland* is also mentioned in *Fagskinna*, when jarl Svein made a plundering expedition in *Austrriki* and also in *Kirjálaland*.⁶ *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* mentions *Kirjálaland*, and gives a geographical location for it: “*En austr frá Naumudal er Jamtaland, ok þá Helsingjaland ok þá Kvenland, þá Finnland, þá Kirjálaland; en Finnmörk liggr fyrir ofan þessi öll lönd[...]*”⁷ As indeterminate as the geographical descriptions tend to be in the sagas and other medieval texts, this description seems to place *Kirjálaland* in Karelia.

Kirjálaland – Kurkijoki?

³ For example *Heimskringla* and *Fagskinna* do not mention the *Kirjálár* but *Egils saga* and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* do. The ethnic background of the *Kylfingar* has also raised questions, but this will be not dealt with in this article. See e.g. *Egils saga* ch. 10, p. 27 and references.

⁴ *Hkr II Ólhelg* ch. 9, pp. 10–11. The poem also calls the inhabitants of *Finnland* as *Finnlendingar*.

⁵ *Hkr II Ólhelg* ch. 80, p. 115.

⁶ *Fsk* ch. 29, p. 178.

⁷ *Egils saga* ch. 14, p. 36.

Kirjálaland is generally accepted to refer to Karelia (Fi. Karjala), meaning approximately the area of Vyborg (Fi. Viipuri) region and the Karelian Isthmus during the Viking Age. Information on a more exact location of *Kirjálaland* is somewhat contradictory, and several reasonable possibilities have been presented (Uino 1997: 185 and cited literature). The etymology of the word *Kirjálaland* has been explained to derive from the place name Kurkijoki, which is situated on the north-western shore of Lake Ladoga.⁸ The Russian chronicles mention it for the first time in AD 1396 as an adjective, *Kjurjeskij* or *Kirjeskij pogost*. This name is also found on a birch-bark document (no. 248) from Novgorod, discovered in an excavation layer dated to the period 1396–1422. The Tax Book of 1500 for the *Vodskaja pjatina* gives the name *Kirjaškoi* (Uino 1997: 185). However, this etymology cannot be confirmed with certainty. Considering the possible etymology of the word, it would be interesting if the word really derives from a place name given to it by its inhabitants and not by some outsiders. The information that the sagas give on *Kirjálaland* and its inhabitants should not be seen as facts. Educated guesses can be made for its location and background, but the truth is that the information that the sagas give should actually be seen to reflect the vast network of trade in *Austrvegr* (Korpela 2004: 56).

In the archaeological material record, there is actually nothing that contradicts the connection between *Kirjálaland* and the area of Kurkijoki. On the contrary, there are several interesting Viking Age sites in and around Kurkijoki, and the density of sites and finds is greater there than elsewhere in Karelia (Uino 1997: 114, Fig. 4:6). Especially noteworthy items come from the cremation cemetery of Lopotti, which had been excavated already by the 1880's. These items include several artifacts of Scandinavian origin: a pair of oval tortoise brooches, a bracelet, and a tongue-shaped fire striker. In fact this is the largest concentration of Scandinavian artifacts in Karelia. According to Pirjo Uino, this type of oval brooch is particularly common in Norway; however, as a whole it is difficult to distinguish the exact nature of the connections with Scandinavia reflected by these artifacts (Uino 1997: 182; see also Uino 2003: 327–331, 354–357). Interestingly enough, the burial form at the Lopotti cemetery is not Scandinavian, but in fact has been identified as West Finnish. Thus, even the community that used the cemetery was probably Finnic, not Scandinavian (Uino 1997: 115). It is also noteworthy, that the village of Lopotti was later, in the 15th century at the latest, the center of the Kurkijoki *pogost*, or parish. All in all, based on the archaeological information, the area of Kurkijoki seems to be the best candidate for the location of *Kirjálaland*. For example in the Vyborg area, which is another candidate for its location, there have been practically no archaeological finds from the Viking Age (Uino 1997: 114, Fig. 4:6).

One explanation for the importance of Kurkijoki in the Viking Age clearly is its geographical position at the mouth of rivers leading to the inland areas in the west and north. These water routes have undoubtedly played an important role for trading, especially for the acquisition of furs. Kurkijoki may have been a trading place, at least temporarily, and would thus have been known by the Scandinavian traders and raiders. Kurkijoki never became an important trading station, maybe because of its relative proximity to Staraja Ladoga, which also seems to be the most probable place of manufacture for at least some of the Scandinavian artifacts found in Karelia.

Even if *Bjarmaland* and the Bjarmians do not belong to the scope of this article, they cannot be totally neglected because they are mentioned in the sagas as one of the peoples inhabiting the vast northern area of Fennoscandia. The location of *Bjarmaland* is disputed, as is the ethnic background of the Bjarmians (Jackson 1992 and 2002). Mervi Koskela Vasaru has made an extensive study of the subject lately. Her conclusion was that *Bjarmaland* was situated on the Kola Peninsula, and that the Bjarmians were a people speaking a Baltic Fennic

⁸ See already Mikkola 1942, p. 26. Since the 17th century the parish also has had a Swedish name, *Kronoborg*.

language (very close to Finnish and Karelian). Also according to her theory the Bjarmians were assimilated into the Karelians, because they disappear from written sources in the 13th century (Koskela Vasaru 2008). The activity of the Karelians in Northern Fennoscandia and Finnmark supports this theory. In this area the Norwegians and the Karelians/Novgorodians competed with each other. Both parties for example levied taxes from the Sámi people. In *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* this problem of spheres of interest intersecting is raised when the envoy of the King of Novgorod⁹ arrives at the court of King Hákon Hákonsson. The passage mentions that *Kirjálar*, who were tributary to the King of Novgorod, and Norwegian *syslumenn* had murdered and robbed each other. The King of Novgorod wanted to put an end to this and suggested peace. He also suggested a marriage alliance between Hákon's daughter Kristin and his own son.¹⁰

Part of a trading network

The main *Austrvegr* route was the River Neva, and Karelia lay outside of this central passage (Uino 1997: 184). However, the effects of trade in *Austrvegr* reached even the inland of present day Finland. For example, in Mikkeli Orijärvi a Viking Age silver hoard was found at the end of 1990s. The hoard consisted of 136 coins or fragments of coins. One of the coins was of Arabic origin, 22 were English, and 83 German. *Terminus post quem* for the hoard is AD 1014. The excavations also revealed a rather big field that had been in use for agriculture between AD 800 and 1300 (Mikkola & Tenhunen 2003: 57, 70–71). For a long time, the number of Scandinavian artifacts in Karelia had been estimated to be so small, that the easiest explanation for their distribution seemed to be the contacts that took place within the Lake Ladoga area (Nordman 1924: 186; Uino 1997: 181). At present, no graves of a clearly Scandinavian type have been found in Karelia, unlike, for example, the burial mounds that do exist on the southeastern coast of Lake Ladoga (Uino 1997: 182).

In his book *The Northern Crusades* Eric Christiansen gives a rather depressing picture of the natural conditions and preconditions for livelihood in Fennoscandia in the Viking Age (Christiansen 1997: 8–10). It is true that the climate can be harsh and crop failures were and still are not uncommon. However, the inhabitants learned to cope with the environment. Agricultural and pastoral livelihood was supplemented with game, fish, mushrooms, and berries. Hunting as a livelihood was important in two ways: it was an addition to daily nutrition, and it also gave extra income when furs were sold. The areas of Karelia, as well as Finland, were part of *Austrvegr* in the Viking Age as the sources of furs. However, despite Karelia's advantageous position (with other river routes to *Garðaríki* – the Old Rus' – that went along the southern shore of Lake Ladoga) archaeologists have not found evidence of any permanent trading stations there (Uino 1997: 179). It is possible that the trading stations were temporary and/or the trade was concentrated at Staraja Ladoga. Since no Scandinavian graves have been found in Karelia, this suggests that Scandinavian contacts and settlement were not permanent and that this area was not of central interest to the Viking Age traders (Uino 1997, p. 182). But actually, in the beginning of the 11th century, when the Caucasia portion of the eastern trade route suffered from attack by the Seldjuks and trade here began to decline, the areas of Southeastern Finland, Ladoga, Karelia, and Viena Karelia became centres for the fur trade. This situation lasted a few hundred years (Korpela 2004: 41 and references). Thus, even though Karelia was not situated on the trade route of *Austrvegr*, it was in its sphere of influence.

⁹ Aleksandr Nevskyi of Novgorod.

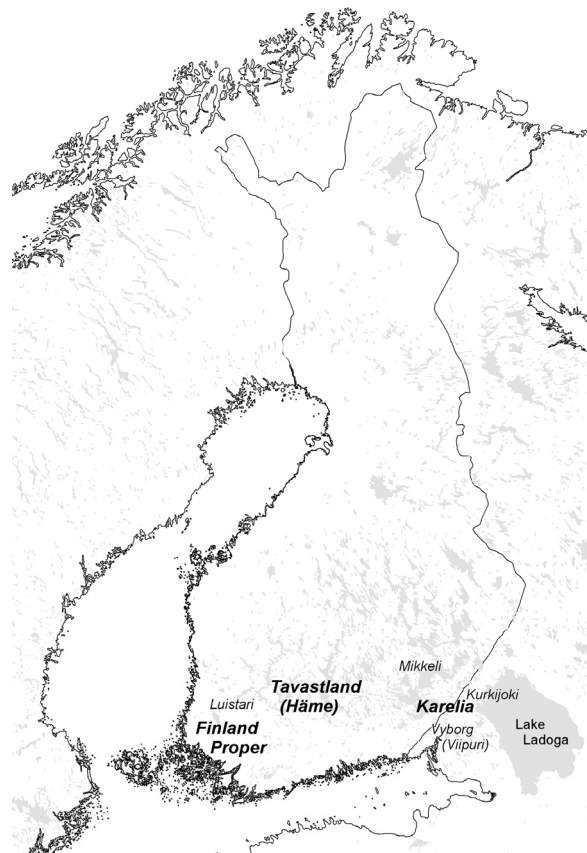
¹⁰ *Konunga sögur*, p. 419–420.

The Finns and Karelians were not just passive peddlers of furs; they also made trading and plundering voyages into Northern Fennoscandia as previously described. They also competed with the Norwegians in Finnmark where they collected tributes from the Sámi people. This competition is apparent for example in *Egils saga*, which mentions the *Kvenir*, *Kirjálar*, and *Kylfingar*, who competed with each other and with the Norwegians.¹¹ During the Crusade Period, the presence of Karelian traders and raiders can be verified by archaeological evidence, which shows that the Karelians distributed at least their own type of axe to Northern Fennoscandia. It is possible also that all kinds of small objects were transported, such as Orthodox cross pendants and other small metal ornaments (Uino 1997: 199).

No definite evidence has been presented of any Karelians participating in the eastern voyages of the Scandinavians during the Viking Age, but this has been considered quite possible (Uino 1997: 183; Uino 2003: 354–357). The presence of Western Finns seems very plausible; items pointing to this possibility have been found for example in the Luistari cemetery in Eura (Lehtosalo-Hilander 2001: 97).

Conclusion

Finland and Karelia are mentioned in written sources as part of the *Austrvegr*, even if the references are short and few in number. The archaeological record also confirms that there were contacts with the Scandinavians in these areas. Unfortunately, neither the written sources nor the excavations reveal the nature of the contacts; we may only assume that the inhabitants of Finland and Karelia were part of a trading organization where they acted as the suppliers of furs. Maybe this trade provided them with enough wealth that they were also considered lucrative targets for raiding.



¹¹ Egils saga ch. 10, p. 27; ch. 14, pp. 35 – 37.

Abbreviations

Fsk = Fagrskinna
Hkr = Heimskringla
ÍF = Íslenszk fornrit
Ólhelg = Óláfs saga ins helga

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Dancing Images from Medieval Iceland

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The Icelandic manuscript *Codex Upsaliensis*, De la Gardie 11 (written in the period 1300–1325),¹ is interesting not only because it preserves the ‘Uppsala-Edda’ but also on account of the marginalia and drawings it contains, which date from various times. The drawings have not yet received critical attention from art historians, but according to Olof Thorell, in his introduction to the diplomatic edition of the manuscript in 1977, the oldest drawing depicts Gangleri with Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði as described in Gylfaginning in Snorri’s Edda. Thorell considers this picture, which is on fol. 26v, as dating from the 14th century, making it the “most remarkable” one in the manuscript (1977:xviii).² The other drawings in the margins or blank spaces following the text appear to be of a more recent date than the manuscript itself, though this is not necessarily the case.

Apart from the ‘Gangleri’ illustration, six of the drawings in the manuscript which show people in a variety of poses are of particular interest. In this talk I intend to concentrate on these drawings and take a close look at them, not only to add to the codicological information about this manuscript, which is already considerable, but also to consider the question of whether all these drawings depict people dancing, and if so, then what evidence there is for this view. If it proves possible to answer this question, and if the conclusion is that the drawings are of people dancing, then they would rank among the oldest dance images that have been preserved in the Nordic countries. My aim is therefore to describe what the drawings depict and to propose likely dates for them.

To throw light on these six drawings, I shall give particular attention to four points: a) the poses in which the figures are depicted, b) their clothing, c) the ink used in the drawings, and d) a comparison with other illustrations in the manuscript. As regards clothing, I shall make comparisons with illustrations in other Icelandic manuscripts,³ and even in manuscripts from elsewhere in Europe, since it is generally accepted that there is considerable foreign influence in Icelandic manuscript illumination.

Here follows an account of the main features of the six drawings.

1. Fol. 24v

The first drawing depicts a man and a woman, showing the upper half of their bodies. They are facing each other. The man, who is wearing a hat with a narrow brim, is bending backwards at a sharp angle. The woman is wearing an upper garment with a square neckline, and her hairstyle is similar to that of the three kings in the ‘Gangleri’ picture (from the 14th century). The same hairstyle is common in European medieval manuscripts, and is by far the most common type found in Icelandic 14th-century manuscript illuminations, e.g. in *Stjórn* and AM 344 fol., and also in *Belgsdalsbók* and *Svalbarðsbók*, where people are shown wearing long tunics with necklines that are reminiscent of that shown on the drawing of the

¹ The manuscript is now in the Uppsala University Library.

² The folio numbers in the references given here are different from those in the manuscript itself, the facsimile of 1962 and the diplomatic edition of 1977.

³ The following manuscripts, which I mention more than once each below, will be referred to by their appropriate catalogue numbers or names as follows. From the 14th century: AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*), AM 227 fol. (*Stjórn*), AM 343 fol. (*Svalbarðsbók*), AM 344 fol., AM 347 fol. (*Belgsdalsbók*), GKS 1005 fol. (*Flateyjarbók*), AM 135 4to (*Arnabælisbók*) and Holm. perg. 16 4to (*Helgastaðabók*). 14th to 15th centuries: AM 673a III 4to (*Íslenska teiknibókin*, ‘the Icelandic Drawing-Book’), which was compiled over a period of about 150 years, from c. 1350 to 1500 (Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir 1997:95–98). 16th century: AM 345 fol. (*Reykjabók*).

woman (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 1–4, 8, 16–25, 53–54, 55–57 and 71).⁴ The same hairstyle is very much in evidence in Íslenska teiknibókin (‘the Icelandic Drawing-Book’). Necklines similar to that of the woman’s garment can be found in illustrations from continental Europe, e.g. from the 14th and early 15th centuries (see Liepe 2003:156 and Wagner 2000:Part I, Pl. 4 and 6). There are similarities between the man’s hat and hats in Flateyjarbók, AM 132 4to (from the 15th century; Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 46 and 73), and in Íslenska teiknibókin (Björn Th. Björnsson 1954:122). Hats appear in many manuscript illustrations, e.g. in Reykjabók (from the 16th century), where they are generally shown with broader brims, and the hats themselves are rather taller (see, e.g., Jónas Kristjánsson 1993:86 and 124). A Scandinavian example of a hat with a narrow brim can e.g. be found in a Norwegian carving from the early 14th century (Vedeler 2006:212–213).

The man’s backward-bending pose strongly suggests that the pair are dancing. But what sort of dance could they be dancing?

There exists a considerable body of historical sources on dancing in Iceland, some of them of great age, and it is generally accepted that dancing was a common amusement in Iceland in the 12th and 13th centuries. Actual descriptions of the dances, or of the movements involved, are of rather later date: from about 1600 or later. Furthermore, each of the surviving descriptions has certain unique features. Most of them, however, distinguish between two types of dance: *dans* (ballad dances) and *vikivaki*. The difference appears to be as follows, taking account of the style of singing that accompanied the dance.⁵

1) *Dans*. In the *dans*, a precentor appears to have led the singing, either alone or with the help of singers; in which case these did not take part in the actual dance. This appears to have applied to round dances and/or dances where pairs of dancers chose particular places. It seems that participation by the dancers took one of two forms. In one, the dancers did not participate in the singing, in which case the dancing tended to be more lively, even though the dancers did not move to new places but simply moved to and fro on the same spot. In the other type of dance, the dancers joined in the singing. The precentor sang the main text, and the body of the dancers, moving in a circle, joined in the refrains. It is believed that men and women also danced separately.

2) *Vikivaki*. In the *vikivaki*, the dancers probably sang or chanted in turn, moving in a round dance until all the dancers had finished their verses. These dances would have been accompanied by *vikivaki* verses, in which a man and a woman recited verses in turn. According to an anonymous account dating from the 17th or 18th century there seem to have been special men’s and women’s *vikivaki* dances, as there were men’s and women’s *dans*;⁶ the sources also mention another type of *vikivaki* in which a man and woman hold hands and sing to one another without moving from their basic position, though various movements were involved, such as steps forwards and backwards and even movements of the type described in this *vikivaki* verse (Jón Samsonarson 1964:cxviii): “Þegar í vikivaka / vil eg sprundin taka, / öxlum gjöra að aka / og víkja sér til baka”. (‘When in the *vikivaki* / I wish to take the girls, /

⁴ Comparable hairstyles can be found in AM 249c fol. from c. 1300, in the 14th-century manuscripts AM 679 4to, AM 68 fol., AM 241a fol., GKS 3268 4to, AM 233a fol., Holm. perg. 5 fol., AM 127 4to, GKS 3269a 4to, Belgsdalsbók, Skarðsbók, Flateyjarbók, Helgastaðabók, AM 249 e fol. and AM 545a–b 4to (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 10, 12 and 14–15, 31–39, 43–47, 49–52 and 55–68 and Liepe 2006:73 og 76), in AM 126 4to and Thott 1280 fol., from c. 1400, and AM 132 4to from the mid-15th century; the same hairstyle appears in two manuscripts from about 1500 (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 40, 72–74 and Jónas Kristjánsson 1993:106 and 118–119).

⁵ On the types of dance, see in particular Jón Samsonarson 1964:xxviii–cxliii.

⁶ It is also possible that contra dances formed part of the entertainment in the *vikivaki* (Jón Samsonarson 1964:xxix).

move my shoulders to and fro / and bend backwards.’) Presumably, therefore, the *vikivaki* was a type of dance that fundamentally involved interaction between a man and a woman.

In the light of this brief definition, therefore, the pair shown in this drawing could either be participants in a *dans* or a *vikivaki*. However, the man’s posture may indicate that he is dancing a *vikivaki*, since it conforms to the description in the fragment quoted above.

2. Fol. 25r

The second drawing is of a woman in a long-sleeved full-length dress or a close-fitting upper garment with a pleated skirt, with a bordered hem. She is wearing a wimple, a belt and pointed shoes. She is standing, but seems to be leaning slightly forwards, perhaps stepping forwards on her left foot, and is pointing forwards with both hands.

Long dresses that are close-fitting at the top but wide at the bottom are frequently encountered in medieval manuscript illuminations.⁷ The dress in this drawing is plain and very similar to dresses in 14th-century manuscript illuminations, in some of which the women wear wimples, as is the case here; on the other hand, the dress is very unlike women’s ‘best’ or ceremonial clothing, or at least that of upper-class women, as illustrated in the drawing of women on the way to a wedding in the 16th-century Reykjabók (Jónas Kristjánsson 1993:86). The design is reminiscent of the dresses found in Herjólfsdalur in Greenland, and it is believed to have been common in the Nordic countries from the 12th century down to the early 15th century, and particularly in the period 1250–1400 (Vedeler 2007:113). Dresses of similar types can be seen in continental European manuscript illuminations, e.g. in a 15th-century manuscript in which the woman is also wearing a belt and a wimple (Wagner 2000:Part I. Pl. 6). Wimples, including ones of the simple type shown here, were common throughout the Middle Ages (see, e.g., Gutarp 2000:28–30).

The natural interpretation of the woman’s pose is that it represents her dancing, possibly a type of dance in which the dancer does not move to a new place, but steps alternately backwards and forwards. Of course, the pose by itself does not indicate what type of dance could be involved, but the fact that the woman is shown on her own might indicate either a *dans* or a *vikivaki* in which only women took part. Her hand gestures, on the other hand, cannot be explained in terms of known descriptions of dancing in previous centuries, except insofar as they mention hand movements and gestures. But it is more likely that they indicate *vikivaki* rather than a *dans*, since when people danced a *vikivaki*, they also played ‘*vikivaki* games’ (*vikivakaleikir*); the entire entertainment generally involved a threefold entertainment consisting of *dans*, *vikivaki* and *vikivakaleikir*. Some of these games, such as *Þórhildarleikur* and *Hindarleikur*, involved the dancers forming man-and-woman pairs. In some cases the women chose their partners; in others, it was the men who did the choosing (see, e.g. Jón Samsonarson 1964:cxxvii and cxcvii–ccix); it seems natural to assume that games of this sort would have involved a lot of hand gestures, though no descriptions of these are to be found in written sources.

3. Fol. 25r

The third drawing shows a man in a closely-fitting buttoned doublet or jacket with long sleeves and a collar reaching to the neck. He is wearing a short pleated skirt with a belt, and presumably close-fitting hose (tights) underneath it. He is wearing shoes with a narrow toe;

⁷ See, for example, the 14th-century manuscripts Skarðsbók, Belgisdalsbók, Helgastaðabók and Flateyjarbók, in which women are almost always depicted wearing wimples with dresses, as is the case here (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 36, 47, 55–57, 59 and 68). The dresses in Íslenska teiknibókin are generally more substantial, though it also contains examples of dresses that are close-fitting on the upper body, in addition to which wimples are worn with them (Björn Th. Björnsson 1954:153).

on his head he has a pointed cap hanging down on the right-hand side. In his left hand he is holding a short sword upright; his right hand is resting on his hip, and the position of his legs suggests that he is in motion, dancing on his toes; in addition, his trunk is curved backwards.

As regards his clothing, the buttons, short skirt and cap are particularly interesting. Tightly-buttoned doublets are to be found in illuminations in other Icelandic manuscripts, e.g. in Thott 1280 fol., dating from about 1400 (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 74), and also in Reykjabók, dating from the 16th century (Jónas Kristjánsson 1993:9 and 86). Both tightly-buttoned kirtles and doublets were in fashion in many parts of Europe in the Middle Ages, at least from the 13th down to the 15th century (see, e.g., Gutarp 2000:18 and Wagner 2000:Part I Pl. 4, 63, 73 and 91).

Pictures of men in short skirts and hose can be found, for example, in Belgsdalsbók (14th century) and in AM 132 4to (mid-15th century; Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 57 and 73). Stjórn, Skarðsbók, Helgastaðabók, GKS 3269a 4to and Flateyjarbók contain examples of men dressed in short knee-length tunics (kirtles) with a belt, and in hose. Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether what is depicted is a skirt with an upper garment or a kirtle, since in some cases the lower part of the kirtle (or the skirt) is pleated. One of the figures in the sources cited is holding a short sword similar to the one in no. 3 (Halldór Hermannsson 1965:Pl. 1 and 2, 10, 16–30, 39, 45–46, 50–51 and 65–68).

Although the point on the dancer's cap is not very conspicuous, it presumably reflects the fashion of pointed hoods (see, e.g., Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 51), which became common from about the middle of the 14th century. To some extent, this fashion developed in tandem with the fashion in footwear, reflecting tapering shoes known as *poulaines*. While the dancer's shoes in this drawing do not have a long toe, it could perhaps be said that the woman in the previous figure is wearing such shoes. Shoes of this type are to be found in Helgastaðabók, (14th century), Íslenska teiknibókin (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 36 and 39 and Björn Th. Björnsson 1954:60, 65, 77–80 and 128), and in European manuscript illuminations from the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries (Wagner 2000:Part I. Pl. 76, 87 and 91). Most of the dignitaries depicted in the illustrations in Reykjabók (16th century) wear shoes that are very different from these, with square toes (Jónas Kristjánsson 1993:56–57).

The most interesting thing about No. 3 is, without doubt, the sword that the man is holding; it suggests that he is dancing some sort of sword dance. Though there is no mention in written sources of such a dance having been danced in Iceland, it can be deduced from other manuscript illustrations that Icelanders at least knew of some sort of games involving weapons in the 14th century (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2008:73). Furthermore, the lawcode manuscript Belgsdalsbók (AM 347 fol., c. 1350–70) contains a picture that is reminiscent in many ways of the drawing in DG 11. The picture (on p. 94v), that is probably of a slightly younger date than manuscript text, shows a man with a stick or a sword projecting out to the right; his right hand is in front of his chest. The man appears to be in motion, as if dancing, and his clothing is similar to that of the sword-dancer in DG 11, i.e. a short skirt with a belt, and he seems to be wearing a cap or hood that hangs down on the right.

4. Fol. 25r

The fourth drawing in DG 11 is of a man, shown in half-length. He has a goatee beard and is wearing a kirtle or long upper garment, a belt and a pleated skirt. There are borders on the neckline and cuffs of the upper garment. The man, who seems to be wearing a tight-fitting cap, is holding in his left hand what could be a rope or a stick with a loop at the top, while his right hand is pointing forwards. His posture seems to suggest that he too is dancing, his gestures having certain similarities with the pose of the woman in No. 2.

Although it is not possible to state with certainty whether this man is wearing a kirtle or a skirt, the latter seems more likely in view of how distinct the pleating is beneath the belt; this would seem to distinguish it from the material of the upper garment. A plain cap of similar design can be seen in *Flateyjarbók* (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 46) and *Íslenska teikni-bókin* (Björn Th. Björnsson 1954:121–122).

If it is accepted that this picture is of a man who is dancing, like the other figures on this leave of the manuscript, then it would seem that what is depicted here is some sort of rope-dance. According to Tobias Norlind, writing about Nordic dances in 1911, there were considerable similarities between the Faroese rope-dances, which were danced to the accompaniment of ballads and verses, and dances with weapons. He regarded the Faroese rope-dance as a developed variant of the bow- or sword-dance, and as being most closely related to the Finnish bow-dance. If one goes further and ignores the role of the rope in the Faroese rope-dance, then similarities with a Norwegian dance are revealed; in this, the dancers change their orientation in the ring as they pass under the raised hands of two men (Norlind 1911:750–751). This description by Norlind calls to mind an Icelandic dance known as *hringbrot* ('breaking the ring'), which in turn has been compared to the Finnish bow-dance. *Hringbrot* is mentioned in written sources as early as the 15th century; in the earliest description (*Niðurraðan og undirvísan*, see above) it is assumed that six pairs take part in the dance, using a rope linking them all (Jón Samsonarson 1964:lii and clxvii; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2008:62–63). In view of the relationship between rope-dances and weapon-dances, or certain variants thereof, one could perhaps conclude that the two dances depicted in Nos. 3 and 4 go back to the same origin.

5. Fol. 26r

The fifth drawing shows a woman dressed in a long, long-sleeved dress which is close-fitting in the upper body, with a belt and a broad skirt. The dress is bordered along the bottom, at the neckline and on the cuff, and is buttoned down the front. As with Nos. 1–3, the woman's clothing and hairstyle reflect models in manuscript illuminations from the 14th and 15th centuries. Her hand gestures are similar to those of the woman in No. 2, and she appears to be stepping forwards and bending her upper body backwards, as if dancing.

6. Fol. 56r

In the sixth and last drawing, two figures are drawn beneath the text: a man on the left and a woman on the right. The pair face each other and both are pointing forwards, the man with his left hand, the woman with both hands.

The man is dressed in a costume similar to the sword-dancer's costume, except that he is wearing a brimmed hat with two seam lines along the length of the crown. His shoes are similar to the poulaine shoes of which there are examples in *Helgastaðabók* and *Íslenska teikni-bókin*, and also in manuscript illuminations from outside Iceland in the period from the 13th to the 15th centuries, as has been mentioned above in the discussion of No. 3. The woman's costume is similar to the one in No. 2, and her hairstyle is similar to those of the women in Nos. 1 and 5. The man is standing with his feet wide apart, his body is curved well back and he has his right hand on his hip; the woman's pose is the same as those of the women in Nos. 2 and 5.

As before, the physical poses here suggest that the figures depicted are dancing a dance characterised by stepping forwards or sideways and arching one's upper body backwards, and by hand gestures. The simplest explanation is to see these drawings as depicting *vikivaki* dances or games, as was the case with No. 1 and 2.

Features in common

If these six drawings are examined together, it appears certain that they all illustrate dancing or games with a dance element, and in particular *vikivaki* and the sword-dance, and possibly also a type of rope-dance. The body postures are of various types, and it seems that the artist took pains to depict a range of different types of dances and games; this makes his or her drawings an independent source about dancing in the past.

It is difficult to say how old *vikivaki* dances are, but there is nothing to rule out the possibility that they, or dances of a comparable type, were danced in Iceland as early as in the 12th century. The oldest written references to dance-related games on the other hand, are probably those found in literary works from the 14th and 15th centuries (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2008:62–63).

The Nordic sword-dance is basically an ancient dance genre, regarded by some as forming an unbroken tradition reaching all the way back to Viking times or even earlier. On the other hand, sword-dance seems to have been revived, in a new form, in Germany in the 15th century, and to have become reasonably widely disseminated in this form during the 16th century. Rope-dances or stick-dances are probably to be seen as reflexes of the sword-dance, or of other European dances of the 15th or 16th centuries. Therefore, no accurate dating of the drawings in DG 11 is possible on the basis of dance history, but the period from the 15th and 16th centuries is a framework that could cover all the drawings. This conclusion is not far out of keeping with the framework suggested by the clothing; comparison with other manuscripts indicates that the fashions involved were in vogue from the 14th century to the early 15th century, with some leeway at each end.

A comparison of the dance images in DG 11 with other manuscripts is somewhat restricted by the fact that the majority of Icelandic illuminated manuscripts date from the 14th century, with a relative dearth of material for comparison from the 15th and 16th centuries. Anna Zanchi, author of a Ph.D. thesis on clothing in the Icelandic sagas and *þættir*, considers that while medieval manuscripts are highly useful for gaining an insight into clothing and fashion at the time they were written, it must be remembered that in some cases illuminations were drawn from foreign originals (2006:13). This is very much the case, for example, with the illuminations in lawcode manuscripts, as has been demonstrated in the case of *Stjórn*, in which the illuminations were probably based on English models. For this reason I have chosen to make comparisons with illuminations in manuscripts from other European countries as a source regarding the general outlines in the development of clothing fashions. As an example of comparable fashions, we can take the Flemish brass engraving of about 1415–1420 in the church in Nousis, Finland, showing men in short pleated skirts, tightly-buttoned doublets and poulaines, women in long-sleeved full-length dresses that are broad at the bottom but close-fitting around the upper body, even with buttons and bordered necklines, and wearing wimples (Liepe 2003:118 *et seq.*).

I mentioned at the beginning that in addition to the features examined and compared above, it was desirable to examine the ink used in the drawings and also to compare them with the other illuminations in the manuscript. As it proved impossible to examine the original manuscript, my conclusions regarding the ink are based on an examination of digital images, which imposes a limit to their validity. However, it seems that the ink of the drawings is not very different from that used in the text, though if anything, it seems to be slightly lighter. This need not indicate a difference in the composition of the ink, however, since the shorter strokes in script would probably use more ink than the longer strokes of the drawings.⁸ But a

⁸ There is also a very slight variation in hue between the drawings themselves, but here it may be necessary to allow for the possibility that this may lie in the digital images themselves.

comparison of the dance images with the other illuminations and marginalia in this manuscript enables us to rule out at least some of the marginalia, written in the 15th or 16th century. The ink in some of the drawings, on the other hand, is more like that in the dance images, but it is evident from the artistic style of the ‘Gangleri’ picture that a different artist was at work, and Thorell’s claim that the ‘Gangleri’ picture is the oldest one in the manuscript is probably well-founded.

In two of the drawings, the colour of the ink and the artistic style are comparable with those of the dance images; these are the bishop on fol. 1v and the knight on fol. 37v. The knight is wearing a costume that corresponds to what we find in illuminations from continental Europe in the late 14th and 15th centuries (Wagner 2000:Part II, III, VI and IX). The drawing of the bishop is characterised by light pen-strokes similar to those in No. 6; this, and his features, suggest that the same artist was at work here as in the dance images (*cf.*, for example, No. 5).

The bishop is dressed in a cope, and is also wearing a mitre and holding a crozier in his left hand; his apparel suggests that the drawing pre-dates the Reformation, since it is believed that in some countries, including Iceland, bishops abandoned the use of mitres and croziers at the time of the Reformation, i.e. about 1550. The composition of the picture and the bishop’s clothing are reminiscent of older pictures of bishops, such as the one believed to be of Bishop Þorlákur *helgi* in *Arnarbælisbók*, dating from the 14th century (Halldór Hermannsson 1935:Pl. 58 and Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 2000:26). The mitre is short, as is the case in older pictures, and consequently unlike the tall mitres that came into fashion later, at least from about 1500 (see Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir 2000:167) and possibly earlier, at least outside Iceland (see the illumination in a French manuscript from the late 14th century in Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 2000:180). According to Thorell, this picture can scarcely be older than from the 15th century (Thorell 1977:xvii).

The question arises whether the bishop on fol. 1v was drawn there for a particular purpose, or whether it is simply an exercise in draughtsmanship that happens to be there. Could it be that the bishop was intended as ‘blessing’ the heathen content of the manuscript, or is he perhaps here to admonish the dancers who seem to be enjoying themselves in the margins of DG 11? At first sight this may seem improbable, but if we bear in mind the history of dancing in Iceland, there is no avoiding the fact that the bishops played a certain role in it. It seems that clerical opposition to dance gatherings arose as early as the 12th century, when Jón Ögmundsson, who became Bishop of Hólar in 1106 (d. 1121), fought against, and had a prohibition imposed on, the game (*leikur* – probably dance) that was commonly played in which a man and a woman sang improper verses to each other (Jón Samsonarson 1964:ix–x). For a long time thereafter, the church was opposed to dancing, and more bishops followed Jón Ögmundsson’s example. At least five of the pre-Reformation bishops showed their disapproval of dances, speaking out against them or banning them, and the Lutheran bishops and clergy continued this after the Reformation. Thus, it is by no means far-fetched to see the drawing of a bishop in DG 11 as being related to the dance images in the manuscript; this could be further evidence of how closely they reflect Icelandic reality.

At the outset I stated my intention to examine the drawings in DG 11 not least because they might prove to be among the oldest images of dancing in the Nordic countries. The oldest Nordic dance image that I know of is a Danish church painting in Ørslev, near Skælskør in Sjælland, which is thought to date from about 1325.⁹ Most of the evidence suggests that the

⁹ This image, showing dignitaries dancing in a group and holding hands, is very different from the drawings in DG 11 and is consequently of little help in dating them. Others propose dates of c. 1350 or c. 1380 for the painting. A church painting in the church at Vigersted in Roskilde (15th century) shows some sort of knife-game/dance; other church paintings depicting dancing are from the 16th century or later (Saxtorph 2004:49, 146 and 159).

dance images of DG 11 are not quite so old, though the time-frame, in the broadest sense, runs from the 14th to the 16th century. As far as I have been able to establish in this examination, the most likely date for them is the 15th century, which is still enough to place them among the earliest dance images from the Nordic countries.

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Outlaws, women and violence. In the social margins of saga literature

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In the society that the Icelandic family sagas depict, whose public sphere was ruled by men, violence was an extraordinary extent of action for women – but it takes place. The image of women in sagas responded to the ideas that prevailed in the context. Representations of the image were necessarily if not acceptable, at least conceivable but within the restrictions of the saga genre. In this paper, I will focus on social factors that would guide the interpretation of occurrences of female violence in the saga literature.

Since women's possibilities to social influence were quite limited in the past as depicted in sagas, the final target of their actions often required an intermediate of the opposite sex. Their contribution to conflicts often was limited to arbitration or whetting.

Solidarity as a social act had wide consequences since every Icelander belonged to complicated social networks. In a state of emergency, like in a raving blood feud, solidarity towards a party was easily interpreted as hostility towards the other. Outlaw figures in saga literature often are described seeking and finding protection from women. If a person was condemned to outlawry he was not only an enemy of his prosecutor, the plaintiff, but simultaneously an enemy of the law: by outlawry, he was denied any protection from the law. This made any assistance of an outlaw a highly risky and morally questionable deed: one which required strong reasons.

It is remarkable to which extent the accounts of women taking violent acts in saga literature are connected to their expressions of solidarity towards an outlaw. Repetition of a narrative element such as this connection indicates its significance to the saga writers and their audiences. Repeated narrative elements cannot be considered as mere empty literary motifs, or clichés, without expressive power. They are meaningful expressions with a narrative function.

My initial research question is if there can be found explaining factors to the literary connection of outlaw figures and women who express solidarity to an extreme degree in social structures that are expressed in the saga literature. Any correspondences could provide hints of how these occasions ought to be interpreted and, in a general sense, they can indicate something about the narrative techniques of the saga writers.

I have adopted in this paper the view that textual referentiality within the corpus of medieval Icelandic literature was a comprehensive process rather than a mere literary convention. Individual similarities between narrative elements may have origins in different phases of saga production process from oral narratives to a written manuscript and its copies. Direct borrowing from another written source, *rittengsl*, can be considered intertextuality in a philological sense. When a saga writer applies literary commonplaces, or *topoi*, without a precise source, the result can be called intertextuality in a literary sense. If similarities between narrative elements in distinct sagas have their origins in the corpus of respective oral tradition we can talk about traditional referentiality.¹ The original source of similarity may have differed but passages that had recognisable similarities were associated with each other and contributed to each other's meanings. Narrative elements with recognizable similarities had a *semantic connection*.

Whose conceptions the sagas reflect is another matter and will not be addressed here any further than briefly by the binary gender aspect. Sagas in principle discuss issues that con-

¹ Term coined by John Miles Foley (1991: *Immanent Art: from structure to meaning in traditional oral epic*. Bloomington: Indiana.); discussed in connection with saga literature by Slavica Rankovic (2005), esp. 108–116.

cerned the highest social strata in the time of writing: feuding was an occupation of the social elite in the 13th century and the most sophisticated legal and political turns in saga literature required vast corresponding knowledge and this indicates that they were written by / for representatives of the same strata; and, it should be emphasized, its male representatives. Like Else Mundal (1992, 108) has put it: man was the norm in the society that sagas depict.

In this paper, answers to the research question are looked for in relation with gender roles that underlie the sagas: violence in relation with female roles and outlawry in relation with male roles. The occasions of violent acts of a woman in assistance or even on behalf of an outlaw have different functions in the plots of different sagas but as a repetitive narrative element, it supposedly has a semantic logic which makes it applicable in different narrative contexts. Additionally, I will briefly discuss how this narrative element makes sense against the context of saga production – and, likewise, reception.

Women and Outlaws

The strong image of women in the family sagas, especially compared to contemporary continental literature, is a commonplace². However, women's ways of acting were limited by a strict normative social order.³ Gender roles and the corresponding social expectations were quite clear-cut: women were responsible of managing the farm-stead whereas men took charge of activities outside it (Jochens 1995, 116–117; Grágás 1b: 44; 2:173). Women's range of responsibility was limited to the *private field* of the society: homestead and immediate relatives. Women were excluded of responsibilities and, hence, power in the *public field* of the society: in legislation and practice of law, administration and politics, central institution of which were the assemblies.⁴ Neither did women travel abroad, except for pilgrimage or settlement to a new land.

Fights and battles, feuding, were the ultimate way of negotiating relationships in the public field. Women did not have an immediate role in feuding (Jochens 1989, 109). Women naturally had their share of interests in issues such as family honor or rights of inheritance, but they lacked direct means to promote them. The principal means women had in feuding was to goad / whet men into action (Mundal 1992, 103; Mundal 1994, 7–8; Heller 1958, 117–118; Bagge 1992, 14–15). Goading as a means of action under such circumstances is not excluded to women but sagas represent also goading men who lack sufficient means to act otherwise (Byock 1983, 94–95; Miller 1990, 212–213).

Sagas narrate some occasions when women force a truce between fighting parties by, for instance, casting clothes over their weapons. Peaceful enterprises are far less frequent in the family sagas than in contemporary sagas. According to Else Mundal it is due to differences in the narrative genre and not differences in actual practices in different times that these groups of sagas describe (Mundal 1992, 104). Peaceful deeds are not a favoured topic for family sagas unless they underline the following disaster.⁵ Else Mundal has pointed out, based on the testimony of saga literature, that “the honorary qualities for women were much the same as for men, but they were used in a different way” (Mundal 1994, 10). These qualities were such

² For instance, Else Mundal (1993), 723–724.

³ The conceptions of Saga Age circumstances that the writing period Icelanders had, and which reflect in saga literature, was probably based not only on existing historical texts (sagas and Landnámabók) and respective historical traditions but also on law texts that were produced still after subordination to Norwegian crown and introduction of the new law code.

⁴ The division private – public is applied here as descriptive of the division of labour and sphere of influence between the sexes. I am aware that as a societal system, the division private – public “makes sense only in the context of a coercive state” (Miller 1990, 305). However, the material at hand indicates that direct power and hence, access to immediate action was limited for the female members of the society to only one of these fields.

⁵ E.g. Andersson 1967, 38–40.

as intelligence, health, beauty and toughness (Miller 1990, 305). Strong, initiative deeds of a woman were admired.

Male virtues in sagas are largely connected to preservation and gaining of social capital, honour, for the individual and the social network he represents. Such virtues are expressed in sagas mainly in terms of physical strength, bravery, intelligence and verbal skills. Honour and manliness are closely related in saga vocabulary: the virtues of *drengskapr*, *mannleikr*, *ger-vileiki* all express general honorary properties which are – already by the kernel of the first two terms – gender-specific. The relation is at least as visible in the negation of the concepts: the usage of words *mannleysi* or *ódrengr* refer not only to lack of additional manly virtues but rather to total absence of them, unmanliness in an insulting sense (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983, 76–77).

Outlaws are a distinct group of narrative actors in the sagas. Outlawry was the severest punishment which could be condemned for most flagrant legal offences, mainly for offending another's physical inviolability. According to the law, an outlaw lost his whole property and was “not to be supported, or transported, or helped in any way” (*Grágás* I, 139), and anyone could kill him without a threat of retribution. In principle, an outlaw was totally expelled from the society. He was basically a dead man walking.

However, the sagas don't show that literal following of the letter of law. The position of outlaws was desperate but the final execution of their sentence was up to the plaintiff: with a plaintiff weak enough, or with an ally strong enough, an outlaw could well survive for a while (Amory 1992, 194–196). In sagas, outlaws visit farms like any other representatives of social margins who wander from a farm to another.⁶

As main characters of a saga, outlaws are provided with the narrative perspective and consequently, sympathies of the audience. Three sagas have been nominated as outlaw sagas for the sake of the outlawry of their main characters and the concentration on their adventures and close escapes during the time in outlawry. The so-called outlaw sagas *Gísli saga*, *Grettis saga* and *Harðar saga* provide an account of positive male qualities of an outlaw figure.

The outlaws in sagas are depicted according to the requirements of their unforgiving state. Big size and great strength are typically stressed. Grettir's huge size and feats of strength are accounted along the whole saga and a descriptive is for instance his superiority over the two Þórður's sons at wrestling games at Hegrannessþing: “þeir væri eigi sterkari tveir en Grettir einn, en hvárr þeira hafði tveggja manna megin þeira sem gildir váru” (*Grettis saga* ch 72: 236). Gísli is not depicted as a man of special strength – as is actually no-one else in this saga – but the saga tells that he proofed stronger than others at ball-games and that on an occasion, he threw a stone to a distant skerry “og kom þar þá enn þat fram að Gísli var betr at íþróttum búinn en flestir menn aðrir” (*Gísli saga* ch. 20: 66). In the discourse of the saga, this probably counts as a proof of superior strength. He was able to convincingly act Ingjaldr's retarded son who was “mikill vexti, nær sem troll” (ch 25: 79). Hörður “var hærður manna best og rammur að afli[...] og að öllu vel vaxinn” (ch 11) The outlaw heroes show extraordinary martial skill against overbearing enemy (Gísli, Hörður) and even supernatural creatures (Grettir). Resourcefulness of the outlaw heroes is stressed to a considerable degree. Gísli is depicted as an especially handy man in his saga (*hann var hagari en flestir menn aðrir*: ch 25: 79) and even though Grettir is less enthusiastic about labour of any sort he is able to use his physical strength to overcome difficult situations. Cleverness helps an outlaw to avoid his pursuers, and they are all named vitr (*Harðar saga* ch 36; *Grettis saga* (ch 93: 289); *Gísli saga* (ch 22: 70). Poetic skills can be understood as a proof of mental capacity, too. Actually, all the virtues of an outlaw as well as the stock description correspond to male virtues in the sagas in general.

⁶ Cochrain 2002; Cris Callow (2004) discusses Norwegians as similar extraneous narrative agents.

Assemblies, which have a relatively central place in saga narration, were a forum excluded to men: the status of a free male guaranteed one the right to attend. Attending was a central manly function. Outlawry stripped one of all protection of the law, not to speak of attending the gathering of the central institution of law. According to the law (but not the sagas, it has to be noted) if a man was expected to be outlawed at an assembly for a manslaughter, he was not even allowed to attend the court in which his own case was treated. Consequently, an outlaw was stripped of a significant share of his masculinity along with his right to fulfill male obligations. Outlawry was a male state. The law applied to women as well but no female outlaws appear in the family sagas.

The outlaw lost his home and the world outside was hostile and forbidden for him. In order to find refuge, he had two directions to turn to: either to the deserted, uninhabitable inland or to the private field.⁷

The Connection

Solidarity in saga literature seems to require taking its social consequences in consideration: assistance is an act in the interests of a party and all its reference groups, but often it is simultaneously an act against those of another. Family is an obvious solidarity group. Grettir is protected by Þorbjörg *digra* for the sake of their kinship (*Grettis saga* ch 52: 167–169). As Else Mundal (1992, 104) has noted, “Women had a double loyalty: to their own family and that of their husband’s.” Even an ideally loyal wife, as Auðr is depicted in *Gísla saga*, may act against the interest of her own husband if it is in conflict with her obligations by blood relationship. In ch 29 (92–93), Auðr gives shelter to her two nephews after they have killed Gísli’s brother Þorkell. Gísli gets furious when he hears of it but Auðr is able to calm him down. The absurdity of the settings, outlaws covered from a pursuing outlaw, indicates stability of the motif.⁸ According to the law, a killer was an outlaw right after the deed and had no protection from the law: the sentence passed at the court was its formal announcement. This makes Auðr’s nephews outlaws in the passage.⁹ In *Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabani*, Gunnarr kills Þiðrandi and escapes the revenge. Gunnar goes to Helgi Ásbjarnarson who accommodates him in an outhouse. Helgi asks his wife Þórdís to take good care of Gunnarr while he is away. Þórdís’s brother Bjarni uses the opportunity together with other pursuers of Gunnarr and demands Þórdís to deliver Gunnar to them. Þórdís assures her will to cooperate and asks the men to return next morning when she would hand over Gunnar. During the night, she gathers a large troop of her relatives to the farm, and in the morning the pursuers have to withdraw. After returning later, Helgi says to his wife: “*Vissa ek, at ek var vel kvænt, ok er þat vel, at hon sagðisk í ætt sína*” (ch 6: 209) which resembles to a great degree the words uttered by Gísli to his wife Auðr for her support. Auðr joins his husband in his final battle with a club and hits the leader of the attackers, Eyjólfur in the arm and disables him from continuing the fight. Gísli expresses his admiration: “*Þat vissa ek fyrir löngu, at ek var vel kvænt, en þó vissa ek eigi, at ek væra svá vel kvænt sem ek em.*” (*Gísla saga* ch 34: 112)

It was not the first time Auðr hit Eyjólfur. Earlier in the saga, Eyjólfur offered Auðr a purse full of silver for handing over Gísli. Auðr responds by hitting him on the nose with the purse,

⁷ Kirsten Hastrup (1985) divided the conceptual (horizontal) world view of medieval Icelanders into the inside (*innan*) and outside (*útan*) of civilisation (147–154) and placed the outlaws to the latter sphere. The division is telling in many ways but as an approach to the following materials, I suggest a not binary but tripartite division to Private – Public – Outside.

⁸ Also *Laxdæla saga*, ch 14: 31.

⁹ Likewise, in *Vatnsdæla saga* (ch 44: 118–119), a man called Þorkell kills a man called Glæði and, consequently, is pursued by his followers. He has to seek shelter inside a farm and a woman called Helga allows him to escape through her bed-closet which she seals by swinging an axe in a threatening way.

emphasising the humiliating nature of the deed: “*Haf nú þetta ok bæði skömm ok klæki.*” (*Gísla saga* ch 32: 101)

The bloody motif of a woman defending an outlaw with a purse is met elsewhere as well: in *Laxdæla saga* (ch 15) a woman called Vigdís had given a shelter to her relative Þórólfr who was dodging consequences of a killing. Her husband is ready to give in the outlaw to his pursuers against silver but Vigdís spoils his plot by warning Þórólfr who escapes. When the head of the pursuers, Ingjaldr, demands his silver to be returned, she hits him on the nose with the purse “so that blood spilled on the ground” and refuses to return it. Ingjaldr retreats indeed, and considers his journey a failure (*unir illa við sína ferð*).¹⁰

Quite contrary to this, also in *Laxdæla saga*, is the willingness of an anonym maid to hand over her outlaw lover Stígandi and to be bought to freedom in exchange (ch 38: 107–108). Her behaviour is not praised: she is not even given a name.¹¹

To avenge a person’s death was an act of posthumous solidarity, recognition of responsibility. Avenging was strictly limited to male members of the society. However, women may have got short of other means when they had a personal interest in a matter but no-one to goad. *Gísla saga* tells that after the death of Gísli Súrsson, his sister Þórdís is wining and dining the killers who were at the service of her husband, Börkr. Þórdís drops a tray of spoons in front of the table at which the head of the killers, Eyjólfr *grái* sits. When she bends down to pick them up she grasps Gísli’s sword that Eyjólfr had placed by him, and attempts to push it into his stomach under the table. The hilt of the sword hits the table and the sword hits Eyjólfr’s thigh. He survives even though the wound is serious. Börkr pays compensation for the wound, and Þórdís declares herself divorced. (ch 38: 116–117) None of the killers of Gísli is very happy about this outcome, and especially Eyjólfr, once more, “*unir illa við sína ferð*”.¹²

In *Harðar saga*, after the death of Hörður, his sister Þorbjörg is frustrated of not having anyone to avenge her brother’s death. In the evening, in the bed she places a sword on her husband but he grasps the weapon by the edge and has his hand cut (ch 38).¹³ It seems like Þorbjörg strikes him: Indriði blocks the movement of the sword (*tók í móti*) and cuts himself in the process, which can be considered not likely to happen if the movement is not fast. Indriði was among the killers of Hörður which made him liable and a target of revenge. He attempted to buy the peace from his wife by agreeing to get the head of Þorsteinn *gullknappur* who gave Hörður his death-blow. Þorbjörg’s avenging blow on Indriði with the sword reached the target, indirectly, although the ultimate victim, Þorsteinn, was crippled instead of killed. However, she lost her husband in the process.

Stabbing in bed is a motif which has been studied carefully. Hermann Pálsson (1974) stressed the nature of this stock motif as a heroic motif and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1986) as a form of a crime of passion. The stock scene has been applied in outlaw biographies in several ways / functions: in the most famous instance in *Gísla saga*, it is revenge in a reciprocal manner, and crucial one for the saga plot as the initial crime which led to Gísli’s outlawry. In a similar way, and to the degree of a literary loan in similar details, in *Droplaugarsona saga* it is a manner of revenge of a brother that leads to outlawry of the responsible (ch 13: 169–171). In *Bandamanna saga*, it is a passionate deed of the outlawed Óspákr who kills the lover of his former wife (ch 12: 360–362). The stock scene has a mythic dimension

¹⁰ Compare the expression in *Gísla saga*: “*Eyjólfr[...] unir illa sinni ferð*” ch 32: 101.

¹¹ However, Stígandi was a witch, which appears to be the factor that made his deceiving if not praised at least appropriate and unpunished.

¹² William Ian Miller (1990) considers Þórdís’ failure as an indirect expression of disapproval by the saga author (355) but the humiliating location of the wound right below the stomach is – to my mind – just as easily read as a successful one.

¹³ “*En er þau komu í sæng um kveldið þá brá Þorbjörg saxi og vildi leggja á Indriða bónda sínum en hann tók í móti og varð sár mjög á hendi.*”

as the idea of death of a settled wandering hero in a hostile alien house: Sigurðr Fáfnisbani's death as a revenge for the honour of sister but in reality for the sake of a woman's (Brynhild's) intrigues (which are motivated by passionate love) as depicted in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (Pálsson 1974). Bed as the setting of violence stresses the helplessness and unawareness of the victim. Its connotations extend to sexuality, and being the receiving party of a thrust was a shameful position (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983, 59–60).

It is worthwhile noticing that these women only wound their victims. To my knowledge, there are no reported killings by women in saga literature. This is perhaps where the limit of acceptability was. Killing would be a direct contribution to a feud, and require revenge in the structural balance of saga narration, whereas mere assistance is obviously seen as interference of an exterior agent.

When a narrative element establishes it starts to function as if given: with its face value. Connotations seize a larger share and the denotative meaning, that the propositions it consists of expressed as their sum, becomes less significant. Connotative meanings may even take a leading role. Here follows an example.

Laxdæla saga tells that Þórðr and Guðrún are both unhappy in their marriages and fond of each other. Þórðr advises Guðrún to get a lawful reason for divorce: by sewing her husband a shirt with so wide neck opening that his nipples show. She does this and divorces successfully, and reciprocally advises Þórðr to get divorced on grounds that his wife *bróka*-Auðr uses men's pants "skarsk í setgeirabrækr sem karlkonur" (ch 35: 96). Auðr avenges this humiliation after the divorce by stabbing Þórðr in his sleep.

According to Auðr's introduction in the saga, "ekki var hon væn kona né görvilig" and this made her less feminine by saga standards (Jochens 1991, 21). Initially, the accusation of Auðr wearing pants is indicated as false. However, when she takes off for the avenging journey on horse-back, the saga writer sees necessary to remark that "at that time she must have worn pants". Her masculinity is also stressed by telling that she rides the horse so fast that her male companion can hardly follow (ch 35: 97).

The detailed, tense description of her approach to Þórðr's bedcloset resembles the stabblings in bed in *Gísla saga* and *Droplaugarsona saga*. Auðr stabs Þórðr in the arm and both his nipples are wounded; the blow is so powerful that the sword is stuck in the bed. This also is an element of the stock scene of stabbing in bed (Pálsson 1974, 19–21; Meulengracht Sørensen 1986, 250–251). Her brothers admired her deed (*þeir létu vel yfir*) (98); and it was also accepted by Þórðr as a compensation to his previous deed (thus avoiding any following feuding, potentially unhonourable when a woman is involved). Jochens (1991, 9–10) considers this scene an ironic variation of the slaying in bed-theme, the passionate ethos revealed by the term describing Þórðr's turning in his wakening towards the attacker, *sniask* at which indicates sexual initiative and is used in *Gísla saga* as well (Jochens 1995, 203 n.43). According to William Ian Miller (1990, 354–355), the irony is emphasised by the fact that Auðr "cut the humiliating neckline on his flesh."

Female violence does not take place in connection with an outlaw in this passage. However, it has clear referential connections to central outlaw narratives. The narrative elements are no longer attached to outlawry only but to social margins in a more general sense: a figure that is depicted in a sexually marginal, less feminine light resembles an outlaw – her inability to function openly according to the norms of the public field (her brothers seem no help) forces her to commit the deed in secrecy, within the private field, her previous home.

Reciprocal solidarity of the outlaws towards women as a stereotyped narrative element in the saga literature indicates some degree of fixedness of the narrative characters and the connection between them. Outlaws in sagas often help women in connection to the stock motif of women, and especially their honour threatened by male ogres such as berserks. Within an

outlaw biography, the scene functions as a trial of the hero.¹⁴ The tension of the motif is created by the solitude and helplessness of the women and the unexpected appearance of the hero, though not always an outlaw. Occasionally the meeting of an outlaw and a woman creates romantic tension uncommon to saga narrative in general; already the appearance of a strange man in the domestic sphere, in absence of male family members, creates the tension. A socially independent agent is potentially free to act within the society without restrictions it has set on its members; norms as preventing people from following their instincts do not tie those outside.

Conclusion

Narrative in general is interested in the extraordinary: in this context we can talk about “saga-worthy” material. Both assistance of an outlaw and violence of a woman exceeded the limits of conventionality within the scope of saga literature, and it is no wonder that narrative elements combining them were attractive to saga writers. From the perspective of the central institutions of social interaction in medieval Iceland, the law and its manifestation in the *alþing*, both women and outlaws belonged to the social margins. Their mutual solidarity in the sagas, narratives that had this perspective, was enabled by belonging to the same social stratum. The private field, ruled by women, was an alternative refuge for the outlaw, and the one with social consequences. These consequences were the materials for saga literature and hence recorded. The emphasis on social marginality in the encounters enabled also extreme acts. Violent acts of women were way beyond the norms of feuding. A man’s reliance on the support of a woman was inappropriate but accepted in the state of outlawry just like other normally unacceptable deeds such as robbery and thievery (Andersson 1984, 501–502). The common elements in the passages dealt with in this paper indicate a semantic connection between the violence of women and an outlaw figure.¹⁵ In more general terms, they indicate that orientation of a scene (to social margins) was closely tied to the selection of narrative materials and that their usage in an ironical purpose stresses the fixedness of the semantics.

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¹⁴ The fight with a monster who claims a woman is an international medieval motif, especially popular in the *fornaldarsögur*. See Holtsmark 1951, 7; Liestøl 1930, 154.

¹⁵ Actually, Anne Heinrich’s (1986) analysis on similarities between heroic female characters resemble those of an outlaw hero to a considerable degree. Her hypothesis is that the categorical characteristics of isolation, active life, sexual initiative, wisdom and power over life and death in saga heroines derive from prepatriarchal conceptions and are adapted from the Niebelungen tradition to the saga narratives. It is worth considering whether the categories were general prerequisites and characteristics for any heroic action, regardless of sex.

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The Formation of the Kings' Sagas

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What I propose in this paper is merely a footnote to Tommy Danielsson's second volume, *Sagorna om Norges kungar* (2002b). After a detailed consideration of many specialized problems in the kings' sagas Tommy concludes with a brief chapter (pp. 385–95) on how the kings' sagas evolved into the form we now have. He reminds us of the prominent place occupied by the Norwegian kings in *Laxdæla saga*, and a number of other sagas, and goes on to review the meetings of prominent Icelanders with Norwegian monarchs particularly in the *þættir*. These contacts could have served as the point of departure for the Icelandic interest in the kings and the growth of oral narrative. Tommy also reviews the named Icelandic tradition bearers: Þorgeirr afráðskollr, Oddr Kolsson, and Hallr Þórarinsson, all of whom were among Ari's sources, and the young Icelander who learned the story of Haraldr harðráði's early adventures from Halldórr Snorrason and performed it at Haraldr's court. We do not know the exact form of such transmissions, but Tommy notes the comments made by Theodoricus and Saxo indicating that the Icelanders cultivated rich traditions, a reputation confirmed by the prologues in *Heimskringla* and by the *þættir* in *Morkinskinna*. This narrative material is generally assumed to have provided a rough basis for the written accounts later shaped by writers, but Tommy asks whether this assumption is necessarily correct and whether the underlying narrative could not have been in the form of polished storytelling (p. 392: "ett ytterst avancerat berättande"). These stories do not surface in the early period because there would have been no reason for Ari or Sæmundr or the later synoptic historians to reproduce stories that everybody knew.

At about the same time as these stories were circulating, domestic Icelandic sagas would have been evolving on the basis of legal disputes and feud stories, as Tommy argues in his first volume. A likely venue for the exchange of such stories would have been the Icelandic thingmeetings, just as the young Icelandic storyteller in *Morkinskinna* learned the story of Haraldr harðráði at thingmeetings over a series of summers. The evolution of royal stories is perhaps less easy to grasp than the evolution of native stories, but Tommy suggests several possibilities. There could have been a tradition of comparing kings, or the kings could have been of ongoing and central importance to the Icelanders, or there could have been a concretization of royal stories analogous to the *þættir*. The kings' sagas could also have been modeled on the agonistic patterns of the evolving Icelandic sagas. In turn, the growth of the kings' sagas into large books could have paved the way for the large Icelandic sagas such as *Laxdæla saga* and *Njáls saga*.

The central issue in this argument is the existence of fully developed kings' sagas in oral tradition. This is indeed a new perspective on the kings' sagas, and we may ask ourselves why it has not been aired before. One reason is surely that the very idea of an oral saga fell out of favor in Icelandic circles throughout the twentieth century. A leading project of the "Icelandic School" was to diminish our faith in the existence of full oral sagas about early Iceland, and it was only to be expected that the generations engaged in this project would not contradict themselves by advocating oral kings' sagas. On the contrary, they focused on the development of the sagas as a purely literary enterprise, perhaps ultimately based on scattered oral traditions but carried out exclusively with quill and ink. Naturally the same assumption would have carried over to the kings' sagas.

But an analogy with the native Icelandic sagas is not the only justification for believing in the piecemeal literary composition of the kings' sagas. Our information about the latter begins in fact almost a century earlier than the information on the native sagas and gives every ap-

pearance of suggesting a gradual literary evolution from smaller written denominations to larger denominations. The process began with Sæmundr and Ari at the beginning of the twelfth century and culminated in the Norwegian synoptics at the end of the century. That this was a literary sequence is supported by what seems to be a growing consensus that there is a continuity between the early epitomes and the later ones. Despite Theodoricus's protestations that he based himself not on "visa" but on "audita," it seems likely that he also used written sources and that these sources are most likely to have been Sæmundr and Ari.

The picture that emerges from the twelfth century is therefore a puzzling together of information, including oral sources but collected by writers who converted what they could learn into little digests and summaries, not stories. This picture is reinforced by the shape of the first full-length kings' sagas, Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and "The Oldest Saga of Saint Olaf" largely represented by *The Legendary Saga*. To be sure, these are full-blown biographical stories, but they are quite awkwardly composed. They do not suggest authors recording flowing narratives but rather writers who are trying to fit and join scraps of tradition. That might lead us to believe that writers in the twelfth century began by condensing the main points provided by the oral transmissions and ended by trying to expand these early indications somewhat artificially into real books, an entirely literary project. The tacit assumption might then go on to stipulate that when the master narratives appear, largely in *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, they again perfect the form of the older written narratives using strictly literary methods.

How does Tommy Danielsson's suggestion of ready-made, full-fledged oral narratives about the kings comport with this picture of writers struggling to achieve a literary form for the royal biographies from scattered traditions? If the first biographers were faced with the simple task of setting down well articulated oral stories in writing, why did they perform the task so poorly? Perhaps an analogy will help us out of this dilemma. Since the publication of Gísli Sigurðsson's and Tommy Danielsson's books no one seems any longer to have difficulty with the idea that there were fully developed sagas about early Iceland, but we must remind ourselves that these sagas also had an awkward beginning.

The question of which *Íslendingasögur* came first is of course a subject of dispute, and I can only say which sagas I think came first. I think that *all* the skald sagas, including *Gunnlaugs saga*, were early, and to that group of four I would add *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, and *Reykðæla saga*. What these sagas have in common is that they are not gracefully composed, unlike the great sagas of the next generation, *Egils saga*, *Gísla saga*, and *Laxdæla saga*. The early sagas are in some cases quite short and in other cases rather mechanically constructed around skaldic stanzas.

Accordingly we find both among the sagas about early Iceland and the kings' sagas a prefatory period of experimental and rather problematical composition before the perfected form emerges. There can now be little doubt that the domestic Icelandic sagas were drawn from oral tradition. It therefore seems clear that the transposition from oral stories to written stories was by no means straightforward. It required practice. By analogy we can suppose that oral kings' sagas would have been no easier than the *Íslendingasögur* to convert smoothly into written sagas at the first attempt. That means that the awkward first biographies of Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf Haraldsson do not exclude the possibility that there existed full oral sagas about these and other kings. It was only a question of learning to recast these oral prototypes into written sagas.

Nor should we forget that there were stories intermediate between the domestic sagas and the kings' sagas, to wit the *þættir*, in which equal space is given to the Norwegian kings and the Icelandic adventurers. The *þættir* are very much at the center of Tommy Danielsson's discussion and are at least one secure key to the operations of oral transmission, inasmuch as they can hardly be explained by any other conveyance. They provide information on the kings

and their attitudes, character, and politics, as well as on their contacts with the Icelanders. The warrant that they were circulated in the earliest period of saga writing (1200 to 1220) is the preservation of thirteen examples in *Morkinskinna*. Their focus is the Icelandic experience of the outside world, and they must therefore have been handed down in Iceland, perhaps in the families of those who experienced them. The dual focus on kings and Icelanders assures us that at least some memory of the kings would have stayed alive in Iceland.

As Tommy Danielsson points out, they also illustrate the general Icelandic preoccupation with Norwegian kings. In the early twelfth century, both Sæmundr and Ari directed their attention to the nearest kings in Norway. If their books had been preserved, the task of understanding Icelandic thinking about the Norwegian kings would perhaps have been facilitated, but even the bare existence of these books tells us something. The kings seem to have been Sæmundr's sole preoccupation, and though we may be apt to think of Ari's "konunga ævi" as a supplement to his *Íslendingabók*, simply because we have one and not the other, the situation may have been reversed. Perhaps the "konunga ævi" were the primary undertaking, and perhaps we should consider *Íslendingabók* as the supplement. In either case the Norwegian kings were a dominant factor when the Icelanders first began to write.

We are not told much about the interaction between the Norwegian kings and Iceland under the early kings down to 995, but after the advent of the conversion kings the interaction becomes charged. Olaf Tryggvason appears to have been an energetic prosyltizer well beyond the shores of Norway, and that may perhaps understate the case. He was credited with the conversion of five lands (chapter 17 of *Historia Norwegiae* and chapter 19 of *Ágrip*), and texts such as Ari's *Íslendingabók*, Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Kristni saga*, and *Laxdæla saga* lead us to believe that he exerted strong pressure on the Icelanders to convert. Indeed, it seems not unlikely that the chief reason for Iceland's conversion was Olaf's mission. This is the point at which Norway becomes a real, not to say a menacing, factor in the political life of Iceland.

The threat materializes palpably under Olaf Haraldsson, who, according to *Heimskringla* (*ÍF* 27.214–18, 240), not only tries to cajole the Icelanders into making him a gift of the island Grímsey but later holds distinguished Icelanders hostage to exert pressure. Subsequently Harald Hardrule is said to have been a great friend of the Icelanders (*Morkinskinna*, p. 170), but given his record of deceitfulness and his aggressive foreign policy, we would like to know what motivated his friendship. Adam of Bremen (Book 3, chap. 17 [p. 159]; Book 4, scholion 146 [p. 267]) states that Harald extended his rule as far as Iceland. This corresponds to nothing in the indigenous sources, but we may well wonder where Harald's contemporary Adam may have gotten the idea. In the twelfth century the Norwegian kings were sufficiently preoccupied with other matters that they did not pose much of a threat, but the very fact that the Icelanders had such a clear memory of Norwegian aspirations under the Olafs indicates that they must have had a watchful eye on Norway. Add to this that, whatever the actual history of immigration to Iceland may have been, the Icelanders clearly thought of themselves as kin to the Norwegians by lineage and culture. The national umbilical cord seems not to have been severed, and Norway remained much more than just a horizon.

We can be in no doubt that information on Norway was plentiful in Iceland, but the question to be dealt with is not one of information but of literary form. The Icelanders could of course have known a great deal about Norway without ever casting anything in narrative form. That they did think in terms of literary form is sufficiently demonstrated by the *þættir* with their identifiable morphology, but the oral existence of short *þættir* may not justify the assumption of longer sagas. Even so the evidence for oral kings' sagas is rather better than the evidence for oral *Íslendingasögur*. This evidence resides largely in the *útferðarsaga* of Harald Hardrule that Halldórr Snorrason teaches to a young Icelander, who in turn recites it at Harald's court. Tommy Danielsson refers to this recital in both of his volumes, but it may lend

itself to further exploitation. At the very least the episode suggests that such stories were formally composed with enough detail so that they had to be learned, that they were formally recited to a large group, and that they were long enough to be presented for two weeks. They were formal stories, not just random accounts.

Not only that, but the story of Harald's adventures in the Mediterranean, as it is told in *Morkinskinna* and by extension in *Heimskringla*, was clearly a highly dramatic story of intrigue in the Byzantine court, military prowess and ingenuity, and the accumulation of fabulous wealth, a thirteenth-century counterpart to *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The oral version that held the attention of King Harald's court for two weeks must have shared some of these qualities; it too must have been a rousing tale of derring-do and high romance.

I have indicated that there seems to be a tacit assumption that the evolution of the kings' sagas from notes and summaries in the twelfth century to epic canvases in the thirteenth century was a strictly literary process. That is to say, people simply learned to write better and better and more fully as time went on. At the same time we have evidence that there were fullblown, dramatic tales in oral form. The awkward formulations in the twelfth-century epitomes and the first attempts at biography teach us that the ostensibly simple option of transcribing oral stories was not adopted. The first efforts at duplicating what may have been rather good oral stories fell short and converted good stories into not very successful books. The art of capturing good stories on parchment was a gradual process, learned slowly and a little painfully. It seems to have combined a knowledge of stories with a faltering acquisition of writing skills.

Vésteinn Ólason has recently used the word "imitation" to describe this process and refers to Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's earlier use of the same term (2007:34): "The narrative style and technique of the sagas shows every sign of being an imitation, conscious or unconscious, of oral narrative." "Imitation" may well be as close as we can get to a resolution of this problem. Vésteinn uses it with reference to the *Íslendingasögur*, but, following Tommy Danielsson, I have no difficulty in extending the usage to the kings' sagas as well. Indeed, it seems to me that the kings' sagas reveal the nature of the imitation more clearly and more fully by making the stages in the development more palpable. The first stage was to skim the highpoints by way of a summation. The second stage was to add detail in order to approximate at least the length of the oral sagas. The third stage was then to imitate the narrative style as well as the narrative dimensions of the oral stories.

The progress from brief summary of the main points in the oral transmission to a fuller recapitulation in the first biographies and finally to a recreation of the dramatic story line is clearer in the kings' sagas than in the *Íslendingasögur*, but the same line can also be detected, though more tentatively, in the latter. The famous summary of *Hænsa-Póris saga* found in Ari's *Íslendingabók* is analogous to the epitomes on the Norwegian kings and represents the first stage in the narrative development. The second stage is more difficult to match because the differences in the quality of composition among the early *Íslendingasögur* are less palpable than in the kings' sagas. We can nonetheless make it plausible that the earliest *Íslendingasögur* were less well assembled than the later masterpieces. If I were to choose one *Íslendingasaga* to illustrate the original defects of composition, it might be *Kormáks saga*, a saga that does not so much tell the story as it extracts the main moments of the biography from a large collection of stanzas. Dialogue and drama are largely missing.

There is also a good match in the chronology of these developments. If *Egils saga* was written as early as the 1220s, we might infer that the third stage in the *Íslendingasögur* was reached in the same time frame as the culmination of the kings' sagas in *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. These were the highpoints in both genres and they represent a level seldom attained again.

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Whirls, horses and ships: Towards an interpretation of the early picture stones on Gotland

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The early picture stones on Gotland have not been discussed to the same extent as the later ones, mainly due to the formalized and repetitive character of the images. However, in recent years archaeological investigations have proved that some of these monuments are much older than previously assumed. This new chronological context of the early picture stones opens up for new comparisons in time and space. From such comparisons new attempts of interpreting the iconography of the early picture stones will be presented in the paper.

Why be afraid?

On the practical uses of legends

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1. The practical side of dragon-slaying

Sigurðr Fáfnisbani's great achievement was slaying a dragon and as the abundance of texts about this Germanic hero indicate, that was not a trivial feat. In the Germanic North, dragon-slayers seem to have been in a heroic class of their own, albeit a class with only two members: Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Ragnarr loðbrók. There are several texts about each, pictures as well as narratives, but there is also the legend – a different kind of text – which materialises in these medieval texts, of which *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* will be studied below. The scholar who wishes to say something about the heroic dragon-slayer myth is trying to interpret this text but it is not tangible. A myth does not exist on paper; thus it becomes necessary to work from its versions in narratives such as the *fornaldarsögur* and use them as a pathway to the essence of the myth.

There are two reasons for this. Myths and legends always express themselves through language; there is no clear separation between beliefs or ideas and their linguistic expression.¹ My second reason is an interest in the practical uses of myths to an imagined audience, in this case 13th, 14th and 15th century Icelanders, the audience of *Snorra-Edda*, *Reginismál*, *Fáfnismál*, *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*. It seems logical to approach the myth as they did, through texts such as the *fornaldarsögur*.

What kind of text is a legend or a myth? There is no shortage of definitions and I will keep myself to the functionality of myths and legends. This is the aspect of the myth lost to a modern audience that does not believe in the myth and starts out impervious to its possible explanatory value; it tends not to regard stories such as *Völsunga saga* as “practical literature” and will miss some of its value to its audience. I speak here of functionality of the myth rather than its meaning; there is no real need to distinguish between the two when looking at the meaning of the myth from the perspective of an audience that wants to put it to some use. The functionality of myths entails that a myth always exists in two ages: on one hand in the ancient past where it has been placed and on the other in the present, in the lives of its audience. The myth is very distant, as deities and venerated figures have to be, and yet it exists within ourselves and thus everywhere. Myths can be complex but their essence tends at the same time to be very simple, even mundane. Myths are supposed to explain the world and invent a harmony between the inner and the outer, the vast and the small, thus helping a simple human, in his smallness, to grasp a complex world. Life is not static, neither are myths. They are narratives about movement, a quest with a clear purpose that is often absent from our everyday lives, and where the hardships of the hero provide the myth with an intensity that may be lacking in our daily existence.

¹ I see no reason to distinguish between myths and legends in this study. Demarcation between the two is far from clear and definitions vary. Bascom (1965) defines myths as having non-human principal characters and belonging to the ancient past, whereas legends are closer in time and have human principal characters. This definition has been criticised by Csapo (2005, 3–9) who questions the need for such a clear demarcation. To clarify my stance, I understand “legend” as a traditional narrative, not necessarily historically accurate (though purporting to be). “Myth” is used mainly about cosmological narratives with an explanatory function. It could be argued that legends serve a similar function, although less overtly. And as I understand it, both the Sigurðr and the Ragnarr legends are a part of a larger unity which is really a myth, that of the dragon-slaying youth.

Myths are a paradox; on the one hand they have to be lofty and cosmological, explaining the biggest things imaginable to men (god, the sky, time, life), and on the other hand they give meaning to the small and insignificant private lives of ordinary people. If myths and legends did not address the ordinariness of existence, they would lose much of their force. And this is what one is faced with when studying *Völsunga saga* and other narrative versions of the Sigurðr legend: the meaning of an extraordinary hero such as Sigurðr and a huge, mythical beast such as a dragon to the existence of, for example, poor farmers and their families in a peaceful Icelandic countryside. As the myth is ubiquitous, it assumes that there is a Sigurðr inside every man and that the legend has a function for everyone. But Sigurðr is a king as well, and that is another important function of the legend, to sustain the charisma of rulership.² The legendary past is always two-dimensional: it concerns *both* society and the life of the individual.

The mythical hero is gone but still present, the legend is not just storytelling about the past but also an afterlife for the hero who keeps serving his didactic function: this hero matters to the everyday life of his audience. From the 17th century onwards, Sigurðr Fáfnisbani became more and more distant, first as a figure from a very distant heroic past, someone who represented what we *were* instead of what we *are*. Then, after this heroic past had been dismantled and was no longer considered true history,³ he became at best a part of a cultural heritage that had stagnated and is no longer vibrant, at worst a fabrication, a myth in the negative sense of the word which all rationalists must uphold, something untrue and consequently not very interesting to the historian.

But in the Middle Ages the legendary hero is both dead and alive. The medieval view of the past was not grounded in a firm belief in evolution or a sense of change where the past is seen as alien to the present; thus legends could serve as examples and guidelines (see e.g. Burke 1969, 1–6). Medieval men projected themselves back on to the men of the past, these men were described as contemporaries and their ideals were those of the High Middle Ages. In the culture of feudal society in Europe the heroes of old become medieval knights: Achilles and Hector, Alexander the Great, Caesar, King David, King Arthur and Charlemagne. And this is how the Sigurðr legend works in 13th and 14th century Iceland; it is historical and yet topical and timeless. Therefore it has a didactic function and is far more intimate than it later became.

In what follows I will focus on the personal rather than the public function of the legend although it probably had practical value for its West Nordic audience both as an analysis of society and of the psychology of the individual. My main subject will be how the legend expresses, but also to a degree problematises, the concepts of youth and courage, through the figures of the hero and the dragon.

2. Killing a dragon in the North

The dragons killed by Sigurðr and Ragnarr are not the only two dragons in the medieval Norse-Icelandic textual corpus; indeed there are several serpents of various types to be found there. And yet Ragnarr and Sigurðr stood out among Northern European dragon-slayers, especially Sigurðr who is the principal Germanic example of the dragon-slaying myth that Watkins (1995, 297–303) has located all over the Indo-European world.

The dragon provides the Sigurðr legend with its core. Thus understanding the legend means understanding the meaning of dragons to its late medieval audience. Here I will focus on the narrative purpose and the practical function of the monster, as explained above. There

² I have written about the myth of rulership in the medieval North at some length: Ármann Jakobsson 1997, 89–154.

³ Whereas *Völsunga saga* can be regarded as a part of a tradition of historical writing (see e.g. Andersson 1999).

is also the possibility of a religious purpose that I will not discuss any further here but which has been discussed by other scholars (see e.g. Ásdís Egilsdóttir 1999). The draconic function I am mostly interested in is fear. While dragons are not a part of the daily existence of most people, fear certainly is, and I will argue that fear provides the dragon-slaying legend with a clear purpose.

J.R.R. Tolkien (1936, p. 11) exaggerated perhaps when he said that in the North, dragons were “as rare as they are dire”,⁴ but he is right in that the *flugdrekar* that Gull-Þórir and his companions slay in *Þorskfirðinga saga* when stealing their hoard (pp. 185–88) do not seem as terrible as the mighty Fáfnir whom Sigurðr kills.⁵ The dragon that Björn Hítðlakappi slays in his story hardly seems worth a mention, neither in this study nor indeed in *Bjarnar saga* itself where it is referred to most perfunctorily (p. 124),⁶ and even though the bully Þorkell hákr in *Njáls saga* boasts of having killed another *flugdreki*, he is put in his place by Skarp-héðinn: killing a dragon does not seem to compare to the heroism of skating over a frozen river to kill a chieftain in his sixties accompanied by seven men (Brennu-Njáls saga, 303).⁷ Even though Haraldr harðráði’s mettle is put to the test when making short work of the emperor of Constantinople’s dungeon dragon in Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* and *Morkinskinna* (a type of monster familiar not only to medievalists but to everyone who has seen *The Return of the Jedi*), he emerges unchanged from the pit. His dragon is terrible but not the making of the man (*Morkinskinna*, 80–82; *Gesta Danorum: Danmarkshistorien 2*, 10). The dragon-slayings of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Ragnarr are thus the only clear representations of the powerful dragon-slaying myth,⁸ and the word *dreki* may not be the best guide to the *draconitas* of Sigurðr and Ragnarr’s antagonists.⁹

The dragon which Björn Hítðlakappi kills earns him no special status in the Mýrasýsla. On the other hand, Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Ragnarr loðbrók became the most celebrated heroic figures of the medieval North. Ragnarr pales by comparison to Sigurðr yet his dragon-slaying is not only the subject matter of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* but is also referred to in several other Old Norse texts: *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* and *Norna-Gests þátr*. He also figures in Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* and in *Hauksbók*.¹⁰

Sigurðr is even more distinguished and makes an appearance all over the Germanic world: in *Nibelungenlied*, in *Beowulf*, in images carved on Swedish runestones, and in Old Norse texts, including *Snorra-Edda*, *Þiðreks saga* and *Völsunga saga*. His story is worthy of being retold at length alongside the mythical narratives of the Codex Regius of the Elder Edda, such as *Völuspá*, *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, and he even makes it into the late 14th century *Þorsteins þátr skelks* in Flateyjarbók as a prime example of a heroic heathen, before becoming the hero of several post-mediaeval ballads in various parts of Scandinavia.¹¹

⁴ On this exaggeration, see Evans 2005, see esp. pp. 218–21 and pp. 241–48.

⁵ These dragons are so large they can carry a man in their jaw, they fly, spew fire and poison, and yet the narrative is devoid of any sense of wonder or danger, which may be regarded as typical of this saga type; see Sävborg 2009. At the end of the saga, it is suggested in an equally offhand fashion that Þórir himself may have changed into a dragon instead of dying (p. 226).

⁶ After Björn has killed the dragon, it is never referred to again.

⁷ According to the saga, Þorkell has also fought a “finngálkn” (a chimera).

⁸ Tolkien also included the *Beowulf* dragon but, for some reason, not Ragnarr’s dragon (p. 11). Since space is limited, the dragon in *Beowulf* will not be dealt with here. At first glance this narrative might seem to provide a useful counter-example to my main argument here, since Beowulf does not encounter the dragon in his youth. On the other hand, he does not survive the battle either.

⁹ The word is not Germanic but Greek (see e.g. Evans 2005, 217), and neither is there a clear separation between the Germanic dragon and its Indo-European counterparts (Evans, 221–30).

¹⁰ On the origins and the popularity of the Ragnarr legend, see McTurk 1991, esp. pp. 53–62.

¹¹ See e.g. Rowe 2006, who provides a good review of the diversity of how Sigurðr functions in the texts.

Þorsteins þáttur skelks is preserved in *Flateyjarbók* which presents its audience with a rigorously Augustinian world view in which the heathen past is outlawed (Rowe 2005, 65–97). But who is Sigurðr? Why is his legend so popular and why does the late 14th century editorial team of *Flateyjarbók* care about this prehistoric heroic figure? As outlined in *Ragnars saga*, Sigurðr acquires some significance as the mythical ancestor of the perhaps equally mythical King Harald Fairhair of Norway and other Northern kings.¹² However, that is hardly enough to explain his elevated status in the culture of the medieval North. It seems more likely that his importance lies in the dragon-slaying itself, myth rather than history, a feat which also manages to elevate Ragnarr loðbrók over most other prehistoric viking kings.

3. Youth and the dragon-slayer

Even though Ragnarr loðbrók is actually Sigurðr Fáfnisbani's son-in-law in the preserved *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, the two heroes are quite dissimilar. There are also significant differences in the most detailed narratives of the two killings. With Ragnarr, the emphasis is on his ingenuity and on the hairy breeches which he uses to escape the poison of the worm and which provide him with a lasting identity. In the Sigurðr narrative, the emphasis is on his desire for revenge and the influence from his fosterfather Reginn. Still, there are shared elements. We find evidence for this in the *fornaldarsögur* variations of the myth, in *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, presumably composed in the 13th or early 14th century but preserved together in the early 15th century manuscript NKS 1824 b 4to.¹³ I use these texts as representative for the myth in this paper, not because they are the oldest or the most original variant but they do demonstrate a possible function of the myth for a late medieval audience who encountered it through these texts.

The first important common denominator, emphasised in both sagas, is that the dragon-slayers are youths. When Reginn first presents Sigurðr with the task of killing a dragon, Sigurðr remarks that he is still little more than a child (“vér erum enn lítt af barns aldri”) (p. 33), and it is only a short while later that he avenges his father before going to face the dragon. His youth is also made clear in the ensuing conversation between the dragon and his slayer. Fáfnir calls him “sveinn” and keeps asking about his father (p. 42).¹⁴ In *Ragnars saga*, Ragnarr claims to be 15 years of age when he kills the dragon and the earl's daughter he has liberated finds him more like an ogre than a man of such a young age: “þykkisk hún eigi vita hvárt hann er mennskur maðr eða eigi, fyrir því at henni þykkir vöxtr hans vera svá mikill sem sagt er frá óvættum á þeim aldri sem hann hafði” (p. 119). It is an important factor in both stories, in their *fornaldarsögur* form, that the hero is young, still a teenager, a man between childhood and adulthood.¹⁵

The youth of the hero means that the climactic event of the hero's life is placed early in the narrative. What happens after the dragon-slaying is often a long decline. Ragnarr survives but relinquishes the place of honour in his story to his wife and sons after having killed the dragon. Sigurðr makes a mess out of his life, gets entangled with two different women, one too many, and ends up getting killed by his in-laws. But why must the dragon-slayer be a youth? To address this, we have to go to the second common denominator of the Sigurðr and Ragnarr narratives: the bravery necessary to confront the worm.

¹² As evidenced by the manuscript AM 415 4to from the early 14th century where Ragnarr is the purported ancestor of the kings of Denmark, Norway and Sweden (on this manuscript, see Sverrir Jakobsson 2005, 50).

¹³ This manuscript is used in the edition of Olsen (*Völsunga saga ok Ragnar saga loðbrókar*); all references to both *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* are to this edition but I have normalised the spelling.

¹⁴ This is even more evident in the *Fáfnismál* version of their conversation, see *Norræn fornkvæði*, 219–26, esp. stanzas 1–8 and 12–13.

¹⁵ This makes perfect sense if the myth is seen as an initiation ritual (see e.g. Eliade 1974, 17–18) but that is not the aspect which interests me here.

4. Fear is the key

In *Ragnars saga*, when the worm that dwells on Þóra's casket starts to grow, people start to become terrified of it: “Þorir engi maðr at koma til skemmunnar fyrir þessum ormi” (p. 117), making her a virtual recluse. Fear also follows Fáfnir the dragon; after he is first mentioned Sigurðr remarks: “Kann ek kyn þessa omrs þótt vér séim ungir ok hefi ek spurt at engi þorir at koma á mót honum fyrir vaxtar sakar ok illsku” (p. 33). When Reginn has extracted from Sigurðr a promise to kill the dragon, he keeps expressing doubts that Sigurðr will make good on his promise and when they have come to the heath where Fáfnir dwells, he starts goading his young apprentice again: “Eigi má þér ráð ráða er þú ert við hvatvetna hræddr” (p. 41). The text is full of talk of fear and not by chance; what the two dragons have in common is the fear they inspire in others.

Getting back to a possible symbolic role for the dragon in the myth, both dragons may be said to represent, even embody, terror, and in *Völsunga saga* this terror is objectified in the Helmet of Fear (the *Ægishjálmr*) that Fáfnir possesses. As the dragon remarks in *Völsunga saga*: “Hafðir þú eigi frétt þat hversu allt fólk er hrætt við mik ok við minn ægishjálmr?” (p. 42). The dragon seems almost vexed that the young hero is not suitably scared by him, but the Helmet of Fear has to be taken seriously. If this part of *Völsunga saga* is compared to *Fáfnismál*, one notes a change from a Helmet of Fear which might be a metaphor or an expression¹⁶ to an actual concrete helmet that Sigurðr can carry away with him, along with a golden byrnie and the sword Hrotti (p. 47). What does not change is the symbolic meaning of the helmet. The dragon has a Helmet of Fear because it is terror itself.

Tolkien believed that the Beowulf poet did not like dragons “as a sober zoologist” (1936, 11), indirectly warning against regarding a dragon as a mere beast. It is, of course, a hybrid of several actual animals, with wings and its scales, its claws and its serpent-like length, but there is also the terrible fire that it breathes (in the preserved *Völsunga saga* the emphasis is more on its venom) which is not taken from the animal kingdom but from the human mind, from our fear of the destructive power of fire. As *Völsunga saga* indicates a dragon is both poisonous and has magical powers, two attributes greatly feared in the Middle Ages (pp. 41–44). It is no accident that fear is referred to in both narratives, *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, right before the young hero accomplishes his feat, and that a dragon should be in the possession of a Helmet of Fear that causes all to cower.

In his pivotal study of North European dragons, Jonathan Evans sees the main mythic function of dragons as being metaphors of avarice (2005, 261–69). It is true that in both these legends (Sigurðr and Ragnarr) there is a clear connection between dragons and gold and thus with greed, both the dragon's own and that of others. Although it can hardly be ascertained what the most important mythic function of a mythic narrative might be or whether its functionality changed through the ages, one can at least say that in the late medieval variant in *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* fear seems to be accentuated above everything else in the dragon-slaying narratives and greed is hardly mentioned in connection with the two heroes. Although desire for gold may be a motivation for Reginn, desire for vengeance is more prominently voiced and gold seems to provide no motivation for Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, even though he takes Fáfnir's treasure when he sees it. It is quite unclear what possesses Ragnarr to fight his dragon; although he ends up in deep mourning for Þóra, he has never seen her before the fight, and it seems more logical that his motivation is heroism for its own sake, since the key fact in the narrative preceding his killing seems to be how terrifying the worm is and how nobody dares to approach it.

¹⁶ “Bera ægishjálmr” is indeed an expression in Icelandic (see Jón Friðjónsson 1993, 736) but it is hard to say which comes first: the metaphor or an actual helmet. The present author's money would be on the expression.

Although a dragon can be both an embodiment of its own savage greed and the fear of others, both *Ragnars saga* and *Völsunga saga* indicate that for the youthful hero, the first is not very important but the second all-important. When Sigurðr has killed the dragon, *Völsunga saga* describes him with loving attention to detail, his armour and his weapons, his gracious manners, his chestnut hair and curls, his sharp eyes and his powerful shoulders. And it ends with this statement: “Eigi skorti hann hug ok aldri varð hann hræddr” (p. 57). If we see the dragon as an embodiment of terror, it is clear that this is why young Sigurðr defeats it. For the fearless youth, fear does not exist and thus it can be vanquished. In this myth, overcoming the fear of the dragon means its automatic destruction.

It is fitting that Sigurðr should later make an appearance in the *Þorsteins þáttr skelks*, a late 14th century adaption of the folktale ‘The Boy Who Knew No Fear’ (AT 326). This tale is a reminder that there are actually two kinds of fearlessness: that one which is a handicap, a defect in a young man too simple to know fear, too limited to understand what it is (Aarne/Thompson 1961, 114–15).¹⁷ This is not how Sigurðr’s lack of fear is defined; his bravery makes him more rather than less of a man.

5. Youth, bravery and dragons

One might not expect to find a place in the lives of ordinary people for dragon-slaying, but fear provides that place. Although Sigurðr is exceptional, his courage is something that everyone in the audience can relate to, since the audience is composed of people who have known fear and had to rely on bravery, though it also seems likely that their relationship with it varied quite a bit.¹⁸

On a personal level, this legend also concerns the ages of man, an important medieval theme (see esp. Burrows 1986). There are all kinds of fear, and indeed many kinds of bravery: existential, moral and physical. The fear of the dragon can be characterised as a strong physical fear. In fact, the dragon is intensely physical, savage and bestial and its threat is of death itself: instant, brutal and sudden. It is thus logical that the man who may defeat a dragon should be far removed from death and full of vitality and zest, the life-force that some call Eros.¹⁹ In fact, the perfect person to conquer this image of death is a youth, a teenager like our heroes.

Sigurðr somewhat insolently says to Fáfnir as the latter lies dying: “Fárr er gamall harðr, ef hann er í bernsku blautr” (p. 43). The youth nonchalantly regards courage as his own property and the disregard for physical fear is indeed a well-known characteristic of youth – or at least the myth of youth. Youths may ignore consequences, scorn danger and brave death in various ways. This is all part of an erotic existence: being far removed from death, it poses no danger. Youths often possess great physical courage but are on the other hand given to social fears: being unpopular among peers, talking to strangers at parties, being uncool, being the object of scorn. Killing a dragon seems easy by comparison.

In feudal society such tempestuous youths formed a social group; Georges Duby has spoken of bands of aristocratic youths in 12th century France who formed “the cutting edge of feudal aggressiveness” (1968, 200), and from 13th century Iceland we have the example of the youthful band of the Þorvaldssynir of Vatnsfjörðr who go to conquer their own dragon, the

¹⁷ On the history of this folktale in Iceland see Lindow 1978.

¹⁸ On the cultural importance and the representations of fear in the Middle Ages, see e.g. Dinzelbacher 1996.

¹⁹ In Freudian psychology (from Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) onwards), it is customary to acknowledge two opposing forces; the life force (Eros) and the death force (Thanatos), although Freud himself did not use these concepts. See esp. Marcuse 1972, 35–54. As the death force involves repetition and conservative behaviour, it makes sense to see the aggressiveness of youth, including the fearlessness and courtship of death, rather as a part of its erotic energy.

mighty chieftain Sturla Sighvatsson, but whose spirited attack fails in becoming heroic, since all they encounter are women and unarmed men whom they kill and wound instead with all the frenzy that might have come in handy against a dragon (Ármann Jakobsson 2003).

Youth and fear go hand in hand in the dragon-slaying legends of Sigurðr and Ragnarr. In both instances, the dragon-slaying takes place in the hero's youth and is the climax of the hero's life. The fortitude the hero needs is the fortitude of youth, that zest for life and belief in one's invincibility that leads to disregard for death and fearlessness in face of physical danger, and in both *fornaldarsögur* youth and fearlessness are the hero's main attributes. As previously related, neither Sigurðr Fáfnisbani nor Ragnarr loðbrók do so well after their dragon-slaying. The sagas' version of the myth seem to reflect a youthful point of view: killing dragons is something one can accomplish but relationships with in-laws are complicated and messy and beyond one's skills.

Sigurðr is partly superhuman, descended from Óðinn and glamorous beyond everything the audience of *Völsunga saga* is likely to have experienced. And yet he is also "everyman" at a certain age, ruled by his lust for life and contempt for death. His fearlessness may be lofty but it also something all may experience. The legend is not about something else; it is about us.

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Sigurðr Fáfnisbani as Nineteenth-Century Man.

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The figure of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani takes a central position in the works of Richard Wagner and William Morris, two revolutionary writers who themselves stand at the centre of the nineteenth century. Both these men looked back on the Middle Ages in order to comment on their own times and to look forward into the future that they hoped would soon come about.

This paper examines the medieval sources used by Wagner and Morris and asks what they found there that made the figure of Sigurðr resonate for them as a contemporary man. It shows how eddic and saga accounts of Sigurðr feed into nineteenth-century debates on power and anarchism, the nature of masculinity, concepts of heredity, and finally, above all, the loss of certitude in ethics and epistemology.

upp ek þér verp ok á austrvega:
death overseas and the dead in the east

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In this paper I will explore the idea, once raised by Gabriel Turville-Petre, that the complex of beings made up by *jötnar*, *þursar* and *tröll*, as they are described in Old Icelandic mythological texts, ‘are the devouring demons of death [and] may even be the dead’. This hypothesis is tenable inasmuch as the *jötnar*, the forefathers of the Æsir, seem to have occupied a position within the Norse cosmos in relation to the Æsir commensurable with that of the ancestral dead in relation to the living. A corollary of this is that the sphere of the cosmos occupied by the *jötnar* may be reckoned a realm of death and of the dead, one of several accommodated within Norse cosmography.

Taking the poem *Lokasenna* as my point of departure, I will first test this hypothesis in the light of ideas expressed in certain mythological texts (*Snorra Edda*, *Þrymskviða*, *Eiríksmál*). Drawing on direct and indirect cosmographical statements in these sources, a structural analysis suggests that the identification is valid. Applying an anthropological perspective, I will ask whether the attitude of the Æsir towards the often malevolent, incursive *jötnar* is congruous with attitudes of the living towards the unquiet ancestral dead, attitudes suggested both by texts (saga accounts of revenants) and by archaeological finds (burial practices).

Snorri located the *jötnar* and their ilk in the east (*Þórr var farinn í austrvega at berja tröll*). I will ask whether there was an element of recursivity in medieval ideas of the lands to the east of Scandinavia, whether they may have derived in part from cosmographic conceptions; did Norse cosmography and Norse geography accord on this point? Here I draw evidence from runic inscriptions and picture stones with a provenance in coastal communities of eastern Scandinavia, for whom the death of loved ones in the lands on the far shore of the Baltic was a commonplace. In their religious response to this everyday experience of death, contemplated against the background of pan-Scandinavian(?) cosmographical conceptions, these communities may have mythicised the East as a place where the dead took up permanent residence, and the *austrvegar* as something akin to Helveg.

In exploring these themes I will problematize the validity of comparing the statements and images on eastern Scandinavian commemorative stones raised in the late heathen era with the perhaps over-rationalised accounts of cosmography found in western Scandinavian manuscripts of the Christian era.

‘Viðbætur’ Hauks Erlendssonar eða hefðbundið Landnámuefni

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Inngangur

Síðustu ár hefur mönnum verið tamast að líta á Landnámu sem stutta og ósögulega. Hér hafi verið um að ræða nytsama skrá sem síðan hafi smátt og smátt fengið á sig annars konar svip vegna dugnaðar þeirra Sturlu, Styrmis, Hauks og jafnvel Melamannsins svokallaða því allir eiga þeir að hafa skotið inn í Landnámugerðir sínar sögulegu efni. Hér er að sjálfsögðu um að ræða tilgátu manna um ákveðna þróun, en ekki heilagan sannleik, þó stundum bregðist menn við eins og um óumbreytanlegar staðreyndir sé að ræða. Þær miðaldagerðir af Landnámu sem varðveittar eru þ.e. Sturlubók, Hauksbók og Melabók bera þess allar merki að vera sögulega uppbyggðar. Sú túlkun að textinn hafi þróast úr stuttum skráarkenndum texta í sögulegar frásagnir styðst því ekki við raunverulegar gerðir. Hér er um að ræða tilgátu um nytsama skrá 12. aldar manna. Einni gerð, Melabók sem eingöngu er varðveitt í brotum, hefur verið hampað af fræðimönnum sem besta fulltrúa upprunalegustu gerðar Landnámu. Hún er vissulega styttri en hinar gerðirnar og með lítilsháttar annars konar efnisröðun. Melabók hefur því að einhverju leyti fallið betur að hugmyndum manna um elstu gerð. Jón Jóhannesson var áhrifaríkur fræðimaður á sviði Landnámurannsókna. Niðurstaða hans um hina týndu Styrmissbók sem forrit allra varðveittra gerða hefur öðlast töluverða hylli. Forsendan sem hann gekk út frá var jafnframt sú að Melabók væri sú gerð sem næst stæði upprunagerðinni. Sú hugmynd hefur verið ríkjandi frá síðari hluta 19. aldar en hefur verið andmælt m.a af höfundum þessarar greinar (Auður Ingvarsdóttir 2004:91–118). Menn vitna enn til þess sem staðreyndar að Haukur hafi bætt við texta sinn frá óþekktum heimildum, munnmælum og týndum sögum. Fyrir nokkrum árum tók fræðimaður dæmi af þessu vinnulagi Hauks til þess að rökstyðja að munnmæli frá landnámsöld hefðu verið lifandi að minnsta kosti fram yfir 1300. Hann vísar í þessa hugmynd um verklag Hauks Erlendssonar á eftirfarandi hátt: ‘tekur inn nýtt efni í sína gerð Landnámu sem ætla má að hann hafi ekki getað sótt sér til ritaðra bóka.’ (Gísli Sigurðsson 2002:58).

Haukur Erlendsson gefur greinargóðar upplýsingar um forrit sitt og segist notast við tvær Landnámur þ.e. eftir þá Sturlu Þórðarson og hins vegar eftir Styrmi hinn fróða. Nú er Sturlubók varðveitt í afriti og Hauksbók að hluta til í eiginhandriti Hauks sjálfs, sá texti sem Haukur hefur fram yfir Sturlubók ætti samkvæmt hans eigin orðum að vera frá Styrmissbók kominn. Vegna þeirrar upprunakenningar sem verið hefur við lýði hafa menn efast um orð Hauks. Í stað þess að telja sértexta Hauks kominn frá Styrmissbókarforriti hans er gert ráð fyrir ýmsum heimildum þekktum og óþekktum. Út frá þessari hugmynd hefur verið fullyrt: ‘að miklu skiptir um heimildargildi Landnámutexta hvort hann er frá Styrmissbók runninn eða er viðbætur Sturlu og Hauks.’ (Jakob Bendiktsson 1968: 53) Hér verða svokallaðir ‘viðaukar’ Hauks um Þorstein tjaldstæðing skoðaðir. Getum við ályktað hvort þeir eru úr Styrmissbók eða glötuðum þætti?

Styrmissbókartexti Hauks.

Er hægt að gera sér einhverja hugmynd um hina glötuðu Styrmissbók? Er ekki sennilegt megnið af umframtexta Hauks fram yfir Sturlubók sé frá Styrmi komið? Sá skilningur er fyllilega í samræmi við orð Hauks Erlendssonar um verklag sitt, ‘hafða ek þat ór hvorri er

framar greindi' (H.354¹). Eru einhver rök fyrir því að draga orð Hauks sjálfs í efa? Á sínum tíma taldi Landnámuútgefandinn Finnur Jónsson vafalaust að 'de øvrige plus-stykker hos Haukr må med størst sandsynlighed henføres til Styrme.' (1900:11). Jón Jóhannesson taldi Hauk hafa notast við fjölda annarra heimilda og fullyrti að Haukur hefði: 'víða farið eftir öðrum heimildum en bókum Sturlu og Styrmis, munnlegum eða rituðum.' (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:175). Nú er Styrmisbók gjörsamlega glötuð og því verður að telja þetta heldur hæpna fullyrðingu hjá Jóni. Þessi skoðun hefur þó fengið byr í fræðunum (Jakob Benediktsson 1968:52). Álit margra fræðimanna á verklagi Hauks er tilkomið vegna þess að Melabók er metin of mikils. Jón Jóhannesson jafnar hinni glötuðu Styrmisbók t.d. við Melabók, segir að hún verði 'að teljast bezti fulltrúi Styrmisbókar, sem nú er völ á.' (1941:174). Þetta viðhorf hans kemur hvað eftir annað fram t.d. 'Melabók var að mestu eftirrit Styrmisbókar[...]' (1941:225). Þar sem að Melabók var í hans huga besti fulltrúi Styrmisbókar er sértexti Hauks metinn eftir því hvort sjá má merki um hann í Melabók eða ekki. Haukur Erlendsson er svo talinn hafa breytt forriti sínu eftir fjölmörgum heimildum og það fullyrt að 'frásagnir þær, sem eru eftir hann sjálfan, en ekki teknar upp úr öðrum ritum, eru ekki vel til þess fallnar, að vekja traust á honum sem heimildarmanni.' (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:207). Hvernig er úrskurðað um upprunalegan texta forrita Hauks? Hér eru það víslega brotin af Melabók sem gefa upprunalegan texta forrits Hauksbókar til kynna. Ekki er hægt skv. Jóni Jóhannessyni að greina sérstakan Styrmisbókartexta hjá Hauki 'nema þar sem brotin af Mb. eru til samanburðar.' (1941:175). Melabókartextinn hefur þannig úrskurðarvald á hvaðan texti Hauks er ættaður. Þessi falska vitneskja um Styrmisbók hefur leitt af sér ýmis konar vandræði. Ekki er hægt að fallast á þá tengingu að Melabókartextinn sé nær óskekull vitnisburður um Styrmisbókartextann. Þessar getgátur um verklag Hauks eru heldur ekki í samræmi við það sem við sjáum í texta þeim sem hann hefur eftir öðru forriti sínu Sturlubók. Það er sláandi hve mikinn hluta af Landnámutextanum hann hefur tekið óbreyttan eða lítið breyttan úr Sturlubókarforriti sínu eins og hægt er að sannfærast um með samanburði við Sturlubókarhandritið sem varðveitt er í afskrift frá 17. öld (Jakob Benediktsson 1968:51).

Hvaðan er Þorsteinn tjaldstæðingur upprunninn?

Það er upplýsandi að líta á sögulega frásögn af landnámsmanninum Þorsteini tjaldstæðingi til þess að greina hvernig Jón Jóhannesson reiknar út viðauka Hauks Erlendssonar. Þorsteinn tjaldstæðingur var landnámsmaður í Rangárþingi og segir af honum í öllum varðveittum Landnámugerðum (H.314; S.356–358, og Sk.356 bls.169–171). Á enn einum stað er frásögn af Þorsteini tjaldstæðingi, en það er í Flateyjarbók. Þar er frásagnarþáttur um hann í þeim hluta Flateyjarbókar sem telst til bókarauka frá lokum 15. aldar (Jonna Louis-Jensen 1969:235–250). Þessi bókarauki fjallar um konungana Magnús og Harald harðráða og svo er þar að finna nokkra þætti, sem eiga það sameiginlegt að fjalla um samskipti manna við konunga, þar er m.a. þátturinn um Þorstein tjaldstæðing (Flateyjarbók IV:183–230). Nú er það ljóst að um rittensl er að ræða á milli Landnámu og þáttarins eins og auðvelt er að sannfærast um með samanburði. Fyrir utan næstum samhljóða upphafskafla og landnámslýsingar, er að finna öll aðalatriðin í báðum gerðum² Landnámu og þættinum. Eftirfarandi atriða er getið a) skattheimtu Haralds hárfagra, b) sendiferðar Þórorms, c) dráps Ásgríms, d) hernaðar Þorsteins, e) föðurhefnda, f) farar þeirra bræðra og móðursystur þeirra til Íslands, g) landnáms Þorsteins þar; h) hjálpsemi Þorsteins við sóttveika skipverja sem komu í Rangárós, i) fégraftar þess skipverja sem lengst lifði (H.:358). Hér má sjá öll skilyrði þess að um bein rittensl sé að ræða. Á sínum tíma úrskurðaði Finnur Jónsson það að frásögn Hauksbókar væri greinilega útdráttur úr þætti sem væri eldforn (1927:188). Þar átti hann að sjálfsögðu við glataðan X-þátt

¹ Hér er vísað til kafla í Landnámabók, og stafsetningin samræmd.

² Melabók er hér aðeins varðveitt í afbrigðum Þórðarbókar.

sem einnig hefði verið stuðst við í Flateyjarbók og þar væri, ‘fremstillingen sikkert nærmere originalen’ (Finnur Jónsson 1927:188). Þessi skilningur á týndri og fornri frumsögu á bak við söguna var algengt viðhorf manna en hefur sætt gagnrýni á síðari árum. Það er þessi horfni X-þáttur bak við Þorsteins þátt tjaldstæðing sem ég vil hér gera athugasemd við. Er ástæða til þess að gera ráð fyrir þessum horfna þætti frá því um 1200 til þess að skýra þær frásagnir sem varðveittar eru í dag? Í rauninni þjónar þessi týndi þáttur aðeins þeim tilgangi að að skýra út ætlaða notkun Sturlu, (og Styrmis) og Hauks á heimildum. Ef vinnubrögð Hauks og Sturlu hafa ekki verið á þá lund sem tíðast er að halda fram, blasir við allt önnur mynd af ritinu Landnámu.

Þeir fræðimenn sem töldust til hins svokallaða ‘íslenska skóla’ veltu iðulega fyrir sér notkun á Landnámu þegar þeir af nákvæmni tiltóku heimildir sagnanna. Þar virðist sú þumalfingursregla vera í gildi að telja beinar frásagnir af landnámu eiga uppruna úr Landnámu (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934:39–40). Aftur á móti voru sögulegar frásagnir sem krökkt er af í öllum varðveittum gerðum Landnámu iðulega afgreiddar sem innskot og viðaukar frá þekktum og óþekktum heimildum. Þessi skipting í ‘hefðbundið’ Landnámuefni og sögulegar viðbætur veldur óneitanlega ýmsum erfiðleikum. Jóni Jóhannessyni fannst nauðsynlegt að gera ráð fyrir því að sá sem setti saman þáttinn um Þorstein tjaldstæðing hefði notast við forna Landnámu og innskot úr þessari fornu Landnámu sé að finna í þættinum (1941:199). Aftur á móti var það andstætt hugmyndum manna um tilurð Landnámu og þróun að telja mögulegt að hin sögulega frásögn hafi verið upprunaleg í Landnámu.

Vissulega væri hugsanlegt að frásögnin öll væri komin úr þessum sögulega þætti í upphafi, og tind inn í Landnámu vegna þess að þar væri fjallað um landnámsmenn. Helst virðist útgefandi þáttarins Þórhallur Vilmundarson hallast á þá skoðun, a.m.k. telur hann líklegast að útdráttur úr þættinum hafi verið í öllum varðveittum gerðum Landnámu (1991:192). Þá verður að gera þáttinn býsna gamlan því Þórhallur fylgir Jóni Jóhannessyni að málum um samhengi gerðanna og sameiginlegt forrit Melabókar og Sturlubókar. Eða eru bara sögulegar frásagnir sem koma ekki heim við áætlað form Landnámu innskot? Er landnámsfrásögnin frá fornri Landnámu? En hin sögulega atburðarrás frá skrifaðri sögu? Þá verður höfundur þáttarins að hafa notast við þessa fornu Landnámu a.m.k. til þess að fá upplýsingar um landnámsmenn. Sögulegar frásagnir jafnvel þó að þær komi heim við varðveittar Landnámugerðir þurfa útskýringa við enda ekki ‘hefðbundið landnámsefni’ að dómi fræðimanna. Þetta viðhorf til efnis Landnámu kemur víða fram, til dæmis er þessu haldið fram í nýlegu riti: ‘Efni Úlfjótsslaga fellur a.m.k. ekki að hefðbundnu Landnámuefni.’ (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001:168).

Frásagnir af landnámsmönnum í þættinum og Landnámu

Það hefur verið ríkjandi skoðun meðal fræðimanna að gera ráð fyrir því að efni Landnámu hafi verið mjög markvisst og einskorðað. Efni sem ekki kemur heim við þessa hugmynd er þá gjarnan úrskurðað sem innskot úr ólíkum áttum. Landnámsfrásagnirnar eru efni sem er viðkennt sem dæmigert landnámsefni, þ.e. eru frásagnir af landnámsmanni, landnámi hans og afkomendum. Þátturinn um Þorstein tjaldstæðing í Flateyjarbók hefur einmitt þess háttar efni. Notaðist þá höfundur þáttarins við forna Landnámu?

Í þeim sögum sem fjalla um landnám velta útgefendur fyrir sér notkun á Landnámu. Nú er það svo að í þættinum margtalaða er minnst á landnám tveggja manna, þeirra Flosa Þorbjarnarsonar sem er titlaður landnámsmaður og svo hins vegar Þorsteins tjaldstæðings. Þess konar efni hefur venjulega í meðförum fræðimanna verið viðurkennt sem hefðbundið landnámsefni.

Hann nam land at ráði Flosa fyrir ofan Víkingalæk ok út til móts við Svínhaga; bjó í Skarði inu eystra (Þorsteins þáttur: 430)

Þorsteinn nam land at ráði Flosa, er numit hafði áðr Rangárvöllu, fyrir ofan Víkingalæk til móts við Svínhaga-Björn [ok] bjó í Skarðinu eystra (S.:358)

nam land at ráði Flosa fyrir ofan Víkingalæk ok út til móts við Svínhaga-Björn ok bjó í Skarði enu eystra (H.:314)

Hér eru enn meiri líkindi með Hauksbók, og lýsingunni í þættinum. Notaði Haukur hér enn þáttinn til þess að fá aðeins annars konar orðalag? Ekki er það líklegt. Þá yrði samt sem áður að gera ráð fyrir því að sá sem setti saman þáttinn hefði fengið efnið einhvers staðar frá því greinileg rittengsl eru líka við Sturlubók. Jón Jóhannesson velur einmitt þá leið að telja að þá hafi höfundur þáttarins notað forna Landnámu. Það verður hann að gera til þess að skýra út líkindin við Sturlubók (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:199).

‘er framar greindi’

Haukur notaðist við tvö forrit af Landnámu, þ.e. Styrmissbók og Sturlubók sem að þorra til var eins að hans sögn en fór eftir þeirri er ‘framar greindi’ eins og alkunnugt er (H.:354) Haukur hefur í kaflanum um Þorstein tjaldstæðing umtalsverðan textaauka fram yfir Sturlubók sem að mestu kemur heim við þáttinn í Flateyjarbók. Eftirfarandi atriði er þar að finna: a) tilraun til úburðar, b) hvítvoðungur fer með vísu, c) móðir Þorsteins er nefnd, d) Ásgrímur sendi konungi gjöf ‘hest gauskan ok silfr mikit.’ (H.314). Sömu atriði er einnig að finna í þættinum, m.a. er talað um gjöfina til konungs á þennan hátt: ‘hestr gauzkr ok þar með mikit silfr.’ (Þorsteins þáttur:427). Þessi líkindi og greinilegu rittengsl sanna þó ekki að Haukur hafi notast sjálfstætt við þátt um Þorstein tjaldstæðing. Frásögnin er í meginatriðum líka í Sturlubók eins og fyrr segir. Það hlýtur að teljast býsna mikil tilviljun ef Haukur, og Sturla og höfundur þáttarins og jafnvel Melamaðurinn hafi allir notast við þáttinn sjálfstætt. Er ekki eðlilegast að líta svo á að þarna hafi Styrmissbók haft ítarlegri texta en Sturlubók? Kemur það ekki heim við orð Hauks sjálfs um vinnulag sitt að hann hafi einmitt notast við fyllri textann í þessari frásögn af Þorsteini? Því er ekki að heilsa, að mati Jóns Jóhannessonar, en hann er þess fullviss að Sturla hafi þarna upprunalegri texta; ‘er engum blöðum um það að fletta, að texti Stb³. er frumlegri, þótt hann hafi sennilega orðið fyrir smábreytingum.’ (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:199). Af hverju féllst Jón ekki á þá skiljanlegu ályktun að textaauki Hauks væri frá Styrmi kominn? Kenningu Jóns Jóhannessonar verður ekki gerð skil í þessari grein. Hér eins og víðar miðar hann við texta Melabókar og gerir hann óhikað að besta fulltrúa X-Landnámunnar svokölluðu sem hann taldi vera sameiginlegt forrit Sturlubókar og Melabókar (Styrmissbók). Því er nefnilega þannig varið að sjá má að Melabók hefur haft texta um Þorstein tjaldstæðing sem kemur betur heim við Sturlubók. Ályktun Jóns verður því á þann veg að Haukur geti ekki hafa haft textaaukann frá Styrmi. Þetta kemur fram þar sem hann bendir á að sendiferða Þórorms hafi verið getið í Melabók samkvæmt texta Þórðarbókar ‘en engin heimild er til að ætla, að það hafi verið gert rækilegar en í Stb’ (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:199). Þó að skiljanlegast sé að gera ráð fyrir því að frásögn af Þorsteini landnámsmanni og hremmingum hans hafi verið að finna í forriti Hauks (þ.e. Styrmissbók) og i forriti Sturlu (hinni óþekktu X-Landnámu hans) er því vísað á bug. Gert er ráð fyrir útdrætti Hauks úr týndum þætti, en jafnframt því áætlað að Sturla hafi notast eitthvað við þáttinn. Enn eykur á flækjuna í þessum rittengslafræðum að hinni forni þáttargerðarmaður hefur líka notast við forna Landnámu að hyggju Jóns Jóhannessonar eða a.m.k er þar að finna. innskot einhvers

³ Stb. er stytting Jóns Jóhannessonar á Sturlubók.

ritara þáttarins úr fornri Landnámu (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:199). Þórhallur Vilmundarson gerir reyndar ráð fyrir útdrætti úr þættinum í öllum þekktum gerðum Landnámu og þar með Styrmissbók en afneitar þó engan veginn hugmynd Jóns um innskotin í þáttinn (Þórhallur Vilmundarson 1991:192).

Í stuttu máli sagt, Styrmissbók

Ef upprunakenning Jóns Jóhannessonar er lögð fyrir róða er hægt að skoða samband þáttarins og frásagnarinnar í Landnámu með öðrum hætti. Ekkert bendir til annars en forrit þáttarins geti verið það sama og Hauks, og þá er auðvelt að benda á Styrmissbók. Aldursins vegna kemur það harla vel heim við Styrmissbók, því eftir hefðbundum leiðum hefur þátturinn verið tímasettur um 1200 (Þórhallur Vilmundarson 1991:199–200).

Það vill reyndar svo heppilega til að ættartölu í lok þáttarins er hægt að bendla við Styrmi hinn fróða, þar er nefnilega ættartala frá Þorsteini tjaldstæðingi til Lopts föður Gunnlaugs smiðs (Þorsteins þátr:431) sem mun hafa verið upp um aldamótin 1200.⁴ Þessi ættartala gefur því vísbendingu um aldur forritsins og kemur alveg heim við áætlaðan aldur Styrmissbókar.⁵ Ennfremur má sjá í Hauksbókartexta Landnámu, ættartölu til þessa sama Gunnlaugs. Þar er þó ekki um langfeðgatal frá Þorsteini að ræða, heldur rakin ætt frá landnámsmanninum Eyvindi til smiðsins fyrrnefnda (H.:351). Nú er það þekkt að ritara Landnámugerðanna bættu við ættartölum til sinna manna, og þá jafnan oftast en einu sinni. Haukur tíundar samviskusamlega ættir Sturlunga og bætir einstaka sinnum við til sinna manna. Það er því engin ástæða til annars en ættrakninguna til Guðlaugs smiðs hafi Haukur fengið úr öðru forriti sínu enda ekki að sjá að hann hafi nokkur persónuleg tengsl við þennan óþekhta smið. Ekki hefur verið rannsakað hvort sjá megi skipulega ættrakningu sem rekja megi til Styrmiss í sértexta Hauks en vissulega gefur þetta dæmi grun um tengsl Gunnlaugs/Guðlaugs smiðs við Styrmi.

Mælska og leikræn uppsetning og rökræn atburðarás

Er form og efni þáttarins þess eðlis að þar hljóti frásögn Hauks að vera þiggjandi? Ekki er unnt að koma auga á það. Stærsti munurinn á þættinum og frásögn Hauks er skipulögð atburðarrás þáttarins. Skipulagðari uppsetning þáttarins hefur þá verið talin til aldursmerkja. Haukur hefur svo að mati Jóns Jóhannessonar o.fl. gert frásögnina ruglingslegri þegar hann var að notast við heimildir sínar, þannig hafi röðin ‘raskazt hjá Hauki sökum þess, að hann hefur ritað frásöguna um fyrri ferðina eftir Stb. áður en hann fór fyrir alvöru að gera útdrátt úr þættinum.’ (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:200). Ef þetta væri rétt ætti textinn í byrjun frásagnarinnar hjá Hauki að vera hreinn Sturlubókartexti. Svo er ekki, í byrjun frásagnarinnar eru einmitt fjölmörg atriði sem ekki er sagt frá í Sturlubók t.d. er sagt frá systur Þorsteins og móður, nánari lýsing á landafræði og ennfremur kemur skýringin á gjöf Ásgríms í beinu framhaldi sem skýring á því hvers vegna Ásgrímur galt ekki skattinn (H.314; S.356). Þessi tækni til að greina aldur og uppruna frásagna hefur mætt vaxandi efasemdum í fræðiheiminum. Röklegrí og ‘betri’ frásögn er ekki endilega sú eldri eins og fyrri tíðar mönnum var gjarnt að halda fram.

Annað atriði hefur þátturinn sérstöðu með en það er mikil áhersla á beina ræðu. Persónurnar ræða málin gjarnan í hnyttum setningum. Konungurinn segir t.d. um andóf Ásgríms við að borga skatt: ‘Skjótt munu vér gjöra skiptin þá. Vér munum eignask land hans og lausafé, en ætla honum lengð af jörðu. Þorsteinn segir þegar hann fréttir dráp föður síns:

⁴ Þetta er hægt að reikna út með upplýsingum um þekktan frænda Gunnlaugs sem kemur fram í ættartölu Hauksbókar, þ.e. að Finnur Hallson lögsögumaður (1139–1145) hafi verið ömmubróðir hans. (H.351)

⁵ Hér er miðað við líklegan aldur Styrmiss því hann hefur a.m.k. verið uppkominn 1206 og deyr 1245.

‘Bitu hann enn ráðin Haralds konungs, en brátt mun eptir verða ætt vára, ef Haraldr konungur skal einn fyrir sjá.’ (Þorsteins þátt:427; 428–429). Mörg fleiri orðaskipti í forni beinnar ræðu eru rakin í þættinum, mér taldist til 25 slík orðaskipti. Þeir sem oftast tala eru konungur, Ásgrímur, Þorsteinn tjaldstæðingur, og Þórormur sendimaður konungs, en einnig eru höfð bein orðaskipti eftir þraeli, sendimönnum, bændum og skipverjum og einu sinni er lítil setning höfð eftir landnámsmanninum Flosa. Frásögnin í Landnámu Hauks er laus við slíkt en þó bregður fyrir að orðaskipti manna eru höfð eftir óbeint: ‘spurði bændur, ef þeir vildi greiða konungi slíkan skatt sem beizk var.’ (H.314). Gefur leikræn uppsetning og mælska þáttarins þá til kynna að sú frásögn sé upprunalegri? Miðaldarmenn tíðkuðu það oft að betrumbæta sögur, og töldu sér það jafnvel rétt og skylt. Vissulega hefur frásögnin í Hauksbók boðið upp á slíkar lagfæringar og ólíkt er frásögnin læsilegri í þeirri mynd sem við höfum í Flateyjarbók. Ef Haukur hefði haft þáttinn í svipaðri mynd og í Flateyjarbók við höndina er ótrúlegt annað en hann hefði notfært sér lipulega ritaðan textann þar og sem smekkmáður á texta hefði hann látið einhver hnyttirðin fylgja með. Það er þekkt að Haukur stytti og skerpti á texta og eyddi út óþarfa skrafi. Hann var orðsins maður og greinilega gefinn fyrir góðar sögur. Lagfæringar hans á texta þjónuðu þó fremur þeim tilgangi að gera frásögnina skýrari og læsilegri (Jansson 1945:114). Það er því á skjön við þá mynd sem við höfum af honum, að hann hefði farið að rugla atburðarásinni frá ágætlega skilmerkilegri röð eins og í þættinum.

Annars konar texti Hauks, betra handrit, fróðleikur og almælt sannindi?

Það eru nokkur atriði hjá Hauki sem hvorki er að finna í þættinum í Flateyjarbók né Sturlubók. Þar er ekki sagt frá Þorlaugu systur Þorsteins, ekki hvaðan úr Noregi þau sigla, en skv. Hauki bjuggust þau ‘til Íslands ór Grenmar fyrir austan Líðandisnes’ (H.314). Einnig er í Hauksbók ættartala frá Þorgeiri bróður Þorsteins til Sæmundar fróða (H.314). Sjá má texta hjá Hauki sem er fornlegri og eins og orðalagið þrællinn ‘hvatti gref’ og kemur það heim við vísuna en þetta atriði vantar í þáttinn. En hver er skýringin á þessu? Jón svarar á eftirfarandi hátt: ‘Um sumt hefur Haukur ekki þurft neinar ritaðar heimildir. Önnur voru alkunn, svo sem ætt Sæmundar fróða, forföður Steinunnar, konu Hauks. Loks hefur Haukur auðsælega haft betra hdr. af þættinum en nú er til.’ (Jón Jóhannesson 1941:201). Þessar skýringar eru þess eðlis að hvorki er hægt að sanna þær né hrekja. Skiljanlegra er að gera ráð fyrir notkun Hauks á Styrmissbók og höfundur þáttarins hafi fengið söguna um landnámsmanninn Þorstein tjaldstæðing úr Landnámu, þá gengur skyldleiki þessara rita upp án allra þessara getgátna um vinnulag Hauks.

Niðurstöður

Hugmyndir manna um upprunalegt efni Landnámu hefur gert það að verkum að efni hennar hefur verið flokkað niður í ‘hefðbundið’ Landnámuefni og hins vegar sögulegar viðbætur.

Þátturinn um Þorstein tjaldstæðing er einn þeirra innskotsþátta sem Haukur á að hafa notast við í Landnámu sinni. Það er í raun fátt sem styður það verklag Hauks því þátturinn er til muna yngri og unglegri að flestu leyti enda er forrit Hauks af þættinum talið betra og upprunalegra. Það er hér eins og víðar upprunakenning Jóns Jóhannessonar sem stýrir mönnum í þessa átt. Melabók er grunnviðmið á upprunalega gerð og líkist Sturlubók á þessum stað þannig verður niðurstaða Jóns Jóhannessonar sú að Styrmissbók hafi verið eins. Þá getur það sem ‘framar greinir’ hjá Hauki ekki verið frá Styrmi komið. Þótt dæmið þurfi að vera býsna flókið til að ganga upp því að Sturla þarf líka að hafa stuðst við þáttinn sjálfstætt og síðan er innskot úr fornri Landnámu í þættinum. Mun eðlilegra er að gera ráð fyrir því að sá sem setti saman þáttinn í Flateyjarbók hafi einmitt notast við sams konar rit og Haukur og í þessu tilviki væntanlega Styrmissbók. Það er ljóst að það eru rittengsl við allar gerðir

Landnámu. Sturla hefur mun fáorðari texta en samt eru orðréttir eins upphafskaflar og frásögn af landnámi. Einnig eru tvö merkingaratriði sem fylgjast að hjá Sturlu og þættinum sem Haukur hefur ekki. Sennilegast er að höfundur þáttarins hafi notast við Styrmissbók og jafnframt hafi forrit Sturlu haft þessa sögulegu frásögn sem og forrit Melabókar. Sú ímynd sem hefur verið við lýði, af hinni fornu Landnámu sem stuttri skrá sýnist mér því tæpast standast. Allar þekktar gerðir Landnámu hafa verið ‘sögugerðar’ og svo hefur væntanlega verið með hina upphaflegu smíði. Það er einnig hægt að benda á athyglisverðar ættarupplýsingar í Þorsteins þætti sem gefa til kynna tengsl við Styrmissbók. Þar er ættrækning til Þorsteins smíðs, ættartölu til þessa sama Þorsteins smíðs er sömuleiðis að finna í sértexta Hauksbókar á allt öðrum stað og bendir því til Styrmissbókartexta.

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Writing origins: the development of communal identity in some Old Norse foundation-myths and their analogues in *Guta saga*

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Íslendingabók and *Landnámabók* have long been regarded as the lynchpins of an Icelandic foundation-myth, a myth which pervades not only these purportedly historical works but also the *Íslendingasögur* and, arguably, much other Old Norse literature produced in Iceland. An understanding of the use of this myth is essential to our wider understanding of the productive use of the idea of historicity present in the essentially fictional accounts of Icelandic society found in the family sagas. Certain texts, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* among them, are dominated by a single narrative interest in the literary establishment of the conceptual boundaries of a community, the 'foundation-myths' of the title. Conversely, a typical *Íslendingasaga* contains multiple narratives, not only those internal to the narrative logic of the saga but also those pertaining to what Jürg Glauser has described as the 'große Erzählung' ('great narrative,' Glauser 2006:41) of Iceland itself. Rather than looking exclusively at the myth of Icelandic settlement across such 'generic' boundaries, this paper will begin by looking towards *Guta saga*. Although this medieval Scandinavian settlement myth was written in Old Gutnish rather than Old Icelandic, it nevertheless exhibits productive similarities with our Icelandic examples. We will also examine Snorri Sturluson's redaction of the foundation of Scandinavian identities in *Ynglinga saga*, the 'prologue', essentially, to the *konungasögur* of *Heimskringla*. These texts are drawn from across spatial and temporal boundaries: whilst *Íslendingabók* dates to the first third of the twelfth century (Grønlie 2006:xiii), *Heimskringla* and *Guta saga* have both been dated to the first half of the thirteenth century (*Heimskringla* 1941:xxix, *Guta saga* 1999:xiii). Whilst Snorri Sturluson states his admiration for Ari inn fróði's work in the preface to *Heimskringla* (and, in all probability, was familiar with some form of *Landnámabók*),¹ there is no evidence of awareness of *Guta saga* in Iceland. Nevertheless, a comparison of these texts may illuminate a common act of writing the origin of a cultural community, an act essential to an understanding of the literature of a specific group of people in time and space.

The frequently fantastic content of *Guta saga* or *Ynglinga saga*, such as the account that before the arrival of fire Gotland by 'dagum sank ok natum var uppi' ('sank by day and rose up by night' *Guta saga* 1999:2), or the story of the creation of Seeland by Gefjun's four sons (*Heimskringla* 1941:15), initially betrays little in common with *Íslendingabók* or *Landnámabók* beyond a common interest in origins. These narratives of Gotland and Seeland, located in a mythic past, contain territories whose very physicality is unstable. This is not the case for Iceland, since the temporal location of the settlement is scrupulously established within human history with reference to the wider European (and Christian) context in *Íslendingabók* (dating according to the martyrdom of St Edmund, for example) and *Landnámabók* (which dates the settlement according to the reigns, amongst many others, of the Pope, Byzantine emperor, and the kings of Norway, Sweden and Denmark). If, however, one is to leave to one side the literal plausibility of the events described in *Guta saga*, on a mythic level there is more unity in design and purpose than first meets the eye: the text sits between the implausi-

¹ '[O]k þykkir mér hans sögn öll merkiligust' ('and his whole story seems to me most noteworthy', *Heimskringla* 1941:6). Of course, we cannot be entirely sure whether Snorri is referring specifically to *Íslendingabók* or other works by Ari now lost.

ble (and thus potentially allegorical) narratives of *Ynglinga saga* and the ostensible factuality of *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, moving between two modes of ‘historical’ writing.

Like Iceland, the community of Gotland is first established by settlement from abroad. The discoverer of Gotland, Pieluar, is not established within a genealogical sequence; in this respect, he is not dissimilar from the ‘Naddodd viking’ who first named Iceland ‘Snæland’ according to *Landnámabók* (1968:34). Neither, perhaps significantly, is Pieluar granted a prior ethnicity: Stephen A. Mitchell interprets this as follows:

The implicit value of having Pieluar appear from no specific point of origin is, of course, that the Gotlanders then owe no a priori allegiance to any of the national kingdoms. By thus beginning the tale *in media res*, the redactor avoids any possible constraints on the future loyalties and political freedom of the Gotlanders (Mitchell 1984:171).

This is a considerable point of deviation from the settlement-myth of Iceland, in which Norway’s significance looms large. Nevertheless, Pieluar establishes a dynasty whose genealogy is inscribed on the new land itself. His three grandsons split their father’s inheritance and thus the origin of Gotland’s three districts is established. This marks the creation of the community of Gotland, as distinct from the geographical feature. Pieluar’s role as the father of the concept of Gotland is cemented by his role in stabilising the very island itself, and preventing it from sinking back into the sea: ‘En þann maþr quam fyrsti eldi a land, ok siþan sank þet aldri’ (‘And that man first brought fire to the land, and it never sank afterwards’ *Guta saga* 1999:2). Settlement – the creation of a community – here has a direct physical effect on the land itself; Gotland becomes inhabitable, indeed simply thinkable as the physical dimension of a community, through the Promethean action of the first settler. This action transforms the land from the malleable, non-physical, mythic landscape we find in the story of the creation of Seeland to a more concrete model, closer to the tangible landscape of Iceland.

Whether a moment exists at which a group of settlers becomes a coherent community, at which a label such as ‘Icelanders’ or ‘Gotlanders’ becomes meaningful, is a fundamental question in assessing the validity of these texts as ‘foundation’ myths. The Gotlanders (the ‘fulk i Gotlandi’ *Guta saga* 1999:2) fast transcend the physical dimensions of the island of Gotland when the text begins a substantial digression to describe the fate of a third of the population who had to leave, because the ‘land elpti þaim ai alla fyþa’ (‘land was not able to support them all’ *Guta saga* 1999:2). The significance of this part of the text, which includes the exiled Gotlanders’ nomadic existence until they settle in the Byzantine Empire, lies in the fact that it forms part of this text at all. Despite the fact that all these events take place in an ill-defined mythic past, the text’s concern for the fate of these people demonstrates the conceptual birth of a community: after relating an anecdote in which the Gotlandic exiles trick the Byzantine emperor into granting them permanent permission to reside in his realm, the author observes that ‘hafa þair sumt af varu mali’ (‘they retain some of our language’ *Guta saga* 1999:4).² The use of the second-person plural possessive adjective ‘varu’ betrays the author’s implicit expectation of address to a particular community. *Íslendingabók* demonstrates the same phenomenon in its opening line, ‘Íslendingabók gørða ek fyrst byskupum órum, Þorláki ok Katli’ (‘I first wrote the Book of the Icelanders for our bishops Þorlákr and Ketill’ *Íslendingabók* 1968:3).

In her analysis of the development of an Icelandic ethnicity from an anthropological perspective, Kirsten Hastrup has observed that:

² The argument for some form of identification here between Gotlanders and Goths has been much rehearsed; E. V. Gordon gives a brief summary (1956:175). If so this would only reinforce the view taken here that foundation-narratives such as *Guta saga* readily utilise legend and folktale in order to reinforce communal identity.

At first there was only a community of settlers, but after a few generations this community was turned into a society by way of collective social action (Hastrup 1990:79).

We have observed how *Guta saga* demonstrated at a very early stage in the narrative that a self-defined community had come into existence, one that was no longer simply a short-hand for those individuals or family groups who happened to inhabit the same physical space, but an identity that had become intrinsic to the individual to the extent that the concept of a 'Gotlander abroad' was meaningful. Hastrup's observation is important in taking this further, since the concept here of 'society' necessitates not only collective identity but also collective action. In *Guta saga*, Hastrup's 'society' is arguably born at the same time as the community first becomes evident, for the mechanism by which a third of the Gotlanders become Gotlanders abroad is by the casting of lots, which suggests the presence of some form of administrative system; we have already, after all, witnessed the creation of the administrative districts of Gotland. Later in the text the author observes that the people of Gotland 'e iemlika sigri ok ret sinum' ('always held the victory and their rights' *Guta saga* 1999:6) in their dealings with foreign powers, which seems to establish incontrovertibly a discrete Gotlandic ethnicity, society and community, by differentiation from foreign attackers. We will see later that Gotland comes to exist in a special relationship with Sweden, which is analogous to that between Iceland and Norway; but first we will examine how Icelandic foundation myths operate with a more complex understanding of the foreign and the útland, which is not predicated, as so many foundation myths are, on the violent struggle against exterior forces, but instead integrates multiple named points of origins for its settlers who go on to acquire a degree of indigeneity.

Migrations occupy a special status at the heart of the myths of origin examined here. The first hint of collective identity in Icelandic literature is related to the common situation of the settlers as emigrants from a different, established community: here Norway assumes a role as the 'mother country'. But even if it might have been true that the early occupants of Iceland were simply Norwegians abroad, the literature depicts migrations as an inherently transformative act. Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, within *Heimskringla*, postdates *Íslendingabók* by a considerable number of years, but its source material, *Ynglingatal*, is dated to the late ninth century (Pulsiano 1993:665), although it only survives embedded within much later texts.³ Snorri's saga includes an account of a forced westward migration which recalls the conventional myth of Icelandic emigration following the aggressive centralisation of Haraldr hárfagri's reign, but with the greater complication of direct familial identification between oppressor and emigrants. The Swedish king Ingjaldr burns down his hall containing six rival kings whom he had invited to a feast, and

Eptir þetta lagði Ingjaldr konungr undir sik öll þessi ríki, er konungar höfðu átt, ok tók skatta af (*Heimskringla* 1941:67).

After that King Ingjaldr brought under his control all these kingdoms, which the kings had ruled, and made them pay tribute.

This aggressive accumulation of authority over former petty kingdoms and the levying of taxes on his new acquisitions is strikingly redolent of the portrait of Haraldr hárfagri found in several instances of the migration-myth, especially in those prefacing *Íslendingasögur*; for example, in *Egils saga*:

³ The dating of *Ynglingatal* is somewhat contentious: Åkerlund (1939) has argued for an earlier date, whilst more recently Krag (1991) has put forward a date close to the composition of *Ynglinga saga*. The weight of critical opinion seems to lie with the former view.

Haraldr konungr eignaðisk í hverju fylki óðul öll ok allt land, byggt ok óbyggt, ok jafnvel sjóinn ok vötnin, ok skyldu allir búendr vera hans leiglendingar, svá þeir, er á mörkina ortu, ok saltkarlarnir ok allir veiðimenn, bæði á sjó ok landi, þá váru allir þeir honum lýðskyldir (*Egils saga* 1933:12)

King Haraldr took into his own hands in every district all the estates and all the land, settled and uninhabited, and even the seas and lakes, and all the farmers were obliged to be his tenants, and so those who worked in the forests, and the salt-driers and all the huntsmen, both of the sea and the land, were all then subject to him.

The narrative of emigration in *Ynglingatal* is stretched over the reign of more than one king, however: although Ingjaldr pursued territory and tax in a similar manner to Haraldr, he was not ultimately successful, and burned himself in his hall when he realised that resisting the Danish King Ívarr would be futile. Ívarr, a greater consolidator of power than Ingjaldr or, perhaps, Haraldr, went on, according to Snorri, to rule Denmark and Sweden, precipitating the flight of the Ynglings from their traditional power-base around Uppsala westwards, in the direction of Norway. The similarities in these two narratives only go so far: Snorri's interest is primarily in the genealogical history of a certain supposed family, the Ynglings, rather than the history of a people; and the degree of identification between Óláfr trételgja's new province and a discrete identity from the Swedes is complicated by the very fact that Óláfr, the architect of emigration, was himself the son of Ingjaldr, the first oppressive and centralising tyrant. Myths of exodus, of course, are not exclusive to a Scandinavian cultural context: the Bible surely provides an archetype. These are not, therefore, directly related narratives, but instead *Ynglinga saga* and its primary source *Ynglingatal* provide a number of analogues for one of the most important aspects of the Icelandic foundation myth: its definition of itself against an 'other', namely, centralised kingship. Whether medieval Iceland before 1262 really was a state or just a rebellious province of Norway is an irrelevance in the face of a literary tradition which repeatedly alludes to the transformative power of emigration.⁴

We can see, therefore, that the settlement-phase of myths of origin frequently contains an implicit development of a social identity. The central piece of collective action which cements this identity in *Íslendingabók* is the conversion to Christianity. Like the migration-myth, the conversion-myth transcends any single text; Siân Grønlie describes the multiplicity of forms in which it is found:

[I]t appears in different contexts and genres and therefore in different guises: as a key moment in the history [of] the Icelandic people (in *Íslendingabók*), as a successful missionary effort on the part of the Norwegian king Óláfr Tryggvason [...] and as a focus for the 'historical fiction' of many of the family sagas, most famously *Njáls saga* (Grønlie 2006:vii).

There are several reasons why the conversion ought to be considered a 'key moment'. It is the clearest example of Hastrup's 'collective action', insofar as Christianity is incorporated into the self-definition of 'Icelandicness'. It also demonstrates, conversely, the peripheral nature of religion to identity. The Icelanders remain Icelanders before and after, and despite a Norwegian king's role in initiating the conversion, the ability of the Alþingi peacefully to resolve to follow the new faith affirms the capability of Icelandic society to absorb a wholesale change

⁴ We should observe that these migrations follow a westward trajectory, a concept which appears integrated into an Icelandic perception of space: the east is Norway, the west new territory: Greenland, Markland and Vinland. There are further instructive analogues to the establishment of a migration-myth in Iceland in the sagas relating to the settlement of Greenland, *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, whilst an analogue to the ambiguous relationship between Iceland and Norway is also found in *Færeyinga saga*.

of values without compromising their perceived independence. Essentially the same event occurs in *Guta saga*, with an even more overt claim to the exclusive decision of the Gotlanders to change their faith:

Síþan gutar sagu kristna manna síði, þa lydu þair Guz buði ok lerþra manna kennu. Toku þa allmenilika við kristindomi mið síelfs vilia sinum utan þuang, so at engin þuang þaim til kristnur (*Guta saga* 1999:10).

After the Gotlanders saw the customs of the Christians, they then obeyed God's command and the teaching of learned men. They then received Christianity generally of their own will, without duress, such that no-one forced them into Christianity.

The emphatic rejection of the idea of the Gotlanders being forced into conversion naturally highlights the role of their own 'vilia', again, despite the fact that a Norwegian king – in this instance Óláfr inn helgi – had begun the process of conversion external to Gotland itself. This form of narrative, composed by the converted, must necessarily strike a balance between the essential rectitude of the discovery of the true faith and a determination to ensure that the converted community is shown to have made this decision freely, through its own enlightenment, rather than solely by external coercion. But even this exterior pressure betrays the existence of the Gotlandic community that the text seeks to affirm. In the same way that the ancient Gotlanders retained a communal identity even after being forced to leave the island due to overpopulation, a Gotlander abroad is converted by Óláfr – Ormika af Hainaim – who begins the process of general conversion. This necessity for conversion to begin within the community, even if supported from outside, is highlighted in *Íslendingabók*. Óláfr Tryggvason's role is certainly important, but it is notable that Þangbrandr, Óláfr's missionary, remains in Iceland for only a few, rather ignoble, years:

En þá es hann hafði hér verit einn vetr eða tvá, þá fór hann á braut ok hafði vegit hér tvá menn eða þrjá, þá es hann höfðu nítt (*Íslendingabók* 1968:14).

And once he had been here for a year or two, he then went away, having killed here two or three men who had libelled him.

It is left, therefore, to Þorgeirr to reconcile the Christian and pagan parties at the Alþingi – an external force was successful in introducing disorder into the system, but it takes indigenous individuals and institutions to re-establish harmony. Harmony is not here a plurality of beliefs: it is of course Þorgeirr who argues for the imperative of 'lög ein á landi hér' ('one law here in this land', *Íslendingabók* 1968:17); this echoes *Guta saga*'s insistence that Christianity was accepted 'allmenilika' ('generally' *Guta saga* 1999:10). The narrative structure of *Íslendingabók* itself binds the new faith to the existing socio-political apparatus: from the eighth chapter onwards, immediately post-conversion, the naming of Icelandic bishops and law-speakers are juxtaposed, placed in discrete clauses but interwoven: for example, Ari concludes his eighth chapter ('Frá byskupum útlendum', 'on foreign bishops' *Íslendingabók* 1968:4) with a list of law-speakers culminating in Gellir Bölverksson; he then returns to matters ecclesiastic with a discussion of the first Icelandic churchman Bishop Ísleifr, before picking up the listing of law-speakers again with the observation 'Gunnarr enn spaki hafði tekit lögsögu, þá es Gellir lét af, ok hafði þrjú sumur' ('Gunnarr the wise had become law-speaker when Gellir left off, and held the post for three summers' *Íslendingabók* 1968:20). Church and state are thus presented as equal and compatible elements of a single community. This myth acquires a sense of tragic wish-fulfilment when compared to the probable reality: Kirsten Hastrup observes that

[T]he introduction of tithes paved the way for an increasing accumulation of wealth by a relatively small number of people, even if still in the name of the Church. This again laid the foundation for serious conflicts over church lands, which contributed to the general breakdown of Icelandic society (Hastrup 1985:193).

The myth of successful conversion is vital to the creation of a coherent and useful Icelandic identity for two central reasons which operate in different directions: it legitimises the potential for the Alþingi and the legal institutions of medieval Iceland to settle disputes, since the stand-off between Christian and non-Christian blocs acts as something of a worst-case scenario that an institution designed to ensure harmony might encounter, and it places Iceland and Icelanders squarely within Christendom and thus within a wider European tradition of culture and learning, which leaves its mark on every piece of extant Old Norse-Icelandic literature, if through nothing more than the use of the Latin alphabet. Orri Vésteinsson (2000:18) rightly observes that the conversion-narrative of *Íslendingabók* ‘was not so much a matter of salvation as political unity’, and the omission of any great concern for the effect of the Alþingi’s decision on the Icelanders’ eternal souls affirms the text as speaking to a myth of the creation of a community – or even a nation – rather than a myth solely of Christianisation. *Guta saga* shares this exploitation of a religious event as an opportunity to establish or reinforce a specific communal identity within the entry into wider Christendom.

The role of Norway in the conversion of Iceland and Gotland was nevertheless significant, despite the extent to which these cultures’ respective literatures used conversion to affirm discrete identities; the two ‘continental’ powers, Norway and Sweden, figure largely in these insular literatures far beyond this one event. The relationship between Norway and Iceland, in history and as represented in the literature, is both highly complex and decidedly difficult to discern: it has no direct modern or ancient analogues. *Guta saga* does, however, provide some illuminating points of comparison in its description of the relationship between Gotland and Sweden, in which Gotland nevertheless appears considerably more subservient than the literary depiction of pre-1262 Iceland, insofar as Gotland was obliged to provide men to fight with the Swedish king if so demanded, albeit under certain conditions. *Guta saga* presents the establishment of a subordinate relationship with Sweden through the decision of the Gotlanders to petition the Bishop of Linköping to ‘reþskep giera’ (‘give support’ *Guta saga* 1999:10), before describing the bishop’s obligations towards Gotland. Nevertheless, although presented as a willed decision by the Gotlanders, their decision to place their church under the aegis of an external authority has immediate implications for the independence of the island itself:

Síþan gutar toku sir biskup ok presti ok víþr fulkumnum kristindomi, þa toku þair ok víþr at fylgia suia kunungi i herferþ miþ siau snekkium ufan a haiþin land, ok ai ufan kristin (*Guta saga* 1999:12).

After the Gotlanders took for themselves bishop and priest and completely accepted Christianity, they then also took it upon themselves to follow the Swedish king in military expeditions with seven long-ships against heathen lands, but not against Christian ones.

The final qualification to the above sentence, ‘ai ufan kristin,’ seems to reassert Gotlandic sovereignty over their political arrangements, despite the bare facts of their subordinate relationship to the Swedish monarch. Stephen A. Mitchell has argued that

the compiler of GS was also a propagandist: he wanted to create an historical overview of the island which would demonstrate its “traditional” independence (Mitchell 1984:173).

In *Íslendingabók*, a clear differentiation is made between the list of the ‘byskupa þeira, es verit hafa á Íslandi útlendir’ (‘the foreign bishops who have been in Iceland’ *Íslendingabók* 1968:18) at the beginning of the eighth chapter and the opening of the ninth chapter with the first bishop of Iceland, Ísleifr, the son of Gizurr enn hvíti Teitsson who had agreed with King Óláfr Tryggvason to help bring Christianity to Iceland. To a certain extent we see here, therefore, the inverse of the conversion-myth of Gotland: rather than seeking external legitimacy in a Norwegian bishop, Norway itself sends converted Icelanders such as Gizurr to effect a simulacrum of the foundation of an indigenous church.

We have observed some ways in which these foundation-texts work to utilise both history and myth to construct a literary point of origin for various cultures. But we must not observe these texts in a vacuum – they existed, and, with the exception of *Guta saga*, continue to exist within a corpus of texts relating to the same communities. In her analysis of *Ynglinga saga*, Marlene Ciklamini describes the function of the text within *Heimskringla* thus:

[t]o provide mythical models of events and human behaviour for intellectual guidance in the more familiar but confusing historic era. Interestingly, themes and motifs from *Ynglinga saga* recur throughout Snorri’s account of the historic era, which suggests that *Ynglinga saga* served not only as an introduction to the historical part of the saga, but also as a thematic presentation of mythic and social verities (Ciklamini 1975:90).

This conception of *Ynglinga saga* as a functional prologue which informs the text it precedes forms a microcosm of the literary function of *Íslendingabók* (and, in a different manner, *Landnámabók*) in relation to the later literary products of Iceland pertaining to Iceland, throughout the free state period and right into the thirteenth century. The myths of origin of a community developed and explored in these two texts are reified as the origin of a literary corpus which consistently interacts with the social constructs enumerated in *Íslendingabók*: settlement, conversion, and the politico-legal system the Alþingi and its subordinate assemblies embody. These myths are interrogated in much Old Icelandic literature, from the family sagas to the law codes (if they can be labelled as such) and to the *þættir* of Icelandic skalds. *Guta saga* provides us with an analogous text in which mythic origin directly precedes an explication of how Gotland became a vassal of Sweden: as such, it presents a dramatically compressed story of a community that Icelandic literature plays out over many texts and several centuries. It constitutes a useful example of the way in which literary foundation myths transform historical events, such as settlement and conversion, into transformative events in themselves, which create new identities. Whilst they are certainly not accurate as accounts of the foundations of real societies, they are of fundamental importance as accounts of the foundation of the literary manifestations of these societies. As in *The Tempest*, ‘what’s past is prologue’; it is these texts of origins which form the prologues to the literary corpus we study.

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Eddadikterna i Codex Upsaliensis DG 11

En projektpresentation

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Jag är knuten till projektet Studier i Codex Upsaliensis som doktorand, och min del av projektet handlar om eddadikticitaten i handskriftens Gylfaginning. Utgångspunkten för min undersökning är att i första hand se på dikterna utifrån handskriftens egna premisser, snarare än att som i tidigare forskning avgöra vad som är rätt eller fel i förhållande till andra handskrifter. I andra hand kommer jag dock också att jämföra DG 11 med de resterande tre huvudhandskrifterna av Edda, men främst för att belysa de skrivningar som möter i DG 11. Med denna utgångspunkt hoppas jag kunna närma mig handskriftens läsare. Om man föreställer sig en medeltida islänning som i motsättning till oss inte har tillgång till andra handskrifter än DG 11, hur kan hon (eller han) ha uppfattat de ord och formuleringar som nutida forskning avfärdar som felskrivningar? För att ta ett exempel ur *Völuspá* 9, så skriver Codex Regius av Edda (GKS 2367 4to) *at skyldi dverga drótt of spekja* (Faulkes 2005:16), medan DG 11's skrivning lyder *hverr skyldi dverga drótt um spekja*.¹ DG 11 är ensam bland handskrifterna om att ha *spekja* här, och det är inte svårt att förklara: skrivaren har förmodligen råkat byta plats på <k> och <p>, en inte ovanlig typ av skrivarfel. Sett ur ett skrivarperspektiv är problemet så att säga löst – men vad kan läsaren ha läst? Ordet *spekja* är i sig inte särskilt problematiskt; det betyder bl.a. 'gjøre vis, begave med Visdom' (betydelse 2 i Fritzner s.v.). Att "göra dvärgarna visa" kan också ses som ett sätt att skapa dem på, särskilt om man jämför med *Völuspá* 17–18, där de första människorna skapas genom att få bl.a. *önd* och *óðr*, 'ande' och 'tanke'. Trots att det alltså finns starka indicier för att skrivaren av DG 11 (eller dess förlaga) har råkat skriva fel, så har en hypotetisk samtida läsare goda möjligheter för att förstå strofen som den står. Därmed anser jag att man inte kan tala om en skrivning som *spekja* som ett fel, eftersom den fortfarande är begriplig i sitt sammanhang.

Jag kommer i min undersökning att operera med ett antal olika tolkningsnivåer, där de viktigaste är *skrivarnivå*, *läsarnivå* och *egentliga fel*. Hur dessa nivåer kan användas har exemplifierats i det ovanstående. På skrivarnivå är det rimligt att misstänka att ordet *spekja* i *Völuspá* 9-citatet inte har valts medvetet av skrivaren, vilket gör att man bör se om skrivningen kan tolkas på läsarnivå – vilket jag som synes anser att man kan. Det är först när även en tolkning på läsarnivå är omöjlig eller mycket osannolik som man kan beskriva en från majoriteten avvikande skrivning som ett egentligt fel. Men även de egentliga felen har något att säga oss. Ett tydligt exempel på en skrivning som bör tolkas som ett egentligt fel finns i *Völuspá* 57-citatet, där DG 11 har *Sól mun sortna* <sigrfolldinnar> (Grape *et al.* 1977:34), vilket är närmast jämförbart med strofen som den står i Codex Regius av eddadikterna (GKS 2365 4to): *Sól tér sortna, sígr fold í mar* (Jón Helgason 1955:13). Att <sigrfolldinnar> har sitt ursprung i ett missförstånd av <nn> för <m> torde stå klart, och det är heller inte möjligt att få ut någon språklig mening av skrivningen (se Bäckvall 2007:42 f.). Ändå behöver man inte nöja sig med att som Jón Helgason (angående andra diktcitat i DG 11) tala om "en förvirret skrivares vilkårlige påfund" (1961:X). Elementet <sigr> visar till exempel att DG 11 här ligger nära formuleringen i de två handskrifter som har dikten i sin helhet (GKS 2365 4to och Hauksbók), vilka båda har *sígr fold í mar*. I de övriga huvudhandskrifterna av Edda (GKS 2367 4to, Codex Wormianus och Codex Trajectinus) inleds strofen *Sól mun sortna, sökkr fold í mar*. Detta är inte det enda exemplet på en strof där DG 11's citat har mer gemensamt med "dikthandskrifterna" än med övriga eddahandskrifter, men precis vad detta innebär, om något,

¹ Skrivet h. 'skyldi dverga drott vm spekia (Grape *et al.* 1977:8).

återstår att se. Det faktum att fyra ord har skrivits ihop till en enhet tyder dessutom på att skrivaren av DG 11 eller dess förlaga har analyserat ordföljden som ett ord; medeltida skrivare skriver vanligtvis inte ihop mer än två ord åt gången. En hypotes är att ett hopskrivet <imar>, så som det till exempel ser ut i både GKS 2365 och Hauksbók, kan ha setts av avskrivaren som ett -innar och uppfattats som slutet på ett particip i f.sg.gen., vilket är vad <sigrfolldinnar> liknar rent morfologiskt. Kanske kan missförståndet ha att göra med att *marr* inte har varit ett levande ord i skrivarens ordförråd; det finns i stort sett bara belagt i eddadikter (Fritzner s.v.).

En annan fråga som väcks i samband med eddadikterna i DG 11 rör vad som förväntas och/eller krävs av läsaren. Handskriften har till exempel generellt samma strofcitat som de övriga huvudhandskrifterna av Edda, men ett märkbart undantag utgörs av det längsta sammanhållna eddadiktscitatet i Edda. I de övriga handskrifterna citeras nio Völuspástrofer i rad (strof 46/5–8, 47/1–4, 48, 50–53, 55–57); i DG 11 endast tre. Men det är inte tre slumpmässigt utvalda strofer av dessa som citeras i DG 11, utan de två första (om man räknar kombinationen av strof 46 och 47 som en strof) och den allra sista. Det verkar inte helt orimligt att tänka sig att stroferna inte är utvalda på grund av innehållet, utan snarare för att de utgör inledning och avslutning på ett långt citat. En läsare med kännedom om Völuspá skulle därför kunna supplerat de strofer som kommer däremellan, särskilt som denna del av dikten (som handlar om vilka som ska slåss vid Ragnarök) är ett av de mer sammanhängande avsnitten i Völuspá.

Detta är bara några få exempel på vad studiet av eddadikterna i DG 11 kan ge. Jag kommer också att ägna mig åt förhållandet mellan prosasammandragen av dikterna och de direkt därpå följande citaten, liksom frågor omkring namnformer och metrik. Många av dessa frågor kommer förmodligen mynna ut i en diskussion om eddadikternas liv i den medeltida islänningens medvetande. I mina första försök att göra något så skenbart enkelt som att läsa texten i DG 11 som den står har jag sett hur uppgiften knoppar av sig och ger upphov till frågeställningar av vitt skilda slag. Jag ser därför mycket fram emot att arbeta vidare och kunna återkomma med resultaten inom de kommande åren.

Litteratur

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Individuality and Iconography: Jakob Sigurðsson's Renderings of Codex Upsaliensis f.26v

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1. Introduction

Anthony Faulkes and other scholars have thoroughly documented the textual transmission of Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century Prose Edda. However, the transmission and reception of Edda illustrations in manuscripts and early print sources has received scant critical attention.¹ This paper will examine the earliest rendering of an Edda scene² which is the Gylfaginning (The Deluding of Gylfi) illustration on f.26v in the early fourteenth-century Icelandic Codex Upsaliensis [hereafter U] and the eight renderings which stem from it. My paper will clarify how a cycle of illustrations occurred that resulted in the transmission of U's illustration over a four-hundred-year period from Iceland to Sweden and back to Iceland. The paper's major focus is on four full-page renderings of the Gylfaginning scene that were produced in the period 1760 to 1765 in three hand-copied paper manuscripts by Jakob Sigurðsson [hereafter JS]. JS's four renderings include two renderings—NKS 1867 4to [hereafter N] f.111v and ÍB 299 4to [hereafter Í] f.59v—that are very similar to U's illustration. However, this paper will establish that JS's renderings were inspired by Olaus Verelius's copperplate rendering of U's Gylfaginning illustration in a Swedish print edition of Gautreks Saga in 1664. In addition to his two rather close renderings of Verelius copperplate, JS also created two idiosyncratic renderings—N. f.98r and SÁM [hereafter S] f.78r—that are part of his two sets of sixteen Edda scenes in N and S.³ All four of JS's Gylfaginning renderings differ from each other and from that of Verelius' rendering of the scene, and not surprisingly the two idiosyncratic renderings feature major differences from the copperplate. Apart from the light it casts on medieval Icelandic illustrative practices, my study offers insights into illustrator- and patron-relationships in book production and culture in eighteenth-century Iceland, as well as in seventeenth-century Sweden. As my paper will demonstrate, illustrators through the ages have essentially adhered to the description of Gylfaginning in Snorri's text and to the basic composition of U's illustration. However, illustrators of this scene, from U to the present day, have also individualized their renderings in ways that reveal fascinating aspects of the transmission and reception of U's illustration, thus clarifying an important chapter in the textual reception of Snorri's *Edda*.

2. The Illustration of Gylfaginning in Codex Upsaliensis

The well-known illustration of Gylfaginning in U depicts the Swedish King Gylfi—disguised as Gangleri—standing before three regal figures seated on high seats hierarchically arranged so that they tower above him. The seriousness of the situation is only fully discernable to those familiar with the narrative. Gylfi has come to discover if the formidable abilities of the strangers from Asia are due to the gods that they worship. He is immediately ensnared in a

¹ See Hans Kuhn's Greek Gods in Northern Costumes concerning paintings and other art works based on Norse mythology in nineteenth-century Scandinavia (2000: 209 – 219), and Margaret Clunies Ross' examination of the illustrations of the Poetic Edda for Thomas Gray's Norse odes: The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odinn (1988: 105 – 118).

² AM 738 4to from 1680 features twenty-three illustrations of individual figures, as well as Valhöll and Yggdrasil, but does not contain illustrations of narrative scenes.

³ I will present a thorough discussion of the two sets of Edda illustrations and their differences in Chapter Four of my forthcoming dissertation.

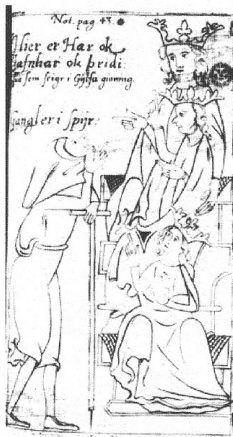
wisdom contest and is threatened with bodily harm if he loses. This contest serves as a narrative frame for the Gylfaginning section of Snorri's Edda. It explicitly reinforces the process of euhemerization that was introduced in the Prologue, and subtly raises the question as to exactly who is being deluded. Does Gylfi merely act dumb and play along, or does he actually come to believe that these men are gods? The text does not describe the seated figures but simply states that they are kings and identifies them with names from the large list of *Óðins heiti* (poetic synonyms for Óðinn) as *Hár*, *Jafnhár*, and *Þriði* (High, Just-as-high, and Third), Despite Snorri's statement that the seated figures are all kings, it is intriguing that U's illustrator depicted the lower figure as a female, as evidenced by her feminine face and the contours of the robe outlining her breasts. It is possible that U's illustrator may have chosen to use a feminine figure in order to represent a negative hypostatic representation of Óðinn's true character. Óðinn was a practitioner of the type of magic known as *seiðr*, which was so strongly associated with women that it was considered to be unmanly even in pagan times and was demonized in the Christian era.



Codex Upsaliensis [= U] c. 1325 A.D.
f.26v
Uppsala universitetsbibliotek
From Grape



Marshall 114 [= M] c. 1638 A.D.
f.23v
Bodleian Library
From Einar G. 1998:front cover



Verelius 1664:42a



Schefferus 1678:fig. 32



Rudbeck 1679:fig. 29 309

U eventually came into the possession of the manuscript collector Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson who sent it to Denmark in 1639 as a gift to Stephanus Johannis Stephanius. The Bishop had a copy made of U before it left the Iceland, namely Marsh. 114 [hereafter M], but M also left the country when it was taken to England as part of Thomas Marshall's collection in 1690. The Gylfaginning scene on f.23v in M is of interest to my argument because it is not an exact copy of U. M's illustrator portrayed the three seated figures as bearded kings and explicitly identified them within the illustration as "*prenning Óðins*" (a trinity of Óðinns). M's rendering of Gylfaginning does not appear to have inspired any renderings in England and consequently did not participate in the further transmission of U's illustration.

U's illustration did not engender any renderings in Denmark and consequently its transmission might well have ended there as well. Danish scholars were not interested in copying U because it was not considered to be the best text to base a translation on. The Danish edition, Peder H. Resen's *Edda Islandorum*, was published in Copenhagen in 1665 and was based on the *Laufás Edda*. Resen's *Edda* made a print version of Snorri's *Edda* accessible for the first time in Icelandic, Danish and Latin but it was not illustrated. However, Resen's introduction, which took a metaphysical approach to the *Edda*, was included in hand copied manuscripts in Iceland such as N, Í, and S, and JS illustrated a cover page of his own devising for it in Í.

3. Verelius' Copperplate and Other Swedish Renderings

U was acquired by the Swedish collector, Magnus Gabrielle de la Guardie after Stephanius' death in 1650. U arrived in Sweden during a period of intensely patriotic antiquarian scholarship, and it was a welcome resource, given that Gylfi was a Swedish king and that the events of Gylfaginning took place in the vicinity of Uppsala. Verelius created his full-page copperplate rendering of U's Gylfaginning illustration in 1664, which was sometimes⁴ inserted into his notes accompanying his translation of Gautrek's *Saga* (1664:42a). The reason for including or excluding Verelius's copperplate from editions may represent a subscription option offered by its publisher. U does not appear to have circulated but Verelius' copperplate engendered further renderings. Johannes Schefferus placed his rendering of Verelius's copperplate onto a page crowded with other representations of triple crowns (1668:fig. 32) in response to competing Danish claims to the crest. Olaus Rudbeck included a similar rendering, also based on Verelius', on a page with other illustrations whose connections to Gylfaginning are not readily apparent (1679:309 fig. 29). However, Rudbeck's rendering of the three gods in Gylfaginning was part of his efforts to prove that Sweden was in fact the lost Atlantis and the cradle of civilization. These early print renderings of Gylfaginning reflect the fact that Sweden was the first Scandinavian country to develop the printing press and also the first to use an *Edda* illustration, in the patriotic spirit of the times, to promote their nationalistic agendas in print.

The lower seated figure in all of the Swedish renderings is very close to that of U but does not necessarily indicate a visualization of a hypostatic representation of Óðinn. Verelius and Schefferus were minimalists when depicting folds in the figure's clothing, but Rudbeck emphasized the contour of her left breast with a triple line. However, for Verelius, and his fellow scholars, the temple trio at Uppsala would have been composed of Óðinn, Thor, and the goddess Frigg. In Sweden, Frigg had supplanted Freyr in Adam of Bremen's description of the

⁴ Anders Grape (1962:29) notes that the copperplate was rarely inserted into Verelius's notes. However, I discovered that Roll 366 of the Scandinavian Culture Series contains two editions of Verelius' notes and both of them contain the copperplate.

Temple of Uppsala, due to an error in the transmission of Adam's text.⁵ Schefferus appears to have been the first to claim that the trio of enthroned figures in U could be traced back to the temple gods in Uppsala (1678: 157). Consequently, the lower seated figure simply represents Frigg when it is depicted as a woman in seventeenth-century Swedish renderings of U.



Nks 1867 4to [= N] 1760 A.D.
f.98r
Det Kongelige Bibliotek



Nks 1867 4to [= N] 1760 A.D.
f.111v
Det Kongelige Bibliotek



ÍB 299 [= Í] 1764 A.D.
f.59v
Landsbókasafn Íslands



SÁM 66 4to [= S] 1765 A.D.
f.78r
Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi

⁵ In Adam's description, Freyr's name was rendered as *Fricco*, which became *Frigh* in early Swedish versions and was later misinterpreted in the writings of Johannes and Olaus Magnus as representing Frigg. See Magnus 1555:185 endnote 3–3.

It is significant that the Swedish renderings included a detail that was originally a pen trial in U, a face with a crown that the Swedish renderings transformed into an icon of the sun with a human face. In his text, Verelius makes a connection between Óðinn and the Sun based on Óðinn being *monoculus*. It is odd that Verelius remained faithful to U's illustration and did not depict Óðinn as one-eyed in his rendering of Gylfaginning. However, Verelius and Rudbeck were determined to establish a link between Norse and Classical mythology and asserted that the Temple of Uppsala had originally been the Temple of Apollo, and therefore both temples could have been associated with a sun icon. Schefferus opposed the association of the temple with that of Apollo on the basis of archaeological evidence (Ellenius 1957:62–64). However, he may have retained the sun icon because the sun was considered to be the king of celestial bodies and Óðinn, being one of the Æsir, was an astral deity. Consequently, when the sun icon is present in renderings it indicates that the illustrator was not copying directly from U but from a rendering of Verelius' copperplate.

4. Verelius's Copperplate and its Icelandic Renderings

Verelius' notes to Gautrek's saga were often included in eighteenth-century hand-copied paper manuscripts of that saga in Iceland, and it was no doubt through a print edition of his text that his rendering of U's illustration came to the attention of JS (1729 – 1779). JS was a tenant farmer and a prolific copier and illustrator of texts⁶, as well as a poet. He was fostered at Kirkjubær in north-eastern Iceland and spent his life as a tenant farmer in the surrounding district. Lutheran pietism insured that all children at the time were taught to read in order to be confirmed, but neither writing (Olafsson 2009:6) nor drawing would have been considered a necessary part of their education. JS's informal education would have been enabled by the clergyman, Ólafur Brynjólfsson, who was also a scribe and illustrator and was in charge of Kirkjubær's farmstead and church. JS supplemented his livelihood by producing hand-copied paper manuscripts which were part of an informal system of book production in Iceland from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century.

It is significant that JS's four renderings of Gylfaginning all contain the sun icon from the Swedish renderings, as well as the same manner of depicting Gylfi's clothes so that they generally conform to the outlines of his robe in U. The basic layout of all of JS's renderings are mirror images of the Swedish renderings and the reversal of the layout indicates that Verelius's copperplate was his exemplar. Unlike the other Swedish renderings, Verelius' copperplate was printed on only one side of a page, and it sometimes bled through the paper thereby producing a mirror-image.⁷ The renderings by Schefferus and Rudbeck were printed on heavier paper and have images on both sides of the page. However, Verelius's copperplate was printed on only one side of a page because, as previously mentioned, it was not inserted into every edition. Access to an edition with the copperplate and its bleed-through would have given JS the choice of copying the reverse image, which obviously appealed to him artistically because he used the reversed image for all of his renderings.

As previously mentioned in my introduction, the N manuscript, which is the oldest of the three manuscripts under discussion, is unusual because it contains both a close copy (f.111v) and an idiosyncratic rendering of Verelius's copperplate (f.98r). N is also unusual because JS signed the close copy in N "J. Sigurdsson with my own hand" as well as adding a verse: "*Hárs er lygin hérna sýnd með hvopta púðri ólinu, en Óðins kunungs talin og týnd tign í hásetinu.*" (High's lie is shown here with strong eloquence. But the dignity of King Odin in

⁶ See Hrafnkelsson (2004:13) for a list of JS's extant mss.

⁷ See Roll 366 of the Scandinavian Culture Series: the copperplate does not bleed through in #2355 but it does in #2563.

the high seat is described and lost.)⁸ The verse is not unusual because JS included it in all four of his renderings, however in N it contains a minor correction changing *og* (and) to *en* (but). The placement of the verse, squeezed onto the bottom of the page in N, along with the correction, suggests that this was the first Edda scene that JS illustrated, and that he simultaneously recorded it on the page as he composed it. The spontaneous nature of the composition and recording of JS's poem in N suggests that it was Verelius' copperplate that initially inspired him to create his close renderings, and subsequently his idiosyncratic renderings. JS did not sign his other three renderings of Gylfaginning and the verse is more carefully placed and lettered in the latter renderings.

JS's attention to detail in his close renderings of Verelius suggests that he regarded the copperplate to be an accurate rendering of U, and accorded it the respect that he would have given to the original illustration. However, JS does vary somewhat from Verelius in the close renderings as to the major detail in his depiction of all of the seated figures as bearded and the minor detail of his inclusion of a tiled floor in Í. The status of the close rendering in N (f.111v) is confirmed by its placement in a group of renderings of historical artefacts comprised of rune stones and spears. Moreover the fact that the compiler of N also included one of JS's idiosyncratic renderings (f.98r) indicates that close rendering was perceived differently than the idiosyncratic rendering.

Verelius did not label his figures and JS's labelling of the three kings varies in his renderings. In the two rendering in N, the labels follow the order given in the text but he reversed them in Í and S. The confusion regarding the labels indicates that eighteenth-century readers in Iceland struggled, then as we do now, to make sense of Snorri's description in which Third is the topmost figure, Just-as-High the middle figure, and High the lowest.

JS's idiosyncratic renderings in N (f.98r) and S (f.78r) feature many differences, both minor and major, from Verelius' rendering and represent a major break in the tradition of copying U. For instance, a major change occurs when JS depicts all of the seated figures as being one-eyed, thereby visually indicating that his figures are hypostatic representations of Óðinn. Moreover, JS also changed all of Óðinn's declamatory hand gestures—a standard oratory gesture since antiquity—to a two-fingered gesture, which in the Christian tradition is associated with the conveyance of blessings or absolution. Possibly, by depicting the figures gesturing in a way that is inappropriate to them, JS is reminding his audience (which would have been familiar with the gestural conventions of their Lutheran pastors) that the “gods” are engaged in a sort of fraud. Thus, as we can see, JS's alterations to Óðinn's gestures in the idiosyncratic renderings gives greater emphasis to the verse in all four of his renderings concerning Óðinn's lie and his consequent loss of dignity.

JS also changed Gylfi's declamatory gesture in the idiosyncratic renderings to an open handed gesture, and his arm is thrown up over his head. This exaggerated gesture suggests enthusiasm and gullibility, and JS labelled Gylfi with text that describes him as “*gapir*” (gaping) and as “*gleypir í sig lygi*” (swallowing the lie). Taken all together the change in gestures along with the verse and the text indicates the manner in which JS and his patrons perceived the dynamics of the scene. Thus Gylfi was viewed as having been thoroughly deluded by Óðinn's eloquence, but eighteenth-century Lutheran Icelanders no longer viewed pagan myths as material that they might fall into believing. They read the Edda despite the disapproval of the Church and used its contents in the composition of ballads known as *rimur*.

JS also altered the three figures of Óðinn and that of Gylfi in his idiosyncratic renderings. The Óðinn figures are less dignified in their body language but Gylfi undergoes the greatest change. In the close renderings (N f.111v and Í f.59v), Gylfi's disguise is that of a beggar, or possibly a paganised pilgrim, but in the idiosyncratic renderings (N f.98r and S f.78r), he ap-

⁸ I consulted various friends and colleagues while doing the translations for this paper; any mistakes are my own.

pears to be a simpleton with a deformed body and face that seems less than human. Consequently, it appears that Óðinn and Gylfi were both viewed as foolish figures in eighteenth-century Christian Iceland, which is also indicated by his verse denigrating Óðinn as a liar and his text identifying Gylfi as a gullible fool.

There are indications in JS's idiosyncratic sets of sixteen Edda scenes in N and S that he tailored his work to suit his clients' interests or level of education, but only his renderings of Gylfaginning falls within the scope of this paper. The kings are empty-handed in the idiosyncratic rendering (f.78r) in S but in the idiosyncratic rendering in N (f.98r), which was owned by the clergyman at Kirkjubær, the highest king is holding an *orbis terrarum*. Moreover, the middle figure in the idiosyncratic rendering in N is holding an object that represents a paganised *orbis cruciger*, with the head of Thor's hammer, *Mjöllnir*, replacing the Christian cross. The orbs in N make it possible to identify the topmost figure as Óðinn, the middle figure as Thor, and the lower figure as a pagan version of the Holy Spirit. Rory McTurk has observed that the three figures can be seen as offering support to Anne Holtsmark's suggestion that Snorri presents "the heathen religion partly as an inverted Christianity," and he further suggests that Snorri's three kings represent three figures of Óðinn as a pagan version of the Holy Trinity (1994:11). In S, whose provenance and textual contents indicate that its owner had less esoteric interests than the clergyman who owned N, the three hypostatic depictions of Óðinn are empty-handed. It appears that S's owner was not interested in subtleties of a paganised Trinity or in creative anachronisms.

5. Conclusion

JS stands out among illustrators of Gylfaginning because he is the only illustrator to have created more than one rendering of the scene and also because his illustrations represent the most recent renderings of Gylfaginning for almost two hundred years. Moreover, as my work indicates, JS idiosyncratic renderings (N f.98r and S f.78r) represent a fascinating chapter in the reception and transmission of the Edda because they move beyond the ambiguous description in Snorri's text by depicting the three figures of Óðinn as one-eyed bearded males and in depicting Gylfi's enthusiastic gullibility. JS's compilations preserve evidence of the reading interests of eighteenth-century Icelanders and his illustrations of Gylfaginning offer insights as to their engagement with the text of the Edda. JS's labours as a scribe and illustrator insured that his clients were not restricted to reading the material deemed appropriate by the Church which owned the only printing press in Iceland during this period. The enthusiasm with which JS (presumably at the behest of his patrons) took up the challenge of revisualizing U's medieval image that had returned to Iceland by means of a seventeenth-century engraving indicates a culture which at that particular moment was keen to engage with its mythological heritage.

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St. Óláfr and his Enemies in the Saga Tradition

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The following is a part of a longer article dealing with the medieval literature about St Óláfr Haraldsson (king 1015–30). Its aim is neither to discover the truth about Óláfr nor to solve the difficult problem of the textual relationship between the various works about him, but to examine the tradition as such, from the vague references to Óláfr's life and reign in *Passio Olavi* (c. 1175) to the detailed narrative in Snorri Sturluson's *Separate Saga* (c. 1225) and *Heimskringla* (c. 1230). My conclusions from this examination can be summarised as follows.

If we consider the difference between the first and the last of these works, it is easy to leap to the conclusion that an enormous change has taken place during these fifty years, leading to the “invention” of the Óláfr known by most modern readers of the sagas. This impression is wrong. Quite a substantial part of this story must have been known to our earliest author, Theodoricus, who, in his terse and succinct way, renders a fair number of the episodes told in greater detail by his successors and shows that much of what was included in the later sagas was known to him and his contemporaries, at least concerning the first and last phase of Óláfr's reign. As Theodoricus was very selective in what he included, he may also have known some episodes of which there is no trace in his work, although this is of course impossible to prove. From *Legendary Saga* we can conclude that a great variety of traditions, partly oral, partly written, must have existed, particularly concerning the early and late phases of Óláfr's reign. The age of these traditions is difficult to determine, but the existence of skaldic poetry, partly combined with background narrative (“Begleitprosa”), may suggest that at least some of them go back to Óláfr's own lifetime.

In this paper, I shall discuss the great conflict between Óláfr and his internal and external enemies, which ended in his death at Stiklestad. All the Norwegian-Icelandic sources, including *Passio Olavi*, agree that Óláfr was killed in battle, and, with the exception of *Passio Olavi*, all sources list Cnut as well as a number of Norwegian magnates as his enemies. However, only two sources give more details, *Legendary Saga* and Snorri. Despite altogether three references to Cnut's attempts to gain Norway, the author of *Legendary Saga* shifts the focus from him to the internal Norwegian opposition. For the first time, we get information about individual motives for resisting Óláfr.

Challenge and Response: the Individual Motives

The main example of this is the story of Ásbjörn selsbani, which occurs for the first time in the *Oldest Saga* and then in *Legendary Saga* and Snorri (*Otte Brudstykker*, pp. 3 f.; *Leg. Saga* ch. 47–49; *HkrOH* ch. 117–20, 123). Ásbjörn sails from Northern Norway to Sola to buy grain from his uncle Erlingr Skjálgsson. As Óláfr has banned the export of grain from Southern Norway, his *ármaðr* Selþórir confiscates Ásbjörn's cargo and sends him home empty-handed. Next year, Ásbjörn kills Selþórir in Óláfr's presence, is taken captive and sentenced to death, but is saved by Erlingr, who forces Óláfr to accept compensation, after which Óláfr demands that Ásbjörn take Selþórir's place. When Ásbjörn fails to fulfil the condition for his release, he is killed by one of Óláfr's men. This story follows immediately upon a comment about Óláfr's strict justice which caused the revolt against him (*Leg. Saga* ch. 46, p. 108) and is clearly intended as an example of this. It is also followed by a comment that this was one of many conflicts between Óláfr and Erlingr. However, the author does not mention any direct effects of Ásbjörn's death.

The story of Ásbjörn contains no skaldic stanzas, which, combined with the fact that it occurs only in three sources, may give rise to suspicions that it is a late invention. However, it is

hardly invented by the author of *Oldest Saga*. Nor is it difficult to explain that it does not occur in Theodoricus who usually omits or abbreviates such stories and who may have found it sufficient to point to various magnates' hatred of Óláfr without going into detail about its origin. Its absence from *Fagrskinna* may have a similar explanation. This work deals briefly with Óláfr's reign and in general contains little information about the inner struggles in Norway. As the story deals with dramatic events that are likely to have been remembered locally, I am inclined to believe that it contains a kernel of truth, although some dramatic details have probably been invented.

In the introduction to the story of Ásbjörn, both *Oldest Saga* and *Legendary Saga* briefly mention a series of other episodes leading to conflicts between Óláfr and individual magnates, mainly Þórir hundr, who only with difficulty manages to get reconciliation after having killed Karli, "a good man" (góðan mann) in Bjarmaland (*Otte Brudstykker*, p. 2; *Leg. Saga* ch. 46). In the latter context, the author states that Óláfr, learning about the disloyalty towards him, let four men be killed, including Þórir hundr's nephew (the son of his sister) and Grjótgardr, whose wife was later married to Kálfr Árnason. The two others are anonymous. Afterwards, Þórir killed three men for Óláfr who were his closest friends. The author of *Legendary Saga* may well have intended these killings as examples of Óláfr's strict justice, to which the magnates reacted, but the connection is not obvious; the wish for revenge leading to a series of killings as in the feuds described in the Icelandic sagas would seem an equally likely motive.

This statement in *Legendary Saga* is most probably derived from a written source. In Theodoricus's case, we can easily imagine a basis in either oral or written storytelling that is condensed in the brief references to factual events, as Theodoricus is not particularly interested in narrative. This is not the case in *Legendary Saga*, which contains a number of stories, some of which are even well narrated. Consequently, it is unlikely that the author knew stories without rendering them in his text. By contrast, he may well have known Ari's or Sæmund's lost works, both of which were probably very brief. Thus, he may have taken over the information about the four men killed by Óláfr from one or both of these predecessors, despite being able to identify only two of them.

If Snorri's source was *Oldest Saga* or another source similar to *Legendary Saga*, this somewhat cryptic presentation of Óláfr's conflicts with the magnates must have represented a challenge for him. Snorri devotes more space to these conflicts than any other writer does. His starting-point is the story of Ásbjörn where he largely follows his predecessor, although adding a few more details. However, the main difference between the two works is that Snorri is more precise regarding the consequences of this episode for the relationship between Óláfr on the one hand and Erlingr and Þórir hundr on the other.

Erlingr has been the leading man in Western Norway since the reign of Óláfr Tryggvason, a position Óláfr attempts to weaken (Bagge, *Society and Politics*, pp. 78 f., 125–8). A compromise is reached between the two adversaries just before Ásbjörn's fatal expedition to the south, an agreement Erlingr does not want to break, although he also feels obliged to aid his kinsman Ásbjörn. Snorri does not explain in detail what happened after Ásbjörn had been reconciled and had broken the agreement, but he makes it clear that the relationship between Óláfr and Erlingr had deteriorated and that Erlingr was ripe for Cnut's overtures. Thus, in Erlingr's case we are dealing with a conflict of interests which according to Snorri could be partly solved by compromises, but was exacerbated by Ásbjörn's foolish actions. The fact that Snorri, following his predecessors, also tries to acquit Óláfr of the responsibility for Erlingr's death – instead blaming Erlingr's kinsman Áslákr – points in the same direction: Óláfr and Erlingr respected each other and would have been able to cooperate, had not their friendship been destroyed, first by Ásbjörn, then by Áslákr.

Concerning Þórir hundr, only Snorri specifies the kinship between him and Ásbjörn, stating that he was Ásbjörn's paternal uncle. Consequently, Ásbjörn's mother turns to Þórir to get

revenge for her dead son, which, according to Snorri, leads to Þórir killing Karli, who had taken part in the killing of Ásbjörn (*HkrOH* ch. 123, 133). Snorri here reverses the sequence in *Legendary Saga*, according to which Þórir had already killed Karli at the time of Ásbjörn's fatal expedition to the south. A modern observer may well forgive Snorri for doing this, given *Legendary Saga*'s record of inconsistency and confused sequences. However, there are also other reasons for being suspicious of Snorri's version. Karli is not killed until he and Þórir have spent the whole summer together on a combined trading and Viking expedition to Bjarmaland, after which they run into quarrel over the booty. Thus, Þórir apparently has another motive to kill Karli. Moreover, why would Karli join Þórir in an expedition after having participated in the killing of his relative? Despite the fact that Snorri tries to answer this question, the story seems to have a tenuous link with that of Ásbjörn, which suggests that it may originally have had nothing to do with it but simply been a story of quarrel over booty leading to a killing. Whereas a factual or at least a traditional basis may have existed for the expedition to Bjarmaland, possibly also for Karli being one of Óláfr's men, the story of Þórir avenging Ásbjörn by killing Karli is likely to be Snorri's own invention. By contrast, Karli's death may well be one of the reasons for the enmity between Þórir and Óláfr.

Apparently, there were also others. *Legendary Saga* identifies two of the men Óláfr killed for Þórir as his sister's son and Grjótgarðr. Snorri repeats the statement about Óláfr killing four men for Þórir in the speech immediately before the Battle of Stiklestad in which Þórir explains his reasons for fighting Óláfr (*Leg. Saga* ch. 62; *HkrOH* ch. 219). Þórir here names Ásbjörn, his brother's son; Þórir and Grjótgarðr, his sister's sons, and Qlvir, their father. Grjótgarðr is thus in *Heimskringla* the son of Qlvir whom Óláfr killed early in his reign because of his participation in pagan cult and whose wife he married to Kálfr Árnason who was then his friend. On this occasion, however, Snorri does not mention that this wife was Þórir's sister (*HkrOH* ch. 110, cf. 107–9). According to *Heimskringla*, Óláfr later killed both Þórir and Grjótgarðr, the former because he had accepted gold from Cnut to betray him, the latter because he wanted to avenge his brother.

Curiously enough, however, Snorri makes little use of this motive in Þórir's case; he only mentions it on this occasion. By contrast, the death of the two young men has a decisive influence on Kálfr Árnason, as they are his stepsons (*HkrOH* ch. 165, 166, 183). This identification is not to be found in any other source. Has Snorri simply invented this story in order to find a reasonable explanation for Kálfr's defection? Or has he even invented the defection itself? In *Legendary Saga* Kálfr is all the time Óláfr's adversary and fights against him already at Nesjar. Nor is he said to have any reason for being grateful to Óláfr. In the dialogues with his enemies, including Kálfr, before the Battle of Stiklestad, Óláfr blames two of them for forgetting the benefits he has conferred on them, but does not direct this accusation at Kálfr. Even stranger, there is no such accusation in the corresponding passage in *Heimskringla*'s version; only Þórir blames Óláfr for the death of Qlvir and his sons (*Leg. Saga* ch. 62; *HkrOH* ch. 219). It therefore seems that the story of Kálfr's conflict of loyalty after the death of his stepsons is Snorri's invention on the basis of the information in *Legendary Saga* or a similar source about Óláfr killing Grjótgarðr and Kálfr marrying his widow.¹

Finally, there are some reasons to suspect the identity of the two women named Sigríðr in Snorri's narrative, as they do not occur anywhere else (Jochens 1996: 176 f.). Sigríðr is also the name of the prototype of an aggressive woman, Sigríðr the Haughty, who killed Óláfr's father. Thus, when there is no other evidence than Snorri's for Karli being involved in

¹ See Schreiner 1926: 77 f. who also regards this story as Snorri's invention and suggests that the name *Qlvir* is derived from one of Sigvatr's poems about a pagan named *Qlvir* who denied him hospitality for the night. By contrast, the name Grjótgarðr seems appropriate for an adversary of Óláfr, as it indicates descent from the earls of Lade.

Ásbjörn's death and a perfectly reasonable alternative explanation for Þórir killing him exists, it is possible that the whole story of Sigríðr with the bloody spear and Þórir taking revenge for Ásbjörn is Snorri's invention. The corresponding lack of evidence for the existence, not only of the other Sigríðr, later married to Kálfr, but also of her two sons, suggests a similar conclusion in this case as well. It must be admitted, however, that some kind of kinship between Þórir and Ásbjörn did exist according to *Legendary Saga* which might have given Þórir a motive for turning against Óláfr. Moreover, Sigríðr does not ask Þórir to kill Karli but to kill Óláfr, which he does by piercing him, apparently with the spear he received from her, at Stiklestad. In a similar way, Finnur Arnason's violent hatred against his brother is better explained by Kálfr having defected from Óláfr than by the brothers just having chosen different sides (*Leg. Saga* ch. 73, 85; *HkrOH* ch. 231).

Snorri's main reason for inventing or changing these stories is Þórir's and Kálfr's central role in the opposition against Óláfr and above all the fact that they were or were suspected of being Óláfr's killers. They therefore needed a strong motive, and the strongest motive Snorri could imagine was revenge. This is the motive of all three killers, although the first one, Þorsteinn knarrasmiðr, who wants revenge for the ship Óláfr has confiscated, seems almost like a parody compared to the two others. By contrast, both Kálfr and Þórir are important magnates who are mentioned several times earlier in *Legendary Saga* and are very prominent in *Heimskringla*.

Explaining Óláfr's Fall: from *Legendary Saga* to Snorri

The concentration of Óláfr's failures to his five last years enables Snorri to create a consistent plot of his conflicts with the chieftains. By contrast, the vague chronology of *Legendary Saga* suggests to the reader that the enmity was there all the time. Nor does the author give much information about individual motives for turning against the king. This picture neither supports nor contradicts the author's generalization about Óláfr's strict justice combined with Cnut's gold as the reason for the opposition against him. Although both explanations also occur in *Heimskringla*, the detailed account of Óláfr engaging in one conflict after the other during the last five years of his reign points to additional and more complex motives. By his inventions and changes in the tradition, Snorri manages to create a strong network of the men opposing Óláfr, all of whom have good reasons for fighting him, which also serves to explain the turning-point in Óláfr's reign in his eleventh year.

I have earlier claimed that Snorri essentially depicts the conflicts as a series of power struggles between Óláfr and individual magnates (Bagge 1991: 66–70). Power is important in the case of all the men mentioned above but it is not the only factor. Neither Þórir nor Kálfr wants a conflict with Óláfr; they are both forced by women demanding revenge who appeal to their sense of shame and honour. Þórir is almost out of his mind, having received the bloody spear, and Kálfr has good reasons to be grateful to Óláfr, besides risking the friendship with his brothers. In the case of Erlingr, his conflict with Óláfr might in Snorri's opinion have been solved, were it not for his loyalty to Ásbjörn. An additional argument for the importance of revenge as a motive in Snorri's thought is the fact that these episodes are likely to have been his own invention. It would therefore seem that he has reduced the importance of power as a motive in favour of revenge. On the other hand, none of the three magnates takes up arms against Óláfr until Cnut has made his claim and a strong alliance can be formed against him. The concern for honour and revenge is combined with political realism.

This emphasis on the individual motives weakens the two general explanations Snorri has taken over from his predecessors. The leaders of the opposition willingly accept Cnut's bribes, but this is not their decisive motive; their experience with Óláfr is more important.

Generally, Snorri attaches less importance to Cnut than most of his predecessors do; the brave Norwegians cannot be conquered by the Danes; they are themselves able to depose their king (Bagge 2002: 191). Nor can the conflicts be explained as the result of Óláfr's strict justice. The detailed accounts of Óláfr's behaviour towards the men who later became his enemies hardly confirm the picture of a king acting out of concern for strict justice, neither from a modern nor from a thirteenth century point of view. Although it is more than a conventional piece of religious rhetoric, it is not Snorri's real explanation of Óláfr's fall.

Where does Snorri's sympathies lie? In contrast to his predecessors, he not only gives a detailed account of why Óláfr's adversaries turned against him, but also deals with their preparations for the Battle of Stiklestad without any word of condemnation. He even attributes a speech to the Danish bishop Sigurðr, condemning Óláfr as a robber and evildoer. The fact that Snorri lets people present their arguments in speeches does not necessarily mean that he agrees with them. However, his sympathy clearly lies in what in later terminology would be called a balanced constitution, the king ruling in cooperation with the people, represented by the aristocracy, and listening to the advice of the leading men in the country. His two famous examples of confrontations between the king and the people, Ásbjörn of Meðalhús against Hákon the good and Þorgnýr *logmaðr* against King Olof of Sweden, both in all likelihood his own constructions (*Hkr. Hákonar góða*, ch. 15; *HkrOH* ch. 80), illustrate this ideal quite well. Particularly the latter example has been regarded as an expression of the Icelandic magnate Snorri's attitude to the Norwegian king (Moberg 1941: 207–15). However, Snorri makes it clear that Þorgnýr's accusation against King Olof of Sweden cannot be directed against the Norwegian Óláfr, who listens to his people when they want peace with their neighbour. Nor does Snorri depict a constant conflict between Óláfr and the aristocracy. He lists a number of magnates on Óláfr's side (Bagge 2002: 184–7), and he gives specific reasons for the individual magnates who turn against him. Snorri's opinion of kingship in general may be better illustrated by the dialogue between the two kings Hrœrekr and Hringr: On the one hand, a strong king can easily reduce the power and independence of the magnates. On the other hand, such a man is also able to reward his friends and punish his enemies. As an Icelander, Snorri may in addition have taken consolation from the argument he attributes to Hrœrekr about the advantages of a distant king (*HkrOH* ch. 36).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Snorri blames Óláfr. A characteristic expression of his attitude is the words he attributes to Erlingr Skjalgsson during one of their meetings: "I serve you best when I serve you voluntarily".² Snorri seems to agree with Erlingr that it would have been in both men's interest if Óláfr had allowed Erlingr to keep his position in Western Norway rather than trying to reduce his power. Snorri may here have had in mind another great magnate whose power the king wanted to reduce, namely his friend and patron Earl Skúli. Moreover, Óláfr's behaviour in the series of conflicts during the last five years of his reign probably seemed incredibly stupid to Snorri. He alienates Erlingr Skjalgsson by insisting on the death penalty for his nephew for killing a lowborn man, descending from slaves, despite the fact that Erlingr is willing to pay whatever Óláfr wants in return for Ásbjörn's life. He then insists on Ásbjörn taking over the position as royal representative, which, according to the view expressed in Snorri's narrative, was an extreme humiliation and hardly likely to lead to lasting peace. After Ásbjörn's death and Þórir's revenge, he lets Finnr Árnason humiliate Þórir who, like Erlingr, would probably have been willing to pay compensation to retain Óláfr's friendship. At Erlingr's surrender in the Battle of Tunga, Óláfr insists on humiliating him before pardoning him, although this leads to Áslákr's fatal blow and would probably in any case have made it difficult for Óláfr to gain Erlingr's friendship. Finally, at the time when Cnut prepares his attack on Norway and several of the leading men

² "sú mun þér mín þjónosta hallkvæmst, er ek veiti þér með sjálfræði" (*HkrOH* ch. 60, p. 89).

have joined him, he kills both Kálfr's stepsons, thus making another important magnate and old friend join the enemy camp. A last episode completes the picture, the story of the skald Steinn Skaptason who kills Óláfr's *ármaðr* but is protected by Þorbergr Árnason (*HkrOH* ch. 138, cf. *Leg. Saga* ch. 58, p. 138). This story is referred briefly in *Legendary Saga*, where it is just an episode, illustrating Steinn's difficult character. In *Heimskringla* it completes the picture created by the concentration of all Óláfr's conflicts with the chieftains to his last five years: Óláfr is a stubborn king who challenges too many enemies at the same time and refuses to accept reasonable compromises. By insisting on the death penalty for Steinn, Óláfr almost makes his closest friends, the Árnasons, turn against him.

We do not know what Snorri really thought about these episodes – after all, Óláfr was not any tyrant from the old days, but the eternal king of Norway, resting in a shrine in the Cathedral of Nidaros – but it is understandable that Snorri needed an excuse for such behaviour, which he found in the statement about Óláfr's strict justice. However, it must be added, in defence of the real Óláfr, that some of these stories are Snorri's constructions. Did Snorri need an excuse for the magnates to turn against Óláfr, particularly for those who killed him? Did he find it psychologically unlikely for such men to betray their king just for gold and silver? Or did he simply examine the available sources for any trace of motives, developing those he found into complete stories explaining the actions of Óláfr's main adversaries? In any case, Snorri gives both a more complex account of the rebellion against Óláfr and shows greater understanding for his adversaries. Ultimately, however, he shows them to have been wrong. Óláfr's alleged tyranny was replaced by an even worse exercised by the Danes, and Óláfr's holiness – which Snorri did not doubt – was used to throw off the Danish yoke and place Óláfr's son on the throne.

Conclusion

Whereas the examination of the story of Óláfr as a whole shows a considerable amount of continuity from Theodoricus to Snorri, the present account of his conflicts with the magnates points to Snorri's almost revolutionary intervention in the tradition. He is the first to attempt a consistent or almost consistent interpretation of the conflicts that led to Óláfr's fall. He is also the first to create a consistent chronology out of the mass of separate stories, most of which were unrelated to one another in the earlier tradition. From a present-day point of view of historical truth, this revolution has not been without costs: originally totally unrelated stories are linked together and not only speeches, but individual persons and their actions have been invented. The result, however, is an entirely new kind of narrative.

How do these observations fit it with the general development of the saga literature? This development has recently been dealt with by Theodore M. Andersson, whose focus is mainly on the Icelandic family sagas and for whom the final stage in the evolution is represented by *Njáls saga* from the late thirteenth century (Andersson 2006: 21–59, 86–101 and 183–210). Although the family sagas and the kings' sagas have much in common, there are also differences between them. The king's sagas show closer similarity to the classical and contemporary Latin historiography, through features like prologues, invented speeches and above all chronology. Theodoricus's work is an example of advanced, theological historiography already around 1180, whereas *Historia Norwegie* represents a more classicizing Latin tradition. However, the influence from these traditions on vernacular historiography is more difficult to ascertain. The dry, terse style of *Ágrip* and to some extent *Fagrskinna* may have been influenced from Theodoricus's Latin prose, but Ari, who writes in the same style in his extant *Íslendingabók*, seems a more likely source of inspiration. The step from this listing of facts to epic narrative is taken in *Oldest Saga*, today mainly known from *Legendary Saga*, and the approximately contemporary saga of Óláfr Tryggvason by Oddr munkr, in both with serious

costs regarding coherence and consistency. Most of the epic material is clearly derived, directly or indirectly, from oral tradition, but its organisation in a longer narrative has presented a problem. We may nevertheless wonder whether the chaotic narrative of these works can be explained by the relationship between written text and oral performance at this stage. We know that texts at this time, and largely also later, were meant to be read aloud, perhaps also to serve as a source for oral storytelling. Could we imagine the author of *Legendary Saga* including a number of different versions in his text, not because of carelessness, but in order to have a variety of material available for various oral performances? The development from this saga to Snorri would then mean a change in the status of the text, from a raw material for oral performance to literary prose, intended to be performed in one particular way.

Between these two stages, we meet an early masterpiece, *Sverris saga*, not dealt with by Andersson, probably because of its limited importance for the development leading to *Njáls saga*. Here the combination of vivid narrative and precise chronology is already perfect and the individual episodes serve to explain major changes in the relationship between Sverrir and his adversaries. *Sverris saga* also, with the exception of the very early part, *Gryla*, probably only covering the period until 1178, represents the same objective narrative as Snorri's works and is likely to have served as his model. There is, however, the great difference that *Sverris saga* deals with contemporary history where at least a relative chronology was easy to establish, whereas Snorri had no evidence for his chronology of Óláfr's reign. The significance of *Sverris saga* for the development of the sagas is difficult to establish, because of the uncertainty about its date. *Gryla* can be dated to 1185–88, and at least a major part of the saga may have been written already during Sverrir's lifetime, but most of the saga may also be as late as from around 1220 (Bagge 1996 15–18; Krag 2005: 46–48 and Þorleifur 2007: LX f.). This uncertainty, together with the general uncertainty about the dates of the kings' sagas and the fact that most of them are after all written within a relatively short period of time, should warn us against drawing too firm conclusions about their development from one stage to another; we may also imagine the coexistence of various approaches. Nor is the latest necessarily the best.

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“Gofuct dýr ec heiti”: Deer Symbolism in Sigurðr Fáfnisbani?

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One of the most intriguing aspects of the complex and fascinating figure of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani is that in a number of Old Norse texts which tell in various ways of the hero's deeds, he is compared, more or less explicitly, to a stag, or his life is connected in some way to this animal. As is widely known, these texts are *Guðrúnarkviða II*, *Völsunga saga*, *Fáfnismál* and *Þiðreks saga*. In the first two texts the hero is explicitly likened to a stag endowed with extraordinary features, while in *Þiðreks saga* it is recounted how the parentless Sigurðr is raised up and nourished by a hind in the woods. More controversial is the interpretation of stanza 2 of *Fáfnismál*, where the hero replies to a question posed by the dying dragon by defining himself as a *gofuct dýr*: this phrase has given rise to a prolonged and lively discussion in Old Norse scholarship and will be commented on in the sections to follow. In the same eddic poem, however, the reference to *Hindarfjall* (“the mountain of the hind”), where Sigurðr will meet the sleeping valkyrie, is part of the same deer imagery. In addition to these occurrences, one should also mention that one of the descendants of Sigurðr the dragon-slayer is called Sigurðr hjörtr (“the stag”).

An obvious major question arising from the occurrences of the image of the stag is why the hero is presented as such. Undoubtedly, any possible answer to this question depends first and foremost on the identification of the symbolic values which are likely to have been attached to the image of this animal in the Middle Ages. Indeed, the occurrence of this comparison in all the texts cited above certainly invites a symbolic interpretation. With regard to this point, one should ask against which cultural background one should interpret this image to work out its symbolic meanings. Should it be assessed as part of a heathen imagery or is it rather a Christian motif, or an elder motif that acquires new meanings according to Christian symbolism? In the present paper some reflections on one possible interpretation of the stag imagery in the depiction of Sigurðr will be proposed. Since the scholar who is willing to embark on such a problem-ridden interpretive enterprise is faced with a considerable number of issues, extreme caution will be necessary in dealing with this topic. Indeed, a major problem is certainly represented by the multi-layered nature of symbols.

Let us now present each single occurrence of the deer imagery in the texts mentioned above.

In *Guðrúnarkviða II* (henceforth *Gðr. II*) Guðrún complains to Þiðrekr about her sorrow and looks back to the time when she was married to Sigurðr. In st. 2 she describes her husband as follows:

Svá var Sigurðr uf sonom Giúca
sem væri grænn laucr ór grasi vaxinn,
eða hiotr hábeinn um hvössom dýrom,
eða gull glóðrautt af grá silfri (Neckel 1983: 224)

From this passage it becomes clear that the three terms of comparison used by Guðrún correspond to the intention to describe Sigurðr as an outstanding hero, especially in comparison with the sons of Gjúki. Interestingly, this description finds a thorough comparison in the words uttered by Sigrún to praise her husband, Helgi Hundingsbani (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, 38):

Svá bar Helgi af hildingom
sem ítrscapaðr ascr af þyrni,
eða sá dýrkálfr, daggo slunginn,
er øfri ferr ǫllom dýrom,
ok horn glóa við himin siálfan. (Neckel 1983: 158)

Here Helgi is compared, among other things, to a young stag whose antlers shine towards the sky. What is worth noticing is that the rhetoric and stylistic pattern is the same as the one used in *Gǫr. II*: the extraordinariness of the hero is expressed and underlined by making use of images taken from the world of plants and animals. Furthermore, in both of them the image of the stag is used, whereas the plant names used are different.

Closely connected to *Gǫr. II* are the relatively numerous attestations to be found in *Völsunga saga*. In ch. 27 [25] Guðrún tells Brynhildr about an ominous dream she had the night before:

“Þat dreymdi mik,” sagði Guðrún, “at vér gengum frá skemmu margar saman ok sámm einn mikinn hjört. Han bar langt af öðrum dýrum. Hár hans var af gulli. Vér vildum allar taka dýrit, en ek ein náða. Dýrit þótti mér öllum hlutum betra. Síðan skauztu dýrit fyrir knjám mér” (Guðni Jónsson 1950: 173–174).

Brynhildr herself contributes to the interpretation of this dream by making Guðrún understand that the big stag (“mikinn hjört”) in the dream is Sigurðr himself. As in the case of *Gǫr. II* briefly presented above, also here one notices that the occurrence of the image of the stag as a representation of the hero responds to the intention to underline his greatness and uniqueness. This is made clearer through the use of expressions aiming at enhancing the status of Sigurðr (“hann bar langt af öðrum dýrum”; “Dýrit þótti mér öllum hlutum betra”).

In ch. 34 [32] Guðrún gives voice to her sorrow following the same rhetoric pattern and drawing from the same metaphoric repertoire as in *Gǫr. II*. Sitting in her own room at Atli’s court, she recalls her husband and the happy times when he was still alive:

”Betra var þá vart líf, er ek átta Sigurð. Svá bar hann af öllum mönnum sem gull af járnri eða laukr af öðrum grösom eða hjörtr af öðrum dýrum”. (Guðni Jónsson 1950: 194–195)

Two further elements in *Völsunga saga* clearly point to the stag imagery: one is the reference to Hindarfjall (especially chs. 20 and 21) and the other is the quotation of the very same controversial strophe in *Fáfnismál* mentioned above.

Further instances of the same deer imagery are given in *Þiðreks saga*. In ch. 162 [267] it is told that Sigurðr has no parents and that he has been raised and nourished by a hind in the forest:

Nv kom þar at æt hind oc teor barnit imunn ser oc berr heim til sins bælis þar atti hon .ij. born. Þar legr hon sveinen niðr. oc lætr sveinen drecka sic. oc fæðir hon han sem sin born. (Bertelsen 1905–1911: 302–303).

In addition, in the scene depicting the quarrel between the two queens (ch. 388 [343]) Brynhildr rudely invites her opponent to go in search of Sigurðr following the path of the hind.

Last but not least, let us turn to the controversial phrase in *Fáfnismál*. The dying dragon asks the hero about his own identity. Sigurðr replies by defining himself as a “göfuct dýr” (“noble beast?”).¹ As was briefly hinted above, scholars are not agreed on the interpretation of this expression (von See *et al.* 2006: 402–404). Most of them explain it as a reference to the

¹ It has generally been considered to be implausible that this phrase could refer to the account of Sigurðr’s being nourished by the hind to be found in *Þiðreks saga*. See von See *et al.* 2006: 402.

stag. Others have put forward an *ofljóst kenning* hypothesis according to which the phrase is a “pun on the name *Sigurðr*” (Gade 1990: 65). In particular, Gade claims that the name *Sigrøðr*, an alternative form which she assumes as the basis of her interpretation, “is a circumlocution for *Hildisvíni*, Freyja’s golden bristled boar from *Hyndlolióð*” (Gade 1990: 65)². For reasons that will be explained later, the stag hypothesis appears to be altogether more plausible.

Starting from all these occurrences, in the following sections the main concern will be to weigh up one possible hypothesis regarding the approach to a symbolic interpretation of the image of the stag in the description of the famous dragon-slayer.

Otto Höfler (1961) carried out a thorough investigation into the stag imagery connected with *Sigurðr*. Yet the results of his study are heavily biased. Indeed, the whole interpretive architecture of his argument is built on the assumption that *Sigurðr*/*Siegfried* is to be identified with Arminius, a chieftain of the Cherusci who defeated a Roman army in 9 A.D near the Teutoburg Forest. According to Höfler (1961: 27), the ethnonym Cherusci would contain the word *herut- (“deer”). Hence, from this viewpoint the occurrence of the stag imagery in the description of *Sigurðr*/*Siegfried* alias Arminius would come as no surprise. Furthermore, Höfler also claims that this imagery has to be seen as a clue to the existence of a stag-cult of which the stag imagery represents a reminiscence. The whole line of reasoning is based on weak grounds and has been widely questioned by most scholars (see, among others, von See 1981: 39–41). A thorough re-evaluation of Höfler’s argument is certainly beyond the scope of this essay. Yet there is at least one major point that needs to be underlined: the textual occurrences briefly examined above clearly point to a metaphoric interpretation and do not provide, as they are, any evidence supporting a cultic hypothesis, as in the case of Höfler. Hence, the imagery under study should be analyzed as a literary metaphor (von See 1981: 40) employed to exemplify certain features of the hero and of his life, a means to give symbolic emphasis to the praise of *Sigurðr*’s stature as an outstanding champion. In particular, what has to be determined is whether the symbolic meaning of this animal in this specific cultural context should be assessed according to a system of pagan cultural coordinates or according to a Christian vision of the world.

At least one major point is clear: as regards the origins of the image of the stag, there is no doubt that it ultimately traces back to pre-Christian times. As Steuer (1999: 588) points out, the stag “hat als stattliches Jagdtier und mit seinem prächtigen Geweih als eindrucksvolle Gestalt immer eine hervorragende Rolle gespielt, was über die Zeiten und die Kulturen hinweg zu mannigfaltiger bildlicher und plastischer Wiedergabe geführt hat”.

As to its major symbolic values, in pre-Christian times it was associated, among other things, with prosperity, rebirth and rejuvenation, with regeneration and fertility.³ Furthermore, it was often connected with sun symbolism (Steuer 1999: 588), mainly because his horns were compared to sunrays. Within the Germanic world, the whetstone sceptre decorated with a little stag found at Sutton Hoo has led most scholars to see the stag as a royal symbol, at least as far as the Anglo-Saxon world is concerned (Simek 2006: 181; Ellis Davidson 1988: 57). This animal is also present in Old Norse mythology, where it appears among the cosmic animals (Heizmann 1999: 604). Stags appear both in the mythological section of the *Poetic Edda* (*Grímnismál*, sts. 26, 33, 35) and in *Snorra Edda*. Four stags (*Grímnismál*, st. 33; *Gylfaginning* 16) are described as feeding on the ash tree *Yggdrasill*. Furthermore, another stag, called *Eikþyrnir*, stands on top of *Valhöll* (*Grímnismál*, sts. 25–26; *Gylfaginning* 39) and bites from the branches of the tree. Copious drops falling from his antlers reach *Hvergelmir*.

Whatever the origin and the hypothetical original meaning of the image of the stag in pre-Christian times in Scandinavia, here I will focus on one possible explanation that may help us

² On this interpretation see von See *et al.* 2006: 403.

³ For a discussion of the the stag as a symbol of regeneration and fertility see Heizmann (1999: 598-600).

account for the representation of the stag as a paradigm of nobility and excellence in the description of Sigurðr. Indeed, the question that this paper aims at raising is whether it is possible to propose an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the stag associated with Sigurðr against the Christian background of the culture within which the writing down of the story of this hero has taken place. As a matter of fact, the texts containing references to Sigurðr as a stag are dated in their present form to the 13th century. *Völsunga saga* is generally dated to around 1260, i.e. after the coming into being of the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda* (Würth 2003: 101). As is widely known, the saga draws from the material contained in the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda*, among them *Fáfnismál* and *Gör. II*. Although their composition dates back prior to the redaction of *Völsunga saga*, these two lays are extant in their oldest written form in the *Codex Regius*. *Piðreks saga* is generally dated to around the middle of the 13th century, and is held to have been compiled at the court of Hákon IV Hákonarson in Bergen (Kramarz-Bein 2002).

A Christian symbolic re-interpretation of the stag is deeply rooted in the Holy Scripture (especially in the *Song of Songs* and in Psalm 42) and in the writings of the Church Fathers. In particular, they see in the young stag appearing in the *Song of Songs*, among other things, a representation of Christ himself (Domagalski 1991: 569).

As Pastoureau (2004: 75) points out, “[I]aissant volontairement de côté les aspects négatifs et sexuels de la symbolique du cerf, les Pères et les théologiens en font un animal pur et vertueux, une image du bon chrétien, un attribut ou un substitut du Christ.”

Also in Old Norse literature the same kind of Christian interpretation of the stag is well attested.

A stag as a clear symbol of Christ appears, for example, in *Plácítus saga*, the Old Norse version of a hagiographic text telling of the conversion of Eustace to Christianity that was widely circulated in the Middle Ages. During a hunt, Placidus and his retinue run into a herd of stags. He decides to run after the biggest of them, which soon reveals itself to be Christ and converts the Roman warrior.

Another noteworthy text bearing witness to the same kind of symbolic interpretation of the stag is the Christian didactic poem known as *Sólarljóð* from the beginning of the 13th century (Njörður P. Njarðvík 1991: 7; Simek-Pálsson 1987: 329). St. 55 reads as follows:

Sólar hjört
leit eg sunnan fara,
hann teymdu tveir saman.
Fætur hans
stóðu foldu á,
en tóku horn til himins.
(Njörður P. Njarðvík 1991: 30)

Here the stag is unanimously considered to be “an incarnation of Christ” (Amory 1990: 259; see also Njörður P. Njarðvík 1991: 84). Interestingly, in the text the tremendous size of the animal is brought to the fore: the horns reach up to the sky. This invites comparison with *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (st. 38), as Amory (1990: 259) points out. Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, also in the eddic poem the young stag bears big horns shining towards the sky.

A third text unmistakably mentioning the stag as a symbol of Christ is the so-called *Physiologus*, of which two fragmentary translations exist in Old Icelandic. Basing on Psalm 42, in the chapter dedicated to the illustration of the symbolic meaning of the stag the animal is described as fighting against the snake. A contraposition between the stag and the snake ultimately traces back to pre-Christian times and is also attested in the Scandinavian world, e.g.

on the Skrydstrup B bracteate (Heizmann 1999: 600). Yet, in Christian symbolism the contraposition is turned into a fight between the good and the evil, between Christ and the devil.

Given these occurrences of a Christian interpretation of the stag as a symbol of Christ, the question arising from the comparison between the stag imagery connected with Sigurðr and the instances briefly discussed above is whether one may find a connection between them. In other words, one is led to wonder whether the Christian Scandinavians to whom the narratives about the dragon slayer were addressed used to interpret the stag imagery connected with Sigurðr against the background of Christian symbolism as attested in the three texts mentioned above.

I think that clues to a possible Christian influence can be detected on a formal-stylistic level. As was mentioned above, in *Gðr. II* and in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* the same pattern to describe the excellence of the hero is deployed. As Klaus von See (1981: 40–41) points out, this type of descriptive scheme has its roots in the Holy Scripture, especially in the *Song of Songs*, and is widely attested in the religious literature of the Middle Ages. As a consequence, he comes to the conclusion that this type of metaphor in *Gðr. II* – more generally in the Guðrún poems – is very likely to have been stylistically influenced by religious literature (von See 1981: 41).

A further aspect that pertains to the stylistic level regards the way Sigurðr as a stag is described in the texts. In *Gðr. II* (“hiqrtr hábeinn”) and in *Völsunga saga* (“einn mikinn hjört. Han bar langt af öðrum dýrum”), the emphasis is placed on the size of the animal to symbolize its superiority. In fact, the same can be observed in the case of the description of Helgi as well. A similar emphasis on the size of the beast is found in *Plácítus saga*, where the stag incarnating Christ is described as follows:

En er ollum riddurum var skipat til veidarinnar, þa syndiz Placido einn hiortr *ollum odrum meiri* (Unger 1877: 193; my emphasis)

Here the crucifix-bearing stag is depicted as the biggest of the whole herd into which Placidus and his retinue run. As was seen above, in *Sólarljóð* the sun-stag is described as even bigger.

Given the relative chronology of the texts examined, I think that a direct influence of *Plácítus saga* on the heroic description of Sigurðr as a stag cannot be excluded.⁴

Let us now turn to *Fáfnismál*. As was mentioned previously, scholars do not agree on the interpretation of the self-definition (*gofuct dýr*) given by Sigurðr at the opening of the dialogue with the dying dragon. Nevertheless, an identification with a stag appears to be plausible for two major reasons. First, from what has been observed so far it is clear that a connection with the stag is part of the imagery associated with Sigurðr. Indeed, the occurrences in texts, other than *Fáfnismál* – regardless of their genealogic relationships – attest to this fact. Second, as was seen above the stag was widely considered to be the enemy of the snake. In the Middle Ages, dragons were generally conceived of as big serpents (Homann 1986: 132), and this is certainly true also of the dragon Fáfnir. Indeed, in *Reginismál* it is told that “Fáfnir lá á Gnitahéiði oc var í orms líki” (Neckel 1983: 176; my emphasis). Hence, it is tempting to see behind the self-definition of Sigurðr as a stag an intention to emphasize the contraposition with the dragon. Such an interpretation invites a further step towards a Christian reading of this phrase. Could such a contraposition be interpreted in Christian terms?

As Ashman Rowe points out, “Sigurðr continued to be a suitable subject in certain Christian contexts, for series of scenes from his story decorate the portals of five Norwegian stave churches from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and individual scenes are found on Norwegian church sites such as door-jambs, capitals, fonts, chairs, and benches from the same

⁴ *Plácítus saga* has come down to us in four versions, the oldest of which was written in Trondheim about 1150. See Tucker (1993: 504).

period” (2006: 168). Furthermore, as she convincingly demonstrates (Ashman Rowe 2006), Sigurðr and his deeds are subject to ethical and moral interpretations also in a number of Old Norse texts. In addition, as regards the iconographic material, the hero is mostly depicted in the act of slaying the dragon. The presence of scenes describing the killing of the dragon on Norwegian church portals and church sites has brought about a lively discussion about the possible interpretation in Christian terms. As Byock points out, the fact that Sigurðr successfully fought against the dragon made him “suitable, at least superficially, for reinterpretation within a Christian context” (1990: 624). Furthermore, he claims that the killing of Fáfnir “paralleled the Christian understanding of the devil-monster menace, and as such was a culturally mutable symbol, one that was not repugnant to the early Norwegian church” (1990: 625).

An identification of Sigurðr with Christ has been generally considered to be far-fetched, especially because he was certainly known as a pagan hero to any Scandinavian in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, as a dragon slayer he may have functioned “purely as a substitute, a Scandinavian St George rather than a pagan antetype of St George” (Ashman Rowe 2006: 193).

The use of what was employed mainly as a Christological symbol in the Middle Ages (i.e. the image of the stag) may have been intended as a means of enhancing the exemplarity and the nobility of the hero in such a way that he could become admirable to a Christian Scandinavian. The Church itself was responsible for turning the stag into a noble animal (a *gofuct dýr?*) by progressively promoting it to the royal game *par excellence* throughout all Europe. Such a nobilitation was carried out also by attaching Christian symbolic values to this mild animal, as the account of the conversion to Christianity of St Eustace and St Hubert clearly indicates. Interestingly, stags begin to appear as “gibier royale et princier” (Pastoureau 2004: 76) in the Arthurian literature in the second half of the 12th century. The topos of stag chase inaugurated in *Érec et Énide* by Chrétien de Troyes is taken up again and again in courtly literature throughout the 13th century (Pastoureau 2004: 76) and finds its way to Scandinavia through the translated *riddarasögur*. In its role as royal game, the stag comes to be closely connected to nobility and kingship.

Furthermore, at this point it must be mentioned that Sigurðr was considered as an ancestor of the Norwegian royal house (Byock 1990: 621; Ashman Rowe 2006: 193). Hence, it is plausible that the decision to liken the hero to the stag can be seen as a further instance of the strategy to bestow upon him royal and courtly attributes that has been acknowledged by most scholars. Such a strategy is evident especially in the account of *Völsunga saga* (Würth 2003: 108) but can also be detected in what has been called the *Jungsigurddichtung* (comprising, among others, *Fáfnismál*), where Sigurðr is presented throughout as a noble son of king, as a hero whose behaviour is modelled after the behaviour of the righteous king (Sprenger 2000: 128).

As far as *Þiðreks saga* is concerned, it is worth noticing that the account of Sigurðr being nourished by a hind in the forest invites comparison with some hagiographic legends, in particular with the life of St Genoveva of Brabant (Kramarz-Bein 2002: 44) and of St Giles (St Ægidius), where the same motif is well attested. However, hasty conclusions should not be drawn from this analogy. Indeed, the complexity of the question certainly demands further investigation and calls for caution.

All the thoughts proposed so far lead us to some concluding (albeit tentative) remarks. In proposing a reading of the symbolic meaning of the image of the stag associated with Sigurðr from within the Christian context in which the texts have been written down, it has been observed that the use of the stag metaphor may be seen as part of a royal imagery intended to ennoble the hero, especially because of his role as mythic ancestor of the Norwegian monar-

chy. The use of rhetorical devices and motifs borrowed from religious texts point to the influence exerted by Christian symbolism on the representation of Sigurðr as the noblest of heroes.

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Muslims in *Karlamagnúss saga* and *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar*

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By the thirteenth century, Scandinavians had been encountered Muslims for centuries; for example during raiding in Iberia in the ninth century, trading in Rus' in the tenth, as participants in the Varangian guard in Byzantium in the eleventh, and as pilgrims and crusaders in the twelfth. Still, although archaeologists and historians have established links between the Muslim world and Scandinavia from the Viking Age onwards, there have been very few studies on Scandinavian images of Muslims. In this paper, I will analyse the images of Muslims as presented in *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar* and *Karlamagnúss saga*. These texts are especially interesting not only because they were among the first full treatments of this question in the Norse tongue, but also because the stories about Charlemagne and Elis were popular both in thirteenth-century Norway, at a time when the Norwegian king promised to go on a crusade, and in late medieval Iceland that played less of a part in physical battles against heathens. They then offer an opportunity to understand the renewed use of these images in different social context.

In recent years, however, the interest in medieval Christians' popular and theological images of the Muslims has been substantial. The recent interest owes much to Edward Said's perspective in his work on 'orientalism'. Western views on Muslims are less interesting in what they can reveal about our knowledge about Muslims, but rather with regard to what these views can tell us about the viewer and the formation of western identity. The unraveling of the medieval Western images of Muslims can tell us much about the formation of a sense of 'Us' in stories about encountering the 'Other'. According to this approach, medieval Christian identity 'was sustained by elaborate, seemingly intractable racial fantasies centered upon the supposed absolute otherness of Jews and Saracens' (Cohen 2003: 187). Moreover, the encounters and constructions of Saracens and Jews as Others, in crusades as well as in the cultural imagination of romances, have been seen as crucial in the creation of a medieval discourse on 'nation' (Heng 2003).

Of course, we can deduce several groups of non-Christian 'Others' in Scandinavian sources. Much has been written about how the heathen ancestors were depicted in the medieval sagas, and also some important studies have also been conducted on the Sámi in the North and on heretics. Less has been written on Muslims, even though many scholars in recent years have emphasised the possible European influence on the Norse worldview. An exception is John Stanley Martin who has discussed the transmission of attitudes towards Islam from the chansons de geste to the Norse riddarasögur. These attitudes were a far cry from accurate images of Islam or Muslims, but rather misrepresenting these infidels as irrational worshippers of wooden effigies and evil creatures (Martin 1990; 1991).

Martin's conclusion is in line with much of the later scholarship on western images of Muslims and Islam in the Middle Ages, as constructing them as the 'Others'. However, studies on western attitudes towards Muslims as represented in medieval literature have recently focused on the more complex and diverse images of the Muslims; punishers of sinful Christians, heretics, monstrous, irrational, or proto-Christians who might be converted (Tolan 2002). Scholars have also pointed out that many texts show an ambivalent attitude towards Muslims; on the one hand they could be very human and chivalric, while at the same time being fierce opponents of Christianity (Bancourt 1982; Jones 2002). In some texts, such as the *Chanson de Roland*, it is emphasised that there is a conflict between traditional ways of making peace between Muslims and Christians, through the paying of tribute (*parias*) in a feudal

context, and the emergence of a dualism between Christians (or rather Franks) and Pagans (Kinoshita 2006: 15–45)

Also in medieval Norway and Iceland do we find several different images of Muslims (Bandlien, forthcoming). In this paper, I will focus on the relationship between representations of Muslims within two texts that have Christian-Muslim encounters as a main theme: *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar* and *Karlamagnúss saga*. These texts were probably originally translated into Old Norse in the thirteenth century. *Elíss saga* is an adaptation of the chanson de geste *Elie de Saint Gille* made in Norway in the middle of the thirteenth century,¹ but also preserved in several manuscripts from fifteenth-century Iceland. *Karlamagnúss saga* consists of adaptations of ten different branches of the Charlemagne cycle. The branches are commonly presumed to have been translated independently in the thirteenth century, probably by Icelanders, or some at the beginning at the fourteenth century, and then compiled into a long version as they are now preserved.²

These peculiarities in the manuscript transmission of *Karlamagnúss saga* make it difficult to use as a straightforward remnant of the thirteenth century when the ten different branches of the saga were probably translated. Still, I think that the evidence for a thirteenth century translation of most parts of *Karlamagnúss saga* is strong and that it should be interpreted as a remnant of the great interest in the Charlemagne cycle among both the Icelandic and Norwegian elite in the thirteenth century. Although they are of French or Anglo-Norman origin, it seems promising to read these texts in their Norwegian and Icelandic setting with regard to a wider problem: the ‘Europeanization’ of Scandinavia.

Elíss saga ok Rósamundar tells the story of the expulsion of Elis by his father, Duke Juliens of helge Egidie (Saint Gille). After being knighted, Elis is disinherited by his father and leaves the court in anger to seek adventures elsewhere. What neither Elis nor his father are aware of is that the land is being invaded by heathens. Elis alone frees several noble Christian captives from the heathens, but after killing many of them is captured and brought to the land of the heathens. He manages to escape and gets help from a repentant robber, Galopin, only to be wounded outside the walls of the main heathen town, called Sobrieborg. He is, however, rescued by Rósamunda, the daughter of the heathen king, Maskalbret. She has fallen in love with the Frankish knight already by her father’s description of his valour and good looks. When the heathen kingdom is threatened by another heathen king who wants to

¹ The oldest version of *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar* is preserved in the Norwegian manuscript known as *De La Gardie 4–7 fol.* As it is preserved now, it contains four texts. First there is *Pamfiluss saga*, a translation of the story of Pamphilus’ love for the beautiful Galathea. The second is a shorter text, a translation of a part of Guillaume de Conches’s *Moralium dogma philosophorum*. Third comes *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar*, and then finally *Strengleikar*, a translation of Anglo-Norman lais, most of them by Marie de France. The manuscript is believed on palaeographical reasons to have been written c. 1270 by a scribe working close to Bergen, the main city in Norway at that time (Holm-Olsen 1940; Tveitane 1972). It is most likely a copy of an older manuscript, and thus it is probable that a translation of *Elíss saga* was committed during the reign of Hákon Hákonsson (1217–63)

² Although commonly believed to have been mostly translations made in connection to the Norwegian court, there are convincing arguments for an Icelandic provenance for at least some of these translations. This is especially the case of the translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* which Peter Foote dated to the early thirteenth century (Foote 1959). Also manuscript fragments of parts of *Karlamagnúss saga* preserved from the thirteenth century points Icelandic scribes, although perhaps made for exportation to Norway (Stefán Karlsson 1992). There are four Icelandic manuscripts from the fifteenth century that contain *Karlamagnúss saga*, which represents two versions, usually designated A and B (Halvorsen 1989). The A version is believed to be closest to the thirteenth century, since it does not contain parts that are believed to have been translated in late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries, such as the Anglo-Norman story of Olif and Landres and excerpts of *Speculum Historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais. *Elíss saga* is preserved in a late medieval Icelandic manuscript with some differences and interesting additions compared to the Norwegian manuscript. The problem is how these stories of encounters with heathens may have been understood in the changing contexts of the thirteenth Norwegian kingdom and in late medieval Iceland, both in the light of the social milieu that produced the texts as well as the context of the crusading and warfare.

make Sobrieborg into tax land and marry Rósamunda, the princess tricks her father into letting Elis meet the rival in single combat. Elis wins, and the thirteenth century manuscript then ends the story by telling how Rósamunda is willing to be baptised in order to marry Elis, since he refuses to marry a heathen.

The structure of the saga is that of a hero who loses his inheritance, is tested through trials, and then returns to his lands with a wife. The Muslims are then at first hand depicted as outsiders to the Frankish kingdom, ruled by King Louis, son of Charlemagne. They are there primarily to loot the kingdom and cause much distress. They have a huge army, but fear a united Christian resistance to them. In this way, they are a useful opponent for a young knight who wants to test his strength and prowess, and at the same time do not cause internal conflicts within the Christian kingdom but rather defend it.

In *Eliss saga*, the followers of Maumet are often mocked as “heathen dogs”, or as “devil’s limbs”. The heathens are identified by their belief in their false gods – most notably Maumet, but also Terrogant, Jupiter and Apollon are mentioned from time to time. These gods are of course a misrepresentation of the Muslim belief, but during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this heathen pantheon had become a stock theme in the chansons de geste (Daniel 1984; Tolan 2002). In *Eliss saga*, Maumet is depicted as a carved image laden with gold and gems. The heathens pray to Maumet and the other false gods and often swear by them, in order to get help in the case of battle or to gain favours. Especially Rósamunda is depicted as a very pious heathen. While her father, king Malkabert seeks Maumet’s help in defeating Christians, the heathen princess kneels and prays to Maumet, especially for the health and life of her beloved Elis, but without the presence of the carved and decorated image.

The same pattern is visible in much of *Karlamagnúss saga*. In the section *Af Agulando konungi*, an adaptation of *Pseudo-Turpin* and *Chanson d’Aspremont*, the heathens bring the wooden gods with them to the battles against the Christians.³ The wooden statues are also decorated most lavishly with gold and gems. They become like relics brought to the battlefield by the Christians, for example in the form of the sword Dyrumdalil that has relics in its shaft. In this sense, the heathens’ belief in these gods is depicted as a kind of inversion of the Christian faith.

In both sagas, a main theme is to show how useless the heathen gods are. Elis, as representative of the Christians, is offered peace, a high position and the hand of Rósamunda by King Maskalbret if he shows his allegiance to Maumet. However, Elis, as a good Christian knight, mocks the gods. They are helpless, he says, and all those who trust in them are fools. Although enraged by this, the heathen king who has captured Elis cannot stop him from jumping on his horse and escaping Sobrieborg. In a remarkable scene, King Maskalbret throws the image of Maumet to the ground, denouncing him as helpless and refusing to help him get revenge on the Christian knight who has made such damage to him. Maskalbret nearly crushes the image, but some of his advisors manage to restore him to his senses. Instead, the king promises to give lavish offerings to the god if he will help him capture Elis.

In *Karlamagnúss saga*, the heathen belief in gods is depicted in a fairly similar way. Heathen gods are carried into the battlefield in carved images, supposed to help them the heathens against the Christians. However, the carved gods are captured and humiliated by the Christians. Again, the heathens question the power of their gods since they put up with this shame and cannot help themselves. Still, the heathens’ mistake is that they do not take the consequences of this and convert because they want revenge. Ultimately, because the heathens have no help from their gods, the Christians get the upper hand, and in the few cases of conversion

³ An interesting exception is found in the dialogue between the heathen giant Ferakut and Rollant in *Af Agulando konungi* about their different faiths. It is based on *Pseudo-Turpin* but omitted in the B-version of *Karlamagnúss saga*.

it is the fact that the heathen gods show themselves unable to help their worshippers that initiates it.⁴

But while there is, in *Karlamagnúss saga*, much emphasis on the help the Christians get from God, and especially St James, the success of the Christians in *Elíss saga* is most of all caused by Elis' courage and strength, the love of Rósamunda, as well as the final assembling forces of Christians that come to the hero's assistance. Moreover, King Maskalbret's men are not really great warriors; they often show cowardliness and only have confidence in themselves when in great multitude.⁵

Karlamagnúss saga, on the other hand, has a much greater emphasis on the fight against the Muslims as religious warfare. The Pope is time and again depicted as a leader who is blessing the fights of Charlemagne and his peers, absolving all Christian warriors who fight against Muslims. Archbishop Turpin the French declares that those who fall will be martyrs of Christendom and go to heaven before their blood runs cold. In this respect, the crusading ideology is clearly represented (cf. Stuckey 2008), and the identity of the Muslims is a religious one.

Still, there are other elements which complicate this picture. Although Muslim belief is crudely misrepresented in the Norse versions, the Muslim world seems still remarkably alike the Christian society. Heathen society is depicted as being ruled by regional kings who controlled a fixed hereditary territory, but with over-kings they paid taxes to and that led the troops in battle. In order to explain the defeat of the heathens, both *Elíss saga* and several of the branches of *Karlamagnúss saga* seek to understand the internal conflicts and strategies within the heathen world.

These complex depictions of the internal relations between heathens are noteworthy. In *Elíss saga* and *Af Oddgeiri danska*, the Christians support their previous enemies when there is a third party from another place in the heathen world involved. The fighting between Christians and heathens suddenly emerges as more complex when other heathen intruders appear, intent on overthrowing the very antagonist that the Christians are fighting against. Especially in *Elíss saga* and *Af Oddgeiri danska*, the Christians suddenly find themselves defending the very heathens they were about to defeat. In these cases, the Christians are open for a potential alliance to a group of Muslims, even though these were not converted.

In *Af Agulando konungi*, there is a version of the internal struggles within the ranks of the heathens. Some heathens, who have abandoned a battle against the Christians, are punished by King Agulandus in a shameful way. This makes one of their kinsmen very angry, and as a revenge he and his troops leave the final battle against Charlemagne. Furthermore, the son of the heathen King Agulandus, Jamund, has his own agenda in his fight against the Christians, as he wants to secure Spain for himself on the advice of his foolish advisors. In these cases, the rules of the heathen society are quite similar to those of the Christian world. Symptomatically, fear for internal strife between Christian nobles is expressed several times in *Karlamagnúss saga*. The conflict between Girard and Charlemagne in *Af Agulando konungi*, Roltant's troubled loyalty to the emperor in *Af Guitalin saxa* when he is struck by Charlemagne, and Elis' anger at his father are tensions that are all downplayed when facing the heathen enemy. A common Christian cause is thus very useful in order to bring loyalty to the Christian

⁴ When heathens refuse to convert, it is partly because of failures of the Christians to honour priests and poor (the case of Agulandus), that it would seem to be because of cowardice (Agulandus), or because the heathens will not abandon the faith of their forefathers and their loyalty to a heathen king (the cases of Karvel in *Af Oddgeiri danska* and Balam in *Af Agulando konungi* who refuses to convert, although he wants to, until his lord Jamund is defeated).

⁵ Especially in *Elíss saga*, King Maskalbret's knights are depicted as rather cowardly, refusing to meet the feared heathen king Julien of Baldursborg.

realm (or, in some cases, to outsmoke deceivers, such as Guinelon (*Af Runzivals bardaga*), or Milon (*Af Olif ok Landres*)).

Although most heathens in these two sagas come from Africa or Palestine, they are surprisingly little distinguishable from the Christians. Both skin colour and their outward appearance, such as beards and weapons are depicted similarly. The beautiful Rósamunda is marked by her white colour; she is even “whiter than snow”. This also applies to men; sometimes the warriors on each side are confused. A Christian army in *Karlamagnúss saga*, for instance, almost makes a grave mistake when they think that an approaching division is heathen. They even enter battle, and are only stopped when they are near enough to ask about each other’s names and family relations. Moreover, one of the distinguishing traits of Charlemagne, his dignifying white beard, is copied by several heathen kings. Most notably, *Af Agulando konungi* repeatedly states how two of the most fierce opponents against Charlemagne would be the best knights, if only they were Christians. Of course they are ultimately killed and go to hell, and some are more cowardly than Christians, but in valour and knightly virtues they are of a similar kind as the Christians.

The outward appearance thus seems to be of no value for identification in these two sagas. Still, there are blámenn present. In *Karlamagnúss saga*, these are usually Ethiopians, distinguishable from other people of ‘Affrica’. But they are not the stock type of the magical cunning or near demonic features that sometimes are sometimes applied in legendary sagas (often in the phrase of ‘berserkir and blámenn’; cf. Lindow 1995). The blámenn, as with other Muslims, are more often marked by their multitude and their bold and fierce kings. Blámenn might be even more fierce in battle than other heathens, but not in a markedly supernatural way.

In *Af Olif ok Landres*, there is a remarkable example of the elusive category of ‘blámenn’. A wicked counsellor accuses Queen Olif (falsely) to sleep with a blámaðr. The counsellor convinces the king that the boy Landres is the son of this blámaðr. Landres is even called ‘þenna blámanns son’ (Kms 1860, p. 64), even though he is not marked by his colour in any way elsewhere in the þátr.⁶

The religious difference still remains important in both *Elíss saga* and *Karlamagnúss saga*, with Christianity as being the hegemonic religion. This religious difference could be, and was, used to legitimise the killings of, and refusal of paying taxes to the Muslims. Still, Muslims were not always depicted as being the monstrous ‘Other’. Although the category of ‘Other’ is crucial to create the identity of ‘Us’, people do not categorise others by using a simple ‘Us vs. Them’-dichotomy. The anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen distinguishes between analogue and digital otherness. When others are ‘almost like us’ or ‘not so different from us’, their otherness is analogue. They are different in degree, not in kind. Digital otherness, on the other hand, means that outsiders are fundamentally different from us. One example from the Middle Ages would be the monstrous races; they were indeed various in appearances and characteristics, but were lumped together as ‘non-humans’. Thus, these different groups of others are then more or less of the same kind of otherness, despite their variation (Eriksen 2002).

If we apply these categories on the two sagas discussed here, it is clear that the Muslims in these two sagas were analogue, rather than digital, others. They were knights like the Chris-

⁶ Unlike for example Feirefiz, the son of a Christian king and Saracen queen in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, and who turns out to have spots of white and black all over his skin. In the later Icelandic versions of EsR and Kms, the manuscript context may point to another reading. In fourteenth and fifteenth century sagas, the Muslims and Africans are much more often depicted as irrational and monstrous blámenn and berserks. This alliterative phrase also creeps in into a passage of *Elíss saga*, when the the heathens are called “berserkia ok blamanna”, as in many of late medieval fornaldarsögur and riddarasögur (p. 19). However, later in the same manuscript Rósamunda still is white.

tian warriors, dressed like Christians, and looked and thought very much the same. Religious difference needs to be emphasised time and again by means of expressions like ‘heathen dogs’ or ‘they sure went to hell’. Still, sometimes the chivalric identity shines through the text more visibly than a clear-cut religious one. There is thus a marked negotiation of who the Muslims really are, drawn between noble opponents and foolish and irrational dog-like heathens. In the late Icelandic redaction of *Elíss saga*, the religious identity of the king of Sobrieborg disappears altogether. The alliance between Christians and heathens is being made, although king Maskalbret is never said to be baptised.

Interestingly enough, Norwegians and Icelanders were quite often in peaceful contact with Muslims during the period of the writing of DG 4–7 fol., and presumably also at the time of the adaptations of the branches of *Karlamagnúss saga*, Norwegians and Icelanders were quite often in peaceful contact with Muslims. In 1262, Hákon Hákonsson sent an envoy to ‘Soldán of Tunis’. It has been suggested that the two Norwegian messengers tried to ensure Tunis’ neutrality for Alfonso’s planned crusade. At least partially, the reason for the visit seems to be to give hunting falcons as gifts to the ruler, possibly to sell a few on the market, but also to make an alliance in the wake of the crusade of Louis IX. The emir of Tunis was in any case not seen as a monstrous other, but rather as an exotic and powerful ruler who respected King Hákon.⁷

In 1347, a letter from King Magnus Eriksson indicates that falcon trade continued to be important in Scandinavia. He managed to get papal permission to trade with ‘Soldan of Babilonia’, in order to improve the kingdom’s economy. What King Magnus wanted to export were falcons, something that for long had been very profitable for the Scandinavian kings (Hofmann 1957–58). The falcon trade seems quite important both for Norwegian traders and in diplomatic relations in the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century – also in the Mediterranean. This was the period during and after the translation of chivalric romances and apostolic vitae into Old Norse. Besides the interest for *blámenn* and worshippers of Muhammed as demonic idolaters, then, there seems to have been one for narratives that depicted Babilonia in a more favourable manner. The cross-cultural contacts in the Mediterranean also influenced the learned and aristocratic world-view in the North, and the Norse aristocrats’ aspiration to courtliness may have made it more appealing to admire the rich culture they met in, for instance, Tunis and Egypt, than to simply depict them as digital others. This context may at least offer a partial explanation for the tensions between the two views of Muslims in thirteenth-century Norway; partly as heathen dogs that should be slain, and partly as exotic allies that one could trade and make allies with – against the ‘bad’ heathens.

This is a less acute situation in fifteenth century Iceland, the time in which most of the extant manuscripts were written. In late Icelandic riddarasögur, the will for reconciliation between antagonists through the exchange of women is very strong (cf. Bagerius 2008). This may align with the new ending of *Elíss saga* in the late medieval manuscripts (*Elíss saga*, pp. 116–139), which strongly differs from the Norwegian (and certainly the Old French) version. In the Icelandic ending, Elis marries the daughter of the heathen king. King Maskalbert thus becomes a family member and a close ally to the French kingdom, despite the fact that nothing is mentioned of any conversion. Even though he remains a heathen, he is included in the network of friends of the French king. The focus in this part of the saga seems to lie less on religious conflict than on the question of how a marriage can transform former enemies into peaceful allies in the best interest of community. Possibly the aristocracy in Iceland wanted to

⁷ *Elíss saga*, p. 4; cf. a similar phrase in Holm perg. 6 fol. where travels of ‘kynstora kaupmenn’ is emphasised, *Elíss saga*, p. 9 (D), while *Elie de Saint Gille* might be more skeptical to traders, cf. Flori 1984. It is also interesting that in the Norwegian *Speculum regale*, or *Konungs skuggsjá*, written probably in the late 1250s, there is stated that Norwegian merchants would often find themselves in dangerous situations, both at sea and in heathen lands. Still, they were advised to respect the local customs wherever they were in order to be well received.

emphasise the chivalric values that distinguished the contestants, as well as the exotic setting, rather than dwelling on the dehumanising images of the worshippers of Maumet.

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Byzantium in the riddarasögur

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According to the eyewitness accounts of Robert de Clari (1991: 189) and Geoffroi de Villehardouin (1938: 172), Englishmen and Danes were fighting ferociously alongside the ‘Greeks’ when seemingly impregnable Constantinople was sacked by French and Venetian forces of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204. The events which led up to that striking image and their influence on the contradictory conceptions of Byzantium in European chivalric romance and Icelandic *riddarasögur* are the subject of this paper.

The crusaders’ sack of Constantinople, a catastrophe from which the city never fully recovered (Nicol 1993: 15–18) before it finally fell to the Ottoman Turks some two and a half centuries later, was the horrific culmination of more than a century of escalating tensions between East and West Christendom, formally marked by the separation between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople – the so-called Great Schism, usually dated to 1054. From that time on, French and Anglo-Norman romance endorsed the West’s view of Eastern Christians as religious deviants, sybarites, and arrogant, treacherous, and generally unreliable allies. Those perceptions were reinforced by the perceived perfidy of the Byzantine emperor Alexius I (1081–1118), who extracted oaths of fealty from the leaders of the First Crusade (1095–99) and then failed to aid crusaders trapped in the city of Antioch after it was abandoned by its Byzantine commander (Angold 1997: 160–65). Constantine’s resplendent New Rome was reconfigured in French and Anglo-Norman romance as a treacherous place of luxury and double-dealing.

The significance to European romance and pseudo-history of East-West Christian tensions and of the dynastic alliances, mainly between Byzantine princesses and members of the European nobility, intended to strengthen the Eastern empire (Macrides 1992: 270–80) has burgeoned as a topic of scholarship in recent years. In *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (2003) Geraldine Heng, for example, reads the treacherous, cowardly and effeminate ‘Romans’ of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca. 1136) as contemporary Byzantines (Heng 2003: 46–49) and interprets the declaration in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* that the ‘Roman’ emperor is a ‘false heretic’ as covert justification for the Fourth Crusade (Heng 2003: 153). Sharon Kinoshita’s reading of Chrétien de Troyes’s *Cligès* (ca. 1176) identifies the political agenda of the work as a demonstration of the ‘hegemony of the Arthurian West over the Byzantine East’ (Kinoshita 1996: 336). Rebecca Wilcox discerns a revelation of ‘the West’s lingering anxieties about the questionable outcomes of the Crusades’ in the mid-fourteenth-century *Guy of Warwick*, the English version of the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, where the Byzantine court is a place of conspiracy and presumed imperial treachery, and the emperor’s daughter is dangerously seductive (Wilcox 2004: 220).

Norse-Byzantine relations from the mid-eleventh century onward, however, took a very different course. Key factors were the apparent irrelevance of the Schism, the cultivation by Norwegian kings of personal associations with Byzantine emperors, and the prestige associated with service in the Varangian Guard. After the Schism, whether or not they recognized it as such or even heard very much about it, as Sverrir Jakobsson (2008: 175, 178) has demonstrated, Icelanders continued to recognize the Byzantine emperor as the undisputed ruler of Christendom (Sverrir Jakobsson 2005: 123–28). Much maligned by the Anglo-Norman historians Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury (Angold 2003: 30–31), Alexius I is consistently represented favourably in Icelandic sources, and the Norse version of his name, Kirialax, became more or less the generic name for Byzantine emperors in the *riddarasögur*. Where Eastern religious practice is mentioned in the *riddarasögur*, it is with tacit approval,

as, for example, in the celebration of the marriage of Kirialax in the Hagia Sophia, church of the Patriarch of Constantinople – ‘sú kirkja er mest gör í allri Europa’ (*Kirialax saga*: 86) – conducted by the patriarch, according to Byzantine custom.

Scandinavians, and Anglo-Saxons, had served emperors of Byzantium long before the First Crusade (Blöndal 1978: 141–47), most famously in the case of Haraldr harðráði’s service in the Varangian Guard during the reign of Michael IV (1034–41). According to *Morkinskinna* (2000: 325) and *Heimskringla* (vol.3: ch.12), after Sigurður Jórsalafari Magnússon’s visit to Constantinople on his return trip from Jerusalem in 1110, many Norwegians remained in the service of Alexius I. Seventy years after that, as *Orkneyinga saga* (ch.89) tells it, Rögnvald of Orkney was showered with money by Manuel I (1143–80) on his arrival in Constantinople and his men invited to sign on as mercenaries.

It all adds up to a view of Byzantium in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century *riddarasögur* which, as Sverrir Jakobsson (2005) has suggested of the broader Icelandic world view, projects an image of Constantinople untainted by the tensions of the Schism and their terrible consequences. From that perspective, an episode in the early fourteenth-century *Eiríks saga víðförla* might be read as a romance of the establishment of the Varangian guard, which had its historical origins during the reign of Basil II in the latter part of the tenth century (Blöndal 1978: 41–53): in the course of his quest for the heathen ‘paradise’, the Norwegian prince Eiríkr visits Constantinople, which is beset by vikings. He and his companion, Eiríkr of Denmark, and their men defeat them and are said to have become the first Northmen to fight for the Greek king in Constantinople’ (*Eiríks saga víðförla*: 14–15). The emperor, in turn, authoritatively instructs Eiríkr víðförla in the Christian faith.

The continuing popularity in Iceland of Haraldr harðráði may also have contributed to the romanticization of the soldier of fortune in the *riddarasögur*. Events in a number of these sagas mirror campaigns in which Haraldr took part, particularly in Apulia and Sicily. Apulia, that region in southeastern Italy which borders on the Adriatic, became a Byzantine province in the sixth century and, apart from intermittent Arab domination (including a short period in the eleventh century), remained in Byzantine possession until Robert Guiscard of Normandy set up the duchy of Apulia in 1059. Sicily, likewise, see-sawed between Byzantine and Arab rule in the tenth and eleventh centuries, until, after an unsuccessful Byzantine attempt at reconquest in the 1030s, Robert Guiscard and his brother, Roger, established the Norman kingdom of Sicily.

As related in *Morkinskinna*, *Heimskringla*, and *Orkneyinga saga*, the travels and campaigns of Haraldr harðráði, along with those of Sigurður Magnússon and Rögnvald Kali, provide the model for the itineraries of many *riddarasögur* heroes who journey to Constantinople: a trail of plunder-rich encounters with Saracen pirates off the coast of Moorish Spain and in the Mediterranean, service with the emperor, forays from Constantinople against Saracens, visits to Asia Minor and the Holy Land, and a component of amorous adventure. Haraldr harðráði served with the Varangians in the Aegean and in Sicily, and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. *Morkinskinna* (chs. 12, 13) reports rumours that the formidable empress Zoe, wife of Michael IV, wanted him for herself and accused him of having designs on her niece. Enroute to Jerusalem, Sigurður Magnússon went first to England, then to Galicia, Lisbon, and through the Straits of Gibraltar. He harried Muslims in Spain, fought pirates off the coast of Spain and the island of Formentara; visited Roger II in Sicily, landed in Acre and was lavishly welcomed in Jerusalem by King Baldwin, with whom he joined in a successful skirmish against ‘heathens’ in Syria, and then travelled to Constantinople (*Morkinskinna*: chs. 61–63). Rögnvald Kali (*Orkneyinga saga*: chs. 86–89) went to France and had a liaison with a lady-in-waiting in Narbonne, then to Galicia and through the Straits of Gibraltar. He demolished a Saracen dromond in the Mediterranean, then proceeded to Crete, Acre, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and home via Bulgaria, Apulia, and Denmark. Penitence and pilgrimage tend not to

be the primary objectives in Icelandic accounts of visitors to Byzantium and the Holy Land. As Sverrir Jakobsson points out (2008: 180), the magnificent receptions by Byzantine emperors for Sigurðr Jórsalafari Magnússon and Rögnvald of Orkney reported in *Morkinskinna*, *Hemiskringla*, and *Orkneyinga saga* take precedence over any religious considerations. Similarly in the *Islendingasögur*, Icelanders who go to Byzantium, such as Bolli Bollason in *Laxdæla saga*, do so primarily for the acquisition of personal honour and material gain.

Rhetorically, the topos of *translatio studii* adds a further dimension to *riddarasögur* engagement with Byzantium. According to the preface of *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, Hákon Magnússon (1299–1319) ‘liet vanda morgum riddara sogum j norænu ur girzsku ok franseisku mali’ (3), and it is as a variation of that topos, not as a statement of fact or fiction (Amory 1984), that I would read that statement: a declaration of the transfer of narrative authority from Byzantium and France to Norway and Iceland. The topos recurs elsewhere in the *riddarasögur*; for example, at the conclusion of *Konráðs saga keisararsonar*, where it is said that three copies of the story were made by the emperor of Constantinople – one for the ruler of Saxland, one for the king of Denmark, and one for the emperor himself – and that the saga’s exemplar was found in a street of unnamed location, which, by implication, is Constantinople (344).

Sometimes, in both history and romance, it’s a case of *translatio studii* in the other direction. *Morkinskinna*, for example, incorporates northern mythology and legend into the magnificent statuary of the Hippodrome, which itself celebrated the *translatio studii et imperii* from Rome to Constantinople (Bassett 1991: 87). Among the sculptural commemoration of ‘ancient events’ said in *Morkinskinna* to be found on its walls are images of the Æsir, Volsungs, and Gjukungs: ‘The walls are decorated with all sorts of ancient events. You can find the Æsir, the Volsungs, and Gjukungs fashioned in copper and iron with such great skill that they seem alive. With this arrangement people have the impression that they are participants in the games’ (ch. 62: 324). I agree with Ted Andersson’s comment (*Morkinskinna*: 453n.) that the reference may indicate the writer’s familiarity with the notion that Aesir came from the East, but perhaps we might also read it as a deliberate attempt to embed the North within the cultural matrix of Byzantium.

Viktors saga ok Blávus concludes in Denmark and turns out, ultimately, to be about the provenance of a Babylonian sword and halberd which come into the possession of a Danish king, and which, according to the closing lines of the saga, are the weapons which slay two men in an incident related at the beginning of the seventeenth-century *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*. In something of a similar *translatio* from the classical world to the North, *Kirialax saga* is ultimately configured as an ‘ancestral’ northern narrative, inasmuch as it breaks off in the very act of representing itself as the precursor to a narrative about kings and heroes in the northern part of the world: ‘Ok nú skrifa ek af þeira atferð eigi fleira at sinne ok vikjum sögunni í annan stað til þeira kónga ok kappu, sem bygðu norðrálfy heimsins ok við hljóta at koma þessu sögu [...]’ (*Kirialax saga*: 101).

Among the sagas considered in this paper – *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, *Sigrgarðs saga ok Valbrands*, *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, *Kirialax saga*, *Nitida saga*, *Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs* – Byzantine emperors are revered figures, but often past their prime. In *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, the emperor is ‘ríkastur [...] í öllum heiminum’ (280), but his combat skills are rusty (‘[k]onungr hafði þá löngugi burtreið framda: 337), and his prospective son-in-law betters him in the tilting contest which he (the emperor) initiates. In *Kirialax saga*, Lotharius, the *stólkonungr* of Constantinople (the customary Icelandic term for the Eastern emperor), is said by his prospective father-in-law to be elderly and therefore to present an opportunity for the man who marries his daughter to become his successor. When, in *Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs*, a hostile force from Ermland (probably Armenia) demands that Kirialax, emperor of Byzantium surrender himself and his daughter, on the condition that his life will be spared on account of his

advanced age (77), they are amazed when he leads a spirited counter attack (77–79). In *Sigr-garðs saga ok Valbrands* the emperor Adrianus, an honoured but unassertive figure, is pointedly given precedence in the saga’s three formal banquet scenes: in England; in ‘Villusvínaland’ – probably the kingdom of Nubia, where Christians raised pigs in the Middle Ages (Nelson 1998), and which was strongly influenced by Byzantine culture – and in Hungary. Adrianus’s men are, moreover, models of chivalric propriety. When they are defeated in a tournament by English knights, the Byzantine knight Vígbaldr courteously hands over the prize of 500 marks of gold and, with equal courtesy, the English prince Sigrgarðr immediately gives it to the poor (*Sigr-garðs saga ok Valbrands*: 120). Nor is Byzantium itself always without challenge to its supremacy or immune from the threat of humiliation. In *Nitida saga* Princess Nitida, *meykongr* of France, refuses the suit of the Byzantine emperor’s son, Ingi, because, she says, Byzantium cannot compare with France in wealth and importance: ‘þær hafit eingvan rikdom til motz vit mig. Hafa og litit lond ydar að þýða vit Frackland jð goda’ (*Nitida saga*: 10–11).

Although France, *andvegi heimsins* (‘the world’s high-seat’), explicitly displaces Byzantium as the centre of the world at the beginning of *Nitida saga* (3), the balance of world power in that romance is ultimately recalibrated through the intervention of a ruler from further East, Lifornius of India. There are resonances here of the mythical Christian ruler, Prester John, allegedly the author of the sensational Letter (ca. 1165) addressed to Manuel I, which promised aid to Byzantium against the Turks. (A reference in the *Konungs Skuggsjá* [13] indicates that the work was known in Norway and Iceland.) The new world order is mapped out in the political power grid constructed by Lifornius at the saga’s conclusion: on his marriage to Nitida, Lifornius becomes co-ruler of France; Ingi of Byzantium marries Lifornius’s sister; Ingi’s sister, Listalín, is married to Nitida’s foster-brother Hléskjöldr, the heir to Apulia, and Lifornius presents the couple with a third of India. Byzantium thus gains an alliance with India, and, through the marriage of Listalín, regains a dynastic link to Apulia.

There may be resonances in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns saga* of eleventh-century Arab-Byzantine power struggles in Apulia, when Jarlmann and Hermann of Swabia successfully defend Byzantium against the combined ‘heathen’ forces of Apulia and Serkland (‘Land of the Saracens’). Interestingly the peerlessness of Jarlmann and Hermann is geographically measured in relation to Byzantium: ‘þá fanzt eingi fyrer nordan Gricklandz haf sá er þeim væri iafn að fridleika ok jþrottum’ (5) (‘there was no one to be found north of Greece who was their equal in handsomeness and accomplishments’).¹ Hermann seeks in marriage the Byzantine princess, Ríkilát, a woman of great learning, powers of healing, and piety. Ermanus of Apulia, a rival contender for Ríkilát’s hand, who boasts of having Bláland (Ethiopia), Bulgaria, and Scythia in his power, threatens to attack the city with an overwhelming and monstrous force and to bring certain death to the emperor and utter humiliation to the Byzantines, if his suit is rejected. The emperor’s neck is almost broken in the battle which follows, but eventually Jarlmann visits the same fate upon Ermanus and all the ‘heathens’ are killed.

In what may be a reminder of the significant Anglo-Saxon presence in the Varangian Guard after 1066 (Blöndal 1972: 141–2), Constantinople is championed by English-led forces in *Vilhjálms saga sjóðs*, the story of the lifelong alliance between Vilhjálmr, son of King Ríkarðr of England, and Reginbald, son of the Byzantine emperor Kirialax (said also to be known as Michael [*Vilhjálms saga sjóðs*: 28]). Noteworthy in particular is Vilhjálmr’s concern for the territorial integrity of the Eastern empire: Reginbald offers him a kingdom but Vilhjálmr refuses it because he does not want to diminish Reginbald’s territory (129). When Reginbald crowns him King of ‘Babylon’, Vilhjálmr, in formal acknowledgment of the sym-

¹ As is the beauty of the princess Potentiana in *Saulus saga ok Nikanors*: ‘þa ma so af henni segia at fyrir nordan Gricklandz haf fæddizt eigi fridare kona enn þetta blomstur’ (7).

bolic overlordship of Constantinople, takes a splendid sword kisses it, and hands it to Reginbald.

Kirialax saga is principally the story of Kirialax, a prince from Thessaly who becomes emperor of Byzantium. The saga operates within a multiplicity of chronologies, which draw extensively and sometimes incoherently upon a vast array of learned sources (Cook 1985: 303–26). Some events in the narrative are said to be contemporaneous with historically documented attacks on Rome (and France and Germany) by Goths, Huns, and Vandals in the fourth and fifth centuries, and by the usurper Eugenius during the reign of the emperor Theodosius (346–95); others are contextualized within the pseudo-history of King Arthur’s conquest of northern Europe. A long sequence in Sicily has echoes of the Ostrogothic conquest of Sicily under Theodoric in the late fifth century, but it may also evoke the attempted reconquest of Sicily from Arab rule in the mid-eleventh, that campaign with which *Morkinskina* and *Heimskringla* credit Haraldr harðráði with a prominent role. The framework of history is further extended to ancient and biblical history in the saga’s accounts of Kirialax’s visits to the ruins of Troy and to Jerusalem.

Kirialax saga is a story of Byzantium ascendant. Rome is attacked and threatened from beginning to end: by Goths, Huns, and Vandals; by insurgents from North Africa; by the usurper Eugenius; and by King Arthur. A running historical commentary on Roman fortunes is linked to various episodes within the saga. Egias, son of King Dagnus of Syria, for example, is said to have fought alongside the (historical) emperor Valentinian in Mauretania against potential attackers of Rome, while Theodosius stays behind to guard the city from assaults by men from the northern alps (11). After his defeat in Sicily, a viking named Eugenius is said to have gone North, assembled forces from Swabia and Holstein (‘Svafa and Hollzetu landi’), and – on the model of the historical Eugenius – gained power over Rome until his defeat by Theodosius (62). Resonances of the historical emperor Zeno (ca. 425–491), who made the Germanic chieftain, Oadacer, *patricius* of Italy and later indirectly engineered his killing by Theodoric, surface in the aftermath of the saga’s Sicilian campaign, when the emperor Zeno leaves Rome in charge of an unnamed *patricius* and goes to *austur-veg* to deal with hostility and unrest. Towards the end of *Kirialax saga*, Romanus, a Roman knight and lifelong companion of Kirialax, returns to defend his patrimony because Arthur of Britain has subjugated the northern part of the world. War rages everywhere, as the saga comments, with spurious invocation of the *Imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis (Cook 1985: 306) and a work which may, as Kristian Kålund suggests (*Kirialax saga*: 13n), be the *Cronica Martiniana* – ‘A þeim tímum var micill okyrreikr vida um verolldina, eptir því sem segir *Imágo mundi ok su bok, er het cronikamericion*’ (*Kirialax saga*: 13) – but Constantinople itself remains undisturbed.

Given the reference to Arthur’s conquering of the ‘norðálfu heimsins’ (89), with specific mention of Italy (‘Á þessum tíme herjaði Artus kóngr af Bretland á Italiam’), the lack of any mention in *Kirialax saga* of a Western emperor is puzzling. There is, however, some confusion between the *keisari* Leo and the *stólkonungr* Lotharius, and an implication that Leo is overlord of Lotharius (Cook 1985: 322n): at the wedding feast of Kirialax, Leo sits on his right and Lotharius on his left; Lotharius addresses Leo as ‘herra keisara’ (*Kirialax saga*: 88); Leo crowns Kirialax and makes him overlord of Greece and its seven subordinate kingdoms. Leo and his predecessor, Zeno, are not identified as Western emperors, but Leo’s place of residence appears to be somewhere other than Constantinople, since Lotharius offers him hospitality on his return from *austur-veg*.

Bærings saga concludes by representing itself as an extended exemplum of how wrongdoing will be avenged and righteousness rewarded (123). When Baeringr, a German knight wrongfully deprived of his patrimony by the treacherous Heinrekr and brought up at the court of Ríkarðr of England, defends Constantinople from Saracen attack, the grateful Emperor

Emanuel offers him half of Greece and the hand of his sister, Vindemia. The sexually irresistible Bæringr subsequently has a dream in which an angel tells him that Lucinia, daughter of Lucius, *keisari* of Rome, and other women will do their best to tempt him, but that he must remain faithful to Vindemia. Vilfriðar, daughter of Pippin, king of France, goes through the motions of taking the veil in order to avoid marriage to Emanuel and preserve her availability for the handsome hero. The frustrated Lucina falsely accuses him of rape, and Lucius has him thrown into a waterfall, from which he is rescued by an angel. Mortified and terrified of Bæringr's wrath when he discovers his error, Lucius shuts himself up in Florence and, when he finally emerges, surrenders himself and his lands to Bæringr. A council of kings and bishops meets on the Feast of the Assumption and declares that the treacherous Lucina has lost her father's kingdom: 'Lucinie [...] tapaði ríki fodr sins' (121). In the final washup, Bæringr directs Lucinia to marry the widowed Ríkarðr of England, with Lombardy as her dowry, and Vilfriðar to wed the Greek emperor; he himself marries the steadfast Vindemia, according to the laws of God and man, in a splendid ceremony (122–23). Lucius dies shortly after, and Bæringr, having killed Heinrekr and regained his patrimony, is crowned emperor of Rome. The virtuous Vindemia has comprehensively eclipsed the unprincipled daughters of the rulers of France and Rome, and Constantinople is confirmed as the untarnished capital of Christendom.

Some *riddarasögur* convey a sense of the geography and landmarks of Miklagarðr. There are references to the opening of the chain across Stólpasund (the Golden Horn) in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns* (17) and *Vilhjálms saga sjóðs* (36). *Kirialax saga* refers in some detail to the Hagia Sophia (which had been ransacked and desecrated in 1204) and the imperial palace. The long description of the latter, which derives from *Karlamagnús saga* (Cook 1985: 306), comes after earlier accounts in *Kirialax saga* of Jerusalem and the ruins of Troy and might, in accordance with the views of a number of medieval historians (Alexander 1962: 346; Ball 2001: 445; Carile 2006), be said to offer tacit acknowledgment of Constantinople as the symbolic successor to both cities. That many of the walls of Troy remain intact, a detail not present in the saga's sources for this episode – *Alexanders saga* and *Trójumanna saga* (Cook 1985: 306, 313–17) – serves further as a poignant reminder for us (though perhaps not for the saga-writer) that the walls of Constantinople are said to have terrified the army of the Fourth Crusade. The glowing splendour of the imperial palace, with its throne of fire-red gold and dazzling pillars (*Kirialax saga*: 86–87), mirrors the magnificent stone pillars and the gold cross studded with jewels in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as described earlier in the saga (*Kirialax saga*: 64–65).

The *riddarasögur*, then, hum with resonances of the North's historical association with Byzantium, and the East-West dynamic of Christendom is grounded not in confrontation and conquest but in deference and defence. There is a rhetoric of cultural connection, too, in the threads of *translatio studii* woven by the *riddarasögur* between the North and Byzantium. Just as – if we accept Heng's argument – Geoffrey of Monmouth replaced his sixth-century Romans with twelfth-century Byzantines, so Icelandic saga-writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries looked back to Byzantium through an eleventh-century field of vision (Sverrir Jakobsson 2005: 357–8) which acknowledged that the Great City was vulnerable to attack but unchallenged in its moral and spiritual authority.

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The World West of Iceland in Medieval Icelandic Oral Tradition

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Introduction

The abstract for this paper drew attention to the unusual way in which the *Íslendingasögur* depict the world west of Iceland (with particular emphasis on Greenland), and the implications of this representation for the construction of a ‘world view’ of the geographical sphere as it might have been viewed by medieval Norse society.¹ The Greenland of the sagas was a unique and at times strange place, lying somewhere on the boundary between the known, familiar Norse world, and an unfamiliar, exotic sphere beyond. An analysis of any saga is enhanced by a consideration of its oral dimensions, but the issue is especially important in the case of texts with Greenlandic episodes, where the provenance and nature of these underlying oral elements is particularly difficult to ascertain.² Yet the degree of consistency throughout various sagas’ portrayals of the region suggests some stability within the oral traditions connected with the country. This is particularly the case with regard to the Vínland sagas (*Eiríks saga* and *Grænlandinga saga*), where their similarities led early scholarship to favour a literary relationship between the two, although more recent research has concluded that they are unrelated literary texts with common oral elements (Ólafur Halldórsson 1978:369–71,450). By examining the strands of oral traditions and common literary themes that reoccur throughout the sagas, this paper will attempt to construct a ‘mental map’ of this geographical and social sphere as it might have appeared to medieval Icelandic society. It will examine the place of Greenland in the Norse world view, considering why the sagas set in the region tend to focus on the more negative aspects of landscape and life in the country.³

Greenland in the *Íslendingasögur*

¹ The term ‘world view’ is defined by Sverrir Jakobsson (2007:22) as ‘conscious and subconscious ideas about the world and its inhabitants, including the self, in a historical and geographical perspective. It is also an integral and inseparable part of the general discourse of a period. It characterises groups – social or cultural – rather than individuals’.

² The literary and oral background of texts concerned with Greenland is a matter of debate, made more complex by the diverse genres and postulated dates of composition for each saga. There is no direct evidence for the production of Norse manuscripts in Greenland, although there was probably some form of writing at the Episcopal see at Garðar. However, given the marginal situation of the Norse settlements in Greenland, only the wealthiest chieftains and the bishop could have afforded to be patrons of literature, and if they were, one might expect them to trumpet the fact, not pass by it in silence. Consequently, depending on the character of the saga in question, it may be that the narratives were entirely fictional with no link to Greenlandic society (particularly in fantastical texts such as *Jökuls þáttur* and *Gunnars saga*, which focus on supernatural trollish communities). Alternatively, it is possible that there was a Greenlandic eyewitness informing the writer (for instance, in *Grænlandinga þáttur* Greenlandic places and landscapes are described accurately, detailing a realistic Greenlandic society and its legal procedures). Another possibility is that certain saga authors could have been Greenlandic themselves, writing in either Greenland or Iceland. Additional texts can also be tenuously linked to a Greenlandic literary culture, such as the two eddic poems *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál*, which are given the debateable epithets ‘*in grænlensca*’ and ‘*in grænlensco*’ in Codex Regius (GKS 2367 4to).

³ The term comes from Gísli Sigurðsson’s work (2004:300) on the ‘mental map’ of the world west of Iceland. He develops his hypothesis in terms of geographical orientation, but in the current context the model can be extended to include abstract ideas concerning the place that regions would have occupied in the world view of collective medieval Icelandic society.

A number of broad literary patterns and themes remain relatively consistent across the corpus of texts featuring Greenland.⁴ The physical landscape features prominently, emphasising the difficulty of settling a harsh terrain. Greenland's saga topography can be envisaged as a series of horizontal layers, which become increasingly impenetrable as the landscape rises towards the glaciers and mountains. The lower layers begin in the sea, where inhospitable, dangerous waters give way to the mutable, intermediate medium of the gravel shoreline. This in turn rises to a narrow habitable shelf, consisting of fertile pockets of land by the fjords and below the cliffs. Further into the country, this strip of land becomes impassable rock with the (frequently supernatural) wilderness located beyond. In the upper layers of the terrain, vast, uninhabitable glaciers and ice shelves loom up, dominating the landscape and curtailing exploration with their solid impenetrability. In terms of other themes associated with Greenland, the country's wilderness is a key feature, often complete with supernatural inhabitants and grisly happenings. Outlaws and social outcasts frequent the shores, either arriving from the lands from which they have been exiled, or banished at Greenland's own Þing. Indeed, Eiríkr *rauði*, Greenland's primary *landnámsmaðr*, arrives under a cloud of killings and exile from Iceland, having already left Norway for similar reasons. Within the community, humans become sick, livestock die and famine is an ever-present danger, whilst on the country's storm-battered coast, boats are shipwrecked and lives are lost.⁵

A broad pattern of deictic orientation emerges from the sagas concerning Greenland, in which the more easterly part of the Norse world (particularly Iceland, and to a lesser extent, Norway) is the conceptual and geographical locus of the texts and the nucleus of Norse social identification.⁶ In terms of the 'mental map' that can be constructed of the sphere, an east-to-west geographical axis emerges, moving from cultural familiarity to exotic western wildernesses. This is true externally, in terms of the relationship between the various lands of the North Atlantic (as a rule, Iceland is more stable than Greenland, which in turn is more familiar than Vinland, which is less strange than lands such as *Einfætingaland* and *Hvítramannaland* as mentioned in *Eiríks saga*). It is also the case internally, within the two key communities of Greenlandic society. Generally identified in terms of their relative longitudinal locations as the Eastern and Western Settlements, the former is often indicated more familiarly by name (Brattahlíð or Eiríksfjörðr), whilst the latter is referred to in more abstract terms as the *vestr-byggð* or the *vestr óbyggð* ('Western Settlement' and 'uninhabited west'). This difference in nomenclature is reflected in the characters of the sites themselves, for the Eastern Set-

⁴ These are primarily *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Grænlandinga saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsness*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Jökuls þáttur Búasonar*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, *Auðunar þáttur vestfirska* and *Grænlandinga þáttur*.

⁵ There are of course exceptions to the thematic patterns, such as *Grænlandinga þáttur*, which concerns a realistic Greenlandic community and its attempts to assert national identity against a background of religious tension and struggles with Norwegian incomers. Yet even here, sickness and death awaits Sigurðr's hunting expedition in the wilderness (a typical Greenlandic motif), where they discover the plague-ridden remains of a lost crew. Furthermore, the Western Settlement is a hostile place in comparison to the east, used as a base by the Norwegians during their legal feud with the Greenlanders. In other texts, although the eponymous hero of *Refs saga* is forced into exile in an exceptionally bountiful wilderness, the fact remains that he is there because he has been outlawed, a common feature of many Greenlandic episodes.

⁶ 'Deixis' is a linguistic term referring to temporal and spatial co-ordinates in language. The intrinsic orientation of an object is by definition independent of the position of the speaker and dependent on static observation. In contrast, the deictic orientation of objects cannot be fixed without the speaker, and is dependent on their dynamic involvement. Deictic orientation occurs whenever a linguistic sign receives part of its meaning from an extralinguistic context (see Andersen 1985). This concept can be incorporated into the methodology of research into the perception of the familiar Norse sphere and the significance of landscape in sagas concerning Greenland. By examining the deictic locus of identification through the texts' topographical references, it is possible to identify thematic preoccupations, boundaries of cultural familiarity and attitudes towards the exotic and the unknown in the Norse world view.

tlement is described as a welcoming community, as in *Eiríks saga*, when Þorbjörn reaches Brattahlíð, ‘*Eiríkr tekur vel við honum, með blíðu, ok kvað þat vel, er hann var þar kominn*’ (ÍF 4:209). In comparison, the Western Settlement is presented with a gloomy sense of alienation bordering on the sinister, and although elements such as paganism, plague and supernatural activity also exist in the Eastern Settlement, in the west they are conveyed with dramatic literary patterning as the defining features of the community. For instance, in *Grænlandinga saga*, following his death, Þórsteinn Eiríksson’s prophecy concerning Guðríðr’s future back east (‘*munu þit fara af Grænlandi til Nóregis ok þaðan til Íslands ok gera bú á Íslandi*’ ÍF 4:260) and her ‘bright’ descendants (‘*bjart ok ágætt, sætt ok ilmat vel*’ ÍF 4:260) contrasts starkly with the gloomy, claustrophobic darkness of the farmhouse in the dead of winter, where the stagnant community seems to be internally rotting away in the grip of the epidemic.

In part, the literary descriptions must reflect some degree of the geographical and meteorological reality, with the ‘cultural memory’ and realistic oral traditions concerning the region’s weather and living conditions being transferred in some form into the written texts that emerged.⁷ However, despite the fact that there must have been famines, shipwrecks, bad weather and plagues in similar landscapes such as Iceland, such adverse features do not define the country as a whole. In his discussion of why natural phenomena such as volcanoes do not feature in the *Íslendingasögur* despite their presence in the Icelandic landscape, Oren Falk (2006:232) notes:

The *Íslendingasögur* are tight-lipped in general about all kinds of natural calamity. Few wild-fires or famines ravage the countryside in saga Iceland; harsh winters and disease seldom decimate the population; landslides and floods are mercifully rare; and ravenous polar bears [...] are almost unheard of.

Therefore if, as is generally held, the sagas chiefly attend to meteorological extremes and natural phenomena for literary effects such as metaphor and mood-setting (see Falk 2006:233, Ogilvie 2006), then what does this say about the place of Greenland in the Norse world view, where such descriptions are so prominent?

Test case: landing on the shores of new lands

In order to answer this question, a test case will now be made of a particular aspect of the landscape, in order to highlight the unique place of Greenland in Norse oral traditions. The depiction of the landings and subsequent *landnám* (‘land-taking’) of incomers to Greenland and Iceland will be compared, which will show the different ways in which the voyagers interact with the two new landscapes.

Beginning with the arrival in Greenland in *Grænlandinga saga*, from the time when Bjarni sets out from Iceland, there is a sense of going beyond the controllable and established world of Icelandic society when Bjarni says ‘*óvitrlig mun þykkja vár ferð, þar sem engi vár hefir komit í Grænlandshaf*’ (ÍF 4:246). The familiar world of Iceland retreats, and the unfamiliar seascape is threatening and difficult to navigate (‘*alda þeir nú í haf, þegar þeir váru búnir, ok sigldu þrjá daga, þar til er landit var vatnat, en þá tók af byrina, ok lagði á norrænur ok þokur, ok vissu þeir eigi, hvert at þeir fóru, ok skipti þat mörgum dægum*’ ÍF 4:246). Similarly, in *Eiríks saga* they leave Iceland in good weather, yet ‘*síðan létu þeir í haf, ok er þeir váru í hafí, tók af byri*’ (ÍF 4:205). The subsequent voyage is grisly, for once the wind has dropped, ‘*fengu þeir hafvillur, ok försk þeim ógreitt um sumarit. Því næst kom sótt í lið þeira*’ (ÍF 4:205). Later, bad weather in this stretch of water is responsible for the discovery of Vínland – (‘*lætr Leifr í haf ok er lengi úti ok hitti á lönd þau*’ ÍF 4:205).

⁷ ‘Cultural memory’ is the interplay between the literary inventiveness of saga texts and their ability to reflect and play a role in the broader social and historical issues of the day (see Glauser 2007).

Beyond the *Vínland sagas*, the picture of Greenland's physical landscape remains largely consistent, with journeys to Greenland characterised by storms and shipwrecks. *Refs saga* links the theme specifically to the sighting of Greenland ('*Þeim ferst vel, þar til er þeir fá sýn af Grænlandi, ok síðan velkir þá lengi ok hefr þá norðr með landinu*' ÍF 14:131), while in *Fóstbræðra saga*, Skúfr's journey out to Greenland contrasts with his journey to Norway (on the way out, '*skip velkir úti lengi; fá þeir veðr stór*' (ÍF 6:223), whilst on the way back, '*Þeir fá góða byri; fersk þeim vel, taka Nóreg*' (ÍF 6:257)).

In the supernatural world of *Jökuls þáttur*, the description of the sea journey is protracted, emphasising an otherworldly disorientation, the long time they are lost at sea, and the ferocious shipwreck:

Gaf þeim lítt byri, og rak á fyrir þeim myrkr og hafvillur, svó þeir vóru úti allt sumarið; en er hausta tók, gerði storma með miklum hríðum og frustum, svó sýldi hvern dropa, er inn kom. [...] um síðir rak skipið að skerjaklasa miklum með boðaföllum stórum. (ÍF 14:47)

The word *hafvillur* (witless-at-sea) is significant, implying that the Greenlandic ocean is not only physically dangerous, but can also affect the sailors' minds.⁸ Furthermore, as the rain-drops turning to ice (*svó sýldi hvern dropa*), the weather becomes the landscape, and the storm solidifies into the frost and snow that covers much of the country. Consequently, an event (the storm) is transformed into a topographical situation (the icy landscape) in its meteorological hostility, driving the sailors forward onto the skerries and inhospitable shoreline of the country.

Such descriptions of the approach to Greenland are compounded by the inclusion of menacing supernatural and pagan elements within the story. During the voyage to Greenland in *Flóamanna saga*, Þórr appears to Þorgils, threatening shipwrecks if the company refuse to believe in him. When this comes to pass, the description of the shipwreck on the Greenlandic coast focuses on the little ship washed up below the glaciers, compounding the continuing sense of man's insignificance and vulnerability in the face of the a hostile landscape: '*Þeir brutu skipit undir Grænlandsjöklum í vik nökkurri við sandmöl. Tók skipit í sundr í efra rúmi*' (ÍF 13:282). There is no sense of an external agency being responsible for the breaking ship (such as storms, skerries or humans), with primacy and power instead given to the solid sheet of ice that dominates the landscape. In these descriptions the sailors seem to be repulsed by the land itself, for however good the journey is up to that point, it is hard to control the approach once they sight the coast.

By contrast, in Iceland the immigrants have much more control as they near the coast, reflecting the more powerful way in which they are able to interact with the landscape of their new home. To some extent, the seascape is still marginal, and as Margaret Clunies Ross notes (1998:130, with reference to Gísli Pálsson 1990):

This privileging of the idea of land taking as a means of humanising the environment had its antithesis in the relative neglect of matters to do with the waters and their inhabitants which were placed in a special, somewhat marginal category associated with anomaly and uncertainty.

Consequently, as with the seas around Greenland, there are rough passages at sea as they reach their destination. However, the descriptions are perfunctory and serve little function in

⁸ The adjective also appears in the journey to Greenland in *Eiríks saga rauða* (see above). The word is rare (I have found it only in *Laxdæla saga* in the description of Óláfr pái's voyage to Ireland and in *Finnboga saga*, when Finnbogi is shipwrecked in the far north of Norway) and although not confined to descriptions of the turbulent journey to Greenland, every time it occurs it is in the context of journeys to the inhospitable northerly or westerly outer reaches of the Norse world.

comparison to the place of shipwrecks in the plots of many Greenlandic episodes; the storm blows down and they land without further ado. For instance, in *Egils saga*:

Er þeir váru komnir við Ísland, þá sigldu þeir sunnan at landi; þeir sigldu vestr fyrir landit, því at þeir höfðu þat spurt, at Ingólfr hafði sér þar bústað tekit; en er þeir kómu fyrir Reykjanes ok þeir sá firðinum upp líka, þá stefna þeir inn í fjörðinn báðum skipunum. Veðr gerði hvasst ok væta mikil ok þoka; skilðusk þá skipin. Sigldu þeir inn eptir Borgarfirði, til þess er þraut sker öll; köstuðu þá akkerum, til þess er veðr lægði ok ljóst gerði [...] fluttu þeir kistuna á nes þat, er þar varð, settu hana þar niðr ok hlóðu at grjóti. (ÍF 2:71–2)

In this instance, the sailors are able to circumnavigate the country freely and weather storms without serious repercussions, and when they decide to come ashore, the landscape opens up to receive them so that they might enter it through easily accessible fjords. Once they have landed, the travellers are able to manoeuvre freely in order to familiarise themselves with the topography and bring it within their control, their exploration sweeping up across the plains and into the mountains. This stands in sharp contrast to Greenland's series of topographic layers, which become increasingly impenetrable as they rise from the coast up towards the sterile glaciers.

Just as the approach to Iceland is a controlled and manageable affair, once they have reached the land, the colonisers must take control over their new country. As with Greenland, supernatural elements play a role, but whilst in that setting they highlight the powerlessness of the incomers to Greenland, here they are used as a tool of power by Icelandic settlers. This interaction between the human and the divine take several forms, including benevolent relationships with Iceland's *landvættir* (spirit-beings who live in the land and safeguard it), protective affinities with particular gods carried out with the emigrants and transferred to the new land, and the use of fatalistic determinants such as high-seat pillars to decide on the location of the new farmsteads (see Clunies Ross 1998:122–57).

The approach to Iceland in *Eyrbyggja saga* encapsulates the importance of supernatural forces in enabling the seafarers to take control of their approach to Iceland and their settlement of the land:

Þórólfr kastaði þá fyrir borð öndvegissúlum sínum, þeim er staðit höfðu í hofinu; þar var Þórr skorinn á annarri. Hann mælti svá fyrir, at hann skyldi þar byggja á Íslandi, sem Þórr léti þær á land koma. En þegar þær hóf frá skipinu, sveif þeim til ins vestra fjarðarins, ok þótti þeim fara eigi vánum seinna. Eptir þat kom hafgula; sigldu þeir þá vestr fyrir Snæfellsnes ok inn á fjörðinn. (ÍF 4:7–8)

As with texts such as *Egils saga* and *Landnámabók*, *Eyrbyggja saga* employs the motif of the high-seat pillars, carved with Þórr and cast overboard, in order to create a sense of supernatural interaction with the meteorological conditions, working in concert to welcome them and to create an effortless entry into the country. The word 'sveif' (swept) amplifies the sense of swift movement, emphasised by the information that the ship is moving faster than expected. As with the description of Skalla-Grímr's *landnám* in *Egils saga*, the sailors are not curtailed by a solid block of land in front of them, but are able to sail freely around the coast, arching around cape Reykjanes and the headland of Snæfellsnes, and propelled into the fjord by a *hafgula* (sea breeze) that springs up to speed them on their way.

Conclusion

By means of conclusion, it is worth briefly considering the reasons for the way in which Greenland is depicted in the sagas, with the prevalence of certain negative characteristics. The

question is complex, and a number of factors are likely to be involved, ranging from geographical reality to changing trends in literary genres.

Firstly, there is the aforementioned issue of Greenland's conceptual location in terms of the deictic orientation of the Norse world, perched on the edge whilst Iceland was in the middle. Strange and uncanny events are much more likely to happen in distant, more exotic countries, since, as Falk states, '[un]natural calamities in the sagas tend to occur in far-off lands, where the boundaries between the real and the fantastic are more porous anyhow' (Falk 2006:232).

Additionally, the literary depiction of Greenland is likely to be based on its geographical reality to some extent, for if Greenland was a difficult land to inhabit, it is not surprising that it would be represented in the sagas as a place of shipwrecks, storms and plagues. For instance, the differences between the characters of the Eastern and Western settlements can be explained in part by the different physical conditions in the sites, since despite the nomenclature, the Western Settlement was actually 300 miles further north than the Eastern Settlement. Exposed to the inhospitable West Greenlandic current, the region was considerably colder and wetter than its southern counterpart, with a significantly reduced summer growing season (see Diamond, 2005:215). With a blend of literary patterning and geographical reality which hints at the nature of the defining cultural memories associated with the region, the real-life location and climate of the Western Settlement partly explains why it was characterised as a hostile place of sickness and eerie events. Famine and plague may have also occurred in the east, but in the west these characteristics were key, embellished with paranormal incidents in order to generate a darker, more supernaturally inclined world.

Moreover, if the sagas are ranked roughly according to age (for discussion of this problematic issue see Örnólfur Thórsson 1990, Degnbol *et al.* 1989), the increasingly fantastical nature of Greenland as we move through the centuries suggests that the depiction of the country has also been influenced by changing fashions in saga genres over the years (the classically perceived pattern being a shift from the socially realistic genre of the *Íslendingasögur* to the more fantastical and continentally influenced *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*). The sagas traditionally identified as older provide the most realistic and socially detailed accounts of the country (*Grænlandinga þáttur*, *Grænlandinga saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*), whilst the later texts have a tendency to use broader brushstrokes, exaggerating the thematic motifs associated with the region (*Flóamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga*, *Jökuls þáttur* and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjells*). Earlier tendencies to describe shipwrecks, harsh living conditions and supernatural elements become crystallised as the focus of later stories, with the importance accorded to the human population dwindling until it disappears altogether to be replaced by a trollish society in sagas such as *Jökuls þáttur* and *Gunnars saga*. However, this may not only be a result of changing literary fashions. It may also be that because the themes are largely negative, as time passed the literature also reflected the increasingly precarious nature of life in Greenland's deteriorating physical climate (see Diamond 2005), with an ever more pessimistic 'cultural memory' underpinning the sagas. It might also mirror the diminishing links between Greenland and the rest of Europe, for as the trading patterns changed and the sailing routes to the country were slowly abandoned, the position of Greenland in the Norse world view must have altered significantly (see Oláfur Halldórsson 1993:241). This would explain the fact that in the later texts, human society disappears to be replaced by monsters and giants, for with less contact between Greenland and the rest of the world (particularly Iceland where the sagas are likely to have been recorded), there were fewer oral traditions and information about Greenlandic society emanating from the region.

Finally, there is the question of why, as demonstrated by the test case of the *landnám* as it is presented in both Iceland and Greenland, the less positive aspects of the Icelandic landscape are not the defining features of this country. This can be explained with reference to Jesse Byock's assertion that 'over centuries, [the sagas] helped an immigrant people form a coher-

ent sense of who they were' (2004:303). Central to this impulse were the traditions associated with the *landnám* and genealogies, reflecting the Icelanders' aspirations to establish their nascent nation within a larger European framework (see Clunies Ross 1993:375–6). Within this context, there would have been little reason for negative descriptions of the country's landscape, particularly during descriptions of the *landnám*, since such historicising tendencies were a critical means of defining and legitimising separate Icelandic identity as the country's independence became increasingly threatened in the international political arena. In contrast, the presentation of Greenland in the sagas creates the impression that while it was not a wholly alien land, it did lie upon the margins between the familiar Norse world and an unstable, unknowable sphere beyond. Underlying the unsettled nature of the 'cultural memory' preserved in the sagas, the oral traditions associated with the region were likely to have stemmed in part from the anxieties and dangers that would have concerned the Norse settlers. Consequently, in its literary representation, the land on the edge of the world was transformed into an unpredictable, shadowy place of shipwrecks, plagues, and supernatural happenings.

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ÍF = Íslensk fornrit. Reykjavík

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What do the norns actually do?

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The norns (Old Norse *nornir*) are a group of female supernatural beings who, in Old Norse tradition, somehow or other represent fate. As with many other beings from this tradition, the norns are known to us predominantly through the literary sources.

They are not exactly prominent figures; literary references to these beings are rather few, while references to them from outwith the literature are incredibly few. However, although the sources convey relatively little information about them, it is not unfair to say that certain ideas constitute what one might call our general or even stereotypical knowledge about the norns. In particular three specific ideas appear to be prominent: 1) that there are three norns; 2) that they are called Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld; 3) that they represent Past, Present and Future.

These ‘facts’ have been reiterated in so many scholarly references to the norns that they may even be taken to be common knowledge and, therefore, these ideas merit a bit of close attention.

The Number Three

Concerning the idea that there are three norns, it is true that norns have a strong tendency to occur in the plural – as a group – but instances of singular norns also exist.¹ In cases where there are clearly more than one, the number of norns in the group is rarely specified;² three seems a good suggestion, and this is the enumeration we encounter when there is one, but there is more to be said about it than that.

Völuspá 20 gives three names and *Gylfaginning* 15 (quite possibly echoing *Völuspá*) does the same, though *Gylfaginning*, perhaps in an attempt to amalgamate contradicting traditions, goes on to state that there are more than three norns. Here, *Gylfaginning* cites *Fáfnismál* 13, which refers to a three-part division of the collective group of norns – but not to three individuals. *Fáfnismál* 13 quite specifically says that some norns are of this kind, some of that kind and some of that kind, thus bringing the total number, as it were, to more than three – otherwise it would presumably have said one of this and that kind, not some.

The intention is not to discard the idea of the three norns altogether, but simply to say that it is not the full picture. There **are** three norns – in *Völuspá* and (at least some of the time) in *Gylfaginning*. But there are also other sources that refer to these beings and they do not all give the same information.

The Names

The idea that the norns carry the names of Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld obviously feeds off the notion of there being three of them. Two sources mention these names, namely *Völuspá* 20 and *Gylfaginning* 15.

As a trinity, the names do not occur outwith these two texts, although both Urðr and Skuld occur elsewhere – but never the two of them together. Verðandi occurs nowhere else, and it has been suggested that her name may have been invented in order to fill in some sort of per-

¹ *Reginismál* 2; Kveldúlfr’s *lausavísa* in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* 24; Egill’s *lausavísa* in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* 56; Ólaf’s *drápa Tryggvasonar* 18.

² It is, in fact, statistically very unusual that a specific number is given; this happens in *Völuspá* 20 (though this text does not use the term norns in its description; it simply calls them *meyjar*), in *Norna-Gests þáttur* and in *Gylfaginning* 15 – although *Gylfaginning* 15 also says that there are more norns than the three named ones.

ceived gap between the other two. The figure behind the name may still be ancient, even if the name is not.

Past, Present and Future

The idea that the names as well as the figures hiding behind them represent past, present and future deserves some attention here because it is in certain ways problematic.

The first problem is that, while the meaning of the name Verðandi is in all sorts of ways close to the meaning of ‘present’, Urðr means ‘fate’, not ‘past’, and likewise, Skuld means something along the lines of ‘debt’. Admittedly, the noun *skuld* has a fairly wide semantic range, but that it should encompass the concept of ‘future’ seems to be stretching it a bit far. I am not aware that *skuld* is ever used in that sense, nor have I come across any occurrences of *urðr* used with the meaning ‘past’.

However, it is possible that it has been the intention of the *Völuspá*-poet to create an additional layer of meaning to the names Urðr and Skuld by inserting Verðandi in order to lend the three figures a collective, time-related aspect. This recasting of the names produces a connection that can – but must not necessarily – be made, namely the temporal understanding of Urðr and Skuld as, respectively, ‘past’ and ‘future’, without erasing the, so to speak, original meanings of ‘fate’ and ‘debt’.

The second problem of regarding the norns as representatives for time is that fate and time are not at all the same. Time is concerned about **when** things happen, and such chronological concern seems to be quite different from what is meant by fate. Fate stands outside of time, because it regards the future much as we regard the past; yet, fate is experienced over time, so if time does not exist, one cannot experience fate. Therefore, we need time in order to have fate. But this does not mean that they are the same thing. Fate is much more concerned about **what** happens. It is not really concerned about when or why something is going to happen, only about what will happen and the fact that it will happen.³

The recasting of fate in the chronologically orientated guise of time occurs only in *Völuspá* and, insofar as it appears to rely on this poem, the recasting can be said to occur in *Gylfaginning*, too.

The norns, however, are not the exclusive property of these two texts; we are allowed to also consider what is said about them elsewhere.

What, then, is actually said about the norns? Several things, is the answer, and this paper will not be able to go into detail with each individual reference. It will focus instead on what appear to be the two most common ideas about the norns – their connection to honour and their connection to law.

Norns and Honour

The norns occur almost exclusively in contexts involving legendary human characters, not the Old Norse gods. *Völuspá* apart, the mythological poems of the *Edda* do not mention the norns whereas the heroic poems account for almost half of the total number of references. Also skaldic poems account for a substantial number of references to the norns, and it seems noteworthy that a relatively large number of the total references place the norns in the context of heroic action. By this is meant the type of action that makes a hero or heroine truly heroic, situations where the protagonists prove their heroic character by acting in ways that accord with the high standards of the strict code of honour instead of succumb to the pressure that they find themselves under. In other words, there seems to be a tendency to make reference to the norns exactly in circumstances that will define a person as truly heroic – or as not heroic.

³ Winterbourne (2004:15–18); Bek-Pedersen (forthcoming)

Brynhildr, in *Sigurðarkviða* 5–7, blames the norns for the difficult situation she is in, being married to Gunnarr instead of Sigurðr, as well as for the emotional turmoil this has thrown her into. She identifies the norns as the ones who are to blame, but this does not stop her from exacting her revenge on human beings and she proceeds to urge Gunnarr – successfully – to kill Sigurðr. What motivates Brynhildr appears to be her sense of honour, the fact that she has been made to break her promise to marry Sigurðr, and she embarks on a horrific revenge expedition, spreading death all around her, but all the while feeling that she is forced to do these things and does not have a choice. Her strong sense of honour is her choice, brought about, as she sees it, by the norns.

Helgi, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana önnor* 26, on returning to tell his valkyrja-lover Sigrún of the outcome of the battle he has fought, finds himself having to communicate a tricky piece of news. He says to her that: *erat þér at öllo[...] gefið* ‘not all is as you would have it’ because, although he has slain Höðbroddr, whom Sigrún was expected to marry but decidedly did not want, he has also killed her father and one of her brothers. The situation is not entirely unlike that of Brynhildr – with honour and love crossing each other in such a way that people get caught in between the two – and Helgi says that: *nökkvi nornir valda* ‘the norns decided some of this’. His message seems to be that obeying the rules of honour and, with that, the decisions of the norns is only what is expected of a hero, no matter the emotional cost involved.

Angantýr, in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* 14, makes the same type of reference to the norns when he expresses deep regret for having slain his brother Hlöðr in a dispute over who should inherit from their father. Hlöðr demands half of the inheritance, and Angantýr initially makes him what he thinks is a very decent offer. But when Hlöðr hears himself referred to as *ambátarsonr* ‘son of a slave woman’ he regards this as an attack on his honour and sees armed retaliation as the only solution to the ensuing conflict. With this, the brothers end up on opposing sides and one of them kills the other, saying that ‘evil is the judgement of the norns’. While the understanding appears to be that fate was what got between the two brothers, it seems just as much to be questions of honour that separate them.

Guðrún, in *Guðrúnarhvöt* 13, seems to be thinking along the same lines. After she has successfully seen her sons off, sending them to their almost certain death in avenging their sister, she breaks into a long list of woes, describing how she, on the one hand, feels forced into carrying out horrible acts of revenge for the sake of honour and, on the other hand, feels tremendous grief even as she does these things. She is caught in a tragic combination of what is necessary in order to maintain honour and the inhumanity of doing this. For this, she is, as she puts it, ‘furious with the norns’ *gröm vark nornom*, emphasising once more that honour and fate interlink closely.

A happier take on the same situation comes from *Hamðismál* 30 where the sons of Guðrún, Hamðir and Sörli, have managed to kill Iörmunrekkr, but are themselves about to be slain by the overpowering force of Iörmunrekkr’s men. They have upheld their own and their family’s honour and this is what is important to them, even at the cost of losing their own lives – they seem almost happy with the outcome, as if contemplating a deed well done, in spite of the fact that: *kveld lifir maðr ekki eptir kvið norna* ‘no man lives out the evening after the norns give their verdict’, as it is phrased. Again, the norns appear to be involved in a game of honour.

The norns, then, have a strong tendency to be associated with situations where the heavy demands of upholding one’s honour and emotional stability cross each other. That is, when the figures whom we encounter in Old Norse legends find themselves in situations where their sense of honour requires them to act in ways that would otherwise be considered unacceptable, they often invoke the norns. They do not step down or shy away from what they feel obliged to do, no matter the fact that certain death is frequently the outcome; instead, they refer to this as fate and proceed to take the action deemed necessary.

Norns and Law

Such are the contextual settings in which the norns are typically mentioned, and the great concern that Old Norse heroes and heroines show for their reputation thus appears to interact with their ideas about fate and destiny. Furthermore, some of their attitude to the obligations imposed on them by honour and by fate is appears to be reflected in the vocabulary used to describe the ways in which the norns exercise their influence.

The most common metaphor employed in such instances is a legal metaphor: *norna dómr* ‘judgment of the norns’ turns up in several texts, *Fáfnismál* 11, *Ynglingatal* 24 and *Hervarar saga* 14, as a phrase for death or dying, with the rather similar *kviðr norna* ‘verdict of the norns’ being employed in *Hamdismál* 30. Not unlike such quasi-legal terminology are the phrases: *kveð ek nøkkvi nornir valda* ‘I say that the norns decided some of this’ in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana önnor* 26 and Torf-Einar’s wording: *rétt skiptu því nornir* ‘the norns settled it correctly’, which he uses in a description of how he avenged his father. Certainly the wording of *Völuspá* 20: *þær lög lögðu* ‘they laid down laws’ clearly draws on an image involving law to describe how the norns operate.

It is important to note that there is no direct linkage between norns and the law as this operated in human society. Instead, the key to the legal metaphor characterizing the norns may be that ‘law’ (court cases, juridical counselling and legal disputes) is not what the norns actually do, but that what they do is considered to be similar to this, only on a different level.

Underlying this legal metaphor seems to be a way of looking at the concept of fate as though it were akin to some kind of law – that it was definite and unavoidable, but also that it was there in order to help maintain society and uphold a balance between various sections of society.

Conclusions

As mentioned, it is not possible to discuss each individual reference to the norns in a space as short as this. Instead, the present paper has taken a more generalising approach – but the generalisations have been made on the basis of what are, statistically speaking, the notions that are most often linked to the norns in Old Norse tradition.

The three points mentioned at the start: 1) that there are three norns; 2) that they are named Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld; 3) that they represent Past, Present and Future, do not actually reflect the ideas that are most commonly presented in Old Norse tradition as it has come down to us. Not that these three points are therefore invalid as such, but when it is clear that the majority of references to the norns are not at all concerned with these things, perhaps we should reconsider how representative they really are.

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Ásmund á austrvega: The Faroese Oral Tradition on Ásmund and its Relation to the Icelandic Saga

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The story of Ásmund *kappabani* (“the Champion-Killer”) seems to have been quite successful in the Faroe Islands. The character of Ásmund – Faroese Ásmundur – appears in five Faroese heroic ballads: *Gríms ríma* (CCF nr. 52), *Heljars kvæði* (CCF nr. 63), *Frúgvín Olrina* (CCF nr. 81), *Sniolv's kvæði* (CCF nr. 91) and *Torbjörn Bekil* (CCF nr. 98), four of which – *Gríms ríma*, *Heljars kvæði*, *Sniolv's kvæði* and *Torbjörn Bekil* – preserved in more than one version. In addition to these, Ásmund the Champion-Killer is also mentioned in other texts, such as *Tíðriks kongs ríma* (CCF nr. 97), where he is presented as one of Dietrich’s warriors, or the so-called *Dvørgamoy* ballads (CCF nr. 6, 7, 8, 9), a large group of texts dealing with all the three thematic cores which, in Faroese oral tradition, are connected with the character of Sigurd: the Nibelung cycle, the Dietrich epic and the Ásmund tradition itself.

The Faroese Ballads on Ásmund

Gríms ríma

This ballad, preserved in the CCF in two different versions – A and B –, narrates the adventure of Grímur, son of Hildibrand, against Ásmund, a family of giants and, finally, Sigurd. At the beginning of the text, Grímur expresses his wish to sail in search for adventure, he has a new ship built and eventually leaves. His voyage leads him to a quiet beach where he finds the terrible (*illur*) Ásmund, who challenges him:

Ásmundur við sín skjöldin fríða:
»Grímur, eg bjóði tær út at stríða!«

Fyrsta sting, ið Grímur legði,
Ásmund burt úr saðli hevði.

Annan stingin legði tá,
svorðið hinum av hondum brá.

»So kannst tú tín hestin venda,
sláa annans svørð av hendi.« (CCF 52A: st. 8–11)

They start duelling: with the first blow Grímur makes Ásmund fall from his horse, while with the second one he also loses his sword. In version A Ásmund’s last action in the ballad is represented by the words he addresses to his opponent: “You can turn your horse and knock someone else’s sword from their hand!”. In B Ásmund is described while, after the duel, he is carving evil (*ramar*) runes in a grassy garden.

After having met Ásmund, Grímur continues his voyage in search of adventure. A storm pushes his ship towards the shore of a land where he finds a giant. Grímur goes ashore and, taking the sword in his hand, enters the cave where the giant lives with his family, beheads the old giant and, after stealing gold and wealth, sails home. In the meantime the giant’s son comes home and discovers his father’s corpse. Once he finds out who the murderer is, he takes an iron bar on his shoulder and starts looking for Grímur, who, by that time, has reached the hall of his residence. While he’s there drinking both mead and wine, the young giant enters the hall claiming revenge for his father’s death. The two start fighting and Grímur cuts his opponent in two pieces (*i lutir tvá*).

On a sunny day, early in the morning, Grímur rides towards Hildarfjall (B: Lindarfjall), where he meets Sigurd Sigmundarson. The two knights fight and Sigurd has the better of his opponent. According to Grímur, this could happen only with the help of magic and runes. A ends with this comment, while B narrates the feast celebrating their reconciliation.

2. *Heljars kvæði*

Heljars kvæði narrates Ásmund's quest for Heljar's beautiful daughter, Silri. In the CCF the text is preserved in two versions, A and B. As soon as he hears of the existence of this maiden, Ásmund has his horse saddled to ride to Heljar's. He reaches the palace gate, which is protected by some white bears, kills the animals with his sword and pronounces some magic words (*rúnir*) to put to sleep the snake further protecting the threshold. In this way, he is able to enter the hall. He immediately declares his wish to marry Heljar's daughter. The landlord wants Silri herself to decide about her future, since she's not easy to rule. After three days in the hall, Ásmund hasn't been able to see the girl yet. He, therefore, decides to change strategy and ask for the help of other warriors. Hildibrand, his son Grímur and Virgar the Strong accept to come to the palace, but none of them succeeds in seeing the maiden. Then Ásmund invites Sigurd, who following Nornagestr's advice brings along his good sword and helmet. On his way towards Heljar's, Sigurd meets an old man, who offers him a new sword able to cut the hardest stone. He also tells him how to face both the white bears at the gate and the snake. In this way, he reaches the hall where the other warriors sit around the table. After five days, Silri finally appears in the room. Ásmund makes his marriage proposal, but she strongly refuses. He then suggests organizing a tournament: Virgar fights against Grímur and Sigurd against Ásmund. Being in trouble against Sigurd and fearing Virgar and Grímur might attack him as well, Ásmund finds a diversion heading towards the house of a dwarf living in the neighborhood. They attack, defeat him and steal his gold. When the warriors are satisfied with the battle, they all come back home:

Árla um morgunin, sólin skin,
tá fóru kempur hvør til sín.

Onga jomfrú Ásmundur vann,
hann helt so aftur á Suðurland. (CCF 63A: st. 103–104)

And Ásmund returns home alone, without any maiden.

3. *Frúgvín Olrína*

In this ballad, too, the quest for a beautiful girl is narrated. In a castle on a mountain live two maidens, Ingibjörg and Olrína. Once Grímur hears that, he rides towards the castle, where Ingibjörg yields to him. In the meantime, Virgar Valintsson sends a messenger to Olrína. The messenger reaches the castle and delivers the letter containing Virgar's marriage proposal. Olrína refuses, saying that Virgar has already hundreds of maidens in his castle to have fun with and doesn't need her. In the following fight Geyti, Virgar's messenger, confronts the maidens' father and defeats both him and two of his men. He, then, takes all the gold and silver he can find and leaves the castle, where the two girls sit alone. Hearing that, Sniolvur decides to follow and kill him. Once Geyti is defeated, Sniolvur rides to the castle.

Thinking the castle and the girl are unprotected, Ásmund wants to take advantage of the situation and find a new mistress there:

Ásmundur kom so síðla á degi
við sítt búgvíð svørð:

»Nú skal eg mær frillu kjósa,
deyður er høvuðleysur herur.« (CCF 81: st. 49)

Actually, the castle is not unprotected, but rather full of spells and magical ties, which Sniolvur uses to bind Ásmund:

Borgin var innan við mentir full,
leinkjur, línur og garn,
Sniolvur spenti streingir upp,
Ásmund fastan í jarn. (CCF 81: st. 50)

Bound to an iron bar, Ásmund asks Sniolvur for mercy, is freed and can return to Selgjaland.

In the meantime Geyti, wounded, reaches his master Virgar and reports both on his mission to Olrina's and on his fight against Sniolvur. Virgar decides, therefore, to go personally to the castle. Olrina meets him in front of the door and challenges him saying nobody in the world dares fight against Sniolvur. Hearing these words, Virgar cannot but invite Sniolvur to duel. Sniolvur is defeated, Virgar escorts the sad Olrina to the castle and proclaims peace for both farmers and criminals. The ballad ends by saying that Olrina finally entered a nunnery and that she and Virgar are both saints in Heaven.

4. *Torbjörn Bekil*

This ballad, preserved in six different versions, narrates the adventure of Ásmund against the troll Torbjörn Bekil to avenge the damage he has caused to Halga's farm. Unable to kill the troll by herself, Halga goes to Ásmund and offers to marry him:

»Eg havi farið um Ísland alt
kristið lið at kannu,
víða man mitt lýti fara,
sjálv biði eg mær mann.« (CCF 98A: st. 47)

She has travelled all over Iceland to meet Christian people and is looking for a husband, but she won't sleep with Ásmund before he crosses his sword with Bekil:

» [...] Hvar er Ásmundur, sonur tín,
eg geri tað ei at loyna?
Hann kemur ei í song við mær
fyrr enn odd við Bekil royna.« (CCF 98A: st. 50)

Ásmund's mother gives him coat, sword and armour. So equipped he is ready for the fight, he goes to Halga's and accepts her proposal. In the meantime, Torbjörn sends a messenger to Halga's. When he comes back, he reports having seen a tall man kneeling in front of her. Wondering who this mysterious man could be, Torbjörn suggests he could be an "ashman" (*øskudólgur*)¹ and asks fifteen of his men to go against him. They attack Ásmund without success and are all killed. Seeing that his warriors don't come back, Torbjörn gathers his fam-

¹ As pointed out by Conroy (1978: 41), the original protagonist of this ballad couldn't possibly be the same Ásmund we meet in the Icelandic saga and in the saga-related Faroese ballads of the Ásmund cycle. Assuming the existence of two different characters named Ásmund – Ásmund *illi* or *ungi* and Ásmund *kellingarson* – it is possible to explain how a robber and rapist like Ásmund *illi* could be asked for help against a troll by a maiden. The nickname *kellingarson*, "son of a witch, or of a female troll" (Poulsen & al. 1998: 576), with which Ásmund is usually referred to, originally indicated only the positively connotated Ásmund we find in *Torbjörn Bekil*, but after the confusion of the two characters it became common in the ballads dealing with Ásmund *illi*'s adventures as well.

ily to ask for help and advice. The giant Rani, his relative (*frændi*), offers to fight against Ásmund with his right hand bound. They duel bitterly until Ásmund is able to cut Rani's stomach down to the navel. The same destiny is shared by Gyrðilin and Atli, who wanted to avenge the death of their relative. Finally Torbjörn himself challenges Ásmund: He is killed and, after him, his mother and his sisters as well.

Tired and wounded Ásmund can go back to Halga:

Tað var Ásmundur kellingarson,
fellur upp á síni knæ,
meðan hann tað væna vív
til ektar festi sær. (CCF 98A: st. 183)

They get married and live happily ever after:

Drukkið varð teirra brúðleyp,
kátt var teirra lív,
föru so bæði í eina song,
Ásmundur og hans vív. (CCF 98A: st. 184)

5. *Sniolvs kvæði*

According to de Boor (1920: 214), this text represents the oldest and possibly the original Faroese version of Ásmund's story. Certainly this ballad and, in particular, one of the twelve versions preserved in the CCF, B (447 stanzas divided in seven *tættir*) – which I will analyze in this study – constitutes the longest and most complete witness of the reception of the Ásmund matter in the Faroe Islands.

The first part of version B – *Rana táttur* – tells the story of Hildibrand's *Brautwerbung*. Sitting in armour on his golden chair, Hildibrand asks his men if any of them knows a maiden deserving to become his wife:

Hildibrand setst í gyltan stól,
klæddur í brynju blá:
»Hvar vita tit so væna jomfrú,
mær er sámi at fá?« (CCF 91B: st. 4)

One of his men – his messenger – starts speaking of the daughter of Ólav of Uppland, the beautiful Silkieik, whose face shines like the brightest spring sun:

»[...] Hun ber ikki bleika brá
undir sínum gula hári,
heldur enn tann fagraða summarsól,
ið fagurt skín um várið.« (CCF 91B: st. 8)

After hearing these words, Hildibrand leaves immediately for Uppland. In the meantime Rani is heading to Ólav's to conquer Silkieik. Once he is there, Rani asks the girl to follow him to Ísansland. Silkieik replies that she is already betrothed to another man, whose name she refuses to tell. Instead of naming him, she calls for her brother, Sniolvur, who challenges Rani to a duel.

Before the fight takes place, another knight in blue armour is seen riding towards the castle: Hildibrand. He enters the hall, goes to Silkieik and asks her to follow him to Selgjaland. Her answer is positive: this is the knight she is betrothed to and whom she loves. In the duel which follows Hildibrand defeats and kills Rani. Not knowing which of the two opponents

has died, Silkieik sends her brother Sniolvur to the battlefield to check it out. Hildibrand doesn't know he is his future brother-in-law and attacks him. Sniolvur is quick enough to find a shelter, so that Hildibrand gives up the fight and reaches Silkieik. They get officially engaged and move to Brandavík.

At Christmas Hildibrand and Silkieik invite some nuns who predict that their son – a brave warrior who will hardly find his equal – will fall under his father's sword. Hearing this prophecy, both Hildibrand and his wife are deeply shaken: while Silkieik wants Hildibrand to destroy his sword, he prefers to sink it in the sea, so that nobody can find it:

Hildibrand sigldi for Heljar norður,
tað var mest av sút,
hann tók sín gylta, bitra brand
og varpar í havið út. (CCF 91B: st. 86)

In *Sniolvs táttur* Sniolvur's *Brautwerbung* is narrated. Wishing to find a girl deserving to marry him, Sniolvur asks his mother for advice. When she suggests he should take a maiden from Uppland, he answers that none of them can sleep in his arms and that he wants to conquer the daughter of the duke of Brunsvík. He has a new ship built and sails towards the duke's land. Seeing him coming, the duke sends Sigurd to the beach to kill him. As soon as he sets foot on land, Sniolvur expresses his wish to conquer the duke's daughter, Adalløs. The girl enters the hall and falls immediately in love with Sniolvur. She, therefore, accepts to follow him to Uppland to marry him. After their wedding has been sumptuously celebrated, one night Adalløs wakes up from a strange dream: her husband was fighting against a knight who eventually cut off his head. His name was Ásmund.

The third part of the ballad, *Golmars táttur*, focuses on Ásmund's search for Hildibrand's sword sunk in the sea. Having been told of the existence of this extraordinary weapon, Ásmund leaves for Gantarvík. There he meets duke Golmar who asks him what the reason for his journey is. Ásmund replies that he wants to seduce the beautiful Ingibjörg, Golmar tries to resist, but is taken away by force, while Ásmund obtains the object of his desire. The day after he forces Golmar to accompany him and to show him the very spot where Hildibrand sank his weapon. He dives repeatedly and finally finds it. With his new sword in hand Ásmund kills Golmar and returns home together with Ingibjörg.

Hildibrands táttur echoes the description of the fight between Ásmund and Hildibrand at the end of the *Ásmundar saga kappabana*. The duel's outcome is, however, different, since the battle doesn't end with Hildibrand's death, but with Ásmund returning home naked after Hildibrand has cut in two pieces his armour:

Hildibrand gav so stórt eitt hogg
av so miklum móði,
klývur brynju av Ásmundi,
hann nakin eftir stóð.

[...] Ásmundur snúðist haðan burt
bæði við sút og sorg,
gláður snúðist Hildibrandur
aftur í sína borg. (CCF 91B: st. 267, 270)

In *Virgars táttur*, Ásmund fights against Virgar Valintsson. After forging a new silver armour, Ásmund sends a messenger to Virgar to challenge him to a duel. Before answering, Virgar listens to the girls living in his castle, who foresee his defeat on that very day. Sure that no one can – fairly – hurt him while on Skemming, Virgar leaves the hall and reaches the battle-

field. He is definitely stronger, but Ásmund knows magic and, in this way, is able to hit his opponent between the ribs and the shoulders. It will take a while before he's healed and can return to his golden castle, where he probably still is.

The same narrative scheme of the challenge (German *Herausforderungsschema*) is present in the sixth part of the ballad, *Ásmundar táttur*, where Ásmund encounters Sniolvur. This time the challenge to the strong warrior is determined by Ásmund's wish to seduce his wife, Adalløs. Sniolvur is killed in the duel and Ásmund rides with his victim's head to the latter's castle. Seeing him riding towards her, Adalløs understands immediately that this knight is not her beloved husband. When Ásmund tells her he wants to seduce her, she repulses him, saying she won't have any other man after Sniolvur and adds that Ásmund could defeat him only by employing magic. He, then, shows her Sniolvur's head, her belt goes into pieces and her heart is broken.

Gríms táttur begins with Ásmund out at sea asking if any warrior is still alive. From that moment on his name is changed into *kappabani*.² Hearing of the existence of Grímur, a warrior against whom nobody dares fight, he sends him a messenger to invite him to fight. The news that Ásmund has already killed Sniolvur scares Grímur, who doesn't want to encounter a warrior using witchcraft. He, therefore, offers him the armour of fifty warriors, but refuses to duel with him. Ásmund goes, then, to Oddur the Strong and tells him that one particular warrior in the wood doesn't want to encounter him. Both Oddur himself and his relative Ívint offer to go and fight against Grímur, who eventually defeats and kills them. Since Grímur still refuses to duel with him, Ásmund goes to Hildibrand's, where Silkieik is telling her husband what she has dreamt: he was fighting with his own son, unseated him and cut off his head. Hildibrand reassures her saying that his sword is lying in the deep of the sea. When Ásmund enters his house and explains to him that he cannot defeat a dangerous warrior because he refuses to encounter him personally, Hildibrand offers to fight against him if he can borrow Ásmund's sword. Grímur and Hildibrand meet on the battlefield and duel until the unsuspecting father cuts his son in two pieces. Wishing to know who this valiant opponent is, Hildibrand asks for his name and discovers that he is his own son. He throws away the sword cursing the stomach and bones that have picked it up from the sea. The ballad ends with this remark:

Satt er tað, ið talað er,
so er greint ífrá,
eingin ger at fortvinast,
hvat nornur leggja á. (CCF 91B: st. 447)

No-one can change what the Norns have devised.

Icelandic and Faroese Ásmund

As appears from the account given above, the Faroese ballads on Ásmund preserve a version of Ásmund's story diverging in many respects from the Icelandic *Ásmundar saga kappabana*. These divergences concern both the plot and the characterization of the protagonist, Ásmund.

In the first chapter of the Icelandic saga the genealogy of the two protagonists, Hildebrand and Ásmund, is presented together with the story of the two swords forged by king Buðli's guests Óliús and Alíus, one of which will be fatal to Hildebrand in the dramatic climax of the

² This nickname only occurs in another Faroese ballad, *Dvørgamoyggjin fagra* or *Dvørgamoy II* (CCF nr. 7), where stanza 53 of version B and C says: "Tað er Sjurður Sigmundarson, / hann situr á baki Grana: / »Ásmundur ber eitt heiðursnavn, / teir kalla hann kappabana.«" Elsewhere, Ásmund is usually referred to as *kellingarson*.

narrative. None of the Faroese ballads reports this antecedent: in *Sniolv's kvæði* the first time we meet the sword it is already in Hildibrand's possession and we only discover it has some peculiarity when the three nuns – who were probably originally the three Norns – foresee it will cause Grímur's death.

This is, in fact, another striking difference between the saga and *Sniolv's kvæði*: in the Faroese ballad the dramatic climax is not represented by a fratricide, but by a paternal filicide, with an unaware Hildibrand killing his own son, Grímur. The family drama of a father fighting against his offspring and finally killing him is reminiscent of the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* and is hinted at in both the stanzas inserted at the end of the saga and known as *Hildibrand's Death Song*:

Stendr mér at höfði hlíf in brotna,
eru þar taldir tigur ins átta
manna þeirra, er ek at morði varð.
Liggr þar inn svási sonr at höfði,
eptirerfingi, er ek eiga gat,
óviljandi aldrs synjaðak (Detter 1981: 99).

and in the passage of the saga, where Hildebrand's fury is described: “En í vanstilli þessu er á hönnum var – þa sá hann son sinn ok drap hann þegar” (Detter 1891: 98). According to Halvorsen (1951: 15), the author of the written version of the saga derived this piece of information from the death song, without properly understanding which episode was alluded to.

The tragic epilogue of the saga is announced in the first chapter by Olíus, the sword maker, who curses king Buðli saying this will cause the death of his grandson: “Hann segir: járngott er sverð, enda munu nú nöckur forföll áliggja til hamingjubrotz, þvíat þat mun verða at bana inum göfgustum bræðrum, dóttursonum þínum” (Detter 1891: 82). In the Faroese ballad Grímur's death is first prophesied by the three nuns invited by Hildibrand at Christmas and then recalled by Silkieik's premonitory dream.³

Another fundamental difference between the two texts is represented by the connotation of the protagonist. In fact, if in the *Ásmundar saga* all actions and military enterprises carried out by Ásmund find their explanation both in the political logic of territorial expansion and in the wish to protect and avenge his own or his allies' sovereignty, in *Sniolv's kvæði* Ásmund is depicted as a robber and rapist who chooses his victims arbitrarily, following a sort of animal instinct. Even his repeated successes on the battlefield cannot be fully ascribed to his skill and valour, but rather to the use of sorcery he had probably learnt from his mother, a notorious witch, as it is frequently hinted at:

»Sniolvur var mín móðurbróðir,
hans líki kann ekki finnast,
tað var alt við illgerningar,
hann mundi sigur vinna.

Hann hefur átt sær móður ta,
ein er verst í land,
hon hefur marga raska kempur

³ In version A of *Sniolv's kvæði* only the premonitory dream is present and Hildibrand himself has it: “Hildibrand vaknar á miðjari nátt, / hann sigur sín dreyms so brátt: / »Undarligt hefur fyri meg borist / alla hesa nátt.« // Hildibrand so til orða tók, / í læt sær víkja: / »Mær tókti, sum mitt góða sverð / var komið frá havsins dýpi. // Mær tókti, eg reið á grønum vølli / við so lítið trá, / har kom Grímur, sonur mín, / eg hogg hans høvur frá.« (CCF 91A: st. 158–160).

lagt for eiturgrand. [...]« (CCF 91B: st. 354–355)

Ásmund's familiarity with magic is also attested in other Faroese ballads, such as *Gríms ríma* B, where he is depicted while carving some runes or *Heljars kvæði*, where he pronounces some magic words to put to sleep the snake protecting the threshold of Heljar's palace. Arbitrariness of military action and brutal attitude towards women are distinctive features of Ásmund in all Faroese ballads, except *Torbjörn Bekil*. Here he has the positive connotation of the hero fighting to protect Halga who has been attacked by the terrible troll. The scene of Halga going to Ásmund's and asking him to avenge her father's death parallels – in the saga – the sister of the dukes of Saxony complaining about Hildibrand's tyranny, so that Ásmund moves against him to protect her and her country.

Similarly, the stanzas narrating how Torbjörn Bekil sends his warriors to fight against Ásmund who reproaches him with instigating other warriors to fight, instead of encountering him personally echo this passage of the saga: “Þá mælti Ásmundr: fyrir hví hleypir Hildibrandr út mönnum sínum, en sitr heima sjálf ok etr á mik smámenni?” (Detter 1891: 97).

However, only part of the narrative material employed in the Faroese Ásmund ballads finds a correspondence within the *Ásmundar saga kappabana*. Apart from the above-mentioned parallels between the saga and *Torbjörn Bekil*, *Gríms ríma*, *Heljars kvæði*, *Frúgvín Olrina* and *Torbjörn Bekil* itself narrate a series of adventures involving Ásmund – as well as other famous warriors, such as Sigurd or Virgar Valintsson – and having no connection with the events portrayed in the Icelandic saga. The same can be said for the *Dvørgamoy* ballads or for *Tíðriks kongs ríma*. Even in *Sniolvs kvæði* only three *tættir* (*Rana táttur*, *Golmars táttur* and *Gríms táttur*) correspond to the saga, while all other parts are but the obsessive and formulaic repetition of the same narrative scheme resulting from the combination of the *Brautwerbungs-* and the *Herausforderungsschema*: wishing to seduce the one or the other beautiful girl, Ásmund challenges their guardians who are usually stronger than he is, but are humiliated when not put to the sword. Only once, against Hildibrand, is he defeated and left naked with his armour cut into pieces, but this humiliation simply represents one of the motivating forces of Ásmund's later military enterprises. On the whole, *Sniolvs kvæði* moves from the antecedent constituted by Hildibrand's successful quest for Silkieik and the prophecy about their son's destiny and, in a sort of spiral movement determined by the incremental repetition of the duel sequences, culminates in the filicide committed by Hildibrand. The continuous repetition of both narrative sequences (not only attempted seduction, challenge and fights, but also premonitory dreams) and poetic formulae helps giving unity and cohesion to the ballad, which despite various ellipses and inconsistencies, appears quite well-structured in comparison to other Faroese *kvæði*.

Concluding remarks

In this study I have analyzed the reception of the Ásmund story in the Faroe Islands in order to get the most accurate possible image of the development of both the characters and the plot of the Icelandic *Ásmundar saga kappabana* on its way east.

On the basis of the results of this analysis, it is possible to agree with de Boor (1920: 214 and following) and exclude that *Sniolvs kvæði* derives from the saga in the form we know it. On the other hand, the remark on the unavoidability of the fate devised by the Norns in the last stanza of the ballad and its correspondence with some of the Latin lines inserted by Saxo in his account of Hildigerus' death⁴ don't seem to be sufficient for assuming *Sniolvs kvæði* derives directly from Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, since allusions to the Norns are not infrequent

⁴ “Sed quaecunque ligat Parcarum praescius ordo, / Quaecunque arcanum superae rationis adumbrat, / Seu quae fatorum serie praevisa tenentur, / Nulla caducarum rerum conversion tollet.” (Ollrik – Ræder 1931: 204).

in Faroese oral poetry (Halvorsen 1951: 17). In addition to this, the confusion between *nornir* “Norns” and *nunnur* “nuns”, which has evidently taken place in *Rana tǫttur*, indicates, in my opinion, that the final reference to the Norns is perceived as purely formulaic and is in no way put into relation with the events previously narrated.

As suggested by Halvorsen (1951: 50), *Sniolvs kvæði* could be derived from another form of Ásmund’s narrative material. In this version the character of Ásmund has a strongly negative connotation: he’s a robber and a rapist, who doesn’t fight fairly, but achieves his victories with the help of witchcraft. The transformation of his mother into a witch or female troll (*kel-ling*) must have taken place once Faroese oral tradition had lost the consciousness of Hildibrand and Ásmund being half-brothers. After this detail had been lost, there was no more motivation for the dramatic climax, since the death of either opponent wouldn’t have constituted a family tragedy. At this point, *Sniolvs kvæði* was probably newly contaminated with the oldest epic nucleus on Hildibrand and family tragedy was reintroduced in the tradition in the form of paternal filicide.

Over the centuries in which the ballad survived in a purely oral dimension, this narrative core was expanded through the insertion of new adventures, roughly corresponding to the various *tættir* composing the ballad. These were concluded in themselves and could probably be sung and danced to separately. Such a complex narrative was very likely to entertain Faroese people for several *kvöldsetur* (Wylie 1987: 43 and following) in a row, not too dissimilarly from today’s TV-dramas and soap-operas. These expansions – some of which, as *Hildardalstrið*, appear to be quite late – are often originated by Ásmund’s sexual desire and contribute to increase, especially in a serialized performance, the tension towards the dramatic epilogue of the story. Some of these additions are completely new compositions, while some are the result of the incorporation of characters and events from originally separate traditions into this particularly successful cycle (Conroy 1978: 38 and following).

Ásmund’s attraction for women plays a fundamental role in the other Faroese ballads where he appears and which, apart from the case of *Torbjørn Bekil*, don’t show any correspondence with the Icelandic saga. In the majority of these texts, Ásmund is simply a warrior (usually on the quest for a beautiful girl), who often shares his adventures with other famous heroes, such as Sigurd, Virgar Valintsson or Dietrich of Bern.

Since both the Icelandic saga and the Faroese ballads had been transmitted orally for centuries before being fixed in the form which has come down to us, it is impossible to reconstruct the exact course followed by the Ásmund story on its way east, towards the Faroes. However, I have tried to demonstrate, that once it had reached the Islands, the Ásmund story, far from having a linear development, was repeatedly altered as a result of the loss of original details, of the insertion of new narrative material or of the contamination with other heroic traditions.

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The ‘Other’ and the Noble Heathen: Ambiguous Representations of Grettir and Finnbogi

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In Chapter 38 of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, there is a significant episode in which Grettir begrudgingly agrees to swim an icy channel and retrieve fire for his freezing shipmates.¹

Grettir burst into the house, unaware who was inside. By the time he reached land his cowl was frozen stiff, and he looked frighteningly huge, like a troll. The people inside were startled and took him to be an evil creature. They struck at him with everything they could lay their hands on. A great scuffle ensued, and Grettir warded off the blows with his arms. Some of the men struck him with blazing logs and the fire spread all over the house. Then he managed to leave with the fire and returned to his companions. They lavished praise on his exploit and his bravery, and said no man was a match for him. The night passed, and the crew felt they had been saved when they had the fire. The weather was fine the next morning, and the merchants woke up early and made ready to sail away, saying that they would go and find the people who had made the fire, to find out who they were. They unmoored the ship and sailed across the channel, but instead of finding the hut they saw a great pile of ashes with human bones inside, and felt certain that it must have burned down along with everyone inside it. They asked Grettir whether he had caused this mishap, and called it a pernicious crime. Grettir said what he had suspected had come true, that they would reward him badly for fetching the fire, and said it was a bad thing to help dishonourable men. Grettir suffered greatly for the incident, because wherever the merchants went they said that he had burnt those men in their house. [...] [Grettir] became so despised that no one wanted to have anything to do with him. (CS II:111)

Scholars approach this fire-fetching episode from several different angles. Much criticism focuses on Grettir’s swimming prowess, here and elsewhere in *Grettis saga*, as a parallel to Beowulf’s swimming contest with Breca (Puhvel 1971:277–8; Jorgensen 1978:55–6; Wentersdorf 1975:146–7). Other studies view Grettir’s encounters with supernatural beings, particularly Glámr, as the cause of his persistent ill fortune and eventual downfall (Cook 1989:239; Poole 2004:6). From this perspective, Glámr’s curse – “henceforth outlawry and killings will fall to your lot, and most of your deeds will bring you misfortune and improvidence” (CS II:107) – can be held accountable for Grettir’s killing of Þórir and his family as described above. Finally, and most importantly for this discussion, there is the scholarly opinion that the burning-in is an ‘accident’ resulting from Grettir’s ill fortune. Scholars defend Grettir’s actions by saying he performs a good deed in fetching fire for his companions; he is generally seen as behaving ‘heroically’ in this passage (Hume 1974:476; Pencak 1995:8; Bragg 2004:246–7; Poole 2004:15; Hawes 2008:31, 36) or it is assumed that his failure to undergo the ordeal condemns him to outlawry (Hamer 2008).

However, if Grettir is to be considered a hero then he is a hero out of his time, as Kathryn Hume argues: “Grettir’s stormy relations with society gain immeasurably in importance when viewed not just as the result of personal quarrelsomeness, but as reflecting a clash between two sets of values [...] both of which have merit but which cannot really coexist” (Hume 1974: 485–6). In other words, Grettir’s heroic aspirations are modelled on pagan virtues that have no place in post-Conversion Iceland. More to the point, although I largely agree with Hume’s stance, in this paper I would like to argue that Grettir is remembered in a negative

¹ Unless noted otherwise, all English translations of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* are Bernard Scudder’s from the *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* series; hereafter cited (CS II:pp.). All English translations of *Finnboga saga ramma* are John Kennedy’s from the same series; hereafter cited (CS III:pp.).

light in this saga, not only because he demonstrates outdated heroic qualities – such as a propensity for fighting to resolve disputes instead of using cunning or for battling with vikings (Hume 1974; Hume 1980:11; Bennett 2008) – but because, even though he is one of the only central characters in the *Íslendingasögur* to live his entire life in the Christian period, Grettir is guilty of committing a burning-in. Grettir's intentions in fetching the fire are irrelevant here; what is important is the implication that Grettir has performed a deed that, in Christian terms, is no longer acceptable. Although many scholars describe this burning-in as an 'accident', and indeed the passage can be interpreted in this way, we nevertheless get the impression that Grettir is guilty of committing the 'pernicious crime' his companions accuse him of because of his ambiguous characterisation.

As I have argued elsewhere, the 'burning-in' motif, which depicts the incendiary killing of victims trapped within their own homes, frequently appears in both pre- and post-conversion periods in the *Sagas of Icelanders* and the *Sturlunga saga* compilation (Bennett 2007). The treatment of this motif seems to reflect how the saga compilers wanted to perceive their ancestors, rather than how historical events might actually have unfolded. For instance, the pattern of burnings seems to indicate that remote 'pagan' characters were able to commit burnings of epic proportions without incurring any serious repercussions in the saga narratives. By contrast, late pagans, whose stories appear in the period immediately preceding the year 1000, were frequently portrayed as innately anticipating Iceland's acceptance of Christianity (Lönnroth 1969; Strömbäck 1975:23; North 1991; Jochens 1999a:621; Tulinius 2000:253), even though such behaviour and such supernatural awareness of Iceland's conversion is historically illogical. We find, therefore, that many planned burnings are thwarted in sagas depicting late tenth century events, which suggests the society's growing reluctance to accept burnings even though major characters still propose them. Moreover, once the storylines move beyond the year 1000, only two successful burnings occur in the *Sagas of Icelanders*: Grettir's 'accident' and the burning of Njál. Several important figures in the *Sturlunga saga* compilation propose burning-in as the solution to ongoing feuds, but when these burnings are not thwarted, the victims are few and the perpetrators are considered rather despicable characters. In this way, although such perceptions may be historically inaccurate, the impression we get is that through the recurrent use of the burning-in motif, saga writers were able to incorporate their pagan ancestors into their Christian world without condemning them wholly for behaviour that is seen in Christian terms as completely unacceptable – by the same token, they were able to paint Christian burners as solitary, pagan, bestial 'Others' (cf. Aalto 2006), as is the case with Grettir.

Comparing Grettir's burning-in episode to an almost identical sequence of events in *Finnboga saga ramma* – which was written in the early fourteenth century, well before *Grettis saga*'s composition (*ÍB* II 1993:42; Hawes 2008:25; cf. Hamer 2008:21) – sheds much light on this argument. Like Grettir, Finnbogi is caught out at sea in inclement early winter weather. His ship is dashed to pieces on the rocks – but because Finnbogi is depicted as a fortunate character in his saga, he survives the crash and makes his way to shore. Parallels between Finnbogi and Grettir's situations are impossible to miss at this point in the narrative:

It was then dark night and neither frost nor wind was in short supply. All his clothes froze on his body, and the snow storm was intense. [...] When he had been walking for a while he noticed the smell of a fire, and a little after came to a large and impressive farm [...] where he heard many people inside. They were sitting by fires. (*CS* III:231)

Both characters set out by themselves to seek fire and, as William Ian Miller argues, "Solitariness was always ground for suspicion. Being alone gave one the option of holding one's own counsel and thus the option to be a thief or a murderer, a secret killer [...]" Only in the

rarest of circumstances in the sagas does a man of good character and intention go somewhere alone” (1990:102). In this episode, Finnbogi should be as open to suspicion of solitariness as Grettir is in his saga, yet the events in *Finnboga saga* unfold in a very different way.

In *Finnboga saga* we are presented with one of the rare circumstances “where a man of good character and intention” goes somewhere alone. The promise of a warm fire lures Finnbogi to a farmhouse filled with people, much as it does Grettir. However, considering it is night time and he, like Grettir, is an enormous man – so “apprehensions of a veritable frost giant would be fully understandable” as Poole observes (2004:7) – Finnbogi’s behaviour is beyond reproach. He openly approaches the farmhouse, and knocks at the door three times:

He knocked at the door, and a man spoke, asking one of the servants to answer the door. They replied that they did not care though the hammering went on all night. Finnbogi knocked a second time, more loudly. The man asked them to open the door. They replied that they would not do so, even if a troll beat on it every night. Finnbogi struck a third time, so hard that everyone was startled. (CS III:231)

The farmer disparages his servants’ objections and answers the door himself, at which point Finnbogi introduces himself as the son of Asbjörn and as an Icelander (CS III:231). Despite the possibility that a ‘troll’ might be at their door, the significance of which will be discussed further below, the farm’s inhabitants are only startled by Finnbogi because of the strength and volume of his knocking. All of the elements for disaster are present in this episode: it is night; Finnbogi is alone and thus open to all of the negative connotations solitariness carries; there is a house full of people a roaring fire ready to scorch them all. Yet, despite the potential for a burning-in to occur in *Finnboga saga*, nothing of the sort happens. Instead, Finnbogi acts reasonably and respectfully, just as one would expect a Christian character to behave – regardless of the fact that Finnbogi has yet to be converted to Christianity. As a result, he is invited in from the cold and “Everyone’s attitude towards him was very cheerful” (CS III:232).

By comparison, when Grettir approaches a farmhouse in almost identical circumstances, we get the impression that he is behaving as a thief or a secret killer. He is enlisted to seize fire for his companions, but ends up committing a burning-in; even worse, when he is directly asked about the burning, Grettir refuses to take responsibility for his actions and publish his crime. In his analysis of the laws referring to theft in *Grágás*, Theodore M. Andersson points out the difference between a *ránsmaðr* ‘robber’ and a *þjófr* ‘thief’ (1984:497). Robbery involves the open seizure of property, and results in full outlawry if the perpetrator is prosecuted; whereas a thief, who is also condemned to full outlawry if discovered, disgracefully commits his crime in secret. Similarly, the penalty for murder, and “it is murder if a man hides [a killing] or conceals the corpse or does not admit it” (*Gr* I 1980:146), is outlawry. Although the punishment for all of these offences is the same, there is a significant social and legal stigma attached to the act of thievery and secret killing, as Andersson notes: “If a man took something by force and used it openly, his conduct was less reprehensible in the eyes of the law than if he took it in secret and continued to hide it” (1984:497). In this episode, Grettir may be seen as seizing Þórir’s fire, since his companions encourage him to do so, but he steals Þórir’s life when he does not confess about the burning-in: in other words, he commits murder. In addition, Grettir is aligned thematically with his pagan great-grandfather, Önundr tréfiotr, who commits a mass burning-in in the opening section of *Grettis saga* (CS II:56; Hume 1974:479; Hawes 2008:22–3). Thus, Grettir’s behaviour – in his approach to the farmhouse, in his being involved in a mass burning, and in his failure to publish his crime – puts him on the same semantic level as thieves, murderers and pagan mass-burners, all of which highlights his non-Christian tendencies.

Unlike Finnbogi, who introduces himself and makes his lineage clearly known, Grettir is cast as an ‘Other’ in this fire-fetching episode. The only declaration we get of Grettir’s identity in this sequence is that he is a troll, and he certainly behaves like one. The word ‘troll’ is also used when Finnbogi knocks at the farmhouse door: the servants say that they will not answer it “even if a troll beat on it every night.” But since Finnbogi acts like a reputable man, most notably by speaking instead of barging in unannounced, it soon becomes obvious that we are not intended to equate him with trollishness. A similar example, as Richard North argues, occurs when Egill is about to give himself up to Eiríkr Blóðox in *Egils saga*.

A servant goes in and announces him:

‘maðr er hér kominn úti fyrir durum,’ segir hann, ‘mikill sem troll.’

‘There’s a man come here standing at the door outside,’ he says, ‘as big as a troll.’ (*ÍF* II 178, ch.59) With proverbial humour Egill is made a living example of the expression *troll fyrir durum*, a ‘liability’, and yet in the weakening of his stature from *þurs* [ogre] to troll, the author also seems to made [sic] him more human than his father. (1991:148)

Like Egill, Finnbogi goes through the right channels: he approaches the door and is humanised as a result, despite his potentially frightening appearance. When Barðr, the owner of the farm, realises who Finnbogi’s father is he says, “I expect to find the wolf where I see his ears” (*CS* III:232); yet while the words ‘troll’ and ‘wolf’ are used around Finnbogi, there is no indication that these terms *refer to him* as a character. There is potential for Finnbogi to be interpreted as a ‘troll’ or ‘Other’ in this episode, but his behaviour prevents us from seeing him as such.

By contrast, Þórir and his family believe Grettir is a *troll fyrir durum* (literally, ‘a troll,’ as well as the proverbial ‘liability’), which explains why they react so violently against his intrusion. There seems to have been a tradition about Grettir’s trollishness that predates *Grettis saga*. For instance, in the opening passage of *Fóstbræðra saga*, written in the late thirteenth century (*ÍB* II 1993:42), we learn:

He was an outlaw at the time, and wherever he went he managed to have people give him what he wanted. However, what Grettir called gifts would not have been regarded as such, or so readily given away, had people not felt that they had a troll on their doorstep. It was this that eventually led to the farmers gathering their forces, capturing Grettir, condemning him to death, and building a gallows on which they intended to hang him. (*CS* II:329–30)

Elsewhere in his own saga, Grettir is referred to, or treated as, as a troll (Hawes 2008:36). Moreover, he is consistently associated with the marginal elements of the Icelandic world in which trolls belong. First and foremost, he becomes a permanent outlaw – one of the *útilegmenn* (‘out-lying men’) – after he commits the burning-in. Kirsten Hastrup explains, “[t]his category differed from the category of *skógarmenn* (outlaws, ‘forest-men’), in that it was [...] labelled ‘mythological’ [...] [it] was used as a designation of any who left ordinary human company [...] Later, in Iceland as well as Norway, the notion attained a more ‘wicked’ meaning, including outlaws and non-humans” (1985:142). In addition, Grettir adopts the name ‘Gestr’ for some of his (mis)adventures, which means ‘stranger’ as much as it can mean ‘guest’ (Heinrichs 1994:50–1) and his most powerful confrontations are against supernatural or mythological creatures. Hastrup adds, “it required an outlaw to defeat supernatural beings; only an outlaw could meet them on equal terms. To fight on common ground, the fighters had to inhabit the same space. Outlaws and supernatural beings were co-inhabitants of ‘the wild’, and in this sense they were allies against society” (1985:153). Thus, although Grettir earns the reputation as a great ‘ghost-buster’ in his saga, the impressive battles he fights with trolls, giants, and the undead simultaneously diminish his honour and underscore his exclusion from

Christian society. The impression we get is that Grettir has more success fighting these creatures than fighting other men because, as a Christian who behaves like a pagan (and who, because of Glámr's curse, "has the ability to see what no human wants to see: the supernatural creatures that haunt the dark" (Hawes 2008:20)), Grettir does not inhabit the same space as other people. He is not worthy to fight with Christian men, so he must find opponents who are on an equal par with him.

Furthermore, as Sverrir Jakobsson points out, "If being a stranger did not automatically make one a marginal person, some habits of strangers might have worked towards their marginalization. [...] It was, for instance, common to describe marginal figures in terms of bestiality" (2007:152). It is significant that Grettir seems to be metaphorically characterised as *hamrammr* – a person who could change shape, usually into an animal, while retaining his human identity (Hastrup 1985:153) – which, I would argue, is suggested by his trollish characteristics in the fire-fetching episode. Perhaps more striking, though, is the sequence of events in the bear-slaying episode in which Grettir is semantically linked to the realm of *berserkir* and bears (Heinrichs 1994:55; Miller 1990:208; cf. Hawes 2008:29–30). Simply put, *berserkr* means 'bear-shirt' (Hastrup 1985:153). Jens Peter Schjødt notes, "the traditional way of looking at berserkir [was] as warriors who in some way were associated with bears [...] being a warrior of this special kind demanded that they were strong and savage like bears" (2007:145). Once again, a comparison between Finnbogi and Grettir's association with bears is illuminating. I would like to argue that Grettir's behaviour when he confronts a bear not only foreshadows his reprehensible actions in the fire-fetching episode, but it situates him as an 'Other' by implying that he is a bear himself. By contrast, Finnbogi's upstanding treatment of the bear he fights (in almost identical circumstances, as is the case with the fire-fetching episode) firmly places him in the world of honourable Christian men.

In both sagas, a vicious bear awakes from his winter hibernation and proceeds to slaughter livestock and wreak havoc on the farms in the district (*CS* II:83–5; *CS* III:232–4). Also in both sagas, prominent farmers enlist Grettir and Finnbogi to help hunt down the bear. In *Grettis saga*, a boastful character named Björn (another 'bear') attempts, and fails, to kill the beast; while in *Finnboga saga*, Bárðr, the farmer who Finnbogi opted not to burn-in in the previous chapter, demonstrates the qualities of a 'noble heathen': he chooses Christian brains over pagan brawn by calling together an assembly, at which he has the bear legally outlawed, which gives people an officially authorised reason to pursue it. Teams of warriors intend to fight the bear in both sagas, yet Grettir and Finnbogi each end up confronting the animal at night, by themselves. While his companions are asleep, Finnbogi takes his weapons and sets out to find the bear's den; when he finds it, he once more demonstrates that he is a rational, honourable, and even-tempered man. He tries to reason with the bear before doing anything rash:

'Stand up bear,' said Finnbogi, 'and attack me. That would be more worthwhile than lying on this sheep's carcass.'

The bear sat up, looked at him, and flopped down.

Finnbogi said, 'If you think I'm over-armed against you, I'll remedy that.'

He took off his helmet, laid down his shield, and said, 'Stand up now, if you dare.'

The bear stood up, shook his head and lay down again.

'I understand,' said Finnbogi, 'you want us to be on equal terms.'

He threw away his sword and said, 'It will be as you wish. Stand up now if you have the sort of heart one would expect, rather than that of the most cowardly of all beasts.' [...] They fought for a long time [...] but it ended up with Finnbogi forcing the bear onto his back and breaking asunder his spine. (*CS* III:231)

Finnbogi stresses the importance of being ‘on equal terms’ with his foe, but there is no indication that he ‘becomes a bear’ to achieve this equality. If anything, the bear in *Finnboga saga* is metaphorically lifted up to Finnbogi’s level and is humanised: this exchange outlines how one would expect a person to reason with another person, not the way a beast would challenge another beast. Thus, as is the case in the fire-fetching episode, Finnbogi is positioned near the realm of the marginal – he is associated with words like troll and he places himself on ‘equal terms’ with a bear – but he consistently acts like a noble (almost-Christian) human.

Grettir, on the other hand, is symbolically linked to the *berserkir* when he sets out wearing a shaggy fur cloak, which his companions throw into the bear’s den (cf. Hume 1974:481). When they depart, Grettir turns back alone, affording himself the opportunity to take his own bad counsel, much as he does in the fire-fetching scene. The bear lashes out when he sees Grettir; Grettir instantly unsheathes his sword and chops off the creature’s paw. There is no discussion here, only action: Grettir “said later that holding off the bear was his greatest feat of strength” (CS II:84), a comment which emphasises his habit of relying on actions and bestial strength rather than on human reason. Grettir takes every advantage he can, succumbing to the visceral mindset of ‘survival of the fittest,’ and he is not above using his weapon if it means he will win. He returns home wearing his tattered cloak, carrying the bear’s paw as proof of his victory, and boasting about his achievement in verse. In this episode, Grettir metaphorically proves that he is stronger than two bears, Björn and the animal whose life he has taken, which reinforces his symbolic status as an ‘Other’ – as a bear who enjoys fighting with other bears. Conversely, Finnbogi does not even want to take credit for his deed: “He arranged [the bear’s dead body] so that things looked as they were when he had arrived, took his weapons and went back to the farm. He was very stiff and lay down on his bed, pretending he had been asleep” (CS III:233). Given the unmistakable parallels – and significant divergences – between these two bear fights, one cannot help but think that the author of *Grettis saga* was familiar with *Finnboga saga* and that he adapted crucial scenes from it for thematic purposes (cf. Hume 1974). If this is the case, then the author of *Grettis saga* ultimately chooses to differentiate his hero from Finnbogi, in that Grettir’s animal qualities are emphasised rather than his human ones.

Grettir is not the only saga character to be described as ‘monstrous’ for narrative purposes. We need only consult *Egils saga*, with its generations of dark, half-troll, wolfish shape-shifters, for a prime example of such ‘Othering’ (Jochens 1999b:88; North 1991:147–55). Evil trolls, like Kolbjörn and his crew in *Bárðar saga*, also “represent nature and are repeatedly likened to animals” (Jakobsson 1998:66); but benevolent trolls and giants, such as Bárðr Snæfellsáss, are not always ‘Othered’ in this way. It seems reasonable to suggest that saga authors did not have the same expectations of non-human characters as they did of human protagonists (Jakobsson 1998:54). Therefore, Grettir’s ambiguous characterisation, in which he is simultaneously cast as human and ‘Other’, is significant.

While Janice Hawes states, “It is Grettir’s contradictory personality above all else that places him in liminal space and threatens to place him completely outside the human sphere” (2008:32), I would argue that this personality is manifested in Grettir’s actions – and these actions determine how readers see him. Thus, in situations where we might expect to see bad behaviour, such as when he is out alone at night bearing a striking resemblance to a troll, Grettir behaves like the beast he resembles. The same circumstances are not problematic for Finnbogi, however, because he does not behave badly. There is no overt indication that Finnbogi chooses not to commit a burning-in at the farmhouse even though all of the ingredients are there for him to do so; but his characterisation as a ‘noble heathen’ – especially when it is seen in light of the pattern of thwarted burnings in the pre-year 1000 period in the other *Sagas of Icelanders* – means that he simply will not do it. For most of his saga, Finnbogi does not consciously follow Christian tenets (and he could not logically have been expected to) yet

he is portrayed as doing so nonetheless. His noble behaviour seems to be rewarded when, at the end of *Finnboga saga*, Finnbogi is one of the first people to convert to Christianity (CS III:257).

By contrast, Grettir is consistently represented as a bestial or ‘monstrous’ (Hawes 2008) character throughout his saga. These negative characteristics are exaggerated when Grettir confronts the bear; but it is when he causes – and then conceals – a burning-in in the Christian period that we get the ultimate proof of his ‘Otherness’. Unlike Finnbogi, Grettir is a Christian from the start; and though Hamer argues *Grettis saga* is “more than a morality tale” (19–20), we cannot help but speculate that the saga author was remembering Grettir in a negative light for instructive purposes, particularly when we situate Grettir’s crime amongst the many other instances of burning-in in the *Sagas of Icelanders*.

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Mikill vinr Þórs

Eyrbyggja saga och namngivningen i runinskrifter

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Inledning

Denna undersökning är sprungen ur tanken att det förkristna namnskicket på de i de flesta fall kristna runstenarna ger en bild av det hedniska samhället. Uppland ska ju enligt traditionen ha varit svårkristnat och man skulle därför kunna tänka sig att namnskicket skulle kunna besitta en seghet som ger en långsam förändring. Adam av Bremens Uppsalaskildring från 1075 ger intryck av en sådan seghet och även Upplandslagen från c:a 1300 påpekar att ”ingen skall blota åt avgudar, och ingen skall tro på lund eller på stenar” (Adam av Bremen [1075] 1984; Svenska Landskapslagar, Upplandslagen 1979:12). Eftersom inget sådant nämns i Södermanlagen skulle man ju kunna tänka sig att de förkristna inslagen i det uppländska namnskicket skulle vara större än i Södermanland.

Forskningen om förleder i personnamn

Personnamnen på Rökstenen, möjligen 12 stycken, ger oss en inblick i 800-talets namnskick. Stenens inskrift åkallar åskguden Þórr, men intressant nog är inget av de namn som kan uttolkas ur den omdiskuterade texten sammansatt med förleden *Þor-* vilket man kanske skulle ha kunnat vänta sig (Lindquist 1947:9). I Assar Janzéns undersökning av *Landnámabóks* namnskatt kan han konstatera att de tvåledade namnen med *Þór-* som förled är de mest förekommande, hos både mans- och kvinnonamn. Förleden är också typiskt nordisk. De vanligaste mansnamnen är *Þorsteinn* (83 st), *Þórðr* (73 st), *Þórir* (56 st), *Þorkell* (56 st), *Þorbjörn* (53 st), *Þorgeirr* (51 st), *Þórarinn* (45 st), *Þorgrímr* (40 st) och de vanligaste kvinnonamnen är *Þúriðr* (57 st), *Þorgerðr* (43 st), *Þordís* (37 st), *Helga* (36 st), *Þórunn* (34 st), *Þóra* (22 st), *Yngvildr* (19 st), *Hallveig* (19 st), *Valgerðr* (18 st), *Þorbjörg* (17 st), *Vigdís* (16 st), *Þorkatla* (15 st) och *Jórunn* (15 st) (Janzén 1947:27 f). Vi har en tydlig bild av namnskicket i Norge vid tiden för landnamet på Island. Utvecklingen i Norge och på Island går sedan isär vad det gäller flera av namnen: en del försvinner i Norge men lever vidare på Island och tvärt om. Senare, under medeltiden, har namnskicket ändrat skepnad: många äldre namn lever kvar men många med hednisk bakgrund har fått kliva åt sidan för kristna namn. *Þor-*namnen har mist sin ledande ställning i biskop Eysteins jordebok, även känd som *Røde Bog*, från 1200–1300-talets biskopsdöme för Oslo med omnejd. Det vanligaste namnet här är det kristna namnet *Jón* (Janzén 1947a:29).

Det vikingatida namngivandet tycks ha följt vissa principer, gemensamma för hela Norden. Föräldrarnas syfte med sina telningars namn tycks ha varit närmast magiska och med en förhoppning om att kunna påverka sina barns framtida karaktär, efter tanken att ”människan är vad hon kallas” (se Janzén 1947a:31 m litt). Givetvis ville man ge dem en så fördelaktig start i livet som möjligt. I namngivande kan vi också spåra en tydlig genusordning: de karaktärsdrag som ansågs manliga inympades med manliga attribut som strid, rikedom, makt etc medans flickornas framgång tycks ligga i värden som skönhet och hjälpsamhet, men även valkyrjedrag uppmuntras (Janzén 1947a:31). Janzén menar att namngivandet är i högsta grad medvetet, dvs den som döps till *Þorgeirr* blir skyddad av åskguden, *Eiríkr* ”den framför andra mäktige” ska vara mer gynnad än andra. Detta ska dock ha förändrats genom den allt mer populära variationsprincipen som gav ett oändligt antal varianter av tvåledade namn. Denna förändring av namndelarnas genomskinlighet ska ha skett i redan i äldre germansk tid, även om en medvetenhet kring vissa namns betydelse levte kvar långt fram i tiden. Variationsmöjligheterna gav

dock möjlighet till högst orimliga eller betydelselösa kombinationer, *Qrnulfr* (örn – varg), *Hallsteinn* (flat sten – sten). Därför kan man inte lägga alltför stor vikt vid enstaka namns betydelse (Janzén 1947a:32; Janzén 1947b: 238). I *Landnámabók* kan dock Janzén konstatera att många namnled går i arv i namngivningen, både för- och efterleder. Ibland hoppar dock uppkallningsprincipen över en generation. Vanligast är att faderns namn återanvänds men det förekommer även att moderns namnleder vandrar vidare (Janzén 1947a:33). Av Janzéns resonemang kring medvetenhet om namnens betydelse, tycks just de teofora namnen vara sådana som använts i ett aktivt namngivande i *Landnámabók*.

Den alliteration som kännetecknar germansk namngivning under folkvandringstid har inte fått spridning i det nordiska namnskicket (Janzén 1947a:34 f; Janzén 1947b:237). Variationsprincipen och uppkallelsen har antagligen varit rådande i samhällets högsta skick och som sådan blivit normgivande för samhället som helhet (Janzén 1947:36). Det är också möjligt att namn i olika tider varit på modet, t ex genom kunganamn och andra i tiden välkända karaktärer och då orsakat en stor tillfällig frekvens (Janzén 1947:38).

Wessén vill se *Ás*- och *Ós*-förlederna som varianter på *Þor*-förleden och att namngivandet ska ses som åtminstone delvis tänktes ge bäraren beskydd (Janzén 1947:65, 96). I samma anda skulle förleden *Guð*- med variationen *Goð*- tänkts ge bäraren gudarnas beskydd, om än utan att peka ut någon särskild gud. Dock anses *Ragn*- av *regin* ”gudar” vara så pass förbleknad att man inte kan räkna med ett medvetet namngivande under vikingatid (Janzén 1947:87, 96).

Þor-, *Þór*- med olika vokalvarianter är den vanligaste förleden i *Landnámabók*. Anledningen till detta är de breda folklagrens gud i västra Norden under vikingatiden. Inom kungaätter lyser dock *Þor*-namnen med sin frånvaro. Förleden existerar i princip bara i Norden. Inte ens kristendomens genomslag dämpar till en början namnets popularitet (Janzén 1947:94). Förleden finns i en mängd variationer men även former som *Þórðr* (urspr. *Þórrøð*) och *Þórir* (urspr. *Þór-vér*), samt *Þólfr* (urspr. *Þórufr*) räknas till namngruppen. Också smeknamnet *Tosti* av *Þorsteinn* hör dit (Janzén 1947a:94 f). Vi kan också se en genusstruktur som återspeglas i förlederna. Mannens territorium är vapnen och förleder som *Brand*-, *Bryn*-, *Geir*-, *Grím*-, *Hjalm*-, *Ketil*-, *Odd*-, *Skjald*- och möjligen *Jór*-, samt även förleder som *Sig*-, *Víg*- och *Gunn*-pekar i den riktningen. Men ovanstående kan också peka i ett valkyrieideal för små flickor. Som tänkt härskarinna i det egna hemmet kunde också, enligt Janzén, förleder som *Rann*- och *Sal*- tänkas peka i en sådan riktning, med en idealiserad bild av kvinnan som husfru (Janzén 1947a:96 f; Janzén 1947b:256, 260).

I det fornsvenska materialet återfinns benämningar eller namn på gudar och andra mytologiska väsen i en stor del av namnen. Syftet med dessa förleder är, precis som i de västnordiska exemplen, att ge individerna gudarnas uppmärksamhet (Janzén 1947b:256 f).

Syfte

I Eyrbyggja saga ges vi ett möjligt scenario kring förkristna gudar och namngivning. Reflekteras sagans tradition i det bevarade runstensmaterialet? I sagan berättas om den Torstillvände Hrólfr Mostrarskegg som var så hängiven sin gud att han kallades *Þórólfr*. I sagan kan vi läsa:

Hrólfr var hofðingi mikill ok inn mesti rausnarmaðr; hann varðveitti þar í eyunni Þórshof ok var mikill vinr Þórs, ok af því var hann Þórólfr kallaðr. (Eyrbyggja saga 1935:6)

Þórólfrs fixering vid åskguden begränsar sig inte bara till honom själv. Platsen för hans nya hem och även hans son får förleden *Þór*-. Intressant nog döper sedermera sonen sin son till *Þórgrimr*.

Þau Þórólfr ok Unnr áttu son, er Steinn hét. Þenna svein gaf Þórólfr Þór, vin sínum, ok kallaði hann Þórstein, ok var þessi sveinn allbráðgörr. (Eyrbyggja saga 1935: 12 f)

En sumar þat, er Þorsteinn var hálfþritögr, fœddi Þóra sveinbarn, ok var Grímr nefndr, er vatni var ausinn; þann svein gaf Þorsteinn Þór ok kvað vera skyldu hofgoða ok kallar hann Þorgrím. (Eyrbyggja saga 1935: 19)

Þorsteinns hustru heter *Þóra*, men det är Þorsteinn som ger barnet till Þórr och ger honom hans framtida roll. Þorgrímur blir sedan *hofgoði* när han har åldern inne och får även han en son, som dock föds efter hans död. Sonen får också namnet *Þorgrímur* och efter honom briserar användandet av förleden i släkten fullständigt (Eyrbyggja saga 1935:20). Detta namngivande skulle ju kunna vara en litterär knorr och ett sätt att visa hur fanatiska de hedniska förfäderna var, men skulle också kunna återspegla en äldre namntradition. Vi vet också att större kungaätter räknade sig som härstammade från de största gudarna Þórr, Óðinn och Freyr. Men härskarskiktet har alltid haft en normerande inverkan på befolkningen och en inte alltför djärv tanke vore att den aristokratin på samma sätt tecknat sin egen släkts ursprung eller åtminstone tillhörighet till någon av de stora gudarna och att detta skulle kunna haft utslag i namnskicket. För att riktigt pressa tanken kan vi ju också tänka oss att en sådan tillgivenhet också skulle kunna haft sitt inflytande på ortnamnen. Enligt Eyrbyggjasagens två exempel ges namn antingen av föräldrar eller av omgivningen. I sagan är det faderns förtjänade förled som förs vidare till sonen och sonsonen etc. Namnmaterialet i runinskrifterna tillåter endast en undersökning av den första principen, där föräldrarnas namndelar ges vidare till nästa generation. De vikingatida runinskrifterna är ju nästan uteslutande kristna och någon grad av hedniskhet kan inte förväntas av generationerna i 1000-talets runinskrifter. Däremot kan en viss seghet i namnskicket vara möjlig där en tidigare tradition baserad på ett förkristet namngivande kan ha dröjt sig kvar.

Frågeställningar

Finns det en liknande namngivningsmall i uppländska och södermanländska runstenar? Kan vi upptäcka flera teofora förleder eller efterleder inom samma familj, exempelvis en fader vid namn *Frejsten* och en son som heter *Torsten*? Går det att se en regionalitet i Tornamnen genom runinskrifternas spridning i Uppland och Södermanland?

Undersökning

Jag har valt ut de inskrifter som har två eller flera Tornamn, oavsett om de hör till samma generation eller inte. Sedan har jag analyserat varje inskrift och valt ut de inskrifter som kan tänkas ha ett Eyrbyggjamönster. Runristaren Torbjörns skalds namn har inte räknats med i undersökningen och inte heller de andra runristare som har namn som börjar på *Þór-* eller har namn avledda därav. Undersökningsområde är Södermanland och Uppland.

I Uppland finns enligt Jan Owe *Svensk runristningsförteckning* 1474 stycken och i *Samnordisk runtextdatabas* återfinns vi 1392 av dem. I Södermanland har vi totalt 471, respektive 361 av dessa i *Samnordisk runtextdatabas*. Owe sammanställning bygger på de stora runverken i Norden, i vårt fall *Sveriges runinskrifter*. Uppdateringar av *Samnordisk runtextdatabas* genom nya fynd och ny belysande forskning gör ju att listan påverkas i fråga om antal runinskrifter (Owe 2002:3 f).

Isländskt sagamönster i namngivningen?

Det finns i materialet ett litet antal stenar som uppvisar vad man skulle kunna tolka som ett ”Eyrbyggja-mönster” i namngivningen, dvs två generationer med anknytning till namnet

Þórr, antingen som förled eller som avledning. I Uppland är dessa U 418, U481, U 510, U 838, U 878 och U 1034. U 418 är en tydligt kristen inskrift med bönen *Guð hjalpi ond hans*. U 878 är intressant eftersom Þorgerðr reser stenen efter sin man och Þorunn efter sin far. Om vi antar att Þorgerðr är mor till Þorunnr ser vi att förleden *Þór-* då har gått i arv mellan kvinnor. En av Tors stora uppgifter var just att beskydda Asgårds och Midgårds kvinnor, vilket tar sig uttryck i myterna, men även i det vikingatida gravskicket, något som jag diskuterat i ett tidigare sammanhang (Bertell 2003:193 ff). Inskriften är dock den enda i sitt slag av de som jag undersökt. Den liknar dock U 104, där Ingibjora och hennes söner Þorsteinn och Þórir omnämns. Fadern heter *Sveinn*. På U 1034 har två av tre söner fått namn med förleden *Þór-*: *Þorbjörn* och *Þorsteinn*, söner till Þorfastr. På övriga stenar med fler än ett *Þór*-namn är förhållandena inte riktigt lika tydliga. På U 144, U 151, U 176, U 628, U 653 och U Fv1992;157 har två av bröderna *Þór*-namn men inte fadern eller modern (i de fall där hon nämns). På U 180 och U 275 har två av bröderna *Þór*-namn men ingen ur den äldre generationen nämns, stenarna är resta av bröder över broder. Familjerna skulle alltså kunna ha en namntradition kring *Þór*-namnen men detta avslöjas inte i inskrifterna.

Tor och Frej

Två inskrifter är särskilt intressanta ur ett annat förkristet perspektiv: U 275 och Sö 232. På U 275 har två av bröderna *Þór*-namn medan den tredje brodern heter *Freysteinn*. På Sö 232 har Freysteinn och Ígull rest stenen över sin far Þorbjörn och Þórir över sin bror. På den första stenen har vi en brödraskara med förkristna gudanamn i förlederna och på den andra tycks en *Þór*-generation följts av en *Frey*-generation.

På de sörmländska stenarna återfinns ett Eyrbyggja-mönster på Sö 84 och Sö 233. Sö 84 har en bön *Guð hjalpi ond Þorbjarnar*. Möjligen är också Sö 61 en Eyrbyggja-inskrift då den omnämner en man Þorsteinn som rest stenen över Þorbjörn. Inskriften fortsätter sedan med att nämna att Solvi och Smiðr rest stenen över sin bror. Vi kan därför anta att Þorsteinn är Þorbjörns far, eftersom det antagandet skulle följa det gängse mönstret att den äldre generationen nämns först och därefter syskon. Släktingar brukar nämnas före vänner, varför vi kan anta att relationen mellan männen har varit av släktkaraktär. Eftersom de inte var bröder, som de övriga i inskriften återstår alternativet fader. Jämför med exempelvis U 878 och U 151. Det är uppenbart att namnleder går i arv i både Uppland och Södermanland i någon mening men att detta gäller inte endast förlederna utan även efterlederna. Se till exempel Sö 229.

I inskrifterna Sö 54, Sö 229, Sö 336 och Sö 360 nämns endast bröder med *Þór*-namn och ingen ur en äldre generation bär förleden. Man kan därför inte tala om Eyrbyggja-namn i dessa fall. På Sö 336 nämns inte den äldre generationen alls, men intressant nog bär alla tre bröder namn vars förled har en förkristen bakgrund: *Þorgísl*, *Ásgautr* och *Þorgautr*. Trots detta avslutas inskriften med bönen *Hjalpi Guð ond*, vilket tyder på att namnen är neutraliserade i religiös mening.

U 418 (P3) Ärlinghundra härad, Norrsunda socken

(þ)(u)[rfas]tr * auk| [kitilui * þau * litu * stain [*] rito [*] ifti[R] * þurstain * faþur sin * kaup hialbi hont * hons

Þorfastr ok Ketilvé þau létu stein rétta eptir Þorstein, fǫður sinn. Guð hjalpi ond hans.

Stenen är smyckad med ett kors och inskriften avslutas med en bön.

U 481 (P4) Långhundra härad, Lagga socken

× þorkis[l] -uk × þorstin auk × uibiarn × auk × olifr × --tu × raisa × stin × eftiR × þorbiarn × faþur × sin

Þorgísl ok Þorsteinn ok Vébjörn ok Óleifr [lé]tu reisa stein eptir Þorbjörn, fǫður sinn.

Stenen är smyckad med ett kors, men saknar bön.

U 510 (P4) Långhundra härad, Kårsta socken

× **frystin** × **þorbiurn** × **fasti** × **uiniutr** × **ulfr** × **kuntiarfr** × **þaiR** × **bruþr** × **raistu** × **stin** :
at * þorstin : faþur × sin *

Freysteinn, Þorbjörn, Fasti, Vénjótr, Ulfr, Gunndjarfr, þeir bræðr reistu stein at Þorstein, fǫður sinn.

Stenen är smyckad med ett kors, men saknar bön.

U 838 (P3) Lagunda härad, Nysätra socken

þufr * auk * þorfaþr * þair * litu ' raisa ' stan * at * þorborn * faþur * sen * koþan **
hir maa ' stanta ' stain ' ner ' brautu ' auk ' (k)ilauk ' riþ * kirua ' merki ' [at] (b)(o)a---
*** sen :**

Þólfr(?) ok Þorfastr þeir létu reisa stein at Þorbjörn, fǫður sinn góðan. Hér mun standa steinn nær brautu ok Gillaug réð gera merki at bó[nda] sinn.

Stenen saknar kristna markörer.

U 878 (P3) Hagunda härad, Hagby socken

[iþkirþ × l]it × raisa × st[ain × iftr × olaf × bunta × sin × auk × fastlauk × auk × þorun
× iftiR × faþur × sin ×]

Þorgerðr(?) lét reisa stein eptir Ólaf, bónda sinn, ok Fastlaug ok Þórunnr eptir fǫður sinn.

Saknar uppgifter om kors. Stenen återstår endast som fragment.

U 1034 (P5) Norunda härad, Tensta socken

þorbia(r)n ' auk ' þorstain ' uk ' styrbiarn ' litu raisa stain ' eftiR ' þorfast ' faþur sin
ybir risti

Þorbjörn ok Þorsteinn ok Styrbjörn létu reisa stein eptir Þorfast, fǫður sinn. Æpir risti.

Stenen saknar kristna markörer.

Sö 84 \$ (KB) Västerrekarne härad, Tumbo socken

× **a...R ...et * raisa * stain * at * þorbiorn * boropur * sin * sun * þorstainR * i skytiki ***
kuþ * hiołbi * ant * ¶ * þorbiornaR *

... [l]ét reisa stein at Þorbjörn, bróður sinn, son Þorsteins í Skyttingi. Guð hjalpi ond Þorbjarnar.

Stenen är smyckad med ett kors.

Sö 233 \$ (FP) Sotholms härad, Sorunda socken

kun[i × au]k × þorfastr × raistu × stain × at × þori × faþ-... ... [amut]i (h)iuk

Gunni ok Þorfastr reistu stein at Þóri, fǫður[ur sinn]. Ámundi hjó.

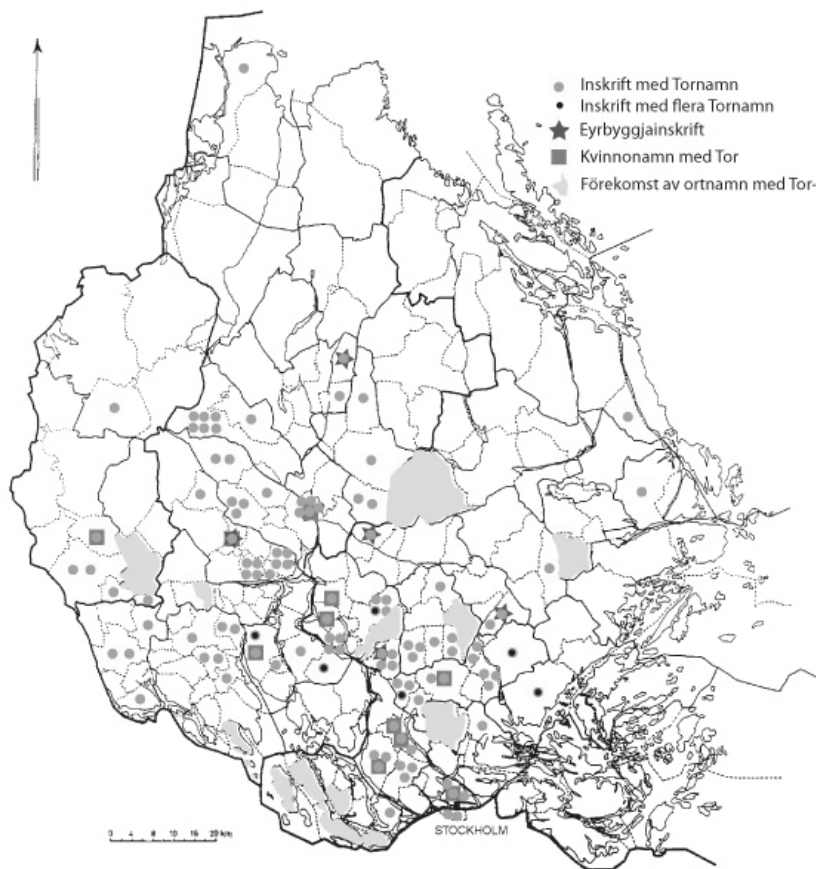
Stenen är utsmyckad med ett kors, men saknar bön.

Två av de uppländska stenarna saknar kristna markörer, de övriga är med all tydlighet kristna.

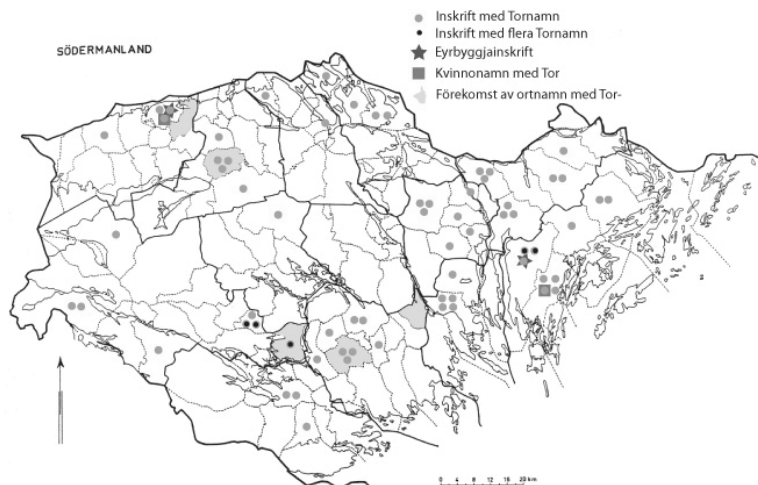
Går det att se en regionalitet i Tornammen?

I Uppland har 13,6 % av inskrifterna inslag av *Þór*-namn, vilket är färre än i Södermanland där siffran är 15,5 %. I Uppland är det intressant att lägga märke till att vissa områden, där det ändå finns relativt många inskrifter som t ex i Bro härad med 24 inskrifter, helt saknas inslag av *Þór*-namn, eller Lyhundra härad där vi hittar hela 50 inskrifter men endast en med *Þór*-namn. Allra flest, procentuellt sett, hittar vi i Örbyhus härad (3 av 8 dvs 37,5 %), Simtuna

härad (4 av 14 dvs 28,6 %) och Hagunda härad (11 av 47 dvs 26,2 %). Det finns alltså ingen jämn fördelning av namnen över landskapet som helhet.



I Södermanland finns en liknande bild. Intressantast är Daga härad med sina 19 inskrifter, men som helt saknar inslag av *Dór*-namn. Även Eskilstuna och Strängnäs med 7 inskrifter var saknar *Dór*-namn. Tätast är Svartlösa härad (10 av 34 dvs 29,4 %), Öknebo härad (6 av 20 dvs 30 %) och Jönåkers härad (3 av 11 dvs 27,3 %). I Åkerbo härad är hela 50 % av inskrifterna *Dór*-inskrifter men det stora procenttalet beror på att Åkerbo endast har 2 inskrifter och en av dem har ett *Dór*-namn. Antalet inskrifter varierar alltså kraftigt mellan olika härad, men vi ska också tänka på den stora procentuella utfall som enskilda belägg ger i härad med få inskrifter. Istället är härad med många inskrifter, men få eller inget belägg för *Dór*-namn mer intressanta. Detta tyder på att en viss regionalitet kan skönjas och att namnet trots sin popularitet konkurreras ut av andra förleder.



Förändring över tid

Jag använder mig av Anne-Sofie Gräslunds datering av runinskrifter som baserar sig på inskrifternas ornamentering och utformningen av rundjuren, särskilt deras huvuden. Gräslund delar in de runristningar som har ett rundjur med huvudet i profil i 5 perioder, samt en period där rundjurets huvud avbildats uppifrån:

Stilgrupp	Förslag till absolut datering (Gräslund 1998:86)
P1	ca 1010–1040
P2	ca 1020–1050
P3	ca 1050–1080
P4	ca 1070–1100
P5	ca 1100–1130
FP	samtidig med P1 och P2, ca 1010–1050

Gräslund har använt sig av uppgifter av genealogisk karaktär och uppgifter om Ingvarståget för sin datering. Hon har också utnyttjat arkeologiskt material med säker datering (Gräslund 1992:195 ff). En del inskrifter faller utanför indelningen ovan. De har istället delats in i grupperna korsbandsstenar (KB) och raka runinskrifter (RAK). Korsbandsstenarna är ristade så att slingornas ändrar utgör ett fundament för ett kors. Dessa anses oftast höra till det äldre skiktet av runinskrifter. Gräslunds datering är inte oproblematiserad och har också kritiserats, nu senast av Magnus Källström (Källström 2007:64 f).

Jag använder mig av dels den tidigare databasen Mälsten och den nyare Samnordisk runtextdatabas.

Intressant nog ligger tyngdpunkten på *Dór*-inskrifterna i de tidigaste perioderna i Södermanland men i Uppland däremot ligger de i de senare perioderna. Om man till tidig period räknar perioderna 1 och 2, samt FP och RAK har hela 53,6 % *Dór*-namn, mot endast 1,4 procent är period 4 och 5. I Uppland är bilden annorlunda: perioderna 1 och 2, FP och RAK har sammanlagt endast 15 %, medan 23 % faller under period 4 och 5.

Mikromiljöer: I Uppland har 28 av 141 stenar med *Dór*-namn även kristna böner, dvs 19,9 %. I Södermanland är siffran lägre: 10 av 67 stenar dvs 14,9 %.

Ortnamn: Finns det ett samband mellan *Tor*-namn på runstenar och teofora ortnamn innehållande förleden *Tor*-? Sockennamn? Kan områden med många ortnamn på *Tor*- tyda på gammal Torsbygd, *Tor*-namn på runstenar och *Tor*-namn i sockennamn?

Det finns lite som tyder på ett samband mellan teofora ortnamn och namnen på stenarna. Enligt Per Vikstrands *Gudarnas platser* finns ett mindre antal teofora ortnamn i Uppland som kan betraktas som säkra och de flesta av dessa uppträder i häraderna där vi inte har några *Þór*-namn alls. *Torstuna* i Torstuna socken i Torstuna härad och *Torsvi* i Torsvi socken i Trögds härad är exempel på ortnamn som tagits upp i socken- och häradsnamnen, vilket borde indikera att namnen betecknat centrala platser redan i förkristen tid. Per Vikstrand diskuterar möjligheten till en koppling mellan tingsplatser och ortnamn med *Þór*- i förleden men tycker sig inte kunna se någon tydlighet i materialet (Vikstrand 2001: 146, 162 ff).

Slutsatser

De få exempel vi har på inskrifter med två generationer med *Þór*-namn, visar inte på någon namntradition med som en stark ställning i området. Inte heller kan vi se någon koppling mellan ortnamnen som indikation om starka *Þór*-områden i personnamnskicket.

Vid tiden för resandet av runstenar i Svealand tycks namnen för de förkristna gudarna som del i personnamn helt tappat sin laddning, precis som de teofora ortnamnen. Förleden *Þór*-förförkommer i de mest kristna sammanhang, med kors och med böner i samma inskrifter. De skillnader som ändå finns över tid och rum i undersökningen måste ses som popularitetsvågor som antagligen liknar dem som finns i dag. De teofora ortnamnens laddning tycks också ha gått ur tämligen fort, eftersom vi har flera exempel på sockennamn och kyrkor som övertagits från förkristen tid, exempelvis Odensala i Uppland (*Othinsharg* 1293). Det går inte heller att tolka namnen som något vittne från en segdragen kristning av Uppland. Om namnen hade haft sin laddning kvar längre i Uppland än i Södermanland, där namnen nära nog försvinner i period 4 och 5, borde tyngdpunkten inte ligga så sent i dateringen. Istället borde vi kunna se en jämnare fördelning av namnen över alla perioder. Dock verkar namnelementen ha haft regionalt starka områden, såtillvida att det helt saknas i vissa häraderna i både Södermanland och Uppland, trots rikt runinskriftsbestånd, men är kraftigt representerat i andra områden, procentuellt sett.

Namnelementet traderas på fler sätt än i sagan ur ett genusperspektiv. Män ärver förleden av sin far, men även av sin mor. Döttrar ärver på samma sätt förleden fädernet och på moder-net.

Undersökningen leder vidare till nya frågeställningar. Det tycks som om inget av de bevarade namnen från urnordisk tid har *Þór*- eller motsvarande som förled. Är det ett sent inslag i namnskicket och i sådana fall varför?

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The Good, the Bad and the Devil!

On rewriting a Religious Motif in some Virgin Martyr Legends

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”Do not have any other gods before me.” The first of the Ten Commandments is well known to most of us. In Exodus 20:4 it is followed by the statement:” You shall not make for yourself an idol...” The Christian condemnation of idols is a central point in early Christian theology and missionary activity, and thus also in several of the early Saints’ Legends. Idols are presented as an example of the many traps the Devil has devised to lure humankind away from God, and to worship them therefore leads to damnation. These are simple religious truths well suited to missionary activity and to early Christian didactic writings. One of the most important dichotomies in the Virgin Martyr Legends is therefore the fight between Good and Evil, represented on the one side by the Holy Trinity and on the other by the Devil and his servants and idols. However, the presentations of opposed groups differ between the extant Old Icelandic versions of the legends, and the Latin versions that they have been shown to be based on, and at times quite substantially. Here, I will primarily examine the alterations in the Old Icelandic versions of the Legends in the presentations of Evil, the Devil and his other worldly and human servants; that is the consequences of the changes made in the translation process and, perhaps even more important, later rewritings of the Virgin Martyr Legends.

Many of the quite extensive changes in the Old Icelandic versions of Virgin Martyr Legends are to be found in manuscript AM 233a fol. In this manuscript we see a series of amplifications and interpolations, from single words to larger extracts of text, that are nowhere to be found in the respective Latin versions of the same legends or, for the most part, not even in other manuscripts or versions that contain the Old Icelandic Legends. Many of these transpositions and transformations have therefore presumably been made in the transmission process rather than in the translation process. The main focus will therefore be on this manuscript, which today contains 29 leaves that have originally belonged either to one single or two different manuscripts. The Legends of Virgin Martyrs are all to be found in a part that has certainly originally belonged to one single manuscript of large format.¹ The legends of Virgin Martyrs preserved here are the Legends of St. Agatha, St. Margaret, St. Katherine and the three sisters Fides, Spes and Caritas. The legend of St. Agnes was also originally been part of this manuscript, but today all but a very small fragment of it has been lost.

Some of the dissimilarities between the Latin versions and the Old Icelandic translations of them are naturally due to misinterpretation or to faults or unconscious choices of wording in the transcription process. This being said, however, there is also a clear tendency in the later reworking of the texts that they involve conscious changes such as amplifications, reductions, rewordings or omissions; changes made either to adapt the texts to a vernacular public or poetics or to clarify ambiguous parts or elaborate on motifs, phenomena and so on. When it comes to the motif of the Devil and his idols, another tendency is that a translator or a later editor adds information about the idols that are not originally mentioned or thematised in the Latin version. This is evident in a longer interpolation in the Legend of St. Agatha in AM 233a fol, but it is also manifest in several of the shorter and less evident amplifications in this and other legends in both the same and other manuscripts.

¹ I *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, (1966:30–38) Ólafur Halldórsson writes that the second hand in AM 233a fol. – from the part of the manuscript containing the Virgin Martyr legends – is probably the same hand that has copied several manuscripts in the monastery at Helgafell.

The Idols

A central motif in hagiographic literature is the futility of worshipping the idols. In the Latin legend of St. Agatha, in the version BHL 133, her main message in the discussion between herself and her persecutor on this topic is that the idols are bad role models, since they are in fact demons that wish to alienate humankind from God. People who worship them can also become like them or meet the same fate as them, since they become tainted by their evil. A prayer to the idols is therefore futile and stupid. In AM 233a fol we can, however, see a further elaboration of this motif through a series of amplifications and amendments, the most important of which is a quite extensive interpolation following a speech from Agatha in which she states the stupidity of appealing to *stones* for help – in the Old Icelandic manuscript amplified to *stocks and stones*. Some of the aspects of and points made about the idols are less important, merely implicit or even not touched upon at all in the original version, as such; the interpolation in AM 233a fol clarifies, elaborates on or introduces new aspects when it comes to the idols:

[...] *eða huerr mun suo fiarlægr allri skynsemi. sa er deili ueit aa skapara sinum. ok kennir sátta lios. at hann mun ganga myrkra gótu. sva afskapliga. at hann mun dyrka greylog goð þín. er gior ero manna höndum eptir hinum uerstum monnum. er uerit hafa i heiminum. er aa allan hátt voro fullir af diófulligum golldrum. ok görningum. ok þar með af allzkonar fullifnaði. ok hordómum. morðum ok odaðauerkum. er auðfundin munu uerða i þeira lifssögum. meðan þau voro her i heimi i sinum bauluudum likomum. En eptir þeira skemdarfult lif foro þau til helvitis ok brenna þar ok friosa með dióflinum. ok hans árum. ok allir þeir er þau dyrka utan enda. en þau mega huarki biarga ser ne oðrum helldr voro þau eptir dauðann blotut ok mögnut af uóndum mönnum. ok diófuls krapti til fyrirðæmngar eilífrar sialfum þeim ok öllvm þeim er þeim treysta. eða hyggj þu hinn grimmu guðs ouín. at ek muna sakir reidi þinnar eða fyrir ognir þisla þinna eða fyrir nóckurskonar bliðmæli orða þinna gefa upp ast ok traust drottins míns Jesu Kristi. er bædi er guþ ok maðr.* [My transcription]

This interpolation adds what for this legend are some new, but generally well-known theological concepts and truths about the idols. For example, the fact that the idols are made by human hands is stressed, and we are told that they are sculpted after the *worst men that have ever existed in this world*; criminals, murderers, adulterers and so on, men that after their deaths went straight to Hell where they are to *burn and freeze* in eternity. Life – and especially punishment – after death is in this way further elaborated upon in comparison with the original. Also emphasised is the fact that anyone who worships the idols will suffer the same fate as them. In fact, idolatry leads to damnation both for the idols themselves and for their worshippers. Another perspective added to the text with this interpolation is the insistence on Christ as both human and God. This is for different reasons also a very interesting addition, but not one that will be touched upon here.

Some of the above-mentioned aspects of idols and idolatry are further elaborations of already treated, or at least implicitly mentioned, characteristics and qualities of idols and eternal punishment; others are new to the text, while not to the genre. Most of what is mentioned here is information about the idols which is known from other texts of the same genre. The insistence on idols as made by human hands is an important focus in other Virgin Martyr legends. In the beginning of the prologue of the Latin BHL5303d version of the legend of St. Margaret for example, humanity's foolishness in worshipping the idols is linked to the raging madness of the devil. At the same time, the uselessness of the deaf, dumb and blind idols, made by human hands, is stressed:

Adhuc tamen obtinebat insaniae diaboli rabies homines, et idola surda et muta et caeca, manu hominum facta adorabant, quae nec illis proderant, nec sibi.²

The foolishness of this behaviour is further emphasised by the comparison of it to the glories one can expect if one submits oneself to the power of God. The reason why the the idols are not of benefit to humankind but rather the contrary, lies in their nature as human-made symbols. This is an argument that is also well known in the Bible. In the Book of Psalms 113.12–16³ we read:

The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men. They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes and see not. They have ears and hear not: they have noses and smell not. They have hands and feel not: they have feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that make them become like unto them: and all such as trust in them.⁴

This Biblical quotation is rendered in its entirety in the legend of St. Barbara (cf. Unger 1877: 155, line 17–23), and in the legend of St. Margaret the characteristics of blindness, deafness, dumbness and lameness are on several occasions linked to the idols, together with a stress on the fact that they are made by human hands and as such useless. In the legend of St. Agatha however, this fact is only implicitly understood and not stressed in any way. The legend mentions that the pagans have made the idols themselves using copper, marble and plaster and covering them with gold. It also mentions that it is futile and insane to call upon them for help as they are made of stocks and stones. But the deficiency of the idols is not further elaborated on. It is however an important feature in some of the other Virgin Martyr legends, in addition to the legends of Margaret and Barbara. St. Katherine states that the idols can neither help themselves or others: "Nam dii nec sibi nec aliis prodesse prosunt"⁵, and St. Cecilia insists, talking to her persecutor, that it marvels her how he does not see that figures made of stone, metals or tree cannot be gods. In a further elaboration on this subject she ridicules the idols and those who believe in them by, among other things, describing how they let spiders spin webs or birds build nests or shit all over them without interfering, and she stresses how stupid it is to believe that something like that can be a god. She also compares the idols to dead people, adding that they are inferior even to them; they are proved to be less than the dead since when humans lived they were able to see, hear, walk, talk, caress and smell, while the idols can do none of these things and never could nor ever will. Cecilia later also asks her persecutor, Almachius, to place his hands onto the idols and in this way experience that they are merely made of stone, since he will not believe what his own eyes ought to tell him about them; thus being the laughing-stock of the entire people.

It is not only in the Old Icelandic translation of the legend of St. Agatha in AM 233a fol that the "idols as made by human hands" motif is stressed more than it is in the Latin version it is based on. The portrayal of this motif is also marked by amplification in the legend of St. Katherine, but here traceable mainly in the other manuscripts containing this version of the legend; Stock.perg.fol.2 and AM 429 12mo.⁶ Also, the interpolations in connection with this motif are primarily suited to clarify or embellish certain aspects in its presentation; aspects

² Translation: "As yet, however, the raging of the madness of the devil held people in its grip, and they worshipped deaf, dumb and blind idols, fashioned by human hand, which were of benefit neither to them nor to themselves." (cf. Clayton and Magennis 2006: 194–5)

³ In numbering here and other places in the text refers to that in the Latin Vulgate Bible.

⁴ This and later Biblical quotations in English are from the Douay-Rheims Bible. We can also find almost the same text in Psalm 134.15–18. The same idea is also expressed in for example Isaiah 31.7 and Isaiah 37.19.

⁵ Translation (mine): "But the Gods can neither be of help to themselves nor others."

⁶ PS: Lacuna in AM 233a fol.

that either are not mentioned at all in the Latin text or the other Old Icelandic manuscripts, or that are merely suggested or mentioned in passing. In the opening passages of the Legend, where we learn that humans are the eager slaves of demons or depictions of idols because they do not yet know about the true God, these manuscripts have an interpolation that states that the idols are made by human hands: "[...] ok kollodv þat gud er sialfir hófdu þeir sínum hondvm smídat."⁷ This is a fact that is merely implied in the Latin version of the legend, BHL1661b.⁸ St. Katherine speaks ironically about how her persecutor, Maxentius, admires a temple made by humans, but the false gods themselves or their graven images as made by human hands are not mentioned. It seems that the translator here, or maybe more likely a later editor, has felt the need to add this otherwise well known fact about them. We can also find this fact stated in other amplifications and interpolations in the Old Icelandic text in AM 233a fol. When a group of onlookers after being converted by Katherine curse the idols and everyone that worships them, they add in this manuscript only that the idols are: "handa uerk manna. ok oll líkneski þeira. [...]."⁹

The Devil and Mister Kvintian¹⁰

The second of the more important additions in the above-mentioned longer interpolation in the legend of St. Agatha states that the idols are *filled with devilish sorcery and actions, and thus also every kind of immorality, indecency, adultery, committing homicides and other evil deeds*, and that after their deaths they *went to Hell where they will burn and freeze together with the devil and his servants and all people who worship them* in all eternity. The fact that the idols are images of evil people or false gods is thematised in the Latin legend, they are among other things named as the pagan gods Jupiter and Venus (Odin and Freya in the Old Icelandic texts), but here it is further embellished upon. A central feature in the legends of Virgin Saints is in fact the thought that the idols themselves are devils or demons that wish to remove humankind from God. Since the false gods thus represent evil beings, it is only suitable that their worshippers suffer their same faith and conditions; they "become like unto them", as Psalm 113.16 states; their evil rubs off on those who create them and those who worship them alike. Thus it is only fair that your conditions are the same as those of your gods and that a person is judged according to the rank of his or her gods. In the legend of Agatha she explains to Kvintian that: "[...]vt et vos possitis in deorum vestrorum numero computari"¹¹ (ASS Feb I: 616), further she uses the comparison with the Roman gods Jupiter and Venus to insult Kvintian and his wife; or at least he so interprets it. She tells him: "Sit talis vxor tua, qualis dea tua Venus fuit; et tu sis talis, qualis Iupiter deus tuus extitit."¹² Kvintian naturally reacts to this insult; a reaction that Agatha turns around and uses against him; why should it be an insult to be compared with one's own gods if those are true gods? The gods that a person worships should stand as examples in this person's life. If the worshipper himself is insulted when a person compares his lives to the gods, then that has to be the ultimate proof that these false gods are not to be trusted. This is ultimately an idea derived from the Bible. In Matthew 10.25 we read: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,

⁷ The text follows the manuscript Stock.perg.fol.2. AM 429 12mo reads: "[...] ok kollodv þat gud uera er sialfir þeir hófdu smídat sínum hondvm." Lacuna in AM 233a fol.

⁸ According to Bjarni Olafsson (1972:53) this version, first printed in Bronzini (1960), is closest to the Icelandic text, not BHL1659 as previously thought. BHL1659 has however some readings that are closer to the Icelandic texts.

⁹ My transcription. This addition is not to be found in Stock.perg.fol.2. Lacuna in AM 429 12mo.

¹⁰ Kvintian in AM 233a fol, Quintian(us) in the Latin version and in the other Icelandic manuscripts.

¹¹ Translation: (mine) "So that you can be judged according to the rank of your gods".

¹² Translation (mine): "I wish that your wife would be like your goddess Venus, and you like your god Jupiter."

and the servant as his lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?”

In the Latin text Kvintian is presented as both an idolator and a servant of sin. Version 1 of this legend, found in AM 429 12mo and Stock.perg.fol.2 presents him as one who sacrifices to the devil, leading to a simplification of the concept of the enemy. In version 2 of the Icelandic legend, found in AM 233a fol, the consul (*jarl* in the Old Icelandic text) is presented as simply a grand idolater; a *blotmaðr mikill*, and not the servant of sin. This leads to less emphasis on Kvintian as a servant of sin in this opening passage in both Old Icelandic versions. The difference seems however quite incidental in both versions. In AM 233a fol similar expressions are also omitted elsewhere, for example when St. Agatha abuses Kvintian calling him: ”Tu minister Satanae”; this is rendered merely by “þu” in AM 233a fol, again leaving us with a weakened emphasis on Kvintian as the servant of evil. On other occasions, though, the statement that Kvintian is the servant of sin is added where it is not stated in the Latin legend or in version 1 of the Old Icelandic legend; a version that except for the opening passage mentioned above follows the Latin rather closely in this respect.

The Latin legend of Agatha is quite clear when it comes to the punishment Kvintian can expect after death if he does not turn his back on “the dark path”. St. Agatha tells him that he should regret his delusions so that he can be saved from eternal torment in the afterlife; torments that by far exceed the torment that he threatens to wreak upon Agatha. She also tells him that if he does not abandon the false gods and instead adores the true God, the Creator of all things, he will be subjected to harsh punishments and eternal flames. Even the physician who visits Agatha in the dungeon, and who later reveals himself as God’s apostle, predicts that Kvintian’s soul will suffer eternal pains. These predictions and threats are faithfully rendered in the Old Icelandic texts, although in some instances we see a clarification of what the consequences of Kvintian’s actions might be; for example when Agatha tells Kvintian that: *Omnia verba tua fatua et vana sunt et iniqua, praecepta tua aërem ipsum maculant. Vnde miser et sine sensu et sine intellectu es.*¹³ This is in the Old Icelandic version 1 rendered by: ”oll ero ord þín tom ok raung bodord þín. þviat þau saurga þik sialfan ok gera þik vitlausan.”, and in version 2 by: ”Aull ero bodord þín ok orð ónyt. ok rangir domar þínir. þviat þeir saurga þik ok draga til heluítis.” So while St. Agatha both in the Latin and in the first Old Icelandic version presents the consequences of Kvintian’s words and judgements as condemning him to misery and stupidity, according to the version in AM 233a fol. they actually condemn him to misery and drag him to Hell.

In this way both the Latin and the Old Icelandic versions of the legend portray the punishment for idolatry and renouncing God as everlasting torments in the eternal flames of Hell. In the longer interpolation in AM 233a fol. we see however that Hell is not necessarily only a place of fire and flames, but that it can also be freezing; perhaps this is a natural expansion of the concept of Hell in a Nordic country. Further we see an expansion of the description of the people that the images of the idols were once modelled upon; the worst people that have ever existed, adulterers, murderers and so on; a colourful description, but not necessarily compatible with the presentation of the idols as based upon false gods that we find elsewhere in the legend.

A further amendment when it comes to Kvintian’s expected punishment is evident in the closing passages of the legend in AM 233a fol., an amendment that instead of clarifying or narrowing the text, actually opens it up to new interpretation; a rather uncommon move for the text. The passage in question recounts how Kvintian, after the death of St. Agatha, wants to get hold of her family’s assets. Both the Latin and Old Icelandic versions narrate how while

¹³ Translation (mine): ”all your words are foolish, useless and evil, your commands pollutes the air itself. Because of this you are miserable and devoid of wits and intelligence.”

on the journey to put his plan into effect, he is killed by two horses while crossing the river in a boat; they kick him to death and into the river, and he is never found. He has to suffer the fate of being denied a proper burial. In all but the AM 233a fol. version of the legend, this passage opens with the narrator's statement that Kvintian is actually struck by the revenge of God here. AM 233a fol omits this rather clear and obvious statement, and instead closes the passage with a quite colourful description of what happens when Kvintian falls into the river:

[...] *ok heyrðu menn í ána niðr. diófulliga blistran með ópi ok gny. þa er lík iarls sokk niðr. ok tok uatnit at uella sem í katli væri vm þrjár stundir dags.* [My transcription]

Here too it is quite evident where Kvintian ends up after his demise, but the passage depicts this much more elegantly and somewhat less explicitly than in the other versions. Also the description of how, after this incident, the water in this spot begins to *boil as if in a kettle three times a day*; inevitably calls to mind the Icelandic *heitur pottur*.

In the AM 233a fol. version of this legend we see that idols through interpolations in the text are depicted both as representations of false gods and of evil humans, two distinctive features characterising the idols that are not usually present in one and the same legend. They are however both well known qualities used to describe the idols in other texts of the genre. The different interpolations and other amendments also lead to the inconsistency that the idols are described both as without autonomous powers, since they are made by human hands and without the power to intervene on behalf of their worshippers or themselves, and at the same time as representations of evil powers in society and as the snares of the Devil; two qualities that are not necessarily compatible. Are the idols useless and helpless or do they affect the lives of those that worship them, driving them to punishment in Hell? The presentation of this motif thus becomes blurred and less focussed in this version, and additional information might appear incidental and without a clear direction. At the same time additions and emendations, at least some of the more fortunate ones, broaden the reader's perception of the plot by providing greater and more colourful detail.

We can see some of the same effects as described in the AM 233a fol version of the legend of Agatha also when it comes to the emendations in the legend of St. Katherine in the same manuscript. The fact that the idols, named as Jupiter, Odin or Tor, in fact are demons that have in store the expected and inevitable fate that they are fated to burn in the eternal flames of Hell together with the people who worship them, is a characteristic of the idolatry motif not stressed in the Latin Vulgate version of the legend of St. Katherine. The motif does however surface in the Old Icelandic version of the legend that is extant in AM 233a fol, and, as mentioned above, it is well known from other Virgin Martyr Legends, like for example the legend of St. Agatha. As is the case in the legend of St. Agatha, this manuscript adds aspects not present in the Latin legend through amplification and longer interpolations; after the emperor has condemned Katherine to death, he disputes with his queen who protests fiercely against this monstrous act. This leads the emperor to ask his queen if she has abandoned faith in the gods, and she answers him that she now believes in the one true God; the Holy Trinity. In AM 233a fol. she further elaborates on this:

þorr ok oðinn ok allir gudar ok goð heidinna manna ero dióflar ok engu nyt nema til þess at brenna í eilífum helutis elldi. ok allir þeir með þeim er þau dyrka. en þau megu huarkí ser gott gera ne oðrum. [My transcription]

This interpolation might be understood as both a reference to other texts of the genre, and also an attempt to clarify why it is so crucial that people abandon the false gods. In this way the

Old Icelandic editor of this manuscript or one of its models interprets the legend for his public.

Demonic possession

In the legend of St. Margaret the idol motif is not embellished in AM 233a fol in the same way as in the legends of Katherine and Agatha. In fact the strategy here seems to be quite the contrary; omission and contraction. As mentioned earlier, the narrator in the Latin legend opens the prologue where the idols are characterized as deaf, dumb and blind, and made by human hands. The foolishness of worshipping them is contrasted with the near-infinite possibilities awaiting if one subjects oneself to the power of God; a contrast that is repeated throughout the whole legend.

The entire prologue is omitted in version 2 of the Old Icelandic legend extant in for example AM 429 12mo, while it is rendered in version 1 extant for example in AM 233a fol and AM 235 fol. In version 1, however, the contrast between good and evil depicted and stressed in the Latin version is downplayed; the narrator simply states that retaining faith was difficult at the time of the events narrated in the legend, because there were more people opposing it than standing behind it. The idols are also portrayed as made by human hands later on in the narrative, in one of Margaret's many replies to Olibrius, her persecutor. This is a rather extensive reply that in the Old Icelandic versions is, as the only part of this reply, omitted (AM 429 12mo) or severely condensed (AM 233a fol and AM 325 fol); to the extent that Margaret simply refuses to sacrifice to the idols, and neither praises the Lord nor scorns the idols. Also in other instances where the shortcomings of the devil and his idols are contrasted to the glories of God and Heaven, the contrast is downplayed or even erased in this Old Icelandic version; often leaving only Margaret's refusal to sacrifice. The result is, since the praising of the Lord is omitted in these passages, a stronger emphasis on the refusal to submit to the worshipping of idols, at the same time as certain characteristics of the idols, as for example the fact that they are made by human hands and are thus useless, are downplayed to the limit of nearly being completely erased.

As mentioned above, defects such as deafness, dumbness, blindness and paralysis are often linked to the idols in this legend, a connection that is only preserved once throughout the entire text of the Old Icelandic version 1 (AM 233a fol and 235 fol). This insistence in the Latin legend is however not accidental. A related motif is in fact a connection between these same defects among humans and demonic possession; an idea that is also present in the Bible, where the miraculous healings by Christ are often regular exorcisms.¹⁴ This idea is also expressed in the legend of St. Margaret; for example when in the prologue we are told that many people have been cured by Christ in the past, or when we are told that many people are cured in the presence of Margaret's relics. In the discussion between Margaret and the black demon, the demon also states that he in fact struggles with the righteous while they sleep and among other things blinds them and confuses their senses. Also in Margaret's last prayer these same defects are mentioned, now in relation to different defects and conditions that infants should be protected from when they are born; in the Latin legend these are paralysis, dumbness and blindness, and in some manuscripts also deafness. Different Old Icelandic versions mention different conditions in relation to this, and most often fewer conditions than are mentioned in the Latin version, the exception being version 3.¹⁵

According to Wendy R. Larsson (2002: 26) it is not by chance that the Latin tradition states that the children should be protected against paralysis, blindness and dumbness (and in some versions also deafness) during birth, since these defects were often regarded as signs of

¹⁴ See for example Mathew 15:22–28, Mark 9:17–29, Luke 13:11–13

¹⁵ Lacuna in AM 233a fol.

demonic possession in the Middle Ages, an idea expressed in the aforementioned Psalm 113.12–16. These characteristics were also often linked to the pagan gods in hagiographical legends; in the legend of Margaret they are used to describe the pagan gods that her father and Olibrius sacrifice to. This connection is not made in the Old Norse versions of the legend however, since both the number of defects that the children are to be protected against and the number of characteristics linked to the pagan gods is reduced. In addition they are not the same:

Version	the children	the idols
Latin: BHL5303d:	paralysis, dumbness, blindness (and deafness)	deaf, dumb and blind
AM 235 fol.	death and paralysis	deaf and dumb
AM 429 12mo	blindness and paralysis	deaf and blind
Version 3:	blindness, paralysis, deafness, dumbness and foolery	deaf and dumb

While the language in the Latin tradition thus reflects the liturgy, most of the Old Norse versions lose this aspect of the text. We can also see a similar suppression of this idea in other parts of the Old Norse texts. The comment in the prologue that states that Christ cured the blind and deaf is omitted, and the specific conditions we are told that people are cured of when they come in contact with the saint's relics are not mentioned (version 2) or are strongly reduced (version 1); while the Latin legend mentions that the "infirmi, caeci, claudi, surdi, debiles"¹⁶ are cured, the Icelandic version 1 only mentions the curing of the *deaf* and *blind*, while version 2 simply refers to *sick people*. This suggests that the allusions to the Biblical passages of interest and the theological idea behind them are overlooked either by the translator or later editor(s) of the Old Icelandic versions.

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¹⁶ Translation (mine): "infirm, blind, paralysed, deaf, disabled."

Negotiations of Space and Gender in *Brennu-Njáls Saga*

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In this paper I shall argue that mapping the social spaces represented in the Icelandic sagas produces an accurate representation of hierarchies, values and gender associations within the text. The purpose of my investigation is to demonstrate the effectiveness of mapping personal space, and to use this mapping as a means to determine the extent to which gender is a key determinant of spatial location, range and influence, and to identify other factors which influence the demarcation of space.

The sagas are reflections and representations of aspects of Icelandic culture as it existed over the centuries, from the tenth and eleventh century setting of the sagas, up to and beyond the thirteenth and fourteenth century time of composition. Actual events depicted should be seen as selections from a range of cultural memories rather than documented historical facts. With caution, these representations can also be extrapolated onto the physical layout of Iceland, with, of course, the usual caveats about the conflation of the saga world and historical reality.

This study focuses on *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, and specifically on the farmstead of Bergþórshváll, which is the physical centre of the narrative, not only as the residence of its eponymous hero, but as the radius from which most action emanates. Many major characters eventually find their way there, as friends, enemies and horrified coroners, and many of the most prominent spend part of their lives there. Before its untimely Burning, Bergþórshváll is a rich and lively space, a frequent forum for relationships and activities and a working farm in which the business of spreading manure and searching for sheep is interwoven with feasts and feuds.

Spatial arrangement can be reconstructed from written material, and analysed to identify cultural classifications represented by exclusions and proximities. Space should be understood as emotional and social, as well as geographic. It is not random and it is not a simple equation in which function is added to topography and technology to produce an inevitable spatial result. The social significance of spaces indicates the hierarchies, associations and exclusions that constitute a society. Henri Lefebvre identifies the dynamic relationship between space and society:

The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space. (Lefebvre 1991: 38)

A space can be coded as female or male by, for example, its decorations, typical activity or usual inhabitants; and changes to these factors can change the gender coding of a space. Space is plastic and can shift or solidify depending on circumstances. How a society organises its activities spatially and how it relates different spatial contexts to each other indicate critical cultural concerns. It is always a two-way process: although a culture might prescribe certain physical characteristics to related sites, those sites then shape and affect everything that takes place within them.

Spaces transmit meaning to activities and performances located within them. As Gaston Bachelard has pointed out, memories are really fixed in space, not in time (Bachelard 1994: 9). A space retains vestiges of previous activities that prevent it from ever being neutral or valueless again and which can be attributed to other events that take place in it.

The spatial arrangement of commonwealth Iceland enforces the centrality of the farmstead as a social site. In Iceland the entire population lived on isolated farmsteads, united by bonds of kinship and work. With no permanent markets or meeting places and no constant public, male spaces in the saga-world, public spaces were created only at specific locations at certain times, such as the annual Alþingi, or the more frequent local assemblies. The farmstead therefore becomes the arena for numerous negotiations of personal and corporate space, status and influence. Each farmstead was an independent and geographically discrete unit, so complex and significant that each forms what Kirsten Hastrup has termed “a complete social universe” (Hastrup 1990: 275).

The farmstead is the location of the dominant Icelandic social grouping, the household. For all but the low-status itinerant members of society, the household is the pre-eminent mode of affiliation and it is also a fundamental component of the governance of the society. Throughout the sagas, a person’s identity is linked to her or his position within the household, and to the relative social position of that household.

The Bergþórshváll of *Njáls Saga* is a home, a farm and a social grouping. The holdings of Bergþórshváll encompass the eponymous farmstead, woodlands at Rauðaskriður, a subsidiary farm at Þórólfsfell and, for the duration of the Alþingi each year, Njáll’s búð at Þingvellir. There is no direct correlation between physical and social distance. Rauðaskriður, though only a couple of kilometres from Bergþórshváll, is beyond social restraint and influence, whereas the booths at the Alþingi many miles away mirror the spatial practice of the farmsite.

In Bergþórshváll and its environs, the processes of daily life in Iceland are mapped out, from the sleeping arrangements of the people to the clearing of the forests. We see where women work, where men go, and how physically close and conceptually distant the space of the sexes can be. Gender is not rigidly embodied in the world of the Icelandic sagas, as noted by Carol Clover in her pivotal discussion of the application of the one-gender model to Icelandic society (Clover, 1993). This situation has implications for the significance of masculine activity in domestic locations, as well as for the nature of feminine participation in activities extending beyond the domestic unit. As genders are seen as points on a continuum rather than a fixed oppositions, it follows that behaviour must constantly reinforce gender distinctions. The spatial congruence between feminine and masculine realms renders these distinctions potentially fluid.

The population of Bergþórshváll is not fully countable from the text, though thirty-one residents, sixteen male and fifteen female, are identified by name or position. These thirty-one are not all in residence at the same time, indeed they are not all alive at the same time, and their numbers were presumably augmented by others who worked on the farm but never contribute sufficiently to dramatic action to get their names mentioned in the saga.

Relatively few of the residents control significant social space. Njáll and his wife Bergþóra, Skarpheðinn, Grímr and Helgi Njálsson, and Kári the son-in-law are all prominent. The main power brokers are Njáll and Skarpheðinn, with Kári also occupying a responsible position. Njáll’s other sons form a fraternal block with Skarpheðinn but they are not independently influential. Bergþóra is the only female who wields significant power within the household, and it is noticeable that her control increases when Njáll is away at the Alþingi, when she directs the feud between herself and Hallgerður that sees the death of numerous farmhands on both sides.

Careful and intricate spatial patterning is evident at those locations that feature in the narrative, making the few social arenas the sites of multiple expressions of position, identity, gender and authority. The most significant sites are the farmhouse, its immediate surroundings of farmyard and homefield, and the wild spaces outside direct household control.

Early Iceland is not a leisured society and most of the time, where people are is linked to the work they are doing. Of course, the nature of that work often determines or influences

where it takes place. According to the law code, an *innan stokks/útan stokks* (that is, inside the threshold/outside the threshold) division of labour operated (Finsen 1879: 173–174), with men working in the fields tending the stock and crops, and women carrying out activities, usually related to textiles or food, that are centred on the farmhouse. Jenny Jochens has demonstrated that the work practices presented in the *Íslendingasögur* do not always follow a tidy dichotomous model in their spatial and gender associations (Jochens 1995: 114–140). Very little productive or domestic work features in the *Njáls Saga*, so it is difficult to see a clear spatial demarcation between masculine and feminine work spaces. Only a few work practices are described: Bergþóra serves some meals (34, 127); Svartr cuts wood (36) and Atli burns charcoal (37); the Njálssons work on their weapons (44); the Þórólfsfell shepherd finds a lost sheep (69); and the farm hands cart dung to the *tún* at Bergþórshváll (44). The main distinction between work location is not gender, it is status. For members of the family, male or female, work takes place indoors, while the hired hands are only depicted outside.

The farmhouse itself is an intensively negotiated site in which the proximity of women and men, of high and low status residents, and of different generations creates overlapping and at times conflicting spatial maps. The biggest room in an Icelandic farmhouse is usually the *skáli*, or hall. At Bergþórshváll the *skáli* is the first room encountered upon entering the house (129: 328), and there is also a *stofa*, the room in which meals are taken (127:324).

The *stofa* appears to be the arena for most interpersonal negotiations. It is mentioned by name only once, when the family are seated at the table as Njáll describes a doom-vision of its walls running with blood (127:324). It seems likely that other meals take place there, including the feast attended by Gunnarr and Hallgerðr (36) and the numerous feasts held by the Njálssons for Höskuldr Þráinsson (97:248, 109:276). Meals are consumed at the benches on removable tables or boards that are placed in front of the benches. We are told that, after meals, “borð váru ofan tekin” (the tables were taken away, 127:324), an indication of how the limited interior space is adapted to different uses.

At the head of the room is a raised platform (*pallr* or *þverpallr*) with benches. The *pallr* at Bergþórshváll features only at the *vetrgrið* attended by the newly-married Gunnarr and Hallgerðr (35:91). Trouble arises between Bergþóra and Hallgerðr when Bergþóra orders Hallgerðr to surrender her position on the *pallr* in favour of Þórhalla Ásgrímsdóttir, wife of Helgi Njálsson:

Mælti Bergþóra til Hallgerðar: “Þú skalt þoka fyrir konu þessi.” Hallgerðr mælti: “Hvergi mun ek þoka, því at engi hornkerling vil ek vera.” “Ek skal hér ráða,” sagði Bergþóra. Síðan settisk Þórhalla niðr.

Bergþóra said to Hallgerðr: “You will move away for this woman.” Hallgerðr said: “Not for anyone will I move, like an outcast old woman.” “I am in control here,” says Bergþóra. Then Þórhalla sat down.

Seating arrangements are of critical importance in the sagas because, as William Miller has noted, “they provided one of the few occasions in the culture where relative ranking was clearly visible” (Miller 1990: 30). While men have many ways of displaying their social position, for women these seating arrangements are critical because the feast is one of their very few occasions when they are assembled together. The physical placement of Hallgerðr and Þórhalla is a matter concerned with female markers of honour (Larrington 1991: 15), and the ranking they display there will codify social positions amongst themselves until the next comparable occasion.

Immediately outside the house, the farmyard begins. The farmyard is a busy space. Although it would have been the site of intense farming activity, in the narrative it is generally

social rather than productive processes that fill the space. The yard is the specific setting for numerous incidents involving farm residents and outsiders, men and women, high and low status people.

The farmyard is frequently the space in which the people of Bergþórshváll receive strangers and guests. Bergþóra stands outside warily watching as a strange man rides up on a dark horse, and she finds out his business before engaging him as a farmhand (36). On several of Gunnarr's many visits, both solo and accompanied, Njáll meets and welcomes him in the yard (e.g. 21, 35), where a situational space is created for the discussion of his affairs.

The farmyard is a point of exit from Bergþórshváll as well as entry. This transition is particularly well-drawn in incidents featuring Njáll and his sons. Twice Njáll is woken when the younger men set off into the night on a killing mission, and on both occasions he follows them into the yard (44, 92). The conversations that take place there mark a spatial and social shift for the sons, who are not fully within the boundaries of their home but neither have they fully passed into the amorphous, wild region beyond. Njáll's conversation and presence provide a conduit between the social world and the spaces beyond, which legitimizes the Njálls-sons' subsequent actions even when they move beyond the social realm to carry out their revenge slayings.

The space of the farmyard is not obviously associated with any hierarchies of gender, generation or status. From Sæunn, the old foster-mother who foresees the Burning from the pile of chickweed (124), to Njáll himself and assorted visitors, it features a wider range of performers than any other part of the farm. It is an egalitarian and undifferentiated space which does not appear to be partitioned in accordance with household hierarchy.

As the point at which Bergþórshváll meets the outside world, the farmyard serves to emphasise the membership of Bergþórshváll as an inclusive rather than differentiated classification. Internal divisions are sublimated into the overall identity of the household, so that the stratification is between residents and outsiders rather than between different classes of resident. The farmyard is inevitably a liminal area and considerable effort goes into maintaining its boundaries. Once people are within the *garðr*, they are in a position to jeopardise the farm's security, and this vulnerability is carefully monitored. When, at the Burning, the men of Bergþórshváll retreat into the house at Njáll's bidding (128), they effectively cede control to the Burners, with famously dire consequences. This demonstrates the importance of the farmyard as a defensive zone, and illustrates the danger that ensues when this defence is breached.

Outside the farmyard the conceptual 'wild' begins to encroach. Travel creates the spaces in which gender distinctions are most apparent. Both the range and the frequency of travel are much greater for men than for women, and their travels are also distinguished in the way in which they are described in the text.

The most mobile Bergþórshváll resident is indubitably Njáll, who goes repeatedly from home to assembly to neighbour's farm, as well as making trips to his own subsidiary farm of Þórólfsfell. Njáll is usually accompanied on this travels by his sons, who also make several, usually violent, journeys of their own. While Njáll and his sons often move beyond the farm-site, other men at Bergþórshváll are more restricted. Only Svartr (36), Atli (38) and Þórðr (42) are depicted outside the farm compound, and their location is subject to the personal control of others.

Most women are restricted in the movements into the wild. The stronger a woman's position within a household, the less mobility she has. Bergþóra's elevated status sees her almost completely immured within the walls of Bergþórshváll. Hróðný, Njáll's sometime mistress, is of land-owning rank but without the secure social position that comes from formal marriage. Twice at times of crisis she visits Bergþórshváll, firstly after the killing of her son, Höskuldr Njálsson (98), and secondly to tell Njáll about the Sigfússons' plot against him (124). The

only women in *Njáls Saga* who travel extensively are vagrant women who wander throughout the region seeking hospitality at various farms. They are never known by name and their lack of fixed abode is noteworthy enough for them to be called *farandkona* (44, ‘travelling women’) a term which locates them by not locating them, although the term *snauðar konur* (92, ‘beggarwomen’). None of these women are actually shown in transit. They are here; they decide to go there; they are there, with no sense of the spatial transition and personal activity involved.

In comparison, descriptions of men’s travels usually mention the process involved: they go home, they ride, they go out, they meet people. This makes men seem dynamic while women are static. Men of status usually move en masse to assemblies, to a horse fight, and to other farms, but women do not usually travel as a cohort. Though women might appear in two distant locations, they are never shown in the transitional areas between them. This reiterates the notion that men can legitimately move beyond the boundaries of the farm into the conceptually ‘wild’ spaces between, but women are culturally invisible during their sojourns there. Nonetheless, both Hróðný and the *farandkona* negotiate their way with ease through the wild spaces of the society, while men are often at risk there. The terrain beyond the farm yard provides the space where men to carry out the violent negotiations of honour and status that are integral to social order.

Definitions of public spheres have emphasized the idea that the most significant effect of the creation of a distinct, separate and usually masculine realm for high-status negotiations is that it excludes many people, especially women, from the privileged knowledge that is created and shared within that space (Spain 1992:3). Certainly this is the case with the Alþingi, where women are permitted to be present but their right to act in this arena was greatly restricted in comparison to men. The gendering of access is necessarily different at Bergþórshváll. At the farmstead, people are shown constantly trying to construct exclusive spaces in which they can exchange information with select interlocutors, and Bergþóra is frequently included in these conversations. At Njáll and Gunnarr repeatedly ‘go aside’ to talk, and the Njálssons ‘go apart’ from their parents when they want to plot with Mörðr Valgarðsson. Bergþóra leaves the room when the men have some disturbing news to mull over but storms back in to reclaim her place within the discussion, and private conversations between her and her husband are implied though not shown. This domestic space achieves a quasi-public status through the absence of public space, and Bergþóra’s prominence here shows that, along with her menfolk, a women with sufficient status, and the right personality, can be active in the public arena. The spatial dichotomy of public and domestic domains is completely dislodged by the social structure of medieval Iceland, which developed without towns, villages or courts.

To conclude, space at Bergþórshváll and throughout the society is not mapped in accordance with a binary gender construct, even though the significance of gender as a means of ordering society is demonstrated by processes as diverse as nomenclature, work divisions and personal grooming. While gender distinctions are certainly apparent in spatial range, as men are represented as more extensive travellers than women, throughout and beyond the country, there is considerable overlap in the spaces accessible to both genders.

The farmsite, and especially the inner compound of farmhouse and yard, consist of heavily negotiated areas. These spaces manifest several overlapping, and at times conflicting, maps of association, exclusion and gender. Classification by gender does not fully explain personal variance in the occupation of space, as household position is also an important variable in constructing spatial practice. Those people, particularly Bergþóra, Njáll and Skarpheðinn, who hold important positions in the household hierarchy, occupy a wider range of spaces and, predictably, display greater authority over others within those spaces, than residents lower in the hierarchy. Hierarchical positions affect the amount of control an individual has over her or his own space. High-ranking residents are able to shape the personal space of their subordi-

nates, even to the extent of locating those subordinate in regions which categories such as gender prevent the status-holder from occupying.

Gender is a powerful element in constructing social identity with its concomitant spatial expression, and the successful operation of gender classifications is fundamental to Icelandic society. However the spatial layout of the society is inimical to rigid gender boundaries and its atomisation into individual farmsteads conflates public and domestic performance sites. This has profound implications for the negotiation of gender. The farmhouse, the centre of domestic space, is situated as a prominent arena for social action. The multiple spatial values which are thereby inscribed on the farmhouse leads to the increased proximity of women, whether as audience or performers, in prestige-related activities from which, were it not for the insubstantiality of the nominally public spaces, they would otherwise be excluded. Space in the saga world is a fluid entity that can bind and connect as well as separate.

Perhaps the most interesting and unusual spatial feature of early Iceland is the merging of appropriate sites for female and male performance. The *Íslendingasögur*, and *Njáls Saga* more than most, are populated by men sensitive to the slightest hint of being anything other than uncompromisingly masculine. The disputes they create over their own claims to manliness are the most consequential in the saga, which leads one to conclude that the concept of masculinity is destabilised by the temporal and spatial impermanence of the separate public male sphere. Men become vulnerable to imputations of effeminacy because they lack constant recourse to a separate forum in which to reiterate their gender away from and against feminine influence. The hyper-defensive masculinity that characterises the saga results from the combination of physical proximity and conceptual inequality between genders. Men seek to define and defend themselves against implications of womanliness, while women's status is enhanced by their socially-sanctioned performances in quasi-public spaces, as they appropriate the positions and activities that were originally devised to demonstrate and reinforce the prescribed gender hierarchy.

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The Secret Lives of Lawspeakers: the portrayal of lögsögumenn in the *Íslendingasögur*

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It is an axiom that in Commonwealth-period Iceland the lawspeaker was a unique figure. He was the only elected official in a society that had no overarching ruler or state system of governance, and stood at the head of the legal community in a society whose literature is commonly held to attest to a ‘cultural predisposition for law’ (Miller 1990:224). Valuable work has been done to establish who the lawspeakers were, in terms of names, dates, and social connections (Jón Sigurðsson 1886, Gísli Sigurðsson 2004), but the *Íslendingasögur* have barely been utilised as sources – justifiably in this context, given the contested status of these texts as reliable historical documents, and the caution which needs to be exercised in using them as such.

The *Íslendingasögur* convey other kinds of information than historical fact, however: cultural memories, social traditions and institutions, and thirteenth-century attitudes to the past (Whaley 2000). Little has so far been written about popular perceptions of the office of lawspeaker, social memories of individuals, or the portrayal of lawspeakers in ‘literary’ texts, and this paper will address these issues. First, the evidence available is detailed for each lawspeaker in turn, followed by a more general consideration of the way the lawspeaker functions in the world of the *Íslendingasögur*. Table 1 below gives an overview of the appearances of lawspeakers in the *Íslendingasögur*.¹

Table 1. Lawspeakers in the *Íslendingasögur*

	Úlfjóttr	Hrafn	Pórarinn	Þorkell Þ	Þorgeirr	Grímr	Skapti	Steinn
<i>Bárð</i>					<i>g</i>		<i>r</i>	
<i>Drop</i>					<i>g</i>			
<i>Egil</i>		<i>r</i>	<i>g</i>			X	g	
<i>Eyrb</i>								
<i>Finn</i>					<i>X</i>			
<i>Fló</i>							<i>X</i>	
<i>Fljótt</i>					<i>r</i>			
<i>Grett</i>				L			L	L
<i>Gullþ</i>	<i>h</i>							
<i>Gunnl</i>							X	
<i>Harð</i>				L				
<i>Lax</i>			<i>g</i>					
<i>Ljós</i>					X		X	
<i>Njál</i>		<i>g</i>	X		<i>L</i>			
<i>Reyk</i>					<i>X</i>		<i>L</i>	
<i>V-L</i>								
<i>Þorstst</i>								
<i>Þorstux</i>	<i>h</i>							
<i>Ölk</i>							<i>X</i>	
Total	2	2	3	2	7	1	8	1

¹ Only lawspeakers who feature in the *Íslendingasögur* are included. For the evidence for the others, see Jón Sigurðsson 1886; Gísli Sigurðsson 2004.

Table 1 cont.

	Borkell T	Kolbeinn	Sighvatr	Finnr	Snorri	Sturla	Total
<i>Bárð</i>							2
<i>Drop</i>							1
<i>Egil</i>							4
<i>Eyrb</i>					g		1
<i>Finn</i>							1
<i>Fló</i>							1
<i>Fljót</i>							1
<i>Grett</i>						r	4
<i>Gullþ</i>							1
<i>Gunnl</i>					g		2
<i>Harð</i>							1
<i>Lax</i>			g				2
<i>Ljós</i>	r						2
<i>Njál</i>							4
<i>Reyk</i>							1
<i>V-L</i>							1
<i>Þorstst</i>		g		g	g		3
<i>Þorstux</i>							1
<i>Ölk</i>							1
Total	1	1	1	1	3	1	

Key

h = historical context

L = primarily legal role

r = referred to in passing

g = named in genealogy; no role in saga

X = role in action of saga

Bold type denotes use of the title of lawspeaker; *italics* denote no mention of title.

The lawspeakers

Úlfjótr

Úlfjótr is conventionally considered the first lawspeaker, but while memorising and reciting the law at the first Alþing would seem to qualify him for the title, he is remembered in the *Íslendingasögur* only as having brought law to Iceland – and only in two rather minor places, *Gull-Þóris saga* (where he is invoked in passing), and *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* (which gives basic details of his settlement and bringing of the law). Despite Úlfjótr's role in Icelandic history, he is too early for the 'Saga Age' proper, accounting for his minimal role in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Hrafn Hængsson (c.930–c.949)

Hrafn is credited in *Egils saga* with the distinction of being *fyrstr lögsögumaðr á Íslandi* (ÍF 2:59) 'the first lawspeaker in Iceland' (and *göfgastr sona Hængs* (ibid. 60) 'noblest of Hængr's sons'). This does not afford him any widespread fame in the *Íslendingasögur*, however, being mentioned elsewhere only in a *Njáls saga* genealogy. Like Úlfjótr, Hrafn's term falls earlier than the period covered in detail by the *Íslendingasögur*.

Þórarinn Óleifsson (c.950–69)

Þórarinn is listed among the sons of Óleifr hjalti in *Egils saga*, and identified with the nickname Ragabróðir 'Ragi's brother' in *Njáls saga* and in a genealogy in *Laxdæla saga*. In all three sagas it is noted that he held office. His nickname – also used in *Íslendingabók* and

Landnámabók – is firmly associated with his traditional identity; it seems his credentials as lawspeaker were not sufficient to make him memorable on his own merits, and Ragi appears to have been the more interesting member of the family. Unfortunately, no extant source gives further details of Ragi's exploits, though he is described as *vígamaðr mikill* (*ÍF* 12:41) 'a great warrior' in *Njáls saga*.

Njála describes Þórarinn favourably as *stórvitr maðr* (ibid.) 'a greatly wise man' and introduces a third brother, Glúmr, who survives four chapters as the second of Hallgerðr's ill-fated husbands. Baldur Hafstað (2001:33–4) notes that Glúmr is not attested elsewhere, and suggests that *Njála* makes repeated efforts to connect invented characters with historical figures. It is worthy of note, then, that he may have seized the opportunity to invent an Óleifsson to bring a lawspeaker into the saga.

Þorkell Þorsteinsson (970–84)

Þorkell máni 'moon' is another early lawspeaker whose nickname appears to be firmly established in tradition – and a 'noble heathen' tradition in which his wisdom and foresight are brought to the fore. As well as in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, the nickname is used in the two *Íslendingasögur* in which he appears: *Grettis saga* and *Harðar saga*. In both he is identified as lawspeaker and plays a cameo role as a legal expert. He is, however, anachronistic in them, his term of office being later than the events described. In *Grettis saga* he is said to have established the shore-rights law, an attribution not made in any other source. In *Harðar saga* he brings about a successful settlement to a case, and is described as *bæði vitr ok góðgjarn* and *kunnigr at allri réttvísi* (*ÍF* 13:26–7) 'both wise and benevolent'; 'knowledgeable in all matters of justice'.

Þorgeirr Þorkelsson (985–1001)

Þorgeirr is one of the most frequently-mentioned lawspeakers in the *Íslendingasögur*, appearing in seven in all with a significant part in three. He is the only lawspeaker who can be said to have a central role in an *Íslendingasaga*: *Ljósvetninga saga* – although he appears only in the first four chapters, he is head of the *Ljósvetningar* and the saga continues with tales of his descendants.

There are two striking aspects of Þorgeirr's portrayal in the *Íslendingasögur*. The first is that despite being a major figure in *Reykdale saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma* and *Ljósvetninga saga*, he is nowhere identified as lawspeaker in the former two, nor in the last-named in the section of the saga in which he actually plays a role. His place in *Íslendingasögur* tradition is as the wealthy and powerful *goði* of Ljósavatn; this appears to be far more significant than his sixteen-year term of office as lawspeaker. Þorgeirr is involved in legal cases and asked for advice on legal issues, but this was a duty of any *goði* – his part in the legal action of the saga is that of a powerful and influential man, not a legal expert. Even where he is named only in genealogies, when we might expect the lawspeakership to be used to highlight the illustriousness of the family, it is not mentioned.

The second striking feature about Þorgeirr's appearances in the *Íslendingasögur* is also something which seems to be omitted, compared to what we know from elsewhere. In *Íslendingabók* and *Kristni saga* it is Þorgeirr who goes under the cloak and decides it should be law that everyone in Iceland be Christian, with the (one would think) memorable words *es vér slítum í sundr lögin[...]* *vér monum slíta ok friðinn* (*ÍF* 1:17) 'if we break asunder the law, we will also break the peace'. Yet among the *Íslendingasögur* it is only *Njála* that makes any reference to this event, in an account ultimately indebted to Ari's. Þorgeirr is commemorated in these texts first and foremost as *Ljósvetningagoði*, and it is his actions in this role that are deemed *söguligt*.

Grímr Svertingsson (1002–03)

Grímr held office for just two summers, and appears among the *Íslendingasögur* only in *Egils saga*, where he is introduced with reference to his more famous nephew and successor, Skapti Þóroddsson. It is presented merely as an afterthought that *Grímr var ok lögsögumaðr* (ÍF 2:241) ‘Grímr was also lawspeaker’ (though his term comes after the events of the saga). Grímr marries Egill’s niece and foster-daughter, Þórdís, and Egill lives with them at Mosfell in his later years. Otherwise there is little to distinguish Grímr, though he is ascribed the conventional qualities of being *auðigr ok ættstórr* (ibid.) ‘wealthy and of good family’.

*Skapti Þóroddsson (1004–30)*²

Skapti is the best-known lawspeaker to the *Íslendingasögur*, appearing in eight. Like Þorgeirr, Skapti was also a *goði*; but his lawspeakery is central to his identity. He is explicitly said to be lawspeaker in five sagas and appears solely in connection with legal matters in a further two. This is likely due to his twenty-six-year term of office, meaning he was lawspeaker for a substantial part of his political life, during a substantial part of the Saga Age.

Landnámabók bestows the byname ‘Lög-Skapti’ and *Íslendingabók* portrays a wise, firm leader, suggesting a respected place in tradition in which Skapti’s accomplishments were well known. However, his portrayal across the *Íslendingasögur* varies. His most favourable depiction is in *Grettis saga*, where he is never mentioned without his title and exhibits ideal if conventional lawspeaker qualities:³ *manna vitrastr ok heilráðr* (ÍF 7:108) ‘wisest of men and of good counsel’.

Demonstrating an admirable sense of fairness, Skapti declares he will not outlaw Grettir in his absence. However, Grettir is found guilty and exiled regardless, a view of the lawspeaker’s power somewhat different to that suggested by Ari’s reference to Skapti’s *ríkr* [...] *ok landstjórn* (ÍF 1:19) ‘power and governance’. Nonetheless, Skapti remains on Grettir’s side, advising him during his exile. Lest this aiding of a convicted felon be taken as disregard for the law, however, his help is limited to the strictly legal: *en með því at ek skal heita lögmaðr í landinu, þá stendr mér eigi at taka við útlegðarmönnum ok brjóta svá lögin* (ÍF 7:178) ‘because I am called lawspeaker [lit. ‘lawman’] in this land, it is not fitting for me to take in outlaws, and thus break the law’.

Elsewhere in the sagas in which Skapti figures his depiction is at best neutral. He plays a small role in *Gunnlaugs saga* (as a kinsman of Hrafn’s, he argues that Gunnlaugr’s betrothal to Guðrún is invalid), *Valla-Ljóts saga* (supporting Ljótr in legal matters, though without explicit identification as lawspeaker), and *Flóamanna saga* (giving legal advice, but again without reference to his title). There is no need to develop his character in these sagas: he is merely a token legal expert. *Njáls saga*, singularly, dramatises the establishment of the Fifth Court; but unfortunately for Skapti, preservation of legal history comes second to requirements of plot and character development: Skapti’s association with the event, evidenced in *Íslendingabók*, is preserved in the saga, but he is relegated to a passive role while Njáll appears the greater legal expert, masterminding the plan.

Skapti’s expertise is acknowledged in *Njála*: he and his father are described as *lögmenn miklir* (ÍF 12:141) ‘great legal experts’, and he is consulted at several points during the preliminaries to the Burning suit. However, he is insulted by Skarpheðinn in a tantalising reference to a bizarre-sounding episode in his past:

² Ármann Jakobsson 1996 makes some similar observations in using Skapti as a case study on the methods of the saga writers. This article came to my attention after the present paper had been written.

³ He is more usually referred to as *lögmaðr* than *lögsögumaðr* here – an anachronistic usage of the post-Commonwealth title owing to *Grettis saga*’s date of composition, probably c.1310–20.

Þú heitir Skapti Þóroddsson, en fyrr kallaðir þú þik Burstakoll, þá er þú hafðir drepit Ketil ór Eldu; gerðir þú þér þá koll ok bart tjöru í höfuð þér. Síðan keyptir þú at þrælum at rísta upp jarðarmen, ok skreitt þú þar undir um nóttina. Síðan fórt þú til Þórólfs Loptssonar á Eyrum, ok tók hann við þér ok bar þik út í mjölsekkum sínum (ÍF 12:298–9).

‘You are called Skapti Þóroddsson, but previously you called yourself Burstakoll [‘Smearhead’], when you had killed Ketill of Elda; you then shaved your hair and smeared tar on your head. Then you paid some slaves to raise up a strip of turf and you crept under it for the night. Then you went to Þórólfr Loptsson at Eyra, and he took you in and carried you out in his meal-sacks.’

Sadly, no other source elucidates this incident. Some of the taunts directed at other figures in this scene appear to allude to events known in other sagas (Cook 2001:331, nn 3, 5), suggesting they could be generally-known; the anecdote about Skapti is specific enough to suggest a basis in tradition, at least, if not truth. Perhaps this was the sort of behaviour Icelanders chose to forget about their lawspeakers; hence what sounds like rather a good story does not survive elsewhere.

Skapti’s reputation suffers a further blow at the battle at the Alþing. Discovering that his son is involved, Skapti intervenes to try to stop the fighting, but is skewered through both legs by a spear, necessitating the indignity of being dragged away. The literal crippling of the lawspeaker may represent the failure of the law to control disputes and its helplessness against the escalation of violence. To make matters worse, Kári and Snorri goði both immortalise the incident in mocking skaldic verse, and Skapti is never compensated for the wounding – a further insult to his honour.

In *Ölkofra þáttur* Skapti is one of six *goðar* (all known from other sagas) whose jointly-owned woodland is accidentally burnt down by the eponymous Ölkofri. Skapti is identified as lawspeaker on first mention and prepares the case, albeit *því hann sat næst* (ÍF 11:85) ‘because he lived nearest’, rather than because of his legal expertise. As far as can be deduced from *Grágás*, the *goðar* are within their rights to prosecute (and Skapti himself claims *málaefni vár eru brýn ok góð* (ibid.:89) ‘the grounds of our lawsuit are just and good’),⁴ but much is made of the accidental nature of the damage and of the greed of the *goðar*. Eventually, Ölkofri enlists the help of Þorsteinn Síðu-Hallsson and his brother-in-law Broddi Bjarnarson, upon whose advice he persuades the *goðar* to accept a settlement. He tricks them into allowing Þorsteinn and Broddi to announce the terms: an insultingly low amount, followed by Broddi verbally abusing the *goðar*. Skapti is accused of composing a love-poem for the wife of a kinsman, an offence punishable by full outlawry and again something that, if true, Icelanders may have wished to suppress about their lawspeaker.

Like *Bandamanna saga*, for which *Ölkofra þáttur* has been suggested as inspiration, it is likely that the *þáttur* is a fictional satire on thirteenth-century chieftains. The named Saga-Age *goðar* are probably not personally the subjects of attack, although it is possible that the insults directed at them in the flyting scene have a basis in tradition.⁵ Skapti may represent a real thirteenth-century lawspeaker, but more likely is that his lawspeakership is incidental to the *þáttur*, where he does not actually manipulate the law. If an attack on the office was intended, it would surely have been made more obvious. I think, rather, that Skapti was chosen because he was a well-known Saga-Age figure, and that he is named with his title because the lawspeakership was inextricably part of his identity.

⁴ There are no extant laws covering the exact situation, but see *Gg* Ib:94 and *Gg* II:463 (on burning grass); *Gg* Ib:137 (on handling fire); *Gg* Ia:166 (on accidental damage).

⁵ For evidence that Skapti composed poetry, see below.

Steinn Þorgeistsson (1031–33)

Steinn is the third lawspeaker to feature in *Grettis saga*, putting in two appearances in connection with legal matters. Like the other lawspeakers in the saga, he is said to be a *vitr maðr* (ÍF 7:244) ‘wise man’ and is sympathetic to Grettir. He declares that the maximum period of outlawry should be twenty winters, and that sorcerers should be outlawed, legislation not attributed to him elsewhere.

Þorkell Tjörvason (1034–53)

Virtually nothing is known about Þorkell, despite his having held office for twenty summers. Hence is it not certain that the Þorkell Tjörvason making a lone appearance (without the title) in *Ljósvetninga saga* is the same man as the lawspeaker, although it seems likely: he is said to be a grandson of Þorgeirr, and father of one Hrólfr, holder of the Ljósavatn *goðorð*. Gísli Sigurðsson (2004:71) thinks ‘it is highly surprising, that if this Þorkell really had held the distinguished position of lawspeaker, that *Ljósvetninga saga* should make no mention of this fact’, but owns that ‘cultivation of the law seems to have run in families’. Since *Ljósvetninga saga* makes no particular effort to associate Þorgeirr himself with the title of lawspeaker, it is perhaps not so surprising that this lone mention of Þorkell is silent as to his position.

Gellir Bölverksson (1054–62)

Gellir is not mentioned in the *Íslendingasögur*, although an Eyjólfur Bölverksson features in *Njála* with a genealogy which by comparison to *Landnámabók* would make him Gellir’s half-brother. Eyjólfur is said to be *inn þriði mestr lögmaðr á Íslandi* (ÍF 12:363) ‘the third greatest lawyer in Iceland’, but acts on Flosi’s behalf in the burning suit and is killed in the battle at the Alþing. It may seem surprising that the author of *Njála* passes up this golden opportunity to refer to another lawspeaker, Gellir; but intriguingly, Eyjólfur is not attested in other sources. This of course does not mean he did not exist; it is entirely likely that two brothers could be trained as legal experts, and given Eyjólfur’s negative portrayal in *Njála*, it could be that he was conveniently ‘forgotten’ by the compilers of *Landnámabók*. The author of *Njála* may also have kept silent on Eyjólfur’s kinship to Gellir so as not to tarnish the latter’s reputation (although a negative comment in Eyjólfur’s introduction to the saga attacks his family, and as Skapti proves, the author is not averse to mocking lawspeakers). However, it could also be that the author, clearly knowledgeable in legal history, invented the character – not unlike Glúmr Óleifsson – and gave him a genuine legal pedigree to satisfy a quest for authenticity, or as an in-joke directed at the more esoterically-minded members of his audience. This suggests that Gellir and his lawspeakership may have been better known than is indicated by his infrequent and sketchy appearances in the extant sources.

Kolbeinn Flosason (1066–71)

Kolbeinn is another figure whose historical identity is unclear. However, a Kolbeinn lögsögumaðr is mentioned in *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs* as having married the granddaughter of one of the protagonists.

Finnr Hallsson (1139–45)

A priest named Finn Hallsson appears in the same genealogy in *Þorsteins þáttur* as Kolbeinn Flosason; Snorri Sturluson is also named. The title is not given here, however, and the genealogical details differ from those in *Landnámabók*; consequently it is not certain that the reference is to the same Finn Hallsson *prestr* who was lawspeaker (Gísli Sigurðsson 2004:80 n. 27).

Snorri Sturluson (1215–18; 1222–31)

Snorri is mentioned in genealogies in three *Íslendingasögur*, but never specifically denoted lawspeaker. It can be assumed that Snorri's general renown, rather than his lawspeakership in particular, is the reason for his inclusion.

Sturla Þórðarson (1251)

Sturla is referred to as a source on three occasions in *Grettis saga*, twice with the title *lögmaðr*. He is treated with respect as a legal authority, and, like the saga's other lawspeakers, is a Grettir fan: *Hefir Sturla lögmaðr svá sagt, at engi sekr maðr þykkir honum jafnmikill fyrir sér hafa verit sem Grettir inn sterki (ÍF 7:289)* 'Sturla lögmaðr has so said that no outlawed man seems to him to have been equally as great as Grettir the strong'.

Conclusions

There are surprisingly few references to lawspeakers in the *Íslendingasögur*, especially in light of the iconic role that is often assumed for them (e.g. Hastrup 1990:74). The lawspeaker may have been unique, but this was apparently not in itself enough to make him a hero of popular tradition. This suggests that by the thirteenth century, either anecdotes about individual postholders had been largely forgotten, or the office and its holders were not considered especially saga-worthy material.

There do not appear to have been many strong traditions about the personality of individual lawspeakers. There are a few, possibly spurious, associations of lawspeakers with particular laws, but this is not a frequent feature of the *Íslendingasögur*.⁶ While the bynames of Þorkell máni and Þórarinn Ragabróðir are clearly part of their traditional identity, this seems to be more habitual association than a trigger for anecdotes. It should not be forgotten, though, that the *Íslendingasögur* are limited in range to a particular time period, and that two lawspeakers – Þorgeirr and Skapti – held office for a combined total of forty-four summers at the heart of this period. The potential for appearances by other lawspeakers is thus restricted, and indeed it is these two, of all the lawspeakers, who figure most often. It is also these two who have any sort of saga personality – but this is not necessarily consistent across the sagas they appear in.

One can conclude from the *Íslendingasögur* that Þorgeirr was a powerful *goði* – though, perhaps excepting *Njála*, one would struggle to note his lawspeakership – and that Skapti, uniquely, was a well-known lawspeaker. Beyond this it is difficult to construct a clear identity for either. The picture of the wise Þorgeirr and his fundamental role in the conversion, painted in *Íslendingabók* and so familiar to the modern scholar, stands out among the *Íslendingasögur* when drawn upon in *Njála*. To the sagas, Þorgeirr was *goði at Ljósavatni*. Despite the importance of the conversion in a number of sagas, it is not their place to document its history. It is not that Þorgeirr's role is misremembered; rather, on the whole, it is just not detailed. Yet it is difficult to reconcile what appear to be two very different traditions circulating about Þorgeirr, and while I do not wish to draw any too-clearly delineated distinctions between audiences, perhaps one tradition – Conversion-Þorgeirr – was the preserve of a learned and/or ecclesiastical community; the other – *goði*-Þorgeirr – that of popular folk-tale and secular concerns.

There was evidently widespread knowledge of Skapti's name in the thirteenth century (and beyond), and his lawspeakership was clearly a fundamental part of his traditional identity. The saga authors, however, apparently felt free to manipulate his character or draw selectively on tradition to suit their needs, and holding the post did not guarantee him respect. It is possible, though, that some of the less favourable traditions about him were suppressed because of his

⁶ Some sagas discuss the adoption of new laws but do not attribute them to any particular figure, e.g. *Eyrb* ch. 38, *Gunnl* ch. 11. Four clauses in the Konungsbók manuscript of *Grágás* name lawspeakers as their originators (*Gg* Ia:122–3, 184; Ib:23, 147), while *Íslendingabók* suggests a degree of legislative autonomy for lawspeakers. Again, however, such instances are few and far-between (Burrows 2007:99–102).

position. Hints at these incidents suggest that there were more memories of Skapti in circulation than have survived. If we take into account the evidence of *Skáldskaparmál*, which cites a skaldic *helmingr* attributed to him (he is also listed in *Skáldatal*) (see Burrows forthcoming), there is almost enough material for an ‘immanent saga’ of Skapti Þóroddsson – and what with his holding the Ölfus *goðorð*, outlawing important chieftains, establishing the Fifth Court, having a skaldic career and an affair with the wife of a kinsman, and being smuggled into Iceland covered in tar and flour, it would be interesting indeed.⁷ Nonetheless, he remains by some distance the only lawspeaker about whom this can be said.

When lawspeakers are mentioned in the *Íslendingasögur*, then, they tend to have one of two main functions:

1 A number of sagas refer to lawspeakers in a genealogical context, even if they play no other role. In these cases, the lawspeaker is usually identified with his title, the exceptions being Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, a well-known saga figure for whom the lawspeakership is a minor part of his identity; and Snorri Sturluson, who, likewise, was known for reasons other than his time in office.

The saga genealogy was not merely a faithful account of all the members of a family, but a way of linking them with the beginnings of Icelandic society and with important ancestors or descendants. It also provided an opportunity for descendants of settlers or saga personages to demonstrate their lineages (Clunies Ross 1993). It seems a reasonable assumption that a lawspeaker in the family would be worth drawing attention to, and on the face of it, the genealogical appearances of titled lawspeakers in the *Íslendingasögur* bears this theory out.

However, the inference can be taken only so far. Although the number of lawspeakers referred to in this way is not insignificant, neither is it considerable. While mention of a post-holder usually comes with explicit use of the title, it is more common that the lawspeaker does not feature at all.

2. Lawspeakers are introduced to a saga to perform a legal role. This accounts for the majority of appearances of lawspeakers in the sagas. Their roles in these cases are usually brief; they are token figures without any distinctly-drawn character portraits, though the traits of wisdom, knowledge and good intentions are often highlighted and seem to be stock lawspeaker characteristics – perhaps an affirmation that, at least in general, the office carried positive connotations. It is also worthy of note in this regard that although individual lawspeakers are not beyond being criticised, there are no occurrences in the *Íslendingasögur* in which a lawspeaker is shown to exploit his position for his own benefit.

Though individual lawspeakers do not have starring roles, lawspeakers in general are drawn upon effectively by some individual sagas. *Njáls saga* and *Grettis saga* each refer to four different lawspeakers, more than any other, and it is interesting that these are both among the later, post-Commonwealth sagas – perhaps these authors felt freer in their use of the now-defunct office than did those for whom it was still current. In *Grettis saga*, lawspeakers are wise and respected, and all come out in support of Grettir, demonstrating the unjustness, even unlawfulness, of his outlawry. While the letter of the law demands his exile, those most learned in its spirit disagree but are increasingly powerless in a changing society in which less noble factors are ever more prominent. In *Njála*, however, the lawspeakers are on the whole either incidental to the action (Hrafn, Þórarinn) or are portrayed with scorn (Skapti). Both sagas demonstrate the decreasing power of the lawspeaker and the office’s ultimate futility, but *Grettis saga* with a fond respect, *Njála* with a cynical criticism.

Overall, then, lawspeakers are not a major part of the subject matter of the *Íslendingasögur*, and when they do feature they are more often types than personalities. But the

⁷ The concept of the immanent saga was first posited by Carol J. Clover (1986:10–39). For a recent case study see Gísli Sigurðsson (2007).

Íslendingasögur do not often provide superfluous detail for its own sake (Heinrichs 1976:142). Mention of a lawspeaker's title – in genres not limited to the *Íslendingasögur* – tends to be made only when it is relevant to the plot.⁸ Similarly, bringing a lawspeaker into a saga could be misleading unless he was to perform a specific legal function in it. Lawspeakers come into the sagas in an advice-giving capacity, but because postholders had no judicial authority and could not influence the outcome of lawsuits, they were not major players – at least in their official role – in the conflicts that the sagas commemorate.

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⁸ I examine the appearances of lawspeakers in other genres of medieval Icelandic writing in Burrows 2007, ch. 2.

Vatnsdæla saga and Onomastics: the case of Ingimundr Þorsteinsson

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Vatnsdæla saga is not exactly the most cherished text within the corpus of Icelandic family sagas. One could, however, argue that it is the most orthodox to our nomenclature since it concentrates not on a single character or a narrow selection of heroes, but tells us in a more or less unfocussed manner a story about the establishment of Vatnsdal chieftainship, beginning in the days predating the Norwegian exodus and ending in the first half of the 11th century.

Nevertheless, it seems to lack a greater theme or a structural unity apart from the family ties that bind the different narrative units together. At least on the surface, it is lacking a distinguishable climax or central event that could give the mere accumulation of often underdeveloped feud patterns some kind of meaning or coherent structure.

According to Theodore Andersson's and comments from other scholars on saga rhetorics, such a climactic event¹ should have been made identifiable by the writer through staging, a slowing down of the narrative pace, a heightening of several levels of detail and a broadening of dialogue (Andersson 1967:55). When he analyzed *Vatnsdæla saga*, he was indeed able to identify a staged event: the death of Ingimundr Þorsteinsson. But since Ingimundr dies halfway through the story, and the storyline that is connected with his death ends with the killing of his murderer Hrolleifr and his trollish mother Ljót a few pages later, Andersson concluded:

The only dramatic piece is the death of Ingimundr, prepared as it is by the unfolding friction between Hrolleifr and his neighbors, but it is impossible to regard this as the pivot of the saga. Hrolleifr tends rather to be absorbed into the series of ill-fated sorcerers and scoundrels eradicated by several generations of beneficent Vatnsdælir. (Andersson 1967:221)

While I share Andersson's opinion that the death of Ingimundr is clearly marked by staging, I think that there is another event in this text highlighted by this method, namely the death of Jökull Ingimundarson the Elder. It happens right at the beginning of the saga and is thus hardly describable as a climactic event. But regardless of how we classify these two events, they are rhetorically clearly distinct from the rest of the narration and should thus be worth a closer look.

What drew my attention to the Jökull episode, apart from its narrative quality, was the personal name Jökull, which catches one's eye because it is clearly readable as an (Old-) Icelandic expression for "ice, glacier" and also serves as name for a being in Hversu Nóregr Byggðist as well as the older and somehow related Fundinn Nóregr, a descendant of primordial Fornjótr and himself the father of king Snær, which might suggest that he was conceived as some kind of giant. Beside the name's occurrence in Hversu Nóregr Byggðist, which I would like to come back to later in this paper, the name Jökull is featured in a handful of Fornaldarsögur². A scene in Sturlaugs saga starfsama shows that the name Jökull was used for an onomastic pun. When the character Jökull asks who is willing to fight him, the similarly named Frosti replies: "Mun eigi þat makligast, at ek gangi þér i moti, því at frostit herðir jökulinn?" (Sturlaugs saga:127). When we reach the horizon of the Söguöld, the name occurs for a very limited number of persons apart from the two Jökuls in *Vatnsdæla saga*³.

¹ As Lars Lönnroth has shown (Lönnroth 1976:94), every incident of some importance for the main plot within saga narratives is marked by staging, but when a climax is reached, the staging becomes more intense.

² Cf. FAS⁴, Vol. IV, pp. 388

³ Characters with the name Jökull do also appear in *Víglundar saga* and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*. In these two texts they are rather evil characters with a violent temper. Jökull Ingimundarson the Younger is also the

One is Jökull Bárðarson, who is described in *Grettis saga* as: “mikill maðr ok sterkr ok in mesti ofsmaðr, hann var siglingamaðr ok mjök óðcell, en þó mikillhæfr maðr.” (*Grettis saga*:117) As Jökuls þátrr Bárðarsonar tells us, he is later killed by Saint Ólaf. The other character is Jökull Búason, the son of the giantess Friðr, as *Kjalnesinga saga* tells us. He kills his father by accident and travels to the borders of the world to fight trolls in *Jökuls þátrr Búasonar*. This shows that the name Jökull could mark in a literary work a character with aspects associated with the world of giants and similar inhabitants of the *Útgarð* sphere which manifest itself either directly through a biological link or through a rather unsocial and violent temper.

It is thus not much of a surprise that our two Jökuls in *Vatnsdæla saga* could also accurately be described as rather physical characters with a tendency for violent behavior. Jökull the Elder is a robber, while Jökull the Younger is contrasted through his violence against his mildly mannered brother Þorsteinn, who is the brain in nearly all of their operations⁴. At least some of these Jökuls represent the *Grettir* type⁵ of the variety of Old-Icelandic heroes, and one could suggest that this kind of hero is already marked through a certain type of personal name⁶. It is hardly surprising that a medieval writer, who lived in an age that was obsessed with etymologies, (Haubrichs 1975) and language in general (Clunies Ross 1987:30f), would use such a technique, and that an audience, even if it does not have a formal education, could get at least parts of the message. Onomastic wordplays were also not uncommon in skaldic poetry (cf. Mundal 2004) and even in saga writing.

I think it is a common observation among saga readers that many characters that are marginal both in regard to the story and socially bear names that consist of just one element, are either readable or of foreign origin, and have a derogatory meaning that is in line with the role they play or the social stratum they represent. Typical examples of such names are frequent thrall names like Svartr and Kolr. In *Vatnsdæla saga* we encounter Ljót and Ljótr, Hrolleifr's companions in mischief, and both characters without any “official” genealogical links. Both the masculine and the feminine form of the name seem to have been common as real personal names, but the direct combination of these two names in a part of the plot where the epitome of *Vatnsdal* chieftainship is murdered, together with Ljót's association with heathen worship and black magic, strongly suggest that we again have a case where personal name and type of character form a unity.

opponent of Finnbogi in *Finnboga saga ramma*.

⁴ While this is a constant theme in the interaction of the two brothers, who seem to form a kind of symbiotic unity, this concept is nicely prepared in the naming scene: “*Sjá sveinn hefir hyggiligt augnabragð, ok skal eigi seilask til nafns; hann skal heita Þorstein, ok mun ek þess vilnask, at hamingja mun fylgja.*” *Sjá sveinn var snimma vænn og gørviligr, stilltr vel, orðviss, langsær, vinfastr ok hófsmaðr um alla hluti. Son áttu þau annan; sjá var ok borinn at feðr sínum, ok skyldi hann ráða fyrir nafni; hann leit á ok mælti: “Þessi sveinn er allmikilfengligr ok hefir hvassar sjónir; hann mun verða, ef hann lifir, ok eigi margra maki ok eigi mikill skapdeildarmaðr, en tryggr vinum ok frændum ok mun vera mikill kappi, ef ek sé nokkut til, mun eigi nauðr at minnask Jökuls frænda várs, sem faðir minn bað mik, ok skal hann heita Jökull.*” (V. s.:37)

⁵ Lönnroth 1976:62; perhaps one should modify Lönnroth's type slightly to fit Jökull Þorsteinsson. He does not suffer a terrible death or is forced to live in outlawry, but it is actually his brother who prevents him from this kind of fate. The relationship between the two brothers is aptly illustrated in a short dialogue in chapter 34: *Þá mælti Þorsteinn: “Hver er nú ráðagörð þín?” Jökull svarar: “Þetta veit ek þik eigi fyrr gort hafa, at leita ráða undir mik; mun hér ok til lítils at sjá, ef þeira þarf við, en þó verðr mér eigi til þessa ráðfátt; vit skulum fara til Undunfells, ok skal Þórir fara með okkr, bróðir okkar.*” This kind of balance between these two types of character is a constant theme throughout the saga. It reaches its peak in the conflict between Óttar í Grímstungum and the *Vatnsdæli*r, where Þorsteinn is forced to use a legal trick to prevent his son Ingólfr and his brother Jökull from starting an unjust bloodfeud. (cf c. 37)

⁶ I think that it might not be purely due to chance, that darker heroes like *Grettir*, (Víga-)Glúmr, (Víga-)Styrr, Egill, Skarp-Heðinn and Jökull bear names that point toward the direction of danger or general violence.

While it is surely a complicated question how far an uneducated audience could follow a literary expert, I think that my thesis regarding the name Jøkull is not all that problematic because it is a noun of everyday use and thus clearly understandable. Even if there existed a person with the name of Jøkull in the genealogy of the Hofverjar, which, of course, cannot be repudiated, it seems to be clear that name and character form a unity and become a literary, fictionalized figure. In his article about *The Significance of Names in Old English Literature*, Fred Robinson takes up an old discussion in his discipline concerning the interaction between name and character in the case of King Heremod in *Beowulf* and the problem of him being a figure of Danish historical tradition. In response to a point made by Frederick Klaeber in *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, Robinson writes after his analysis of both hagiographic and heroic poetry:

“Despite this aptness of the name, however, Klaeber dismisses Müllenhoff’s theory⁷ with the objection, “But later studies have shown him [Heremod] to be a definite figure in Danish historical-legendary tradition”. But is the implied premise valid? Must we exclude the possibility that even unalterable names inherited from tradition can bear pregnant meanings when the poet wishes them to?” (Robinson 1968:51–51)

He ends his article with the name Hygelac/Hugleikr and a summarization of both Old English and Old Norse scholarship about this name. The consensus appears to be that both the *Beowulf* poet, Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri etymologized the name and arranged their literary realization according to their respective etymology (Robinson 1968: 52–57).

A similarly interesting observation was made by Paul Beekman Taylor regarding the conception of Kári and Flosi in *Njáls saga*. He sees a link between the name Flosi, from *flása* (“to run precipitously” designates ‘irresponsible, deceitful, fickle’”, Beekman Taylor 1998:146) and the transformation of the otherwise quite honorable character into a vicious avenger through Hildigunn’s charge (Beekman Taylor 1998:146). Kári’s revenge and reconciliation with Flosi is in two instances directly influenced by the wind (Beekman Taylor 1998:146), which is remarkable since he is the namesake of another Kári, the son of Fornjótr, who is the mythological embodiment of the wind (Clunies Ross 1983:57).

A rather puzzling example of the poetics of personal names can be found in *Eyrbyggja saga*. The writer, who has a tendency to explain each and everything, tells us that our well known saga heroes (Víga) Styrr and Snorri goði did not receive the names under which they rose to literary fame at birth. They first had other names but were renamed at a later stage in their lives because of their temper (*Eyrbyggja saga*: pp.20–21). That Snorri goði was first called Þorgrímr and later received the name Snorri because of his temper is also told in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (p. 57).

The poetical use of names in Old Norse prose narrative certainly is a field that would deserve further research, but I think that these examples alone support Robinson’s comment on the creative possibilities of a medieval writer or poet.

But let us briefly return to the name of Jøkull.

Since the event of Jøkull’s death through the hand of Þorsteinn Ketilsson is a staged narrative unit, we should take a look at what happens in this scene. Þorsteinn is characterized both by the author directly and his father (V.s.:3f) as a physically rather insignificant figure, but after his father has egged him on he decides to set out for the yet anonymous robber who threatens the community. When he finally enters Jøkull’s house, we witness a rare instance of inner dialogue during which Þorsteinn struggles with his conscience about the necessity of

⁷ Müllenhoff (Müllenhoff Karl: *Beovulf: Untersuchungen über das angelsächsische Epos und die älteste Geschichte der germanischen Seevölker*. Berlin 1889, p.51.) translates the name *Heremod* as ‘kriegerischer Mut’ and concludes that name and character fit together remarkably well.

killing Jökull⁸. Jökull Ingimundarson the Elder should be more to the liking of Ketill raumr, Þorsteins father, because he is the prototype of Fornöld ethics, as he himself declares: “*eptir hætti ríkra manna sona aflaða ek mér fjár, þótt heldr væri frekliga att ort*” (V.s.:9). Jökull shows mercy towards Þorsteinn because he sees his extraordinary moral qualities⁹. The constant mirroring of superficially opposed virtues running through the whole story of the Ingimundarsons is already present in the story of the killing of Jökull the Elder through Þorstein the Elder, and that is the reason why the writer put so much detail into this passage. In this scene the foundation is laid for understanding the interaction between Þorsteinn and Jökull Ingimundarson.

While I think that the connection between name and character type in the case of Jökull is quite transparent, I would like to spin the thread a little further. As the title of this paper already indicates, I would like to take a closer look at the figure of Ingimundr Þorsteinsson, the most impressive representative of Vatnsdal chieftainship.

The name Ingimundr itself is perfectly regular and joins the wide variety of *-mundr* names that can be found in the corpus of Old Norse literature. For a name that is so stereotypically Germanic, it is somewhat odd that it appears only very rarely both in texts that are concerned with the Fornöld and those that play in the Söguöld. It becomes more common in the post conversion age up to the late Middle Ages (Lind 1905–15:637). While it is of course nearly impossible to make a suggestion about the frequency of names in a basically illiterate age, the earliest more or less historical bearer of this name I was able to discover is the Norwegian viking leader (H)Ingamund, who, according to the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, raided Chester and established a settlement on Angelsey at the beginning of the 10th century (Fragmentary Annals:169). From Uppland and Södermanland we have a variety of runestones which mention people named Ingimundr from around the middle of the 11th century¹⁰.

In Old Icelandic literary texts that place their matter into the pre-Christian time, the only two Ingimunds I was able to discover apart from *Vatnsdæla saga* were a character in *Hversu Nóregr Byggðist*, Ingimundr Aalfsson (Flateyrbók I 1860:24), and Ingimundr Hafsson in the longer version of *Þorvalds þáttur víðfærla*; that the writer again used an otherwise rare name that also appears in *Hversu Nóregr Byggðist* is an interesting feature that might serve to shed some light upon the saga’s function.

The longer A redaction of *Þorvalds þáttur víðfærla*, which is supposed to already have been included in Gunnlaugr Leifsson’s Latin *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Rafnsson 2005:114), tells us the story of five year old Ingimundr Hafsson, who seeks out bishop Friðrekr to receive baptism. While *Vatnsdæla saga* most likely integrated parts of *Þorvalds þáttur* into its story, the writer perhaps also drew some inspiration from this marginal character. When we look at Ingimundr Þorsteinsson we see a man who is deeply rooted within the lifestyle of the heroic Fornöld but who points at the same time toward a yet distant future. He has a natural piety that shows itself most obviously in his death, when he warns his slayer so that he can dodge the revenge of Ingimundr’s sons, a deed that Þorsteinn Ingimundarson characterizes as *góðgirnd* (V.s.:62). He is undoubtedly an *anima naturaliter christiana* (Kristjánsson 1994:242) but through his death he is transformed into a martyr. While Lars Lönnroth observed that the noble heathen retains characteristics of the heroic age, especially the duty of revenge (Lönnroth 1969:15), Ingimundr even stands above this legally supported act of just violence. The hagiographic undertones in the narration of Ingimundr’s death are further un-

⁸ Slíkt (his father’s hvöt and the troubles of his community) hvatti Þorstein fram, ok leitaði hann sér þá færís, at hann mætti einn hefna margra vanrétis, en í öðru lagi þótti honum þó skaði mikill um manninn. (V.s.:8)

⁹ ” mér segir svá hugr um, at þú munir gæfumaðr verða“ (V.s.:9)

¹⁰ Sö 194, Sö 10, U 72, U 296, U 495, U 388 \$, U 808, U 826, U 898, U 922 \$, U 1090 †, see <http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm>

derlined by the use of curses directed against Hrolleifr: *heljarmaðr* (pp 53, 59), *mannfjándi* (pp 56, 60), *mannþjofull* (p 59), *fjándinn* (p 59) etc.

This depiction of Ingimundr as a saintlike figure is quite remarkable for someone who earlier on seemed to have a special relationship to the pagan god Freyr, but this relation is a rather odd one. Young Ingimundr is a down-to-earth viking who shares the stereotypical aversion of the noble heathen against agents of the supernatural (V.s.:29). After a talk with his protégé Haraldr hárfagri he has to accept that Freyr wants him to leave Norway for recently settled Iceland. Ingimundr's settlement is heavily loaded with imagery connected to Yngvi-Freyr (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1992), and some form of godly protection is not merely indicated, but obvious through the supernatural guidance to Vatnsdal, a place that is separated from its surrounding by its bursting plentifulness (V.s.: 40–43), where Ingimundr establishes a community of extraordinary tranquility (V.s.:47). The first thing Ingimundr does when he constructs his homestead is erecting a large temple. This is again a rather odd behavior for a noble heathen, since the world of heathen worship should be a suspicious one for him. While *Vatnsdæla saga* has a rich stock of all sorts of sorcery and heathen practices, Ingimundr's temple only serves to trick the Norwegian Hrafn into giving his sword, which will become the emblem of Vatnsdal chieftainship, to Ingimundr as compensation for violating the sanctity of the building.

How can we summarize the religious ideas surrounding Ingimundr? The saga leaves no doubt that the divine intervention is not an illusion but an observable fact, the protagonists interpret this divine force as a form that is known to them as Freyr, the aristocratic (Motz 1996:13) sentinel over *ár ok friðr* (Snorraedda:29). Freyr might have been less problematic as a prefiguration of the Christian god than giant slaying Þórr or the sorcerer Óðinn. At some point Ingimundr seems to have realized that Freyr is just a shell for the “real” divine guide of his fortunes, the one who created the sun and the whole world (V.s.:62). Because of this knowledge he is able to mock the old gods by using their temple for a sham.

Besides this heavenly king, Ingimundr also has a close relation to Haraldr hárfagri, who is conceived as a just ruler and the greatest king of pre-Christian Scandinavia (V.s.:35). Earlier on in this paper, I called Ingimundr King Haraldr's protégé, and I think this description fits their relationship quite well. Haraldr provides Ingimundr with rich gifts, arranges his marriage, makes an exception to his anti-witchcraft policy so that Freyr's will can be revealed, encourages Ingimundr to settle in Iceland and supplies him with timber to build a representative farm. Ingimundr, on the other hand, is obedient to Haraldr (V.s.:34) as he is (subconsciously) obedient to Christian principles. While King Haraldr rewards him with gifts and his friendship, God rewards Ingimundr with a rich and prosperous life and the—for us today rather dubious—gift of martyrdom.

If we divide the name Ingimundr into its two elements *ingi* and *mund(r)*, we get two nouns that were understandable by a contemporary audience.

While *ingi* might have been a bit outdated, it was still in use in 13th century skaldic poetry, as a stanza by Sturla Þórðarson shows, in which he calls a Scottish nobleman *óþjóð inga* (Skjaldedigtning I A:221). Far more interesting for our purpose is a Lausavísa ascribed to Óláfr Haraldsson in the *Legendary Óláfs saga hins helga* in which he substitutes the name *Ingibjörg* by *gramr ok brattir hamrar* (Óláfs saga hins helga:134).

More problematic is the element *mund(r)*, not because of its meaning or its use in the 13th century, but because I was not able to discover any poem or stanza where it is used in the context of an onomastic wordplay. Nevertheless, as a mostly poetically used synonym for *hond/armr* (Lexicon Poeticum:413), *mund* is quite common. Perhaps it is not too far out to assume that the name Ingimundr could express a special relationship between the name bearer and earthly and heavenly kingship, perhaps with the meaning “protected by/in the hands of the lord/king”. Such a meaning would perfectly go along with both Ingimundr Hafrrson and

Ingimundr Þorsteinsson, unfortunately not with Ingimundr jarl, from whom Ingimundr Þorsteinsson inherits the name. It is tempting to read the name Ingimundr as a type-name, like the name Jökull, since its meaning fits to the character's roll perfectly. He is the foundation for the Hofverjar clan and Vatnsdal chieftainship, and through his death, he transformed to an Icelandic version of innocently slain martyrking¹¹.

I do not think that *Vatnsdæla saga* is primarily concerned with religious matters or written from a clerical perspective¹², but the development of religious ideas or knowledge is clearly employed by the writer as a structural device. Þorstein Ketilsson is reluctant to kill Jökull and ends his life with the words: „*uni ek því bezt við ævi mína, at ek hefi verit engi ágangsmáðr við menn*“ (V.s.:32). Ingimundr Þorsteinsson gets rewarded for his *góðgirnd* by a yet unknown creator and Þorkell krafla, who is saved through an act of mercy by Þorsteinn and Þórir Ingimundarson, replies to bishop Friðrekr that he does not want to have any other faith than “þeir Þorsteinn Ingimundarson höfðu ok Þórir fóstri minn; þeir trúðu á þann, er sólina hefir skapat ok öllum hlutum ræðr.“ Byskup svarar: „Þá sǫmu trú boða ek með þeiri grein, at trúa á einn guð föður, son ok helgan anda“ (V.s.:125). When the time is right, and the community of secular chieftains accepts and understands the necessity of the new faith, Þorkell gets baptized, “*þá er kristni var lögtekin á Íslandi*” (V.s.:126). Within this successive development of a religious idea, Ingimundr Þorsteinsson bridges the historical and ideological gap between the heroic age and the age of settlement. Through his character, the theme of being chosen, both by the king and by god, enters the saga, and completes the figure of the ideal late 13th century chieftain, whose secular ideals are discussed and set in relation to each other in two generations of Þorsteins and Jökuls.

It is not exactly a new idea that *Vatnsdæla saga* discusses the properties an ideal chieftain should have and might have been conceived as a kind of mirror for its contemporaries. Sigurður Guðmundsson called it *höfðingja skuggsjá* (V.s.:XXXII), while Einar Ólafur Sveinsson shared his, perhaps tongue in cheek, classification and said that its development should be seen against the background of the changing political landscape of late 13th century north-western Iceland (V.s.: XXVII–XXXII). I hope that my paper made clear that I, at least partially, share their view about this rather unusual saga. I think that my analysis of the Jökull figure supports the view that different aspects or qualities of chieftainship, and perhaps human nature in general, are set against each other in the form of the central characters that exemplify both the positive and the negative traits of the respective quality, while characters like Ingimundr Þorsteinsson and Þorkell krafla represent the ideal synthesis of boldness and restraint, muscle, brains and ethical behavior (cf. V.s.: XXXI). What distinguishes Ingimundr from his sons and Þorkell, who all are men with extraordinary strong luck and without doubt

¹¹ For the importance of the several types of martyr kings in both Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian nation building processes cf. Erich Hoffmann: *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern. Königsheiliger und Königshaus.* (=Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins, Vol. 69). Neumünster 1975

¹²I think that this is made clear in the dialogue between Þorkell krafla and bishop Friðrekr, which I already partially cited above. Þorkell takes baptism when the Icelandic legislature, consisting of secular chieftains, agrees to accept it. It is tempting to see this attitude as a literary reflection of the struggle between Ásgrímur Þorsteinsson and bishop Árni Þorláksson that was only solved on a personal level when Ásgrímur died in 1285 and Árni lifted his excommunication. As Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has shown, there is a close connection between *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* and the family of Ásgrímur (Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 2004: *Absent Mother and the Sons of Fornjótr: Late-Thirteenth-Century Monarchist Ideology in Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*. In: *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 14. Pp. 133–160, cf. pp 154), *Vatnsdæla saga* is like *Þorsteins saga* part of the “Gautland Cycle” that Lee M. Hollander identified (Lee M. Hollander: *The Gautland Cycle of Sagas. I. The Source of the Polyphemos Episode of the Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar. II. Evidences of the Cycle*. In: *JEGP* 11, 1912. Pp. 61–81 & 209–217), therefore it is in my eyes not too far fetched that the struggle between secular and clerical powers at the end of the 13th century in both Norway and Iceland also influenced the theme of *Vatnsdæla saga*. That does not mean, however, that I subscribe to the long outdated and never convincing concept of the “two cultures”.

noble heathens, is that he appears to be a “chosen” figure, one of these rare characters with whom the Christian god communicates on a personal level. He becomes the spiritual foundation for Hofverjar chieftainship. This is clearly shown by the narrative and indicated by his name. Wherever the author got his names from, he was able to give them a deeper meaning within his story.

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Sagas and Archaeology in the Mosfell Valley, Iceland

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The relationship between sagas and modern archaeology is just beginning. This paper discusses the nature of the relationship in light of findings of the Mosfell Archaeological Project (MAP). In particular, I will discuss the recent excavations in the Mosfell Valley (Mosfellsdalur) in Iceland, where we are unearthing a chieftain's establishment at Hrísbú – including a longhouse, a church, a graveyard, and a cremation grave – and other sites in the Mosfell Valley including a stone ship setting and ship's landing. The Mosfell Valley was the home of the Mosfell chieftains (the Mosfellingar) a family of warriors, farmers, and legal specialists. Focusing on this glaciated and once wooded valley, our task is to unearth the prehistory and early history of the Mosfell region. We seek the data to provide an in-depth understanding of how this countryside or *sveit* evolved from the earliest Viking Age habitation.

The Mosfell excavation is an interdisciplinary research project employing the tools of archaeology, history, anthropology, forensics, environmental sciences, and saga studies. The work is constructing a picture of human habitation and environmental change in the region of Mosfell (Mosfellssveit). As part of our excavations we are developing a concept of “valley-system” archaeology. Mosfellsdalur, the surrounding highlands, and the lowland coastal areas form a valley system, that is, an interlocking series of natural and man-made components that, beginning in the ninth-century settlement or *landnám* period, developed into a functioning Icelandic community of the Viking Age.

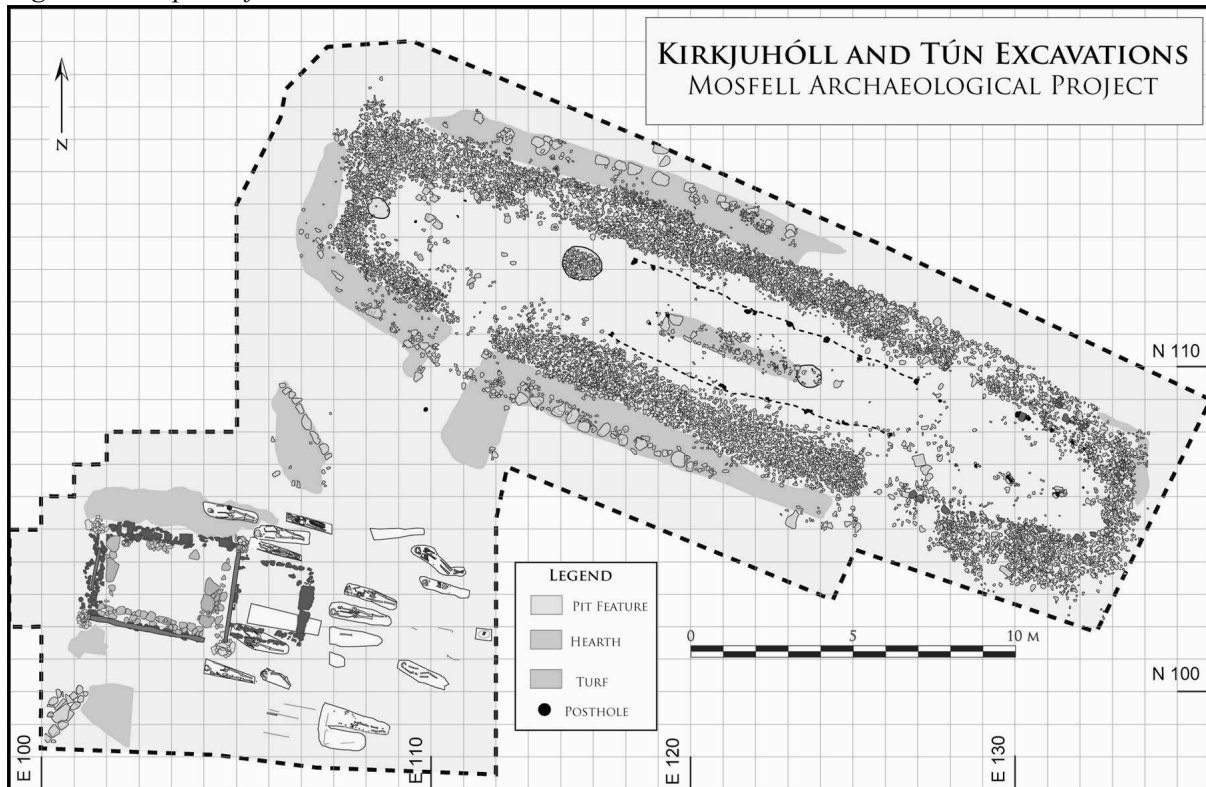
The archaeological work began with surveys and test excavations in the mid 1990s and major excavations began in 2001. The yearly archaeology, which continues into 2009, has documented a rich Viking Age and *landnám* period occupational history.¹ The 2001 excavation at Hrísbú revealed the presence of significant remains, including an early church, a surrounding cemetery, and an adjacent burial mound containing remains of human cremation. The goals of our subsequent field seasons have been to expand the scope of this work, and in recent years we have excavated a large (28 meters long) and exceptionally well-preserved early tenth-century *eldskáli* (firehall or longhouse).

Our excavations on the Hrísbú farm focus on four archaeological deposits: Kirkjuhóll (Church Knoll), the hillock just behind the modern farm's stable; The *tún* or hayfield just north of Kirkjuhóll; Hulduhóll (Elfin Hill), a hillock located about 60 m west of Kirkjuhóll; and Loddahóll, a small knoll at the far north-eastern corner of the home field (*tún*), the hay meadow immediately north of Kirkjuhóll (see Fig. 1). Elsewhere in the valley we have several major sites under excavation. This concept of multidisciplinary archaeology, combining analysis of the cultural and environmental landscapes of a valley including the surrounding highlands and coast, is particularly well-suited to Viking and North Atlantic archaeology.

From the start we have sought the significant oral memory of the local families. When we began excavating in the Mosfell Valley in 1995, the knolls at Kirkjuhóll and Hulduhóll were used as pasture. Both of these adjacent knolls were covered with grass, and their surfaces were undisturbed except where the trappings of cows exposed small patches of earth. The farmers, Ólafur Ingimundarson and Andrés Ólafsson, whose family has lived on the land for many generations, are extremely knowledgeable about life and the changes in land use in the Valley.

¹ For an overview of the work of the earlier excavations of Mosfell Archaeological Project, see Byock *et al.* 2005:195–218 and Holck 2005:340–348.

Figure 1. Site plan of the Church Knoll and Tún Excavations at Hrisbrú.



No agricultural machinery had ever been used on the knoll because of the reverence attached to Kirkjuhóll in oral memory as the site of an ancient church. To date this remains the case, a situation that is relatively rare on contemporary Icelandic farms which are highly mechanized. The same has held true for Hulduhóll, with oral stories attaching to it the interdiction that it was to be left alone because it was inhabited by ‘the hidden people’ or elves. As it turned out, both knolls were connected with ancient mortuary rites, Christian and pagan.

Of crucial importance, the archaeology at the Mosfell Valley sites is aided by a wealth of surviving medieval Icelandic writings, including *The Book of Settlements (Landnámabók)*, *Egil’s Saga (Egils saga Skallagrímssonar)*, *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent Tongue (Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu)*, *Hallfred’s Saga (Hallfreðar saga)*, *The Saga of the People of Kjalarness (Kjalnesinga saga)*, *The Saga of the People of Floi Bay (Flóamanna saga)*, and *The Short Saga of Orm Storólfsson (Orms þáttur Stórólfssonar)* in *Flateyjarbók*. These sources describe sites in the Mosfell Valley and at Leirvogur (Clay Bay), the inlet on the coast below the mouth of the valley into which the rivers of the valley flow.

If we are to believe the written sources, the Mosfell chieftains loomed large in the Viking Age history of Iceland’s western region. The geographical position of their lands and their area of power allowed the Mosfellingar to monitor and benefit from the travel and trade that passed through their valley system. *Egil’s Saga* tells us about one of these leaders, Grímr Svertingsson, who lived at Hrisbrú. Grímr was the lawspeaker of Iceland from 1002 to 1004, the years immediately following the conversion in the year 1000. Grímr converted and is said to have built a church at Hrisbrú. From the medieval writings, one can piece together considerable information about the Mosfell chieftains. For instance, *Gunnlaug’s Saga*, *Hallfred’s Saga*, and *Egil’s Saga* indicate that the Mosfellingar controlled the Nesses, the region of modern-day Reykjavík, extending perhaps out to present day Seltjarnarnes. From the Nesses these chieftains are said to have called up men to support their authority with force.

Figure 2. The longhouse at the end of MAP's 2007 excavation. The building seen from the eastern end is divided into three rooms. The sunken central hall, which had a longfire down the center (and was still to be excavated at the time of this picture), dates from around the year 900. The benches in the central eldskáli or fire hall can be clearly seen. The room at the far western end had a wooden floor.



The Mosfellingar are also said to have entered into marriage alliances with the *goðar* (chieftains) at Borg in Borgarfjörður, the descendents of the *landnámsmaður* Skallagrímur Kveldulfsson. Such an alliance, if it did in fact take place, was logical, and it would have added considerably to the power and authority of both the Mosfellingar and the people at Borg. The two were close enough to support each other but far enough away not to compete for thingmen. The scene in Chapter 81 of *Egil's Saga* when Egill comes to the support of his son Thorsteinn, is one of the great moments in the sagas. When matters of feud and law look bad for Thorstein, a man, leading a group of warriors, rides into the local assembly in Borgarfjörður. "This was Egill Skallagrímsson, who had come with eighty men all fully armed as if ready for battle, a choice company, for Egill had taken with him all the best farmers' sons in the Nesses." (*Egil's Saga* 1976:226.)

Having medieval narrative sources, such as those connected with the Mosfell sites, or written sources at all, is exceptional in Viking archaeology. Extensive Viking Age sites are found throughout mainland Scandinavia, the British Isles and northern Europe, but because of the paucity of written sources, archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists often know little about the inhabitants, their personal history or specific socio-economic and political relationships. The Viking Age sites in Mosfellssveit are somewhat different. The fact that we use all the available sources is a distinguishing feature of our archaeology. This much we can say, that despite all the saga evidence and in the face of the location right on the outskirts of present-day Reykjavík, no one had excavated these sites since the twelfth century, when *Egil's Saga* tells us that the graveyard at Hrisbrú was dug when the old conversion-age church was taken down and a new church built further up the valley (Byock 1993).

Just how to find this graveyard was a question. We tried geophysical tests of the *Kirkjuhóll* and *tún* sites but the resulting magnetometer and resistivity maps of these areas did not sug-

gest the presence of subterranean architectural features. Nevertheless, we decided it was worth testing the site because of its place name. Once the excavations began, we soon found concentrations of burned animal bone and other domestic refuse from a settlement period (*landnám*) farm, graves with an east-west orientation indicating the presence of a Christian cemetery, and finally the foundations of buildings.

Thirteen of the twenty-three skeletal remains excavated at Hrisbrú were suitable for analysis, offering considerable evidence about the health status and living conditions of Iceland's early inhabitants (Walker *et al.* 2004). From the written sources we know that the economic life of these people centered on a settled pastoral life of stock-raising, coastal fishing, and the gathering of wild foods in a challenging marginal environment. The skeletons witness a rough and violent kind of life, with infectious diseases and probable occurrence of tuberculosis. Traumatic injuries appear to have been common. One person buried in the cemetery is an apparent homicide victim with massive head injuries. Another has a healed leg fracture. In addition to traumatic injuries, skeletal lesions associated with heavy labor and infectious diseases are also common in this tenth and eleventh century population.

Several individuals, including an adolescent, show evidence of strenuous physical activity involving the hands and arms and osteoarthritis is prevalent. One young man from this cemetery is of special interest owing to the presence of lesions associated with a chronic ear infection that resulted in a brain abscess. Another adolescent male has lesions on the pleural surfaces of his ribs. Although other diagnoses are possible, the lesions in both of these cases suggest that tuberculosis was present in the Hrisbrú population. Stature comparisons with the early conversion period burials at Hrisbrú and contemporaneous skeletal remains from Norway provide additional data on the living conditions of these people. These data show that stressful living conditions and heavy labor were common among early Icelanders even at such a prominent site as Hrisbrú.

Archaeology, history, and saga studies are sciences and studies for exploring the past, and all have their methods and foci. This paper offers insight into archaeological methods and presents some of the types of data from which saga scholars, historians, and anthropologists can draw inferences from the archaeology. At its most obvious, we can now draw the conclusion that the descriptions found in *Egil's Saga* and *Gunnlaug's Saga* about the farmstead of the Mosfellingar (*Egils saga* 1933, chapter 86; *Gunnlaugs saga*, p. 105) are reflected in the archaeological finds. We now know much more about the material culture of a site described in the sagas than was possible within the scope of the traditional analysis of the written sources.

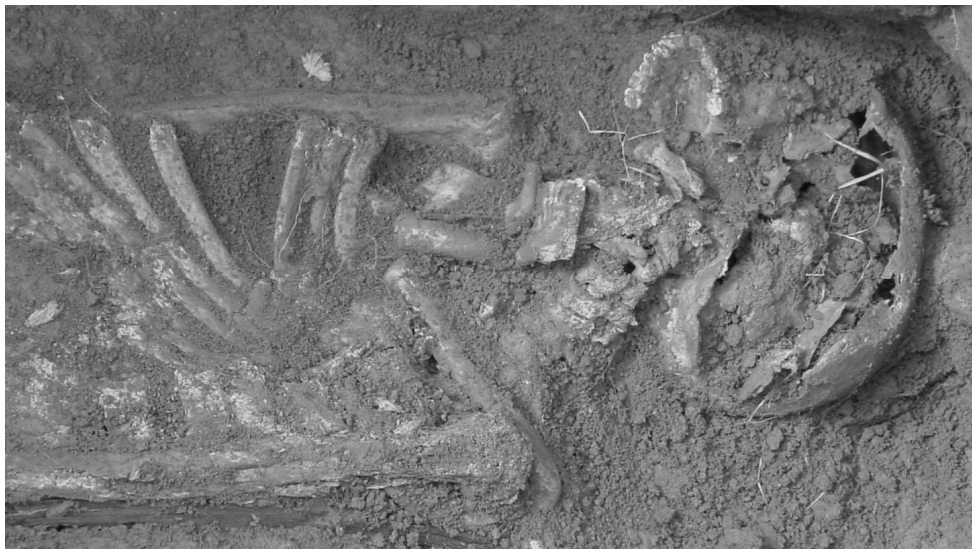


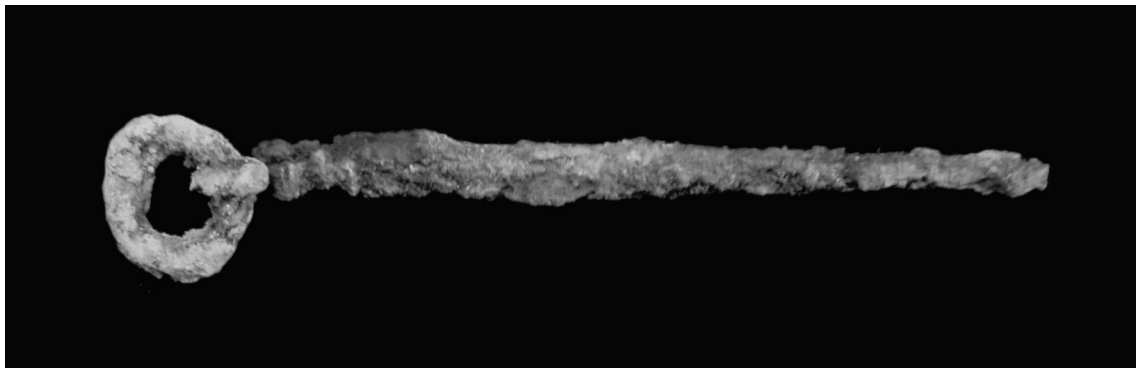
Figure 3. A man in his mid-forties found just east of the church chancel at Hrisbrú. He died of wounds. Radio-carbon dating places the man in the later half of the tenth century or the early part of the eleventh.

It is hard to imagine it now, especially in light of the rich archaeological finds, but at the start of our excavations, a many archaeologists, historians, and saga scholars thought it was futile to consult the family sagas as sources for aiding in locating sites. We were told that everyone already knew (or was supposed to know) that the *Íslendingasögur* were thirteenth-century fictional literary creations. The question we asked was whether a careful researcher should or should not use every tool and clue at hand in the process of discovery, especially in light of the rather clear hint in *Egil's Saga* (1933, Chapter 86) about when, why, and by whom, a conversion-age church was built at Hrisbrú (*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, p. 105).²

Grímr at Mosfelli³ var skírðr, þá er kristni var í lög leidd á Íslandi; hann lét þar kirkju gera. En þat er sögn manna, at Þórdís hafi látit flytja Egil til kirkju, ok er það til jarðtegra, at síðan er kirkja var gör at Mosfelli, en ofan tekin at Hrisbrú sú kirkja, er Grímr hafði gera látit [...].

When Christianity was adopted by law in Iceland, Grímr of Mosfell was baptized and built a church there. People say that Thórdís had Egil's bones moved to the church, and this is the evidence. When a church was built at Mosfell, the one Grímr had built at Hrisbrú was taken down [...].

Figure 4. A Viking Age ring pin, Western Norse/Celtic style. Such pins were used by men to hold in place their cloaks. This pin is of iron and the only such iron pin found so far in Iceland. It was found in the soil lying above the head of the man pictured in Figure 3 above, whose skeleton is drawn (feature 2) in the 2003 site map below.



² For the full passage in English, see *Egil's Saga* 1975, pp. 170–171.

³ Grímr was the lawspeaker of Iceland from 1002 to 1004. His wife Thórdís was the stepdaughter of Egill Skallagrímsson, who lived with Grímr and Thórdís and was said to be buried in the Mosfell Valley. For the posthumous travels of Egill, see Byock 1995:82–87.

Figure 5. Beads, some with exotic designs. More than twenty beads were found within the longhouse. The largest number of such finds within an Icelandic turf house. They offer some indication of the wealth and high status of the inhabitants of the Hrisbrú farmstead.



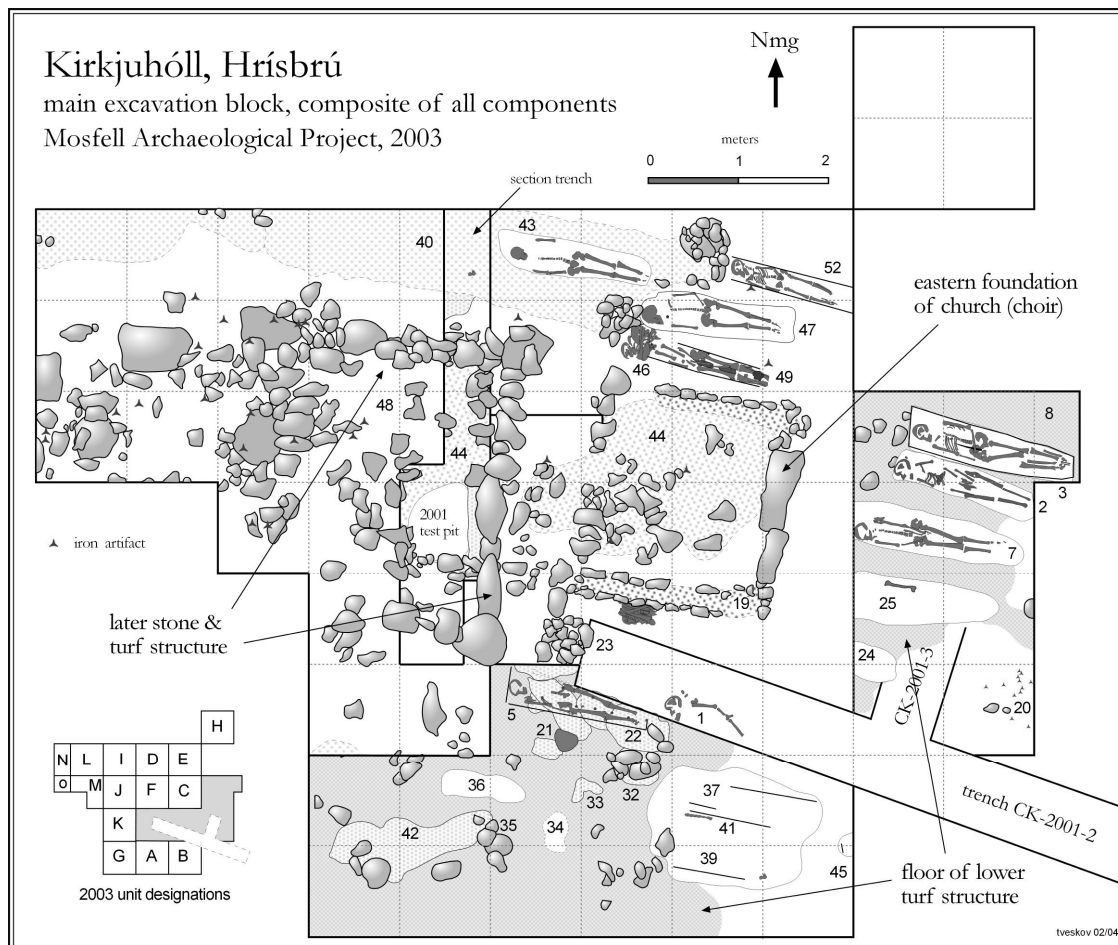
While we do not by any means believe everything found in the written materials, the sources concerning Mosfell are often basic and detailed. We have in these writings a core of information from a variety of sources about settlers, chieftains, warriors, women, lawgivers, slaves, laborers, travelers, and merchants passing through Mosfellssveit. Much of this information speaks to the material and social culture, describing habitation sites, lands, a ship's port, burials, social standing, kinship relations, economic arrangements, as well as determinations of causes and places of conflict. The same can be said for many sagas, and the modern archaeological as well as anthropological, historical, and literary use of Iceland's medieval texts requires a methodology which recognizes both the oral and the written nature of these sources.⁴

The passages about the Mosfell region are a case in point. As a grouping of sources about a regional chieftaincy or *goðorð*, the passages from different texts have been largely overlooked by historians and anthropologists. Together the recent archaeological finds by MAP and the ancient written materials offer a new combination of information about a 250-year period in the past of an important region from the early 10th to the mid-12th century, a time which spans the transition from prehistory to history, from paganism to Christianity.

Mosfellssveit encapsulates the major ecologies of Iceland: coastal, riverine, and highland. Culturally, the region is equally representative. In some ways it was a self-contained social and economic unit. In other ways, it was connected to the rest of Iceland, not least, through a network of roads, including an east-west route to the nearby meeting of the yearly Althing. With its coastal port at Leiruvogur, the region was in commercial and cultural contact with the larger Scandinavian and European worlds, possibly as far east as Constantinople and perhaps further to the west.

⁴ Concerning such a methodology see Byock 2001, pp. 21–24 and pp. 149–151. See also Byock 1982, which explores the oral saga in light of narrative technique and the cultural and social backgrounds of a feuding culture. Distinguishing social memory is also a central issue, Byock 2004, pp. 299–316.

Figure 6. The conversion-age stave church in early stages of excavation. The church chancel at the right is excavated. The foundation stones from the later period building overlaying the church nave were removed in the 2004 excavations. The nave below was undisturbed by the upper agricultural building. Beneath the church is an older turf building.



The research, in reconstructing the early social history of the Mosfell Valley region, integrates information on the changing periods of occupation. We excavate individual sites, both secular and religious, and consider their placement in relationship to one another. We examine the apportionment of open spaces and the utilization of common lands in the highlands and on the coast. Written, archaeological, and other scientific information are integrated into this study as we construct a picture of early life.

The different specialists on the MAP team explore among other subjects the development of roads and paths, the importance of the ships' landing at Leiruvogur, the changes over time in subsistence strategies, the state of health and disease in the Viking Age and later population, developments in building techniques, and the usage of smaller activity areas, such as the *sel*, or summer dairy stations. We are asking questions about the production of iron in the early period⁵ and finding the locations of burials and early farm sites. In some instances our task is to find the remains of turf buildings, roads, burials, agricultural enclosures, and port facilities before they are destroyed by modern construction.

⁵ The iron artifacts in this late iron age society are numerous, see Zori 2007:32–47.

Figure 7. Man-made stone settings shaped like ships. These are the first such monuments found in Iceland.

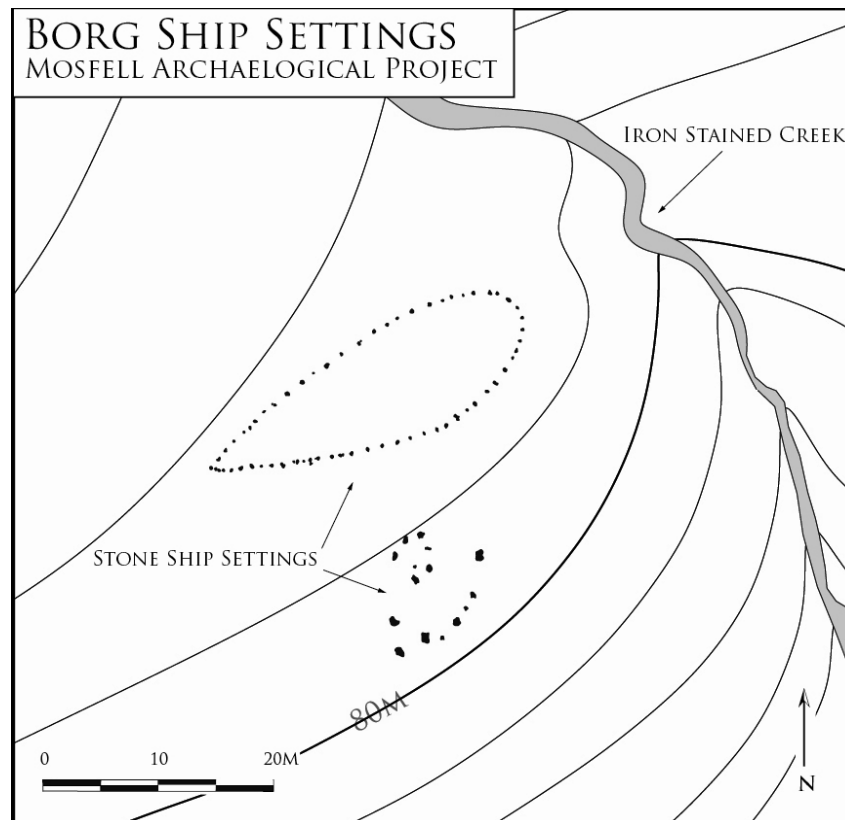
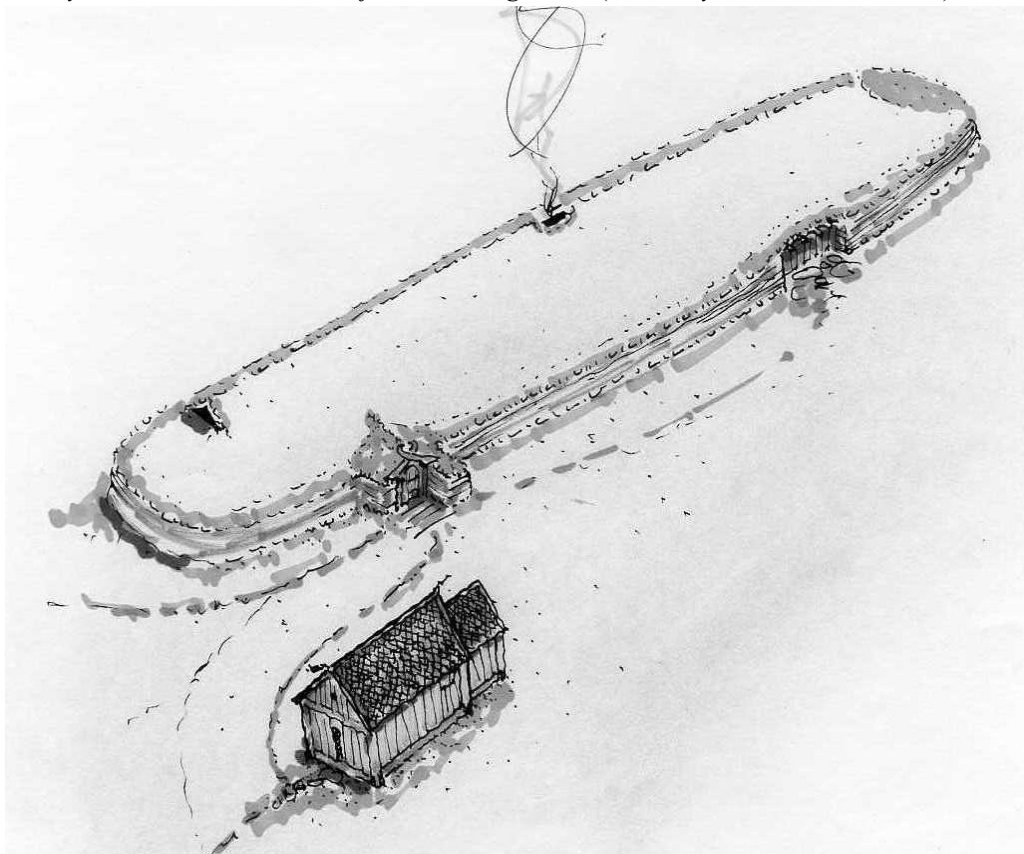


Figure 8. Architectural renderings of the buildings at Hrisbrú in the Mosfell Valley. The church is approximately twelve meters distance from the longhouse (drawn by Grétar Markússon).



The Mosfell Archaeological Project is comprised of an international team and is conducted under the direction of Prof. Jesse Byock of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). The field director is Davide Zori (UCLA). The international group works in Iceland in cooperation with archaeologists from Þjóðminjasafn (Iceland's National Museum) and with members of the local Mosfellsbær community as well as with professors and students at the University of Iceland and other Icelandic researchers. This article is dedicated to the memory of Phillip Walker, my friend, colleague, and co-director of the Mosfell Archaeological Project.

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An Icelandic Genesis

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In this paper I contend that there is a subtle yet fundamental set of Biblical parallels in the opening sections of Landnámabók as it appears in the Sturlubók and Hauksbók redactions.¹ My particular focus is on the apparent comparability of Flóki and Noah, I also compare Ingólfr with Abraham and Þorkell máni (Ingólfr's grandson) with Moses.² I will first explore the biblical parallels in greater detail and then move on to their potential implications, functions and the contemporary precedents for them. It is my belief that these parallels were deliberately developed to forward religious and socio-political ends and ideals: to suggest a parallel between the early Icelandic settlers and the Old Testament patriarchs; between the Icelandic people and the chosen people; and between Iceland and the Promised Land.

The parallel between Hrafna-Flóki and Noah is well established in Norse scholarship, but the origins and nature of that comparison are not as well known.³ According to Ldn Flóki was one of the first explorers from Norway to discover Iceland and reputedly gave it its name.⁴ While there had been rumours of an uninhabited land to the north no one knew exactly where it was and so Flóki took three ravens with him in order to help him find the way. It is the release of these birds, his utilisation of them to find land and the sequence of their flights that creates certain parallels with Noah's sending out flights that creates certain parallels with Noah sending out of a raven and dove in Gen 8. Admittedly the idea of birds being used in navigation could have many sources, from Pliny to real life practices.⁵ In addition the general use of ravens (and other birds) as messengers and omens is certainly well attested both in Norse and continental sources.⁶ On the other hand the sequence of the ravens' flights within

¹ Hereafter Sturlubók = S, Hauksbók = H, Landnámabók = Ldn. S is thought to be composed by Sturla Þórðarson c. 1275–80, the only surviving manuscript is a seventeenth-century copy of the earlier vellum AM 107 fol. H survives primarily in AM 105 fol. although fourteen leaves of the text in the original codex (AM 371 4to) survive. It is thought to have been composed by Haukr Erlendsson c. 1306–8. These are considered to be the oldest surviving redactions of the text, although there are differing opinions over whether the Melabók (AM 445b 4to) fragments derive from an older original; see, Jón Jóhannesson (1941:54–67, 221–6); Ólsen (1920:283–300); Jónas Kristjánsson (1956). For overview of all the Ldn manuscripts and redactions see Jakob Benediktsson (2003); Jón Jóhannesson (1941).

² Finnur Jónsson (1900:5–9(H), 130–4(S)). For normalized texts of both redactions see Jakob Benediktsson (1968:37–47).

³ An un-sourced footnote in Herman Pálsson and Edwards (1972:17, f. 9) leads after a long paper-chase to Bernström (1964:cl. 170), who describes a critical discussion that he states ultimately ended in acceptance of a probable connection between Ldn ch. 5 and Gen 8. Bernström misattributes Fritzner, (1886–96:47) as the source of this theory.

⁴ Jakob Benediktsson (1968: 36–39(S,H)).

⁵ Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 6:24; Rackham (1938–63). For Pliny's possible connection to Ldn ch. 5 see Bernström (1964:cl. 170); Jakob Benediktsson (1968:36, f. 5). Hornell (1946) catalogues some interesting examples of navigation using birds, although this article should perhaps be treated with circumspection.

⁶ With regards ravens as messengers, assistants or omens in Norse literature the archetypal pair would seem to be Huginn and Muninn, Óðinn's attendants. The direct discussion of their role is minimal and interdependent: *Grímnismál* 20, *Gylfaginning* 38 and *Ynglinga saga* 7 Neckel (1983:61); Faulkes (1982:32–3); Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1941–51:18–9); but there is substantial evidence attesting an association of some kind in the form of kennings, heiti and (admittedly ambiguous) iconography. For kennings and heiti linking Óðinn and ravens see, Eysteinn Björnsson, <http://www3.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/kennings/allraven.html> and <http://www3.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/kennings/kappa.html>. Ravens do appear as both messengers and omens in Norse literature outside the context of (direct) divine association, see Boberg (1966:43–4); and Fritzner (1891:47–8). Earlier and contemporary Insular and continental literature do less frequently portray ravens in a similar fashion. See Colgrave (1940:100–3, 222–5); Colgrave (1956:116–21, 124–7); Kalinke (2005: 113, 122–137, 175–181). These sacred continental examples possibly stem from the biblical example of Job in I Kings 17:2–6 whom God sustained in the wilderness by sending ravens to bring him meat.

the Ldn passage are similar enough to those of Noah's raven and dove to suggest a deliberate parallel may have been intended. If we compare Gen 8:6–13, with chapter 5 of Ldn we can see these similarities more clearly:

Vulgate	Ldn ⁷
	S: Flóki hafði hrafna þrjá með sér í haf. H: Þaðan sigldi hann út í haf með hrafna þá þrjá, er hann hafði blótat í Nóregi.
8.6 cumque transissent quadraginta dies aperiens Noe fenestram arcae quam fecerat dimisit corvum	ok er hann lét lausan enn fyrsta,
8.7 qui egrediebatur et revertebatur donec siccarentur aquae super terram	fló sá aprtr um stafn;
8.8 emisit quoque columbam post eum ut videret si iam cessassent aquae super faciem terrae	annarr fló í lopt upp
8.9 quae cum non invenisset ubi requiesceret pes eius reversa est ad eum in arcam aqua enim erant super universam terram extenditque manum et adperhensam intulit in arcam	ok aprtr til skips;
8.10 expectatis autem ultra septem diebus aliis rursum dimisit columbam ex arca	
8.11 at illa venit ad eum ad vesperam portans ramum olivae virentibus foliis in ore suo intellexit ergo Noe quod cessassent aquae super terram	
8.12 expectavitque nihilominus septem alios dies et emisit columbam quae non est reversa ultra ad eum	enn þriðri fló fram um stafn
8.13 igitur sescentesimo primo anno primo mense prima die mensis inminutae sunt aquae super terram et aperiens Noe tectum arcae aspexit viditque quod exsiccata esset superficies terrae	í þá átt, sem þeir fundu landit.

⁷ Jakob Benediktsson, ed. (1968:36 (S), 37, 39 (H)). With the exception of the opening lines, which I have included for context, the S and H redactions contain no substantive differences in this section. For ease of use the normalised S text is given here. For the variations between the texts see Finnur Jónsson (1900:5(H), 130(S)).

8.6 And after that forty days were passed, Noe, opening the window of the ark which he had made, sent forth a raven

8.7 Which went back and forth until the waters were dried up upon the earth

8.8 He sent forth also a dove after him, to see if the waters had now ceased upon the face of the earth

8.9 But she, not finding where her foot might rest, returned to him into the ark: for the waters were upon the whole earth: and he put forth his hand, and caught her, and brought her into the ark

8.10 And having waited yet seven other days, he again sent forth the dove out of the ark

8.11 And she came to him in the evening, carrying a bough of an olive tree, with green leaves, in her mouth. Noe therefore understood that the waters were ceased upon the earth

8.12 And he stayed yet other seven days: and he sent forth the dove, which returned not any more unto him

8.13 Therefore in the six hundredth and first year, the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were lessened upon the earth, and Noe opening the covering of the ark, looked, and saw that the face of the earth was dried

S: Flóki had three ravens with him at sea,
H: Then he sailed out to sea with the three ravens which he had consecrated in Norway.

and when he set loose the first one

that flew back from the stern;

the second flew up in the air

and back to the ship;

the third one flew from the prow

in that direction they found the land.

As the table seeks to demonstrate, the flight of Flóki's ravens can be credibly compared with the flight of Noah's raven and the first and third flight of Noah's dove. In such a comparison the raven that flies from the stern of Flóki's ship is like Noah's raven which flies away with ambiguous hopes of return; and the raven that flies upwards and then returns to the boat is equivalent to Noah's dove, its first unsuccessful flight and return. The final raven which flies straight from the prow in the direction of land represents the dove's final flight and its departure from the ark, which indicates the emergence of land.

The elliptical brevity of the Ldn passage, compared to the Biblical section, cuts the action to the bare minimum to enable comparison, but this brevity may argue a universal referent which the audience could use to decode these actions. The image of a bird returning with an olive branch (Gen 8:10–11) throws into sharp relief the differences in context and function between the Genesis and Ldn passages and perhaps has not been paralleled by Ldn for this reason, despite its iconic status: there are no olive trees in Iceland. Finally, the fact that all of Flóki's birds are ravens whereas all the unambiguously successful flights in Genesis are carried out by a dove is a suggestive discrepancy that I will discuss below.

Apart from Noah and Flóki, I propose two further parallels between the characters in Ldn and the Old Testament: between Ingólfr and Abraham and between Þorkell máni and Moses. According to both Ldn and *Íslendingabók*, Ingólfr Arnarson was the first permanent settler in Iceland.⁸ Ldn states that he was 'frægastr allra landnámsmanna, því at hann kom hér at óbyggðu landi ok byggði fyrstr landit' and furthermore that 'gerðu þat aðrir landnámsmenn

⁸ On *Íslendingabók's* portrayal of Ingólfr, see Jakob Benediktsson (1968:5)

eptir hans dœmum’.⁹ It is arguable that his status as the exemplary settler and thus symbolic founder of the Icelandic nation makes him a quasi-Abrahamic figure. As Abraham fathered the twelve tribes of Israel so Ingólfr’s example gave birth to Iceland.¹⁰ Furthermore, Ldn depicts Ingólfr as both particularly assiduous in performing his pagan sacrificial duties and as prospering, apparently as a result of this assiduity.¹¹ This is in direct contrast to his blood-brother Hjörleifr whose ignominious death at the hands of his own slaves Ingólfr attributes to his unwillingness to sacrifice.¹² Abraham was so assiduous in his sacrificial duty to God that he was prepared to kill his own son.¹³ Margaret Clunies Ross interprets Ldn’s description of Ingólfr’s sacrificial practices as a ritual transference of luck from old land to new, but suggests that, at least in the context of landnám, it does not matter whether the luck transferred is pagan or Christian:

[...] the advent of Christianity by no means extinguished the land rights and authority of the Christian descendants of the first settlers. Rather the new religion preserved the authority vested by the pagan deities in the practitioners and upholders of the old.¹⁴

What better way of preserving that authority than casting their pre-Christian forebears as types of Old Testament patriarchs? If Ingólfr was seen by twelfth- and thirteenth-century audiences as an Abrahamic figure, then his sacrificial practices can be conceived of as having both the disassociated historical context and perhaps even the divine sanction of Abraham’s example. Not only were such notable men of the Old Testament known to be guaranteed redemption despite not being Christian,¹⁵ they had been further redeemed by exegetes who made the Old Testament foreshadow the New Testament through typology.¹⁶ The comparison between Ingólfr and Abraham is more tenuous than that between Flóki and Noah, as it is one of type rather than episodic detail. While this makes the comparison difficult to substantiate it does not entirely rule it out. Arguably, after being keyed-in to the existence of biblical parallels within the text by the more obvious Flóki comparison, the audience would be prepared to read further, more subtle, parallels in the following sections.

Immediately after the description of Ingólfr’s ultimate success as the exemplary settler there is an outline of his lineage through to the time of the redactions’ writing. Most of his descendants are merely named but one – his grandson, Þorkell máni – is the subject of a more sustained description. He is said to have been a lawspeaker and though a heathen, he was exceptionally pure in his person and behaviour.¹⁷ Furthermore we are informed that: ‘lét sik bera í sólargeisla í banasótt sinni ok fal sik á hendi þeim guði, er sólina hafði skapat’.¹⁸ Giving

⁹ ‘[...]the most famous of all the settlers, because he came here when the land was uninhabited and he was the first man to settle.’ ‘other settlers came and followed his example.’ Jakob Benediktsson (1968:46). This is the S text; H uses ‘auðu’ (desolate) to replace the uncommon compound ‘óbyggðu’ (uninhabited). Jakob Benediktsson (1968:47).

¹⁰ For Abraham’s life see Gen 11–25, his naming as father of nations Gen 17:5. For Paul’s pivotal description of Abraham as the father of all believers see Rom 4:1, 13 and Gal. 3:7–4:22. For a brief overview of Abraham, see Metzger and Coogan, sv. ‘Abraham’.

¹¹ Clunies Ross (1998:16–19).

¹² Jakob Benediktsson (1968:42, 44).

¹³ Gen 22.

¹⁴ Clunies Ross, (1998:25).

¹⁵ See Turville-Petre (1953:126–8) on Icelandic versions of the harrowing of hell.

¹⁶ Typology was used by Christian exegetes to connect the Old Testament to the new and make it symbolically foreshadow Christ. See Smalley (1982); Weber (1987).

¹⁷ Jakob Benediktsson (1968:46(S), 47(H)). For the life of Moses see Exod 6-Deut 35. For general discussion of Moses see Metzger and Coogan, sv. ‘Moses’, and sv. ‘Law’.

¹⁸ Jakob Benediktsson (1968:46(S)). ‘In his fatal illness he had himself borne into the sun’s rays and committed himself to the hands of that god who had created the sun’. There are minor but none substantive differences in

reverence to ‘the one who made the sun’, particularly in combination with Þorkell’s other qualities, suggests he is a typical example of what Lönnroth terms ‘the noble heathen’. One of the main purposes for the Christian writers to make the anachronistic insertion of such a character into settlement age narratives is to ‘justify the past and to bring it into concordance with the values of their own time’.¹⁹ A Christian audience may have read in Þorkell’s death a further redeeming narrative element beyond that offered by the ‘noble heathen’ form, as it is loosely comparable with the death of Moses as described in Deut. 33–34. At the end of his life Moses is informed by God that despite leading his people well he will not live to set foot in the Promised Land. He therefore has himself taken to a mountain-top from which he can look upon it in his last moments:

Ascendit ergo Moyses de campestribus Moab super montem Nebo, in verticem Phasga contra Jericho : ostenditque ei Dominus omnem terram Galaad usque Dan [...]

Dixitque Dominus ad eum : Hæc est terra, pro qua juravi Abraham, Isaac, et Jacob, dicens : Semini tuo dabo eam. Vidisti eam oculis tuis, et non transibis ad illam.

Mortuusque est ibi Moyses servus Domini, in terra Moab, jubente Domino

et sepelivit eum in valle terræ Moab contra Phogor : et non cognovit homo sepulchrum ejus usque in præsentem diem.²⁰ (Deut. 34:1, 4–6)

Both S and H immediately follow the narration of Þorkell’s death first with the information that ‘hafði hann ok lifat svá hreinliga sem þeir kristnir menn, er bezt eru siðaðir’ and then procede to inform us that ‘[s]on hans var Þormóðr, er þá var allsherjargoði, er kristni kom á Ísland’.²¹ This tripartite juxtaposition is full of subtextual pathos: Þorkell was such a noble heathen that he was as good as the best of Christians; he died looking toward the Christian truth but from the outside, without the full knowledge of God or the joy of a Christian Iceland which his son would be able to enjoy. This is a very similar pathos to that evoked by the death of Moses who can only look on the Promised Land, which his spiritual children, the Israelites, will enter. This parallel is perhaps less tenuous than that between Abraham and Ingólfr, as the emotional details of the two scenes are arguably so similar, and yet it must be noted that there is still a level of interpretation in this parallel that is not required in the Flóki-Noah comparison. One of the only ways of testing this assumption is to consider the viability of its wider implications. The perception of Iceland or perhaps more exactly, Christian Iceland, as the Promised Land is one that may have been extremely appealing and politically rewarding to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic audiences.²² If Ldn is a kind of narrative charter es-

the H text, Jakob Benediktsson (1968:47).

¹⁹ Lönnroth (1969:28). Lönnroth also suggests that the noble heathen ‘is frequently pictured as a prophet auguring the advent of a new and “better” faith’, Lönnroth (1969:29).

²⁰ Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab upon mount Nebo, to the top of Phasga over against Jericho: and the Lord shewed him all the land of Galaad as far as Dan[...].

And the Lord said to him: This is the land, for which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: I will give it to thy seed. Thou hast seen it with thy eyes, and shalt not pass over to it.

And Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord:

And he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab over against Phogor: and no man hath known of his sepulchre until this present day.

²¹ Jacob Benediktsson (1968:46(S)), ‘he had lived as well as the best behaved of Christian men’ ‘his son Þormóðr was the supreme goði when Christianity came to Iceland’. H is virtually identical at this point, Jakob Benediktsson (1968:47).

²² The seemingly complex concept of a place-time is in fact arguably consistent with contemporary Norse perceptions, see Gurevich (1969).

tablishing the rights of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century landowners, then paralleling it with the Promised Land would turn that charter into a divine covenant. And if the intent of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century authors was to apologetically incorporate their heathen ancestors within a Christian schema without completely erasing their cultural past, then suggesting that they are parallel to God's chosen people might fulfil this criteria: simultaneously incorporating them in an internationally recognised paradigm while marking them out as different.

If we now return to Flóki's ravens; the use of three ravens instead of a raven and a dove on a very simplistic level takes the biblical narrative and makes it Norse. Ravens have a negative or ambiguous connotation in a biblical and exegetical context,²³ but in Norse literature they are a vital component in battle scenes;²⁴ they can be used almost as a cultural emblem,²⁵ and they carry connections to the pagan past through their Oðinic overtones and possible links to pagan ritual.²⁶ Implicitly the substitution of the dove for ravens may also be in dialogue with the strong exegetical tradition concerning Noah's raven, utilising its God-denying connotations to comment on and characterise Flóki and other early pagans, without completely dismissing them. The raven's function and the purpose of his mission in the biblical text is ambiguous, partly as inherent in the original Hebrew text and partly due to the misconceptions created by the Old Latin translation.²⁷ For this reason a variety of exegetes tried to explain it using tropological typology, suggesting that the raven (as implied by the Old Latin translation) did not return to the ark but instead stayed in the flood-waters feeding off the flesh of the drowned sinners.²⁸ Within this typological schema, Noah was Jesus, the ark the church, the dove the good Christian and the raven the apostate or sinner. Hrafna-Flóki, while no apostate, arguably mirrors the exegetes' raven in his actions during his attempted settlement. Like the raven, he is seduced by his greed, which causes his downfall, he spends all of his summer gorging on the plentiful salmon, so that when winter comes and he has forgotten to make hay all his animals die, and he is forced to abandon his settlement plans.²⁹

Before I close this discussion I wish to briefly regard the precedent for such biblical comparison within the context of Norse literary culture and a wider medieval schema. It has been widely discussed and generally accepted that historical writing is another kind of fiction, and that histories from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries were the first intimations of the creation of national/cultural origin myth.³⁰ Howe (2001:179) has argued that Anglo-Saxon literature from its very beginnings sought to create such a cultural myth using an intimate blend of biblical parallels and the native (pagan) heritage to cast the Anglo-Saxon people as the chosen people and to portray their cultural journey as one fated and divinely mandated.³¹ Rowe (1998:8–9) argues that one of the scribes of Flateyjarbók 'depicts the conversion of western

²³ For a medieval exposition of the multiple biblical representations of ravens see Rabanus (PL, 111.252–3). For the exegetical view of Noah's raven, see below.

²⁴ See Jesch (2001:243–54; 2002).

²⁵ Lukeman (1958) catalogues all the incidences of the raven banner, in Norse and Insular literature, while the article contains little analysis it is clear that in almost all incidences the banner denotes Norse warriors, and often has strong pagan connotations.

²⁶ For a discussion of the raven's possible shamanistic links see, Turville-Petre (1953:61); Lindow (2003:102–3, 106); Price (2002:97–8).

²⁷ See Gatch (1975:3–7); Murdoch (2003:116–8); Moberly (2000).

²⁸ This exegesis was known within a Norse context contemporary to the composition of the S and H redactions, as Isidore of Seville's Old Latin influenced interpretation (PL 83.233) as filtered through Comestor (PL 198.1085) appears in *Stjorn I* (AM 226 fol. and AM 227 fol.), Unger (1862:59). For dating and provenance of *Stjorn I* and its use of Comestor see Astås, (1991:73–8, 150–3) Seip (1956:2–4); Kirby (1986:51–56, 72–3).

²⁹ Jakob Benediktsson (1968:38, 39).

³⁰ For texts concerning the fictional nature of Ldn see, Herman Pálsson (1988); Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson (2003); Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (1974). For general texts see, Geary (2002); White (1987).

³¹ Howe (2001:179).

Scandinavia typologically as a re-enactment of world history *in parvo*. Another example perhaps even closer to the one posited within this paper can be found in a group of Frisian chronicles in which the ‘Frisians comparing themselves to the chosen people, inverted the order of historical events in their history in order to get a closer correspondence with the Old Testament’.³² Several Icelanders, including Haukr Erlendsson, did in fact claim a biblical heritage, tracing their lineage back to Abraham, Noah and even as far as Adam.³³ The apologetic history within the Prologue to Snorra Edda and in Gylfaginning uses euhemerism to include the pagan deities within a biblical time-frame, and further blurs the lines between pagan myth and Biblical text by conflating comparable incidents such as the Biblical flood and the mythic drowning of the giants in their own blood.³⁴

Ultimately it is impossible to prove that any of the biblical parallels posited here exist within Ldn, however there is precedent and the social, religious and political need for such comparisons did exist. Personally I find compelling the idea of the Ldn redactors either creating or working within a subtle biblical schema, that incorporated and enhanced their Norse pagan heritage, highlighted their unique history and both foreshadowed and celebrated their Christian present.

Abbreviations

PL Migne ed, 1844–55, Patrologia Latina.

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³² Smalley (1982:xxvii)

³³ Faulkes (1978–9:105–6).

³⁴ Faulkes (1982:3–6, 11); Dronke and Dronke (1977); Faulkes (1983).

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Poets and Ethnicity

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The Uppsala University Library manuscript De la Gardie 11 (U) of c. 1300 contains the earliest text of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and several other works, among them *Skáldatal* 'List of Skalds' on fols 22r–24r. A printed text of the U version is in *SnE* 1848–87 III, 259–69. Another version of *Skáldatal* is to be found in early modern paper copies of the *Heimskringla* manuscript Kringla (K), which was largely burnt in the Copenhagen fire of 1728. Árni Magnússon's transcript of K in AM 761 a 4^{ox}, a paper anthology of early skaldic poetry of c. 1700, was chosen by the editors of the 1848–87 edition of *SnE* (III, 251–9) as the basis of their printed text. The relationship between the two versions, which differ in several significant respects, has been studied closely by Guðrún Nordal (2001, 120–30). She has argued that the Kringla version was intended as 'a source list for the writing of kings' sagas' (2001, 129), which explains its concentration on poets who composed at the courts of kings and earls in Scandinavia, while the version in the Codex Upsaliensis is not so closely tied to a Scandinavian historical project and expands its scope to include two kings of England, Athelstan and Ethelred, and their Icelandic poets, Egill Skallagrímsson and Gunnlaugr ormstunga. The U version also admits important Norwegian chieftains to the list of patrons, while K excludes any patron who was not a king or jarl. This argument implies that the original function of *Skáldatal* is more closely conveyed by the K version than the version in the Uppsala manuscript.

Skáldatal is a unique work. It is unique both in its subject-matter and (at least in the Uppsala version) its textual arrangement on the manuscript pages. It is a chronologically arranged list of Scandinavian skalds beginning with the prehistoric Starkaðr inn gamli 'the Old' Stórolfsson and concluding with poets of the second half of the thirteenth century. Alongside the names of the poets, which are arranged in three columns from top to bottom of the page in U, are placed the names of the patrons whom they served. The patrons' names are juxtaposed with their poets' names by being written sideways beside them.

Skáldatal is anonymous, but it is likely to have been created by someone in Iceland whose knowledge of Old Norse skaldic poetry was as extensive as that of Snorri Sturluson (perhaps in its original version it was compiled by Snorri himself if it was produced as an aide-mémoire for *Heimskringla*) and who felt moved to compile an economical but expressive record of the roll-call of skalds and their patrons from prehistoric times to the late thirteenth century. Its aim appears to have been to capture and record available information about the aristocratic and royal encomiastic tradition in Norway and other parts of mainland Scandinavia, from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries: it is a *Who's Who* of poets and their patrons from this milieu. However, it excludes poets who did not serve noble or royal patrons, just as, with a few exceptions, it largely excludes poets who operated outside Norway, in the Orkneys or the British Isles, for example.¹ Thus the majority of poets whose compositions appear only in sagas of Icelanders or in other saga sub-genres that relate chiefly to Icelandic history do not appear in *Skáldatal*, nor do those skalds who composed poetry on Christian subjects, unless those subjects happened to relate to Scandinavian kings, like Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli* 'Light beam', in honour of King Óláfr Haraldsson or Markús Skeggjason's *Eiríksdrápa*, in honour of the Danish king Eiríkr inn góði Sveinsson. Finally, by its very nature, *Skáldatal* excludes all

¹ For example, Jarl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson of the Orkneys is not mentioned in *Skáldatal*, as he did not compose for a Scandinavian patron. The skald Þorkell Skallason, who composed a *flokkr* in honour of Earl Waltheof of Northumbria, does not appear on the list either.

anonymous skaldic poetry, whether or not it was composed in honour of royal or noble patrons.

It may seem curious, in view of *Skáldatal*'s focus on the relationship between named poets and their patrons, that the list makes no mention of the ethnicity of the poets who served the kings and jarls of Norway and other Scandinavian societies, unless that information is conveyed indirectly by a nickname or a patronymic. The ethnicity and rank of the patrons is recorded or implied, but not that of the skalds. Indeed, the patrons' ethnicity and rank are the factors that determine their places in the various divisions of the list in both versions of *Skáldatal*, and the poets are grouped accordingly. As the focus of *Skáldatal* is firmly upon the nexus between skald and patron in a courtly environment, the question of where the skalds came from, and where they were brought up, may have been considered of secondary importance in the context in which the list was compiled. However, it could hardly be said that the matter of a skald's ethnicity was a subject of little interest in Old Norse literature more generally. On the contrary, several different kinds of prose text, most of them of Icelandic provenance, indicate that a poet's ethnic origin and often his family connections were of great importance to the texts' authors and therefore presumably to their audiences.

Information about the ethnicity of skalds comes from the following types of sources in the main: from sagas of the kings of Norway, where the skalds' works are quoted as evidence for events in the lives of Norwegian kings; from *þættir* often associated with kings' sagas, where the exploits of Icelandic skalds at the Norwegian court are often the *þátrr*'s main subject; from some historical sources such as *Landnámabók* and *Orkneyinga saga*; and from sagas of Icelanders, especially from the sub-group whose protagonists are skalds, the so-called *skáldsögur*. As the majority of these works were written by Icelanders, it is not surprising that these sources show a particular interest in Icelandic skalds and their success abroad, both poetic and otherwise.

That same interest in skalds' ethnicity is to be found in many modern editions of skaldic poetry, studies of skalds or skaldic verse and general literary histories. In fact, it is usually accepted as more or less axiomatic that, after the very early period (the ninth and early tenth centuries), before the settlement of Iceland or during its early days, when skalds were Norwegian, the art of skaldic poetry was the subject of a successful take-over by Icelanders, who came to dominate the profession. A typical assessment is that of Whaley (2005, 479): 'Skaldic poetry was composed throughout the Scandinavian-speaking world, and by poets of diverse origin, but mainly Norwegian in the first phase, then Norwegian or Icelandic in the tenth century. After c. 1000, most skalds seem to have come from Iceland (especially the west or northwest) or Orkney, though some Norwegian kings are credited with poetry.' The main purpose of this paper is to test the validity of our common assumption about the changing ethnicity of skalds from Norwegian to Icelandic, not in order to deny its basic rightness, but to question whether there are some aspects of the general picture that may need modification in the light of recent research.

Now that the new edition of the skaldic corpus, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages (SkP)*, is firmly underway and has already published two volumes, with more in active preparation, we are in a very good position to begin to test some of our older assumptions about a range of skaldic subjects, including the question of the skalds' ethnicity. I have utilised information in the new editions and on our database in order to approach this question here. My starting point has been the information about skaldic ethnicity that Finnur Jónsson included at the head of each named skald's entry in his *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning (Skj)*, information repeated by E. A. Kock in his *Den norsk-isländska skaldediktningen*. I have compared it with the information our editors have been gathering about known details of each named skald's biography for the skald biography section of each poet's oeuvre.

I have confined my analysis to Volumes I to III of the skaldic edition, that is, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035* (Volume I, forthcoming, edited by Diana Whaley), *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300* (Volume II, 2009, edited by Kari Ellen Gade) and *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics* (Volume III, forthcoming, edited by Edith Marold). Of these three volumes, only Volume II is yet published, but material towards Volumes I and III is available on the skaldic project website <http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au>. I have excluded the rest of the skaldic corpus from analysis, because it is either clearly of Icelandic provenance or it is anonymous, or both. There is of course some anonymous poetry in Volumes I–III, which cannot be included in the study for obvious reasons. Leaving aside the anonymous poetry in Volumes I–III, these three volumes constitute a substantial part of the skaldic corpus by named poets to have survived from the Scandinavian Middle Ages.

It was Finnur Jónsson's practice, when compiling his entries for named poets in *Skj* A and B, to place below the skald's name a line about his ethnicity and his *floruit*, if known, as well as information about his personal status. For example, of Þjóðólfr from Hvinir he wrote 'Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, enn hvinverski, Norsk skjald, 9. árh.', while of Þjóðólfr Árnórsson he wrote 'Íslandsk skald, d. 1066'. He differentiated poets not only on grounds of ethnicity, but also according to whether he considered them to be professional poets or not. The former are designated 'poet', the latter 'Icelander' or 'Norwegian' and so forth, indicating their amateur status. He gave further information about poets who were also kings, jarls, district chieftains or lawmen. In some cases, Finnur indicated uncertainty about the information he provided, usually by means of a question mark, but most often his statements about the poets' identities were unencumbered by doubt, unlike the more judicious commentary in the nineteenth-century Arnarnagæan edition of *Skáldatal* (*SnE* 1848–87 III, 287–752), which frequently admits to a lack of knowledge about certain skalds.

I am not the first to suspect that Finnur was often too ready to assign Icelandic ethnicity to skalds about whom little is known from medieval sources. In a survey of poetry and its importance in medieval Icelandic culture published in 2000, Kari Ellen Gade questioned 'whether [the dominance of Icelandic skalds after the tenth century] is an accurate depiction of the conditions in eleventh- to thirteenth-century Scandinavia, or whether skaldic poetry had become one of the vehicles by which late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Icelanders sought to assert their national uniqueness (2000, 76)'. Her doubts can now be seen to have been well founded, as recent research (some of it her own) into the life histories of the skalds who appear in Volumes I–III of *SkP* establishes a more accurate picture of what we are entitled to deduce from available evidence about their ethnicity.

The data

Volume I of the skaldic edition covers court poetry from the known beginnings of the skaldic art up to about 1035. It spans a period of about 150 years and includes a total of 54 named poets, as well as some anonymous verse. Of that total of 54 named poets, 22 or just over 40%, are Norwegian, and there is no doubt about the ethnicity of these individuals. They include three women of high social status as well as nineteen men, four of them kings. The remainder are Icelanders (18 or 33%), Orkadians or, in one case each, the Faroese chieftain Þrándr í Gøtu, the Danish king Sveinn tjúguskegg and the Jómsvíkingr Vagn Ákason. There are 5 individuals (9%) whose ethnicity is not clearly defined in the prose sources that record their poetry, and these are listed in Table 1 below. In all 5 cases Finnur Jónsson classified the poets as Icelandic.

Table 1. Unknown skalds from *Skp I*. (* denotes mention in *Skáldatal*)

Skald name	Comment	Date	Finnur Jónsson (<i>Skj</i>)	Further comment
*Eyjólfur dáðaskáld	Ethnicity unknown	c. 1000	Icelandic poet	
*Gizurr svartir gullbráskáld	Ethnicity dubious	d. 1030?	Icelandic poet	Foster-father of Hofgarða-Refr?
*Halldórr ókristni	Ethnicity unknown	Early C11th	Icelandic poet	
Hallar-Steinn	Probably Icelandic	C12th	Icelandic poet	See GS 2004, 110
*Þórðr Særeksson	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	See Biography on skaldic database

Total 5

Volume II, Volume II, which will be published this year (2009), contains the work of 57 named skalds as well as some anonymous poetry. It continues chronologically from where Volume I leaves off, at 1035, and continues down to the demise of skaldic court poetry in the second half of the thirteenth century. The statistics here are interestingly different from those of Volume I and in part bear out the prevailing hypothesis of increasing Icelandicisation of the skaldic profession after the early eleventh century. But that is not the whole story, as we shall see. From the total of 57 named skalds in Volume II, 11 or just over 19% are definitely Norwegian, and five of these, or just under half, are Norwegian kings, while the majority of the remainder of six are either Norwegian district chieftains or close friends of royalty or the upper nobility. Two men are foster-fathers of Norwegian kings. None of this Norwegian group in Volume II is a professional poet, and in several cases only a single stanza is attributed to the poet in question. This statistic suggests that after about 1035 in Norway skaldic verse was considered a largely royal or aristocratic accomplishment for Norwegians, not a professional skill, and this idea is expressed in the well-known stanza (Hharð *Gamv* 4^{II}) of Haraldr harðráði Sigurðarson on his eight accomplishments, which include poetic composition, repeated almost verbatim by the Orkney jarl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson (Rv Lv 1/5–8^{II}).

Table 2. Unknown skalds from *Skp II*. (* denotes mention in *Skáldatal*)

Skald name	Comment	Date	Finnur Jónsson (<i>Skj</i>)	Further comment
Bjarni Kálfsson	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic (?) poet	See skald biography <i>Skp II</i>
*Björn krepphendi	Ethnicity unknown	Early C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Blakkr	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Bjðvarr balti	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Bjólverkr Arnórsson	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	brother of Þjóðólfr?
*Grani skáld	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
*Halldórr skvaldri	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	See biography <i>Skp II</i>
*Halli stirði	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	Post-medieval ascription
*Hallr Snorrason	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Illugi bryndælaskáld	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	Suggested by patronymic
*Kolli inn þrúði	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Oddr kíkinaskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
*Valgarðr á Velli	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	From Völlur, Southern Iceland?
*Þórarinn Skeggjason	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	? relative of Markús
*Þorbjörn skakkaskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
Þorbjörn svartir	Possibly Icelandic	C12th	Orcadian (?) poet	<i>Orkneyinga saga</i> only
*Þorkell hamarskáld	Possibly Icelandic	Early C12th	Icelandic poet	Could equally be Norwegian
Þorkell Skallason	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	Retainer of Waltheof of Northumbria

*Þorleikr fagri	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	Suggested by nickname?
Total	19			

Compared with the Norwegian group in Volume II, 22 poets or just over 30% are indisputably Icelandic, and their ethnicity is confirmed by prose sources, usually kings' sagas or *þættir*. Most of these poets are professionals or semi-professionals in the service of Norwegian kings. An exception is the group of poets attested from *Orkneyinga saga*, most of whom are only known from this saga. In two cases (Ármóðr and Oddi inn litli Glúmsson), men that the other manuscripts say are Icelandic are said in *Flateyjarbók* to be from the Shetland Islands.

The most interesting statistic in the case of Volume II (see Table 2 above) is provided by instances in which Finnur Jónsson stated a poet's ethnicity to be Icelandic, but our editors have not been able to find convincing evidence of where he came from. There are almost as many such cases as there are clear-cut examples of poets who are definitely Icelandic and this high number (19 out of 57 or 33%) must raise questions about whether the Icelandic dominance of the skaldic profession from the mid-eleventh to the late thirteenth centuries was really as great as has been assumed up to now. There is also the related question of why the biographical details of such a high number of skalds of this period are virtually unknown, in contrast to those of the earlier period.

The situation with the poets named in treatises on poetics (Volume III) is closer in some respects to that of Volume II than it is to Volume I, yet there are also some significant differences between this group and those of both the kings' sagas volumes. For the most part Volume III comprises poetry in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, in his nephew Óláfr Þórðarson's *Third Grammatical Treatise* (*TGT*, c. 1250) and in the mid-fourteenth century *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, as well as additional material recorded in the Codex Wormianus (W) and the *Laufás Edda* (*LaufE*) of Magnús Ólafsson (c. 1610). As with the other volumes, the statistics exclude anonymous poetry. Seventy-three named poets appear on the skaldic database for Volume III (see Table 3 below). Of those 73, only three are definitely Norwegian (Ólvir hnúfa, Bragi Boddason and Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, all from the earliest period), a much smaller percentage (4%) than for either of the kings' sagas volumes. There is one definite Orcadian, Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson, and one supposed Dane, Starkaðr. Thirty-one poets or 42.5% are definitely Icelandic, while 37 or 51% are either unknown or of dubious ethnicity, the majority of them only being cited in one or other of the poetic treatises, where for the most part the only information supplied about them is their names. Even their *floruit*, in many cases, is debatable and is often dependent on an editor's recognition of the likely period during which the subject-matter they treat would have been topical. It is also noteworthy that many fewer of the poets in Volume III appear in *Skáldatal*, indicating that this group is less associated with a court environment and aristocratic or royal patrons. Probably, if we knew more, many of this unknown cohort would turn out to be Icelandic, but that would be an educated guess.

The evidence presented here about the skalds whose work illustrates the major Icelandic treatises on poetics is revealing in the light of Snorri Sturluson's claim to wish to familiarise young poets with the traditional terms and ancient kennings of the kind of skaldic verse that the chief poets (*hofuðskáld*) were happy to use (*SnE* 1998 I, 5, ll. 25–30). Aside from three Norwegians, those chief poets are probably almost exclusively Icelandic, and in just over half the sample from Snorri's *Edda* and the *Third* and *Fourth Grammatical Treatises*, are poets who are virtually unknown and, in some cases, whose works are not attested anywhere else in the Old Norse textual corpus. To the extent that the poetic treatises are normative and prescriptive,² they reflect the practices of Icelandic skalds more than any other group. This gen-

² I do not think that any of them is entirely normative or prescriptive: Snorri's agenda, in my opinion (Clunies Ross 1987), was influenced by the views he expressed in the Preface to the *Edda*, while both Óláfr and the author of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* were keen to demonstrate how skaldic poetry could be explained in

eral observation to some extent echoes Gísli Sigurðsson's finding (2004, 93–119), in his study of Óláfr Þórðarson's sources in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, that a considerable number of them were local to the north and west of Iceland. If, in addition, we consider that much of the anonymous verse in both the *Third* and *Fourth Grammatical Treatises* is likely to have been the work of Óláfr and the unknown author of the latter, then the poetic manuals are even more firmly grounded in Icelandic poetic practice.

Table 3. Unknown skalds from *Skp III*. (* denotes mention in *Skáldatal*)

Skald name	Comment	Date	Finnur Jónsson (<i>Skj</i>)	Further comment
Ásgrímr Jónsson	Probably Icelandic	C13th	Icelander	In <i>SnE W</i> and <i>LaufE</i>
*Atli lítli	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
Bjarni [...]ason	Ethnicity unknown	C12th?	Icelandic poet	
*Eilífr Goðrúnarson	Ethnicity unknown	c. 1000	Icelandic poet	Norw. or Icel.
Eilífr kúlnasveinn	Ethnicity unknown	C12th?	Icelandic poet	
Erringar-Steinn	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelandic poet	
*Eyjólfur dáðaskáld	Ethnicity unknown	c. 1000	Icelandic poet	
Eysteinn Valdason	Ethnicity unknown	C10th?	Icelander	
Gamli Gnævaðarskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C10th?	Icelandic poet in C10th	
*Gizurr svartir gull-brálskáld	Ethnicity dubious	d. 1030?	Icelandic poet	Foster-father of Hofgarða-Refr?
Grani skáld	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
Guðlaugr	Probably Icelandic	C12th	Icelandic poet	See GS 2004, 109
Hallar-Steinn	Probably Icelandic	C12th	Icelandic poet	See GS 2004, 110
*Halldórr skvaldri	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	See biography <i>Skp II</i>
Hallgrímr	Probably Icelandic	?	Not in <i>Skj</i>	In <i>LaufE</i>
Hallr Snorrason	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
*Hallvarðr háreksblesi	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
*Illugi bryndælaskáld	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	Suggested by patronymic
Leiðólfur skáld	Probably Icelandic	C11th?	Icelander?	In <i>TGT</i> , see GS 2004, 109
Ormr barreyja(r)skáld	Ethnicity unknown	C10th or 11th	Orcadian poet?	Or from Barra, in the Hebrides
Ormr Steinþórsson	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelandic poet	
Skáldhelgi Þórðarson	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelandic poet	
Skáldþórir	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
Skraut-Oddr	Probably Icelandic	C11th?	Icelander?	In <i>TGT</i> only
Skúli Þorsteinsson	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	
Snæbjörn	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander	
Steinarr	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	
Steinþórr	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	
Styrkár Oddason	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	
Sveinn	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	Or Greenlander?
Þórálfr (-valdr)	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	
Þorbjörn díarskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C10th	Icelander	
Þórðr mauraskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C11th?	Icelander?	
*Þórðr Særeksson	Ethnicity unknown	C11th	Icelandic poet	See Biography on skaldic database
*Þorkell hamarskáld	Possibly Icelandic	Early C12th	Icelandic poet	Could equally be Norwegian
*Þorleikr fagri	Possibly Icelandic	C11th	Icelandic poet	Suggested by nickname
*Þorvaldr blönduskáld	Ethnicity unknown	C12th	Icelandic poet	
Total	37			

terms of Latin rhetoric.

Analysis of the data

The poetic treatises, like *Skáldatal*, do not normally mention a skald's ethnicity and in this respect they and *Skáldatal* contrast with those kinds of texts that do present biographical information, like kings' sagas in the major compilations, some historical works like *Landnámabók* and *Kristni saga*, *þættir* and sagas of Icelanders. For the most part, it is where we are able to access information about skalds in the non-pedagogical texts that we can determine something of a poet's biography and where he came from. The reason why we have so much fuller information about the skalds who lived between the beginning of the historical period and c. 1035 is that most of these people are at least mentioned, if not more fully represented, in sagas and historical works, particularly *Landnámabók*. The few unknowns in this group (Table 1) are unknown because no narratives of a personal kind, however small, attach to the mention of their names and compositions. By contrast, the period between 1035 and c. 1300 is covered mainly in the historical compilations and *þættir* and in *Skáldatal*, as it falls outside the chronological scope of the *Íslendingasögur* and somewhat before the contemporary sagas, and, as we have already seen, the poetical treatises do not mention biographical data about the poets at all.

To judge by the numbers of poets who composed for the Norwegian kings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries but are otherwise unknown, as Table 2 shows, there seems to have been little literary impulse to create even embryonic biographical narratives about them. This may be partly because literary convention favoured narratives, especially about Icelanders, from either the earlier or the later period, or it may be because, once these poets became part of the royal entourage, they were simply swallowed up in the system, as it were, and there was little to report about them, particularly if they were of low social status, which we know some skalds were, though that in itself did not always debar them from a life in literature, witness Sneglu-Halli, who came from a poor family in the north of Iceland.³

There are two other probable factors that must have determined whether skalds' compositions and biographical information about them was recorded in writing, and that is whether or not their royal patrons and the compilers of their biographies considered it important to use skaldic encomia to support their narratives and give the poets credit for their courtly roles. It is well known that the major historical compilations vary considerably in the amount of skaldic poetry they use and in their choices of verse illustration (cf. *SkP* II, Introduction, lviii–lxxx). Equally, the kings themselves probably played a part in determining whether the compositions and life histories of their skalds were recorded in writing. According to *Skáldatal*, King Sverrir had either ten (U) or thirteen (K) skalds composing for him, yet little of their work has survived, they are mostly mere ciphers, and the poetry cited in *Sverris saga* is not quoted to corroborate historical events but to ornament the prose, especially within the speeches attributed to Sverrir himself. To judge by the names of many court poets from the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries listed in *Skáldatal*, their compositions did not form part of any historical narrative and so are lost to us. This applies to poetry composed for Swedish and Danish rulers and dignitaries, as well as for Norwegian patrons.

Guðrún Nordal (2001, 117–95; cf. Gade 2000, 85–6) has demonstrated that an Icelandic backlash against the apparent loss of status of skalds as authorities and their poems as historical witnesses in Norway seems to have led to a resurgence of poetic activity of a courtly kind in Iceland in the early thirteenth century, as members of the major Icelandic families began to surround themselves with entourages of professional poets. The poets and literary entrepreneurs of the Sturlung family (Snorri Sturluson, Óláfr and Sturla Þórðarson) also recognised this loss of status and tackled it both by assuming the role of professional poet themselves and

³ The names of some of these unknown poets, like Blakkr and Bøðvarr balti, lacking patronymics, suggest that their family connections were unimportant and hence are likely to denote low social status.

by producing pedagogical works analysing skaldic poetry (Snorri, Óláfr) or historical works in which their own poetry took the place of that of the standard court poets of past times (Sturla, Óláfr).⁴ In this way, they probably sought to regain the status that skalds and skaldic poetry appear to have lost, at least to some extent, during the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, probably in part challenged by the newly translated courtly romances, religious and historical literature from abroad that King Hákon Hákonarson encouraged (cf. most recently Wanner 2008, 80–5).

This survey has upheld the standard view of an Icelandic dominance of the composition of skaldic poetry in Scandinavia after the tenth century, but it has also cast considerable doubt on its extent or at least upon the certainty of any modern estimation of its extent. A great deal of information about the identities of many skalds mentioned either in *Skáldatal* or in other sources has been lost, even when some of their poetry has been preserved, though a great deal of that has probably been lost too. Additionally, the medieval sources themselves in which skaldic poetry has been preserved were mostly written by Icelanders, so we cannot forget that the overall perspective from which we view the skaldic corpus is Icelandic. If we had been able to see it from a different ethnic perspective, the view may have been different.

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⁴ In a recent study, Wanner (2008) has invoked Pierre Bourdieu's model of cultural capital in his theory of practice to account for the details of Snorri's life and the creation of his *Edda* largely as a political manoeuvre for his personal advancement, but the nature of both the human response and the product (the *Edda*) is too complex to be explained only in these terms.

Passing Time and the Past in *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*

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In any narrative text there are a number of relationships concerning time. Firstly there is a relationship that has been referred to as intrinsic relative chronology (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964 also Clover 1982: 120–121); that is the chronological relationship between the events described, measured either in terms of one another, or against the historical backdrop of the saga-age. Secondly there is a relationship that I will call narrative pace; that is the relationship between the words themselves and the events in the story. Thirdly there is a relationship between the time represented either by an author or a supposed reader or audience¹ and the events described in the text. In this paper I am going to review these relationships in one medieval Icelandic text *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*.

Grettis saga is considered one of the four major *Íslendinga sögur* (alongside *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga* and *Laxdæla saga*), although it is the youngest among these, dating from around 1310 to 1320 (Cook 1993, 242)². The events the saga narrates cover the years from 885 to 1047. As Ólafía Einarsdóttir observes in her 1964 study of chronology in the sagas, dates occur infrequently in saga literature. Ólafía notes four dates occur in *Íslendingabók*, around which the dating of the story can be ascertained, by counting forwards or backwards. No dates occur in *Grettis saga*, but there are a number of prominent historical events from which the dating of our story can be deduced. The most notable of these are:

1. The battle of Hafrsfjörðr, in which Þunndr tréfoðr takes part, which consolidates Haraldr hárfagri's power in Norway (c.885) (chapter 2).
2. Hákon jarl Eiríksson ruler of Norway (1012) (chapter 20).
3. Óláfr Haraldsson becomes King of Norway (1015) (chapter 37).
4. The deaths of Skapti Þóroddsson and Snorri goði (1030 and 1031 respectively) (chapter 76).
5. The return of Haraldr Sigurðarson from Constantinople to share the Norwegian throne with his half-brother King Magnús inn góði and Magnús' subsequent death (1047) (chapter 90).

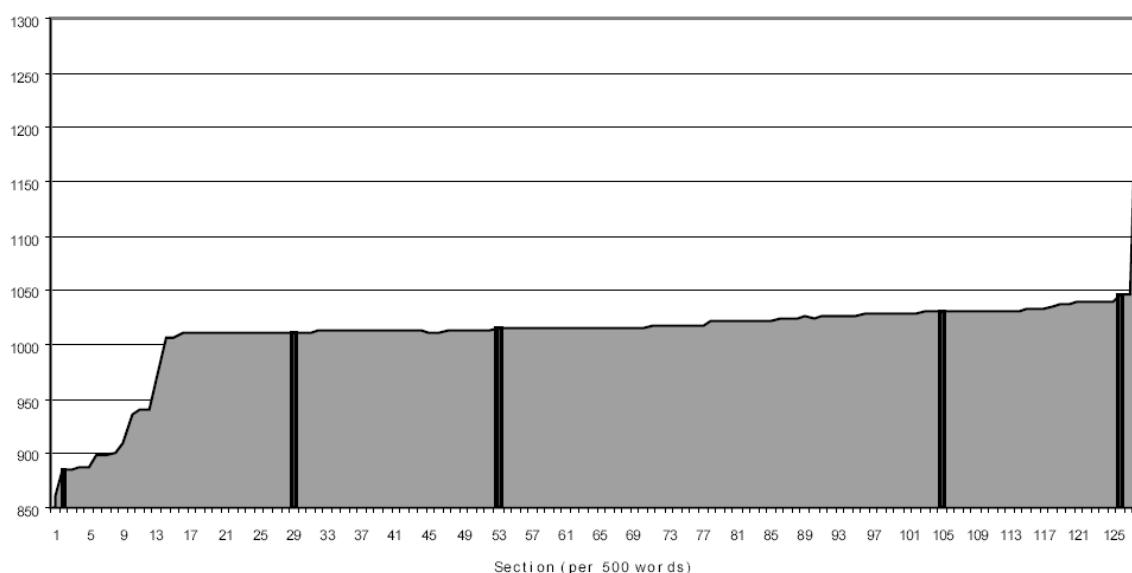
Other seemingly incidental mentions of historical events date sections of our story within a few years, for example the mention of the early Christian missions to Iceland (c. 981–985) in chapter 14 or the mention of Þorkell máni as lawspeaker (970–984) in chapter 12. We cannot be certain that the original saga audience knew the exact dates of these events (although the more educated among them may have done), but they would have been relatively familiar with their approximate relationship with each other and with the audience's own post-saga-age period. As such, these events form part of the overall fabric of the saga-age that could be taken as assumed knowledge. The story of Grettir, his conviction, time as an outlaw and eventual death are set against a backdrop of historical and easily datable events.

¹ I will not tackle the thorny problem of whether the intended recipient of this or indeed any saga was an audience or reader. There is justification for the use of either term. *Grettis saga* as it is preserved is a written text and thus our actual evidence is confined to a readership, but it undoubtedly had an oral background and furthermore the existence of written text does not preclude ongoing performance – either read directly from the text, memorised or extemporised – to an audience. For the remainder of the paper I will use the word 'audience' to refer to the thirteenth century intended recipient of the saga. In the current paper I will not specifically consider the relationship to the modern reader.

² Despite the relatively late date for the extant saga, that a tradition existed about Grettir Ásmundarson can be deduced from mentions of him in a number of earlier sources such as *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson 1943: 70), *Fóstbræðra saga* (Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson 1943: 121–122, 148 and 191) and *Landnámabók* (Jakob Benediktsson 1986: 199, 211, 213 and 280–281).

From these events it is possible to count forwards or backwards in the saga according to the supposed years ('winters') passed in the text to build up an overall picture of the internal chronology of the story. To do this I have taken the online version of the text available at <http://www.snerpa.is/net/isl/grettir.htm> (*Grettis saga* 1997), and divided it into 126 sections of 500 words each.³ At the beginning of each of these arbitrary sections I have tried to estimate the historical year when the events are occurring and plot them on a graph (figure 1). The shaded area represents the course of the saga and the solid vertical bars the five points datable with relative certainty listed above. This is undoubtedly an artificial and somewhat crude means of approaching the text, but nonetheless offers an insight into the passing of time in the text. We find a reasonable amount of cohesion and accuracy showing that the saga-writer had both an awareness of the historical dates and how they related to the specific chronology of his own story. This intrinsic chronology is far from perfect. There are a few sections where the saga lacks specificity (for example *dvalðisk hann þar um hríð*, Guðni Jónsson 1936: 271), and some where it seems distinctly strained, one of which I will discuss further below.

Figure 1. Passing of time in Grettis saga



Plotted in this way the saga forms a flattened S shape. The gradient of the line refers to the speed at which years pass in the story. This brings me to the second relationship mentioned above – that of pace or rhythm. As one might expect the pace at which these events are narrated is varied according to the level of detail or focus the narrator gives at each point. In the most basic sense there is a relationship between the words themselves – that is the actual length of time it might take to read each word aloud – and the movement of time in the story. At one extreme hours, days, seasons and indeed whole years might be passed by in a single sentence. A saga-writer had a number of stock phrases to allow for such progression of time. Examples of these in *Grettis saga* include the following:

³ Counting words seems the most consistent and accurate measure of a text (pagination and chapters are both variable and editorial). For simplicity I have used a computer based text rather than the Íslenzk fornrit text cited in the rest of this article. There will be a few discrepancies due to editorial choices between the fornrit and online versions. Chapter markers and numerals have been counted as words (i.e. '1. kafli' = two words).

Nú leið af nóttin. (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 57).

[...] ok sátu þó um kyrrt um hríð. (Guðni Jónsson: 1936, 100)

Such phrases are often characterized by a mention of a particular season or a point in the year:

[...] leið svá fram á miðsumar (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 113)

Leið nú svá qndverðr vetrinn af. (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 159)

Leið svá vetrinn framan til jóla, at ekki bar fleira til frásagna. (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 61)

Another means at the writer's disposal is to start the description of an event with a mention of a particular point in time:

Um várit [...] (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 113)

Þetta sumar it næsta [...] (Guðni Jónsson, 1936: 61)

This has the effect of suspending the characters while the narrator moves time forward to the next event of significance in his narrative. At the other extreme, events are narrated in actual time; that is the time it would take to read the text aloud is more or less the same as the time it would take for the events to actually happen. The clearest example of actual time pace in the sagas are passages of direct speech. The wealth of direct speech in the *Íslendinga sögur* means that many events are narrated in actual time with a one to one relationship between the words of the text and the pace of the events. Actual time is the slowest pace routinely found in the *Íslendinga sögur* (which do not have either the proliferation of highly detailed descriptive passages or emotional responses found in modern novels). I will argue, however, that at particular points in sagas the pace of the narrative slows beyond this actual time pace. The overall pace of the narrative can therefore be measured according to the way in which these detailed passages with direct speech are interspersed with summary passages.

If we return to the graph, this admittedly crude measure nonetheless illustrates the points I intend to make. The overall direction is upwards, indicating that the vast majority of events in the saga are narrated in chronological order. In the early chapters, time passes relatively quickly with only a few events narrated in detail. There are episodes told in detail and with direct speech, but these are relatively few and several years can be passed quickly in-between them. As one approaches the climactic portions more of the events are narrated in detail, with greater use of direct speech and thus a one-to-one temporal to textual relationship and with less time passing between each episode. As one approaches the end of the saga, the style once again becomes synoptic and years pass more quickly. The little bumps in the line, show that although by and large the order is chronological (as indeed is the case for all *Íslendinga sögur*) there are a few areas of narrative overlap.⁴ For example at the end of chapter 41 (section 58 on the graph) Grettir has been given permission to return from Norway to Iceland. The narrator, however, leaves Grettir poised to embark and returns to Iceland the previous summer to describe the death of Ásmundr hærulangr and killing of Grettir's brother Atli. Grettir is left suspended (literally at sea) until the opening of chapter 47. This is a convenient conceit of the

⁴ Although chronological narration in the *Íslendinga sögur* is observed as a general principle (Vésteinn Ólason 1998, 95–100), that is not to say there is no chronological overlap between separate strands within a saga-plot necessitating the author to backtrack chronologically and fill in the gaps in a particular narrative strand (for different strategies enabling this see Clover 1982, 109–135).

story ensuring that Grettir is out of the way and unable to intervene against the slaying of his brother, but it shows the self-awareness of the writer of the intrinsic chronology as he manipulates the various strands of his story.⁵

This awareness is exhibited in the fact that time and chronology become a theme in the saga. For example, in chapter 51 the Lawspeaker Skapti Þóroddsson questions which came first, the killing of Atli or the sentence of outlawry against Grettir. It turns out that the sentencing had occurred first by just a week, thereby invalidating a case against Grettir's family brought by Þóroddr dráputúfr. More generally in the saga the 19 years of Grettir's outlawry are a recurring theme. It is likely that Grettir's outlawry and the extraordinary length of time he spent in the wilderness was part of the traditional material handed down to the writer part of traditional material the writer. *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (assumed to be earlier than *Grettis saga*) indicates that Grettir was the only man to have spent more time as an outlaw than Gísli (Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson 1943: 70). In *Grettis saga*, however, this length of time becomes a theme, giving the reader a reference point, both concerning how long since Grettir sentence and building tension as Grettir's inevitable final stand approaches. This is perhaps the most problematic use of time in the saga. It proves hard to fit the 19 years exactly with the external events referred to in the saga. Grettir is made an outlaw in chapter 46 (section 62/63 on the graph) which seems to accord to 1016 and killed the winter following the death of Skapti Þóroddsson, normally assumed to be around 1031, giving a gap of only 15 years (on this discrepancy see Guðni Jónsson 1936: lxvi-lxvii). Thus the setting of Grettir's story against the existing fabric of saga lore has been imperfectly made. It seems possible that this discrepancy has come from imperfectly reconciled oral traditions one of which had Grettir as an outlaw for exactly 19 years, the other dating his outlawry against historical events. Nonetheless the 19 years are an important part of the saga, creating the tragic irony of Grettir's life in that he would have become a free-man once again had he lived one winter longer. Although the saga-writer's use of time is imperfect it is self-conscious and relevant to his story.

The third relationship mentioned above is that between the events described in the text and the audience. Assuming the early fourteenth century date for the saga is correct, there is a gap of three centuries between the event described in the text and the original audience. Many technologies and ideas would have changed or developed in the intervening years. Grettir and his contemporaries must have been very much part of the history of the first saga audiences; not distant and obscure like the heroes of the *fornaldar sögur*, but part of history nonetheless. The narrator of *Grettis saga* shows an unusual level of awareness of this historical gulf between his protagonist and audience. As one can see from the graph the tail end extends right into the mid-thirteenth century, this is in view of the final chapter of the saga which states the opinion of the thirteenth century law-speaker, author and power-magnate Sturla Þórðarson (d. c. 1284) on Grettir's life. It is possible that this relates to a text, perhaps an early version of the saga, written by Sturla about Grettir (Jónas Kristjánsson 1988: 235). It has the effect, however, of bringing the narrative up to the present, or at least into the life-times of the parents or grandparents of the original audience.

This is not, however, the first reference to Sturla in the text. He is also mentioned in chapter 69 and particularly strikingly in chapter 49. In one of the saga's best framed set pieces Grettir attacks his enemy Þorbjörn oxnameginn and his son in a hay field. The scene is set through a detailed description of the hay-field:

⁵ On the self-consciousness of the *Grettis saga* author see de Looze 1991.

Þar gengr ein mýrr ofan ór hálsinum, ok var þar á slátta mikil, ok hafði Þorbjörn látit slá þar mikit hey, ok var þá fullþurrt; ætlaði hann þat heim at binda ok sveinninn með honum, en kona tók røkin (Guðni Jónsson 1936: 153)

Grettir too is described in detail. As he approaches, Þorbjörn and his son discuss how best to deal with him:

‘Maðr ríðr þar at okkr, ok skulu vit hætta at binda heyit ok vita, hvat hann vill’ [...] Þá mælti Þorbjörn: ‘Þetta er mikill maðr, ok eigi kann ek mann á velli at sjá, ef þat er eigi Grettir Ásmundarson, ok mun hann þykkjask eiga ærnar sakar við oss; ok verðum við røskliga ok látum engan bilbug á okkr sjá. Skulu vit fara at með ráðum, ok mun ek ganga at honum framan ok sjá, hversu til teksk með okkr, því at ek treysti mér við hvern mann, ef ek á einum at mæta. En þú gakk á bak honum ok hogg tveim hǫndum í milli herða honum með øxinni; þarftu eigi at varask, at hann geri þér mein, síðan er hann snýr baki at þér.’ (Guðni Jónsson 1936: 154)

Although this is ostensibly narrated in direct speech and therefore in actual time, it has the effect of slowing time for the audience. Grettir continues to approach throughout the speech, but as if in slow motion, while we hear the conversation of his adversaries. It is an example of a saga motif whereby the audience see the approach of some attackers through the eyes of their naïve victims (a good example of this, which also has the effect of expanding the time taken of the attackers’ approach, is where Helgi Harðbeinsson discusses in great detail the clothing and appearance of the attackers approaching him with his shepherd in *Laxdæla saga*, Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934: 186–191). This slowing of time in the episode heightens the tension for the audience by delaying the eventual conflict while constantly pointing forward to it. We can see the same technique used to tremendous effect in the build up to the Grettir’s conflict with the ghost Glámr. Through a succession of episodes each of which progress us only a little further towards the eventual confrontation between Grettir and Glámr, the tension is built up, leading to the detailed description of Glámr crashing against the roof of the house and finally stooping inside. I would even argue Grettir’s sudden paralysis as he is dragged by Glámr out into the moonlight is the ultimate example of freezing time in the saga – literally freezing Grettir while Glámr delivers his speech and places his evil curse on Grettir.

If we return to Grettir’s conflict with Þorbjörn øxnameginn, we find Grettir finally kills both men and goes to the farm to announce the killings. As part of this episode, Grettir removes the pin from his spear head under the assumption that he would not want Þorbjörn to throw it back at him.⁶ In fact the plan comes to nothing as without the pin the spearhead falls off and is lost. The fate of the spear is revealed in the next chapter:

Spjótít þat, sem Grettir hafði týnt, fannsk eigi fyrr en í þeira manna minnum, er nú lifa; þat spjót fannsk á ofanverðum dögum Sturlu lǫgmanns Þórðarsonar ok í þeiri mýri er Þorbjörn fell, ok heitir þar nú Spjótismýrr [...] (Guðni Jónsson 1936: 157)

Within the plot of his story the spearhead is entirely functionless and so its inclusion is specifically for the purpose of creating a relationship between the ‘now’ of the story and the ‘now’ of its fourteenth century performance. This relationship between the past and present is played with again and again in the text. Sometimes this is in the differences between the past and present, for example there are various antiquated customs that the author feels the need to elucidate for the purpose of his reader, such as the absence of *dætur* (‘pumps’) from boats and therefore the need for manual bailing (Guðni Jónsson 1936: 55) or specific legal points which

⁶ There are instances of weapons being returned in this way in sagas, see for example *Njáls saga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954: 403).

may not have been familiar to the readers (e.g. Guðni Jónsson 1936, 89⁷). Conversely the relationship between the past and present can be expressed through references to things still existing in the audience's own time which feature in the story, such as the mention of the place-name Spjótsmýrr in the passage above. Such mentions of places and things still in existence and presumably familiar to the original audience are by no means uncommon in saga-literature, but seem particularly plentiful in sections of *Grettis saga*. For example, according to the saga stones lifted by Grettir are still visible (e.g. Guðni Jónsson 1936: 201), places still known are named after saga events (e.g. Guðni Jónsson 1936: 197 and 243) and even a troll woman turned to stone which Grettir battled against can still be seen (Guðni Jónsson 1936: 213). It is unlikely that every member of the original audience knew each of these places personally, but by referring to them this way the narrator stresses the relationship between the time of his story and the present and reminds the audience of the supposed truth behind the story. Elsewhere such details serve to place the audience right within the text. For example the detailed description of the interior of the damaged farmhouse before Glámr bursts into the farm not only further delays his entrance but also may have reminded the audience of the very building they were currently in – one can picture the original audience hearing the story in the depths of an early fourteenth century Icelandic winter glancing nervously at the roof-beams of their own farm-house wondering whether Glámr might not visit them too.

This playful relationship between the past and present can be extended to the style of the saga itself. The many supernatural events in the saga has led to a comparison by some scholars with the *fornaldar sögur* (see for example Tulinius 2005, 457). The earlier sections bear this comparison well. The sea-battles described, both the battle of Hafrsfjörðr and Qnundr's encounters with vikings, fit this epic-heroic model well. Such events were distant both temporally and spatially from the audience's own lives. The mutilation of Qnundr at the battle of Hafrsfjörðr and his subsequent nickname name (tréfótr) are also reminiscent of mutilations found in the *fornaldar sögur* (see for example *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*). Throughout this section (with the exception of the clearly datable battle of Hafrsfjörðr) time is relatively fluid and it is difficult to pin down exact dates for events.

Upon arrival in Iceland, however, the style changes subtly. Although supernatural elements abound, there is little that is not comparable with supernatural elements in other *íslendinga sögur* such as *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Laxdæla saga* or *drauma þættir* such as *Bergþúa þátr* and *Kumlbúa þátr*. Such elements are also found in Icelandic folk-tradition. Indeed I would argue that, despite its supernatural interest and folk-motifs, the central section of *Grettis saga* should be seen very much as an *íslendinga saga*. There is no sense of a quest-narrative as there is in many *fornaldar sögur* and Grettir is outlawed by a legal ruling not a supernatural event (notwithstanding Glámr's curse upon him). He is forced out beyond society into the wilderness, where strange and wonderful things happen, but there is no sense of the escapism that run through the *fornaldar sögur*. Even where *fornaldar sögur* characters are clearly indefinable historical persons, the stories in which they occur exist in a fictional past which is not clearly defined and while such characters might be datable, the sagas themselves show no interest in these dates. Grettir in his saga is a real man acting in a time three centuries before his readers. Although the intrinsic chronology of the central portion of the saga is far from perfect, it was a chronology of which the saga-writer was thoroughly conscious.

With Grettir's death, the style of the saga changes again. Grettir's brother pursues his killer Qngull to Constantinople and kills him. There then follows a short narrative in which Þor-

⁷ See, however, Guðni's footnote to this passage, where he questions the saga-writer's accuracy on this legal point. Whether the saga-writer was right, wrong or deliberately falsifying the law at this point need not undermine my overall point that a distinction is being drawn in the text between the 'now' of the events and the 'now' of their narration.

steinn falls in love with a married woman named Spes and narrowly avoids being caught on several occasions by her jealous husband until she finally divorces him. It has been suggested that motifs in this narrative have links to the Tristram legend (see for example Craigie 1913, 66 and Cook 1993, 242), more generally however, the whole style is much closer to that of a European romance perhaps even influenced by early fabliaux with its emphasis of cunning and, in particular, sexual deception. It is not inconceivable that the so called *Spesar þáttur*, originally had no connection to the oral material surrounding *Grettir*, but nonetheless for the writer of the extant version of *Grettis saga* it was an important final act. Such a writer cannot have been oblivious to the mismatch in tone between the episodes through the main portion of the saga and that in the final six chapters and therefore we must assume he had a particular purpose for such change in style. It seems possible that the episodes of this final act were deliberately mimicking what the saga-writer saw as a modern or new style. In this way the style and tone in which *Grettis saga* is written reflects the comparative distance of the narrative from its original audience. The earliest sections, with their reliance on Viking battles resembling those found in the *fornaldar saga* are deliberately distanced from the audience. The main body of the text, remains distinct from the audience, but only to the distance of all the *íslendinga sögur*, with the great heroes living wild lives but within the familiar surrounds of the Icelandic countryside and with specific reference to things with which that audience will identify thereby embedding the link between the heroic past and textual present. The final section plays out in a far off land, in a foreign mode, imported from Europe but rapidly growing in fashion in saga writing. Therefore, the writer's use of time and the past in *Grettis saga*, while not perfectly reconcilable with historical events, is nonetheless always thoroughly conscious and literary.

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Känsla och oro i *Fóstbræðra saga*

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I

Som vi alla vet är verklighetens skeenden oerhört komplicerade affärer, frihetsgraderna är många och vad som ska hända i nästa sekund inte lätt att förutse, särskilt i avgörande och kritiska lägen av ett förlopp. Efteråt kanske man har en viss uppfattning om det inträffade, men man vet sällan säkert varför det ägde rum. Det finns emellertid ett oerhört effektivt sätt att i efterhand inskränka frihetsgraderna. Man kan berätta en berättelse om det som hände. Berättandet i sig är lika komplicerat och oberäkneligt som händelserna själva, liksom tillägnelsen av det berättade, men ”texten” förefaller entydig och kristallklar såväl ur konceptionens som receptionens synvinkel, och det är lätt att bli övertygad om att den inträngande förståelsen går att nå. Berättandet blir därför ett oundgängligt sätt att hantera komplexiteten i tillvaron, ett sätt dessutom där emotioner spelar minst lika stor roll som den rationella tanken. Men vad ska man göra om texten, den förrädiskt enkla och övertygande texten, är det enda man har tillgång till, och om det man är ute efter är en sedan länge förgången komplicerad kommunikationsprocess?

Det allra mest basala är att inte betrakta texter som oföränderliga, statiska objekt som man kan vrida och vända på och dra slutsatser kring. Det finns ingen text utanför medvetandet, det finns bara textsignaler och *affordances* som läsarkonstrueras dynamiskt i läsögonblicket utifrån den dynamiska diskursvärld som medvetandet ouplösligt och dynamiskt ingår i. Ett första steg kan därför vara att så gott det går betrakta den egna nutida receptionsprocessen och försöka få en bild av de kraftfält som vi tenderar att konstruera när vi konfigurerar textens signaler. Här måste vi komma ihåg att kraftfälten både beror av vår egen erfarenhetsbaserade uppfattning om världen och av textsignalernas urval och fokuseringar och direkta kommentarer. Vi kan inte subtrahera bort inflytandet från den egna diskursvärlden, men vi kan åtminstone ha som medvetet mål att bättre förstå de diskursvärldar som den dåtida konceptionen och receptionen försiggick i.

Det finns all anledning att tro att konceptionens art påverkar texters utformning, men det är svårare att formulera kriterier – och knappast heller önskvärt med tanke på de inblandade dynamiska processerna. En författare som skriver ner en helt fiktiv berättelse, en författare som bygger framställningen på egna upplevelser eller andras utsagor, en muntlig berättare som inför publik framför en egen berättelse, en muntlig berättare som känner sig reproducera en berättelse ur en levande tradition – det borde finnas identifierbara skillnader här. I ett par tidigare undersökningar har jag diskuterat problemen med att alltför ensidigt betrakta den isländska sagolitteraturen som en skriftlig kulturyttring, men det är naturligtvis ett vanskligt företag att hitta otvetydiga bevis för muntlighet i de bevarade texterna. Men även om en skriven saga innebär något helt annat än ett muntligt framförande – texten är, som Gísli Sigurðsson (2004) påpekat, inte *oral* utan *orally derived* – är det min övertygelse att det kan finnas spår av muntlighet i det skrivna, och att det beror på vilka perspektiv vi intar om spåren blir synliga eller inte. Ett sätt kan vara att försöka närma sig det texterna ser ut att ”vilja” – de *affordances* som de ser ut att erbjuda och de grundläggande *anxieties* som de ser ut att uttrycka. Det gäller helt enkelt att identifiera kraftfälten i sagorna, både hur vi uppfattar dem och hur texten tycks ”vilja” att de ska uppfattas. Kan man se en genomgående strategi eller finns det motsägelser, och beror i så fall motsägelserna på en process under lång tid eller på fundamentala problem i den omgivande diskursvärlden? Var det de förmedlade känslorna och den underliggande oron som gjorde berättelsen värd att berätta?

II

Som bekant handlar Fóstbrœðra saga om de båda fosterbröderna Þorgeirr Hávarsson och Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld Bersason, och i ett första parti ligger fokus på deras gemensamma våldsdåd på västra och nordvästra Island. De skils sedan åt och det andra partiet berättar om deras fortsatta öden var för sig. Þorgeirr dräps i en sammandrabbning mellan ett par grupper sjöfarare i ett hamnläge i nordost, och den sista avdelningen har därför Þormóðr som ensam huvudperson. Först tar han på Grönland en gruvlig hämnd på den ene av Þorgeirrs dråpare, och sedan beger han sig tillbaka till Norge, följer kung Óláfr i landsflykten och deltar i slaget vid Stiklastaðir, där både han och kungen dör.

Redan de första raderna slår fast ett makthierarkiskt nätverk från Gud, via kung Óláfr helgi till makthavare i Norge och andra länder.¹ Det var, sägs det, de hövdingar som Gud skattade högst som också Óláfr tyckte bäst om, och den gode hövdingen i det här sammanhanget på Island heter Vermundr. Nätverket är allomfattande eftersom hövdingarna i sin tur håller ordning i den enskilda bygden, och det ställs omedelbart på prov genom att den fredlöse Grettir objuden kommer till trakten. De drabbade bönderna lyckas emellertid övermanna honom och sätter upp en galge. Vermundr är bortrest för tillfället, men när hans kloka hustru Þorbjörg får rätt på vad som är på väg att hända skyndar hon tillsammans med sina huskarlar till platsen, förklarar situationens allvar och ser till att Grettir blir befriad. Þorbjörg framhåller dels att Grettir är av hög ätt och skyddad av mäktiga fränder, dels att han är värdefull på grund av styrka och duglighet. Det har alltså sina risker att döda honom, och i extraordinära krislägen kan sådana som han vara oundgängliga, även om mest till besvär i vardagen. När bönderna i alla fall hävdar att fredlösa rånare inte bör få behålla livet, slutar Þorbjörg argumentera och hänvisar bara till sin bestämmanderätt.

Som vi ser är det redan här ett stort antal kraftfält som samverkar. Man kan för det första ana en viss spänning i den vertikala maktordningen mellan hövdinge- och bondenivån, eftersom bönderna antyder att hövdingarna får sin vilja igenom oavsett om de har rätt eller fel. Vidare är förhållandet mellan de bofasta och icke bofasta komplicerat och kan uppenbarligen vara av både positiv och negativ art. Det finns också släktskapsband som man omöjligen kan bortse från. Relationen mellan kvinnor och män ser ut att fungera väl den här gången, eftersom Þorbjörg är klok och har för vana att styra bygden i makens frånvaro. Dessutom tillhör hon en ansedd släkt, men det är ju inte självklart att Vermundr ska uppskatta all hennes företagsamhet – det finns en potential för konflikt här. Tjänstefolk är på plats i episoden och lyder order. Slutligen får vi en intressant glimt av den laddade typsituation där faran rent konkret står för dörren. Många skulle inte ha varit så undfallande mot Grettir ”ef þeim sýndisk eigi troll fyrir durum” (121).

Textsignalerna styr förstås receptionen inte bara genom urval och perspektivskiften och kausalitetsbedömningar, utan också genom direkta och indirekta värderingar av det som händer, så också i den här ”objektiva” isländska sagan. Gud *tycker bäst* om de hövdingar som Óláfr tycker bäst om. Vermundr *är* ansedd och klok och vänsäll, och Þorbjörg *är* klok och högsinnad. Männen *är* alltid nöjda med det Þorbjörg bestämmer. Och det enda som hindrar hängningen att bli av är att Þorbjörg kommer ridande. Genom den lilla strofen mot slutet av episoden får vi också del av Grettirs perspektiv och hans insikt att han verkligen var illa ute. Till och med berättelsens moral slås fast – den visar vilken hederskvinna Þorbjörg var. Det finns naturligtvis alternativa sätt att sammanfatta skeendet, det ser vi om vi tar i beaktande att episoden även är återgiven, i betydligt utförligare form, i Grettis saga. Där är det i mångt och

¹ Jag utgår från utgåvan i Íslenzk fornrit 6, där versionen i Möðruvallabók är huvudtext så länge den finns bevarad, och versionen i Hauksbók därefter tar över. Märk att versionen i Flateyjarbók inkluderar introduktionen av Vermundr och Þorbjörg men saknar Grettirepisoden.

mycket andra kraftfält som styr än i Fóstbrœðra saga, främst genom en tydligare polarisering mellan en överordnad nivå, där Grettir ingår, och en mer komiskt skildrad bondenivå.

Vad händer då med kraftfälten i resten av sagan? Óláfrnätverket hålls samman av vänskapen med de utvalda hövdingarna och genom att islänningar och grönlänningar tillbringar vint-rar vid den norska hirden. De som Óláfr bedömer som särskilt dugliga kan bli upptagna i hir-den och få särskilda befogenheter och användas för att åtgärda instabiliteter i nätverket, och Óláfr kan också på övernaturlig väg gripa in i skeenden. Men faktum är ändå att den stabila Óláfrvärlden med alla sina nätverk havererar i sagan, i och med att bandet mellan Gud och kung och hövdingar är brutet efter slaget vid Stiklastaðir. Bland hövdingarna kan man särskil-ja de som eftersträvar jämvikt (Þorgils och Illugi Arason på Reykjahólar och Þorkell Leifsson på Grönland), de mer problematiska (Vermundur) och de som stör jämvikten (Þorgrímr trolli). Frändskapsband gör sig ofta gällande, inte minst vad beträffar det stöd Þorgeirr får från Reyk-jahólar, men också som krafter utifrån (dråpet på Þorgils Músson och händelserna på Grön-land). ”Vanligt folk” representeras framför allt av skeppsbesättningar, som ger ett högst nor-malt intryck, och bönder, som vi redan sett bli ordentligt tillrättavisade (en av de bönder som enligt versionen i Grettis saga deltog vid hängningsförsöket är i det närmaste skräckslagen i Butraldiepisoden). Och det är i allmänhet tufft att befinna sig lågt ner på rangskalan i den här världen. Man kan bli dräpt utan anledning, och ofta ingår man anonymt i grupper av huskarlar och tjänstefolk, som förlängda armar helt enkelt. I enstaka fall får man ett namn och en identi-tet innan man blir dödad, och någon gång kan man till och med få friheten till följd av sina insatser. De halvt utanförstående våldsmännen tar upp stor plats i sagan och gör ibland nytta, genom att ta hand om andra våldsmän som terroriserar sin bygd eller genom att utföra kung-ens uppdrag. Men de är också en plåga, och man kan förvänta sig vad som helst av dem. Mycket handlar dessutom om våldsmännens relationer inbördes, i fiendskap eller vänskap, och om hur uppgörelserna dem emellan kan bli till problem för samhället i övrigt.

Kvinnorna spelar en stor, om än sekundär, roll i sagan och är betydligt mer mångfacettera-de än männen. I förvånansvärt få fall är det fråga om hustrur som, liksom Þorbjörg, egentligen står tillbaka för männen, betydligt oftare om kvinnor som agerar helt i egenskap av mödrar och husfruar. Lägre på den sociala stegen står de många tjänstekvinnorna som öppnar dörren i natten och förmedlar budskap men också aktivt kan skydda sina husbönder. Här finns alltså många handlingskraftiga och stridbara kvinnor som hittar metoder att försvara sig själva och sina egna. Inte minst gäller detta Þormóðrs bágge kärestor, som verkligen inte är att leka med. Þormóðr är således inte oemottaglig för kvinnlig fägring, men det förefaller bara vara när han är uttråkad som han tar till den typen av tidsfördriv. Þorgeirr är mer explicit och menar att det bara är slöseri med krafterna att ligga och krypa på kvinnfolk. Däremot har han ett gott förhål-lande till sin mor, och när en kvinna formulerar ett uppdrag är han snabbt på hugget. Flera av kvinnorna i sagan besitter övernaturliga krafter (Gríma på Island och Gríma på Grönland, Þorbjörg kolbrún, undantagskärningen i Óláfsdalr, Þordís på Grönland), och det talas över hu-vud taget mycket om hedniska förhållanden i sagan men då oftast ur berättandets kristna per-spektiv. Bortsett från Óláfrs ingripanden är det annars bara vid två tillfällen som det överna-turliga gör sig gällande (den blodiga processionen i Garpsdalr och pilen som dödar Þormóðr). Vädrets krafter är också ovanligt viktiga i Fóstbrœðra sagas värld, framför allt till en början, och utgör ett framträdande kraftfält med betydelse för händelsernas gång.

Men vilken är då meningen med berättelsen, vad är det sagan vill åskådliggöra och varför var den värd att lyssna till? Är det bara fråga om en ”samling løst forbundne fortællinger” som blir sammanhängande först i och med Þormóðrs hämnduppdrag? (Meulengracht Sørensen 1994: 581) eller helt enkelt om en saga med ”two protagonists instead of one” (Andersson 2006: 70). Eller ska vi lita på sagans egna slutord att ”lýkr hér frásögn þeiri, er vér kunnum at segja frá Þormóði, kappá ins helga Óláfs konungs” (276)?

Jag begränsar mig här till några enskilda iakttagelser. För det första är fosterbröderna till en början minst lika besvärliga som Grettir när han gör livet surt för bönderna i trakten, men de hjälper samtidigt en kvinna som trakasseras av våldsmän, och Þorgeirr hämnas fadern trots sin ungdom. Samma polaritet fortsätter efter Þorgeirrs fredlöshet i och med att han skaffar sig alltmer anseende utomlands, medan på Island dråpsmålen blir mer och mer absurda och futtiga. Det är tydligt att två världar av fundamentalt olika karaktär är överlagrade varandra i sagan, och att Þorgeirr agerar i dem på helt olika sätt, som hjälte i den ena och problembarn i den andra. En annan, högst lokal, instabilitet, ser också ut att organisera helheten. Som framgått är Þorgeirr och Þormóðr först oskiljaktiga men agerar senare var för sig på egen hand, och det enda som egentligen hänt är att Þorgeirr frågat Þormóðr vad han tror skulle hända om de prövade krafterna mot varandra. Þormóðr reagerar omedelbart och kräver att de ska skiljas åt, och blotta tanken på handgripligheter dem emellan är tydligen förskräckande för honom. Att incidenten är central framgår också av digressionen om fosterbröderna i Ólafsdalr, där man verkligen ser vad som kan hända när vänskap övergår i fiendskap. Kanske är det på grund av Þormóðrs frånvaro som Þorgeirr inte alls fungerar på Island, utan bara i den andra värld där kung Óláfr tar över fosterbroderns roll. Och för Þormóðr går det egentligen inte mycket bättre. Han blir upprepat rastlös och tröstar sig med diktning och problematiska kvinnoaffärer, och inte förrän Þorgeirr dräps får han en verklig uppgift att ta tag i. Kanske finns här även en förklaring till det oproportionerliga hämndprojektet på Grönland, och till och med Óláfr frågar ju Þormóðr varför han slog ihjäl så många. Uppenbart är samtidigt att Óláfr kom att bli en ersättningsgestalt även för honom, och betecknande nog är det en kvinna som får lyssna till hans sista hyllningsord om kungen.

Hypotesen är sålunda att det finns en överordnad nivå som inrangerar de mer lokala och tillfälliga instabiliteterna, och att vi på den nivån hittar ett antal grundläggande spänningsfält. Det finns en problematik mellan nytta och bekymmer vad gäller de asociala våldsmännen. Det finns i fenomenet manlig vänskap en inneboende spänning, som tycks svår att hantera och som kan få vittgående konsekvenser. Och det finns en motsättning mellan Óláfrs (kristna) värld och de världar dit hans inflytanden inte når, och det är därför svårt att inte tillmäta betydelse åt det faktum att Óláfrvärlden bryter samman i sagaslutet.

III

Låt mig än en gång understryka att det vi hittills sagt om systemdynamiken i den fiktiva världen bygger på dynamiska receptionsprocesser där textsignalerna läsarkonstrueras i en nutida diskusvärld. Det är således inte självklart att den hypotes jag presenterat ovan har det minsta att göra med hur sagan uppfattades i sin samtid, men det är samtidigt möjligt att man genom att ställa den nutida receptionen mot konkreta uttalanden och konkreta förhållanden i texten skulle kunna säga något om de obekanta storheterna i ekvationen textsignaler + dåtida diskursvärld = dåtida reception. Och om vi förutsätter en lång traditionsprocess kan kanske till och med interna spänningar och paradoxer tolkas som tecken på att texten delvis inte "förstår" sin egen värld. Risken för bevisföring i cirkel är förstås stor, men samtidigt ofrånkomlig, eftersom det är omöjligt att isolera textsignaler från läsarkonstruktion och eftersom läsaren påverkar texten i lika hög grad som texten läsaren. Det som följer nedan ska därför betraktas som ett antal hypotetiska exempel på spänningar (och sammanfall) mellan den nutida receptionen och textens "konkreta uttalanden" och "konkreta förhållanden".

1) Det finns en viss diskrepans mellan presentationerna av Þorgeirr och hans verkliga uppträdande i sagans första del. Han är mycket riktigt stor och stark och besvärlig, men det sägs också att han är oblid mot vanligt folk, att han sällan ler och att han inte bryr sig om kvinnor. Vi får alltså intrycket av en tystlåten, brutal våldsmän, men det är inte som sådan vi möter honom i sagan. Han skräder inte alls orden inför vare sig tjänstefolk, faderns dråpare eller

modern, han pratar vänligt med Sigrfljóð och antar med entusiasm hennes uppdrag, i Gervisdalr försäkrar han den uppbragte Þorkell att ingen skada ska åsamkas honom, och med Þorgils Mátsson för han ett längre samtal. Det är först senare som han mer lever upp till karakteristiken, och då bara hemma på Island. Snarare är Þormóðr – han som bara presenteras med epiteten rask och modig – den tystlåtna och reserverade. De få gånger han kommer till tals är han den minst tillmötesgående av de båda. Han är inte alls pigg på Sigrfljóðs planer, och vi har sett hur han reagerar på Þorgeirrs, eventuellt förflugna, förslag. Inte heller fortsättningsvis kommer man honom riktigt in på livet, och hans beteende både på Grönland och i samband med slaget vid Stiklastaðir är då och då minst sagt märkligt.

2) De så kallade digressionerna har diskuterats ingående och en viktig fråga har varit om de är ursprungliga eller inte. Onekligen ger de ett omedelbart intryck av fristående kommentar, och det är nog knappast i en traditionsprocess som de har sin naturliga upprinnelse. Det myckna talet om karaktärssegenskaper och inre organ tillför antagligen föga i en muntlig berättarsituation, och exempelvis karaktäristiken av Þorgeirr i samband med att han får beskedet om dråpet på fadern känns definitivt påklistrad. Att inte låtsas om nyheten är inte automatiskt samma sak som att aldrig bli vred eller hatisk eller ilsken.

3) Fóstbrœðra saga innehåller så mycket som ett tjugotal dramatiserade ankomstscener med hälsningar, direkt dialog och specificerad kontext (tid, plats). En förklaring skulle kunna vara att en författare använder ett typscensberättande hämtat ur traditionen, men åtminstone sex av ankomsterna är mycket speciella. De innehåller förmedlare (tjänstekvinnor eller huskarlar) och täta perspektivskiften och är i flera fall oproportionerligt långa i förhållande till den viktiga händelse som de oftast resulterar i (företrädesvis ett dråp). Som spänningsskapande grepp borde de fungera bättre i ett muntligt sammanhang på en ensligt belägen gård – i en värld där bultandet på dörren i natten utgör en central existentiell *anxiety* – än som enskild läsning eller uppläsning på ting eller bröllop.

4) Det finns en myckenhet av drastisk komik i sagan, inte minst i samband med digressionerna (välbekanta är alla de skakande delarna av den skräckslagne Fífl-Egills kropp), men parodin och satiren fastnar ofta i halsen. Det är fånen och originalet och trälen och den livrädde småbonden som förlöjligas – och fiender som har den dåliga smaken att bli dödade eller skadade på ett skrattretande sätt. Nu kan man kanske säga att även Þormóðr dras in i det här genom att han så ofta ådrar sig kroppsliga men, och riktigt roligt är det förstås när Þordís på Grönland så när lyckas få honom att avslöja sitt gömställe genom att ifrågasätta hans manlighet.

5) Märkligt nog går kvinnorna i stort sett fria från förlöjligande. Epiteten är genomgående upphöjande, och inte minst de trollkunniga skildras med stor respekt – sagan fastnar också under en längre sekvens digressivt i den isländska Grimas perspektiv. I den enskilda situationen är kvinnorna mestadels både listiga och förnuftiga. De vet vad de vill och driver sin sak, vare sig det gäller att snärja män eller driva hämndaktioner, och även om de inte alltid uppnår sina mål har man en känsla av att de behåller initiativet och hela tiden står klara för nästa drag i spelet.

6) Männerna ger ett betydligt osäkrare intryck, och det intressanta är att detta inte kommenteras som något exceptionellt utan tycks tas för givet. När de hårda männen möts är labiliteten stor, och utgången svår att förutse. Som när Þorgeirr möter Gautr eller Butraldi, eller när han begår något av sina mest meningslösa dråp. Som när Þormóðr möter Gestr eller Loðinn eller bonden i ladan vid Stiklastaðir. Och som när Þorgeirr och Þormóðr går skilda vägar. Den här osäkerheten närmast tematiseras i konflikten mellan fosterbröderna i Ólafsdalr, Eyjólfur och Þorgeirr.

7) Jag har i ett annat sammanhang – Danielsson (2009) – undersökt slutfasen av kontroversen mellan Eyjólfur och Þorgeirr och påpekat hur mycket det är som hänger i luften och hur textsignalerna snarast försvårar förståelsen. Min försiktiga slutsats är att avsnittet avspeglar en

traditionsprocess där problematiken varit så drabbande att berättandets verkan låg i själva bristen på svar.

IV

Man kan reagera på olika sätt inför en berättelse så komplex som *Fóstbrœðra saga*. Man kan, som tidigare inom forskningen, tala om ursprungstexter som blivit interpolerade. Eller man kan, vilket är vanligare i dag, försöka förstå de bevarade skrivna versionernas enhet utifrån tänkesätt som var rådande under 1200-talet. En mycket övertygande analys i den traditionen har lagts fram av Meulengracht Sørensen (1993). Slutsatsen där är att vi står inför en författare som högst medvetet bryter mot en följd sagakonventioner för att nå det övergripande syftet att "only under the king's rule will the actions of the leaders and men under him be in the service of the good" (410). Þormóðr når fram till den insikten och kommer därför till himlen efter slaget vid Stiklastaðir, medan Þorgeirr lever kvar i den hedniska världen och bara blir ett avskyvärt avhugget huvud efter döden och en direkt orsak till att man inte förmår hindra Eyjólfur och Þorgeirr från att döda varandra i Garpsdalr.

Min tanke är att man måste låta båda vägarna förbli öppna. Vi vet inte om det fanns en tradition värd namnet, men vi kan heller inte vara helt säkra på att den inte fanns. Och om den fanns kommer vi aldrig att kunna säga med säkerhet hur den tog sig ut eller om den lämnat spår i de skrivna versionerna. Men de flesta strävanden att enhetliggöra texter är lika spekulativa, och det är lätt att bli förförd om argumenten är tillräckligt briljanta. Diskussionen bör hållas öppen och möjligheten inte automatiskt avvisas att sagatexter kan innehålla lager av olika ålder och härkomst, av fusioner och av senare missuppfattningar av tidigare avsikter. Personligen misstänker jag att det i *Fóstbrœðra saga* finns spår av en existentiell problematik som inte längre var lika aktuell vid nedtecknandet, och som återspeglas bland annat i ankomstscenerna, i förhållandet till de oregerliga våldsmännen, i den svårhanterliga vänskapen mellan män och kanske i kvinnosynen. Därmed inte sagt att det är ointressant att bli klar över hur en skribent på 1200-talet hanterade det traderade stoffet och gjorde det till sitt.

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Editing the *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*

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The *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* (literally ‘ancient sagas of the northern lands’, but often referred to in English as ‘mythical-heroic’ or ‘legendary’ sagas) represent one of the major genres of mediaeval Icelandic saga narrative – although to what extent they actually do constitute a genre remains the subject of scholarly debate (see e.g. Quinn *et al.* 2006). Unlike many of the standard saga genre designations – *Íslendingasögur*, *konungasögur* etc. – which actually are attested in the medieval literature, the term *fornaldarsaga* is a modern coinage, first used by Carl Christian Rafn as the title of his three-volume edition *Fornaldar Sögur Nordrlanda*, published in Copenhagen in 1829–30. Although all but one of the sagas included there had already appeared in print, Rafn’s edition brought together, for the first time, essentially all the prose narratives preserved in Old Icelandic dealing with the early history of mainland Scandinavia, i.e. before the unification of Norway under Haraldr *hárfagri* and the settlement of Iceland (Rafn 1829–30: I, v). Rafn’s edition thus defined the corpus and gave that corpus its name in accordance with that definition.

In their present form, the *fornaldarsögur* are thought to date predominantly from the 14th and 15th centuries, and are thus regarded as one of the younger genres of saga literature. Most of them have at least some basis in significantly older tradition, however, and it has been customary to distinguish between them on the basis of their relationship to that tradition. Thus while works such as *Völsunga saga* and *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, which are demonstrably related to and/or derived from ancient Germanic poetry, have long been accorded a measure of scholarly respect, others, such as *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* and *Bósa saga*, with their fondness for the fabulous, stock characters, lengthy battle scenes and so on, have often been dismissed as historically unreliable and of scant artistic merit. It was, however, perhaps not surprisingly, these same sagas which were generally the most popular, as attested by the very large number of manuscripts in which they are preserved.

The importance of the *fornaldarsögur* is many-fold. They are, to begin with, a valuable source of information on the history – at least the legendary if not the actual – of early Scandinavia. *Fornaldarsaga*-like narratives were used as a source by Saxo in his *Gesta Danorum*, as he himself acknowledges, and the sagas were combed for information about the early histories of the kingdoms of Denmark and, not least, Sweden, by 17th- and 18th-century scholars: in fact, the first saga texts ever to be printed in the original were *fornaldarsögur*, published in Uppsala in the second half of the 17th century.

The influence of the *fornaldarsögur* is also to be found in other literary works. Almost all of them were turned into the lengthy Icelandic metrical romances known as *rímur*, generally more than once, and many also formed the basis for ballads in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Faeroe Islands (Mitchell 2003). They have also served as a source of inspiration for more ‘serious’ writers. Johannes Ewald’s *Rolf Krage: et Sørgepil* (1770) and Adam Oehlenschläger’s *Helge: et Digt* (1814) were both based on *Hrólfs saga kraka*, the former via Saxo, the latter directly, while Esaias Tegnér’s poem *Frithiofs saga* (1825), praised by Goethe and famous throughout 19th-century Europe, was based on *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*. Wagner drew on *Völsunga saga* at least as much as he did on the *Nibelungenlied* for his *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876). And while specific models are harder to identify, the influence of the *fornaldarsögur* on J. R. R. Tolkien’s works, the *Star Wars* films and on modern fantasy in general is also considerable.

Unfortunately, study of the *fornaldarsögur* has long been hampered by a lack of reliable editions. Recognising this, the Arnamagnæan Commission agreed in 1937 that a new edition of the complete *fornaldarsaga* corpus should be among its first priorities. A detailed plan for

the work was drawn up and an editor for the project, the Icelandic scholar Einar Ól. Sveinsson, was appointed in 1939. The advent of the war prevented the editor from taking up his duties, however, and the project was abandoned (Driscoll 2008). Although a handful of *fornaldarsögur* have subsequently appeared in scholarly editions, it is unfortunately still the case that the majority of them have yet to be edited properly.

What would happen if this project were to be taken up again today? What would a new edition of the *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* look like *anno* 2008?

Defining the corpus

The first question which would need to be asked is quite simply what to include. Assuming that the *fornaldarsögur* do indeed constitute a genre, how many sagas are to be ascribed to that genre?

Rafn included in his edition texts of 31 sagas – or 32, if *Hversu Noregr byggðist* and *Fundinn Noregr*, which were placed together by Rafn under the title ‘Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum’, are counted separately – three of them in two recensions, in addition to the poems ‘Bjarkamál hin fornu’, printed with *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and ‘Krákumál’, printed with *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*. Among these there are several shorter pieces dealing with Scandinavian pre-history, such as *Af Upplendingakonungum* and *Hversu Noregr byggðist*, which were for the most part taken out of longer compilations – into which they had arguably been interpolated – such as *Hauksbók* and *Flateyjarbók*. Their decidedly non-narrative nature is in sharp contrast to the sagas ‘proper’, however, and the justification for their inclusion could certainly be questioned. At the same time, there are others, specifically *Yngvars saga víðförla*, *Tóka þátr Tókasonar*, *Helga þátr Þórissonar* and *Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns*, which were not included by Rafn but certainly could have been, as they conform to his criteria of time and place. And there are still others which might also be included, for example sagas like *Ála flekks saga*, *Hrings saga ok Tryggva*, *Sigurðar saga fóts*, *Sigrgarðs saga frækna*, *Vilmundar saga viðutan* and *Þjalar-Jóns saga*; these are normally classed as romances (*ridðarasögur*), but while set outside Scandinavia proper, they take place in a Viking, rather than a chivalric, milieu. There is also the question of *Þiðreks saga*, seen by some as at least closely related to the *fornaldarsögur* (e.g. Schier 1970: 82–83). *Þiðreks saga* is in many ways atypical of Old Norse works and has generally defied generic categorisation; those wishing to place it among the *fornaldarsögur* have presumably done so because it is derived – perhaps directly translated – from German sources, rather than British or French.

There is also the question of ‘lost’ *fornaldarsögur* (see Mitchell 1991: 185). Some of these are so completely lost that nothing remains of them at all, such as **Hróks saga svarta*, which is named in *Geirmundar þátr heljarskinns* but of which nothing survives – though it is possible that the saga referred to by this name is in fact identical with *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* (see Seelow 1981: 158–59). There are no such references to **Ásmundar saga flagðagæfu*, but its existence can be inferred by the fact that it was the basis for a set of *rímur*, also lost. A fairly lengthy prose summary survives, ‘Inntak úr söguþætti af Ásmundi flagðagæfu’, written down by sr. Eyjólfur Jónsson á Völlum around 1700 on the basis of stories told him by his mother and maternal grandmother, but it is not entirely clear exactly what these stories were based on, whether the *rímur*, a written saga or, as seems most likely, both (see Jesch 1982). What does seem clear is that there once existed a *fornaldarsaga*-like narrative of which this is the closest representation we have. As such, one might not unreasonably argue for its inclusion in the corpus.

A number of *fornaldarsögur* survive only in *rímur* that were based on them, such as *Gríms rímur og Hjálmars*, also known as *Grimlur*. These were printed by Biörner, along with prose translations into Swedish and Latin, in his *Nordiska Kämpadater* (Biörner 1737) – the first

(secular) *rímur* to appear in print, and the only *rímur*, to my knowledge, to appear in Latin translation. There are other examples of this, and one could argue that, in the absence of the prose texts on which they were based, all such *rímur* should also be included in the corpus.

In such cases there often are prose texts as well, but these are secondary, in that they are prose retellings of the medieval *rímur*, what Peter Jorgensen has called ‘*rímur* retreads’ (Jorgensen 1990; see also Driscoll 1997: 12–13, 194–205). There is, in fact, a younger prose version of Grimlur preserved in AM 601 4to, a manuscript which contains a prose version of Ormars *rímur*, which were also based on a lost *fornaldarsaga*. Here the situation is even more complicated, as there is also a younger *þáttur* or *ævintýri* preserved in AM 119 8vo and some half-dozen manuscripts in Landsbókasafn; this *þáttur* was then the basis for a younger set of *rímur*, composed in 1833 by Sigurður Jónsson á Reykjum (Björn Karel Þórólfsson 1934: 336–38 and 416–18).

Probably the best known example of the ‘*rímur* retread’ phenomenon is *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*, which was one of the sagas included by Rafn in his edition. Although there is evidence for the existence of a saga by this name in the medieval period – the famous wedding feast at Reykjahólar in 1119 (Foote 1953–57) – this saga has not survived, and the text printed by Rafn is a late 17th-century prose version of the *rímur* known as *Griplur*, which were themselves based on that lost saga (Jesch 1984). A similar case is provided by Haralds *rímur* *Hringsbana*, which are thought to have been composed in the first half of the 15th century on the basis of a lost *fornaldarsaga* (Ólafur Halldórsson 1973). There is a younger saga, probably written in the 17th century. This saga was not, according to Björn Karel Þórólfsson (1934: 405–7), based on the *rímur*, but rather on the older saga. This younger saga was in turn the basis for two further sets of *rímur* (Finnur Sigmundsson 1966: I, 204–6).

Yet another example is *Úlfhams saga*, recently edited in admirable fashion by Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2001). The saga exists in three distinct versions, the earliest from the 17th century, the youngest from the 19th. All derive, directly or indirectly, from *Úlfhams rímur*, also known as *Vargstökur*, which are thought to have been composed in the beginning of the 15th century – though exactly on the basis of what is unclear.

As we have seen, the existence of medieval *rímur* does not always guarantee that a corresponding prose narrative also existed in written form in the middle ages. There is also a significant number of post-medieval *fornaldarsögur*, works which were certainly written after the Reformation, generally on the basis of older material, in particular Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum*. There are almost as many sagas of this type as there are ‘proper’ *fornaldarsögur* – certainly some 25. While some are only found in one or two manuscripts, others were very popular indeed. A few even managed to find their way into print, chiefly in cheap, popular editions from the second half of the 19th century or first decades of the 20th. One such is *Sagan af Starkaði Stórvirkssyni gamla*, which was written by Snorri Björnsson (1710–1803) on the basis of Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum*, *Gautreks saga*, *Heimskringla* and the *Sögubrot af fornkunungum*, with verses in all probability by Gunnar Pálsson (1714–91), of which a popular edition appeared in Winnipeg in 1911. Though some of these sagas are mentioned in works such as Margaret Schlauch’s ground-breaking study *Romance in Iceland* (Schlauch 1934), only a handful have been the subject of detailed scholarly investigation, notably Rosemary Power’s fine article ‘Saxo in Iceland’ (Power 1984; see also Driscoll 2003). Otherwise, where they are mentioned at all, they are usually dismissed as ‘spurious’, something entirely different from the *fornaldarsögur* of the middle ages, certainly nothing to be taken seriously. And yet they are quite clearly part of the same tradition, a tradition which, arguably, continued unbroken from the (early) medieval period until the end of the 19th century. For this reason they too, one could say, deserve inclusion in the corpus.

Editorial principles

The foundation of any scholarly edition is an examination of all the surviving texts, or ‘witnesses’ as they are known in traditional textual criticism, a thorough interrogation of which will bring one as close to the original as it is possible to get. Even limiting oneself to the ‘classic’ corpus of 36 sagas, *viz.* the 31 included by Rafn plus Helga þátr Þórissonar, Yngvars saga víðförla, Tóka þátr Tókasonar, Þjalar-Jóns saga and Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns, there are a lot of witnesses to be interrogated: at last count 1542 texts, contained in a total of 779 individual manuscripts (Driscoll & Hufnagel 2009), giving an average of just a fraction under two texts per manuscript. Of these, just over 100 are defective or one way or another, while just under 100 are fragments, *i.e.* where more than half the text is missing. Several contain only the very beginning or ending of the saga, in some cases obliterated so thoroughly that nothing can be read. Not infrequently this was done by none other than Árni Magnússon himself, who split up a number of manuscripts containing more than one saga (and in such cases always made an exact – one trusts, for generally there is now no way of checking – copy of the text he had eradicated). Extracts or excerpts are found in 23 cases, while about 120 are, or contain alongside the Icelandic text, translations into other languages, predominantly Swedish and Latin; these have never, to my knowledge, been the subject of scholarly investigation but are potentially of great interest, if only because some may be translations of manuscripts no longer extant.

Most of these manuscripts are, or can be, dated and are written by identifiable scribes. The distribution of manuscripts and texts by century is as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of fornaldarsaga manuscripts and texts by century

Century	MSS	Texts	Texts/MS
XIV	1.0%	1.3%	2.8
XV	3.0%	3.9%	2.5
XVI	0.9%	0.6%	1.8
XVII	28.7%	19.7%	2.1
XVIII	43.0%	41.6%	1.9
XIX	21.9%	0.9%	1.9
XX	1.2%	0.9%	1.3

As is immediately apparent from this table, the vast majority of the extant manuscripts containing texts of *fornaldarsögur* are from after the Reformation, with nearly half coming from the 18th century. This pattern of distribution is probably not dissimilar to that of other saga genres, though in the absence of more large-scale statistical analyses it is difficult to draw any conclusions with any degree of certainty. One reason for this pattern of distribution, though, is certainly the great increase in popular literacy in Iceland in the course of the 18th century, with something like universal literacy being achieved by the end of the century, which led to an increase in literary activity generally (Loftur Guttormsson 1989; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and Davíð Ólafsson 2002). At the same time, not all the manuscripts included here were produced in Iceland, many having been copied, usually by Icelandic students, in Denmark or Sweden for use by Scandinavian antiquarians. Even so, the bulk of *fornaldarsaga* manuscripts from the 17th and 18th centuries were produced in Iceland itself, apparently for domestic consumption, something which cannot be entirely unrelated to the interest in this material in the rest of Scandinavia; it would be nice to know exactly how.

While a very large number of these manuscripts are obviously ‘valueless’ from a traditional textual-critical point of view, in that they are – and often admit to being – copies of extant manuscripts or, in not a few cases, printed editions, they are certainly not without their interest. The editorial project envisaged by the Arnamagnæan Commission in 1937 involved

an examination of all the extant witnesses, principally, in keeping with the precepts of the nascent Arnamagnæan School, with an eye toward identifying the ‘best text’, i.e. that which was as close as possible to the work’s original form. In the last three decades or so, not least with the advent of the so-called ‘new philology’, there has been less focus on origins and more on the processes of literary production, dissemination and reception, with the result that texts which would hitherto have been rejected as unreliable, corrupt and worthless can now be seen as valuable sources of information on these very processes (Driscoll *in spe*). *Anno* 2008, one would still want to examine the extant texts, but with an eye toward charting the entire process of transmission and identifying interesting textual manifestations of the works in question, including, but in no way limited to, those which best represent their oldest identifiable forms. One would want to describe and transcribe the individual textual artefacts as carefully as possible, but also link them to other artefacts preserving texts of the same (and other) works. More importantly, one would want to map the relationships between these artefacts and the people who produced and consumed them, to show how the ‘manuscript matrix’ worked. One would then try to present all this material as part of a dynamic, interactive digital text archive, rather than as static, read-only texts on the page (or screen), though printed texts for simple reading could easily be generated from the archive on demand. Fortunately, the technological architecture to do this exists: it is known as ‘Web 2.0’. Only in this way, it seems to me, can we do this vast and utterly fascinating body of material any justice.

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Anatomies off the Map: “Secret and distant freaks” and the Authorization of Identity in Medieval Icelandic and Irish Literature

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In 1185 Giraldus Cambrensis wrote:

Just as the countries of the East are remarkable and distinguished for certain prodigies peculiar and native to themselves, so the boundaries of the West also are made remarkable by their own wonders of nature. For sometimes tired, as it were, of the true and the serious, she [Mother Nature] draws aside and goes away, and in these remote parts indulges herself in these secret and distant freaks (O’Meara 1982: 31).

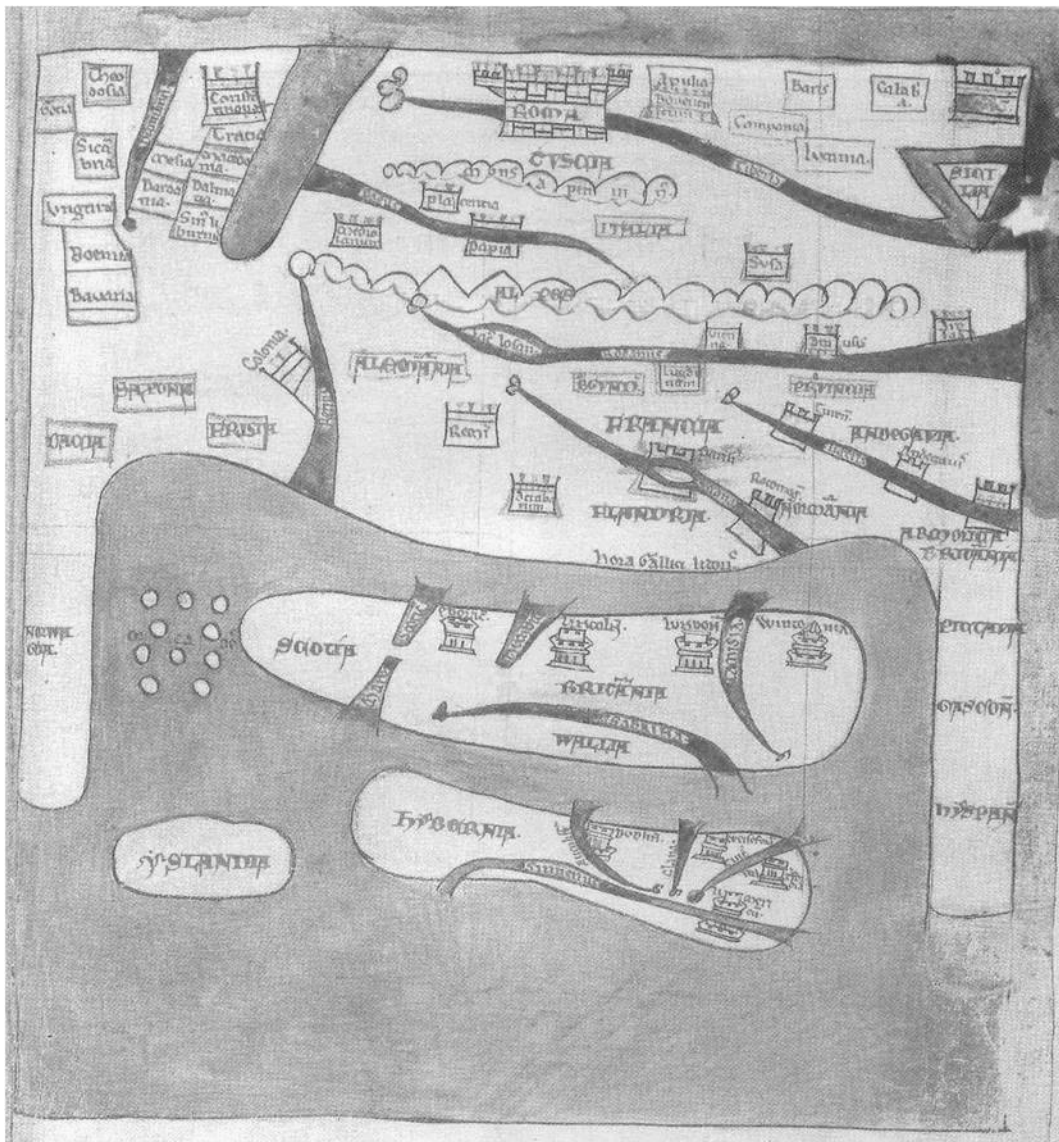


Fig. 1. National Library of Ireland, MS. 700, fol. 48r.

Giraldus parallels the remarkable wonders or “monstrous races” for which the East was renowned with figures from the western geographic extremes of Ireland and Iceland. In a map attributed to Giraldus (Fig. 1) he situates both Ireland (*Hybernia*) and Iceland (*Yslandia*) as outsider lands. England is enclosed in mainland Europe’s embrace while Iceland, and Ireland are set beyond those community defining European boundaries (Lavezzo 2006: 68–9). Ca. 1200, about the same time Giraldus is writing, the Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus asserts that Iceland is “a land very squalid to dwell in, but noteworthy for marvels, both strange occurrences and objects that pass belief. A spring is there, which by the malignant reek of its water, destroys the original nature of anything whatsoever[...].” (Elton 1893: 10–11). Saxo (writing, like Giraldus, in the prestige language of Latin) characterizes Iceland as a strange land of marvels and such terrifying things as springs that erase identity. Giraldus’ and Saxo’s statements suggest that the marginalized westernmost lands possess dangerously “other” beings and wonders that rival the more famous Eastern “monstrous races.”

When we shift westwards to these “remote parts,” we see that Giraldus and Saxo have a point: Irish and Icelandic texts are rich in prodigies of nature that rear their ugly heads, but instead of operating as hideous monsters designed to shed glory on their slayers, the heroes are the monsters. This may be seen as proving propagandistic claims about Icelandic and Irish otherness and dangerous subhumanity. What Irish and Icelandic authors do, however, is give their monstrous heroes articulate, intelligent voices and functions, and endow their abnormality with an impressively informed logic. Two figures comprise my main examples: the Icelandic poet-warrior Egill Skalla-Grimsson, in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (13th c.) and the Irish hero Cú Chulainn from the mid-12th c. Book of Leinster *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (“The Cattle-Raid of Cooley.”) *Egils saga* and the *Táin* spend an unusual amount of time on the heroes’ ugly appearances and aberrant bodily behavior, and while both characters violate bodily norms, they are nonetheless celebrated for the ways they advertise and display their dangerous abnormality. By situating Irish and Icelandic “secret and distant freaks” like Cú Chulainn and Egill within the context of the politically tumultuous 12th and 13th centuries, we see how their authors take the terms and images of their othering and re-configure them to endow a hero’s non-normative body with legitimating power and intellectual cohesion. In other words, neither the Irish nor Icelanders allow themselves to be disenfranchised by propagandistic rhetoric like that of Giraldus or Saxo. Rather, they show their mastery of that type of discourse and its forms, and are able to use that language and body of images as an enabling and empowering discourse. As Houston Baker argues in the influential *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987), this is exactly what early-20th c. African-American writers and performers were doing when they inverted and re-formed the terms and images of blackface minstrelsy, mastering those forms for their own purposes. Thinking about the theories of mastery of form and de-formation (or construction of new forms) as articulated by Baker, I argue that Cú Chulainn and Egill are deployed to create a specific vision of a hero that, to use Baker’s punning language, is both “gorilla” (animal making a show of pounding its chest, bellowing and strutting around in order to guard his territory) and “guerrilla” (effective in camouflage, in resisting easy decoding) – Cú Chulainn and Egill are able to “float like a butterfly in order to sting like a bee,” (Baker 1987: 50) and terrify the opponent with their fierce appearances.

Set in a heroic past syncretized with Christ, the Book of Leinster (LL) *Táin* is nonetheless from a much later period. Compiled between 1152 and 1161, the manuscript was completed shortly before the Norman Invasion of Ireland of 1169, but after the groundwork had been laid and changes had begun to take place. These destabilizing events contributed to the compilation of massive manuscripts (like LL) whose roles were to preserve native traditions as political and cultural order and literary institutions were being eroded with troubling speed. Written in the early 13th c., at the end of the Icelandic Commonwealth or Free State period (930–1262/4), *Egils saga* is also situated in a fraught historical and political context. During

the final fifty years of the Commonwealth period, the Norwegian crown exerted a great deal of pressure on the Icelanders, economic, ecclesiastic and political, and in 1262–4, twenty years after the assassination of Snorri Sturluson, the King of Norway succeeded in annexing Iceland. Written during this tumultuous historical period, and possibly the work of Snorri himself, while *Egils saga* is mainly about the Icelander Egill Skalla-Grímsson (born ca. 910), the saga also spans four generations and provides an extended study of one family’s problems with the ambitious kings of Norway, problems very relevant to 13th c. Icelanders faced with a Norwegian king who seeks their incorporation into his kingdom. The *Möðruvallabók* text cited here is, as a mid-14th c. manuscript, furthermore set in the context of Iceland’s 1380 incorporation into the Danish Empire – *Egils saga* and its manuscripts are inextricably bound up in issues of Icelandic independence (and its loss). Indeed, Egill (like Cú Chulainn) is marshaled throughout the ages as a symbol of Icelandic pride – as an Icelander born in 1924 said, the sagas and their heroes “justified our striving for recognition as a nation” (Jón Karl Helgason 2005: 75). Both the *Táin* and *Egils saga* are very much linked to Irish and Icelandic national identity, and are suitable texts for exploring how Irish and Icelandic authors responded to colonialism and its dehumanizing rhetoric. Indeed, while textual depictions of the bodies of Egill and Cú Chulainn do come dangerously close to proving claims about the extreme Western lands being populated with “freaks,” strategies can also be detected that show how the Irish and Icelanders shift from being “othered” on account of their monsters to using their monstrous heroes to advertise their own power.

Egils saga opens and closes with statements that highlight unusually ugly appearances and semi-monstrous lineage. The saga begins with Egill’s grandfather, Úlfr (nicknamed Kveld-Úlfr (“Evening-Wolf”), son of Bjálfi (“Animal-Pelt,”) whose mother, Hallbera (“Gemstone-She-Bear,”) is daughter of another Úlfr (Wolf) and sister to a Hallbjörn hálf troll (“Gemstone-Bear half-troll”) (Sigurður Nordal 1933: 3). Kveld-Úlfr (“Evening-Wolf”) is suspected of being a shape-changer which, given a pedigree that includes wolves, bears and trolls, is not entirely surprising. The saga furthermore shows Kveld-Úlfr going into berserk fits or frenzies, which becomes another family trait, and one which Egill’s father, and to a lesser extent, Egill himself, shows evidence of undergoing, this warrior frenzy also enacted by the Irish Cú Chulainn. Egill’s grandfather Kveld-Úlfr marries the daughter of an even more thoroughly berserk warrior. While connotations of berserks in Norse sources are mostly negative – berserks are typically dishonorable thugs-for-hire, incredibly strong but rather stupid – in the case of Egill’s family, the saga author combines berserk attributes and dangerous behavior with their intelligence, political savvy and economic successes as landed farmers, which moves the allusions to berserks and shape-shifters at least partially away from the usual set of damning stereotypes.

The family genealogy highlights a cross-generational pattern of a handsome, fair and pro-royal son contrasted by a dark, ugly, and anti-social son. Kveld-Úlfr and his wife have two children, the good-looking and well-liked Þórólfr, and Skalla-Grímr (“Bald Grim”), “a dark and ugly man [*svartr maðr ok ljótr,*] like his father both in looks and temper” (Nordal: 5.) Later in the saga, Skalla-Grímr and his companions pay an unfriendly visit to the King of Norway who is told upon their arrival that “Some men have arrived outside [...] if they should be called men: they are more like ogres [*þursum*] in size and appearance than human beings” (Nordal: 63.) Skalla-Grímr marries Bera (“She-Bear”), and they have two daughters and two sons, another light-colored, handsome and charismatic Þórólfr, and Egill, who, the saga tells us that “As he grew up, one could soon see that he would become like his father, terribly ugly [*mjök ljótr*] and with black hair [*svartr á hár*]” (Nordal: 80.) The saga stresses the triad of ugliness, martial prowess and intelligence in its last lines: “It remained true for a long time in that family, that the men were strong and great warriors [*sterkir ok vígamenn miklir*], and some were highly intelligent. It varied greatly, though, so that in that family were

some of the most handsome men to have ever been born in Iceland [...] but, most of the Mýramenn were superlatively ugly [*ljótastir*] [...]" (Nordal: 299–300.) Where most sagas genealogies focus on wealth, good birth, or intelligence (as this does in part), here we also see an emphasis on, and perhaps pride in, extreme ugliness.

A willingness to defy authority using the fearsome appearance he has inherited characterizes Egill's actions throughout life. In one scene Egill bodily intimidates the English king Aðalsteinn into paying the honor-price for his brother Þórólfr:

Egill had strongly marked features [*mikilleitr*]: a broad forehead, heavy eyebrows, a nose not long but exceedingly thick, a wide, long beard, a chin as extremely broad as his jaws, a stout neck and broad-shoulders, more so than other men, [and he was] harsh- and fierce-looking, when he was angry [*harðleitr ok grimmligr, þá er hann var reiðr*]; he was well-proportioned and taller than other men, and had thick wolf-gray hair, but went bald-headed at an early age; he sat, as just described, and dragged one eyebrow down to the cheek [*þá hleypði hann annarri brúninni ofan á kinnina*], and the other one up to the roots of his hair [*en annarri upp í hárrætr*]; Egill was black-eyed and with crooked brows [...] and alternately, he shot his eyebrows down and up. (Nordal: 143–4).

Sufficiently alarmed, Aðalsteinn pays up, and Egill composes a poem of thanks heavily reliant on appearance: "*Knóttu hvarms af harmi / hnúpnípur mér drúpa, / nú fann ek þanns ennis / ósléttur þær rétti [...]*" (Nordal: 145). ("In bitterness my brows / beetled over my eyes; / Now my forehead has found one / To smooth its furrows") (tr. Pálsson & Edwards 1976:130.) The king wants Egill to stay on, yet when Egill refuses the two nonetheless part "the best of friends" (Nordal: 145). Egill uses his body to intimidate the king, and they come to an agreement on Egill's own terms – the saga here, and elsewhere, shows how easy it is for Egill to gain the respect of important foreign kings, for a mere Icelandic farmer to rub shoulders with, and largely dictate the terms of engagement to a powerful monarch. His threatening body, and the way he advertises his "badness" (Baker: 50) is shown to be persuasive and effective. It is worth recalling that the good-looking, agreeable brothers die early and not entirely honorably, the first Þórólfr killed by the king and the second dying as Aðalsteinn's mercenary. The saga shows that ugly, almost inhuman appearance is an advantage, a powerful and persuasive tool that gives Egill authority and the ability to survive and thrive.

A later episode in which Egill's bodily behavior is at stake vividly shows, on one hand, that Egill cannot be taken anywhere, that he's an "ill-bred, backwater lout" who belongs on the margins among "secret and distant freaks." On the other hand, with careful reading we can see this account as cleverly resisting easy dismissal of the Icelanders, and legitimizing Egill by paralleling him with Óðinn, god of poetry and war. After being misled by the king of Norway's envoys, Egill and his companions arrive, cold and hungry, at the treacherous Ármóðr's farmstead. Ármóðr says all he has are curds, and no ale. His defiant wife sends Egill a message that there is good food and drink, and at Egill's protests, Ármóðr begrudgingly has fine dishes served and strong ale poured. It becomes a heavy-going drinking contest, Egill eventually drinking on behalf of his over-sated men, until unable to continue, he

stood up, walked across the floor to Ármóðr, put both hands on his shoulders and pressed him up against the pillar, then heaved up a vomit of massive proportions that gushed all over Ármóðr's face, into his eyes, nostrils and mouth, and flooded down his chest so that he was almost suffocated. When he recovered his breath he spewed up and all of his servants there began to swear at Egill. What he'd just done, they said, made him the lowest of the low, and if he wanted to vomit he should have gone outside, not made a fool of himself inside the drinking hall [...]. Then Egill went back to his seat, sat down and asked for a drink. After that he recited this verse at the top of his voice: "With my spew I swear / Thanks for your sociability! / We have wit-

nesses that/ I could walk the floor:/ Many a guest's gift/ Is even more gushing:/ Now the ale has ended up/ All over Ármóðr." (Nordal: 225–6; tr. Pálsson & Edwards: 187–8)

We do not need the servants' comments to recognize that, despite its fitness as a punishment for the bad host Ármóðr, this is not a shining moment for the Icelandic hero, almost suffocating someone with vomit not a noble mode of confrontation. However, a different sense of Egill and his actions obtains when we read this scene in terms of the mead of poetry myth as recorded by Snorri Sturluson in *Skáldskaparmál*. Since Snorri may also be author of *Egils saga*, connections between the two texts are particularly relevant. Snorri explains that the giant Suttungr set his daughter Gunnlöð (in a parallel position to Ármóðr's wife and daughter) the task of guarding the divine poetic mead. In order to win it for the Æsir, Óðinn sneaks into Suttungr's mountain stronghold, and Gunnlöð agrees to reward Óðinn with a draught from each container of mead for every night he sleeps with her. With a massive thirst he drains each successive vessel, and

[...] turned himself into the form of an eagle and flew vehemently [...] when Óðinn came in over Ásgarðr, then he spat out the mead into the containers [...] Óðinn gave Suttungr's mead to the Æsir and to those people who know how to make verse. Therefore we call poetry Óðinn's booty and discovery, as well as his drink, his gift and the Æsir's drink (Faulkes, ed., 1998: 4.38–5.8).

Egill is, of course, cleverly drawn in terms of Óðinn, the divine hero who secures the poetic "drink of the gods." Egill turns a trick and attempted ambush by the king's men into an occasion to showcase the Icelander's superiority in terms of gorilla-esque drinking machismo that is simultaneously suggestive as a humorous, yet accurate, rewriting of the mead of poetry account – Egill literally delivers the "poetic mead" to his host, Ármóðr, in Odinic fashion, by spitting it up. In this situation the guest-host, poet-patron relationship has been poisoned, and the usual praise poem becomes both a torrent of vomit and a biting skaldic verse. The next morning, Egill rises with the dawn to kill Ármóðr in revenge, but because the wife and daughter intervene, Egill agrees to only cut Ármóðr's beard and, more severely, blind him in one eye, marking him as a sacrifice to one-eyed Óðinn. Egill presents himself as a god of poetry, as an Óðinn figure, and claims not only literary authority, but the moral high-ground as well, as one whose grotesque act is far less savage than the Norwegian Ármóðr's murderous violation of hospitality.

Egill's physical appearance (inherited and explicitly his), as well as his bodily actions constitute an advertisement of his dangerous power to a range of non-Icelanders. Additionally, *Egils saga*, much of which is set abroad, is also a performance for an Icelandic readership – it is crafted to create a specific vision of an Icelandic hero, to authorize an identity that, citing Houston again, is both "gorilla" and "guerrilla." As such an aberrant and powerful, "secret and distant freak," Egill Skalla-Grímsson is heroically successful.

Shifting to the parallel Irish figure, Cú Chulainn strategically deforms his body and its behavior, his hero's form a highly structured and richly allusive gorilla/guerrilla space. Like Egill, Cú Chulainn puts on the mask of the "secret and distant freak," though it is by donning this very mask that Cú Chulainn, and the scribes who write his body into being, insist on his superiority as a national defender and hero. When enraged and preparing for conflict, Cú Chulainn's body undergoes an extensive and fantastic contortion:

A crooked bout of destruction [*diberge*] fell upon his body in the center of his skin. His feet and his shins and his knees shifted till they were behind him. His heels, his calves and his buttocks moved till they were in front of him. The sinews of his calves moved around till they were on

the front of his shins, so that each huge, knotted muscle of them was as thick as a warrior's round fist (O'Rahilly, ed. 1967: ll. 2344–56, tr. my own).

Cú Chulainn's retropedism links him to the family of "Eastern prodigies" popularly known as Antipodes or Retropedes, and described by Isidore of Seville as having "their soles turned around behind their legs" (*Etymologiae* XI.iii.24). Pliny states that retropedism enabled great speed (*Historia naturalis* VII.ii.30), and one specifically Irish pair allowed movement around all of Ireland in a single day. These highly useful, almost doglike legs would allow Cú Chulainn (whose name means "Hound of Culann") to speedily move around the country and guard its borders. The next part of the description also highlights a link to the monstrous races:

The sinews of his crown were dragged to the hollow of his neck so that each of them was the size of a one-month-old child's head[...] Then he made a red bowl (?) from his face and countenance. He sucked one of his eyes into his head in such a manner that a wild crane could hardly have reached in to pluck it out from the back of his skull onto his cheek. The other [eye] sprang to the outside of his cheek (O'Rahilly: ll. 2271–76.)

A single-eyed appearance is associated in Ireland with *corrguinecht* ("crane-slaughter,") or casting the evil-eye while uttering verse satire, sometimes on the battlefield (Kelly 1997: 128), which is closely linked to one-eyed warrior Óðinn, and the eye-brow contortion Egill effects. Monocular Cú Chulainn also recalls the Cyclopes, with "one eye in the middle of their foreheads [...]" (Isidore, *Etymologiae* X.iii.16) a well-known monstrous race represented, for instance, in the Icelandic *Physiologus* MS (Halldór Hermannsson 1938).

The descriptions of contortions resulting in retropedism and cyclopism do similar work. Giraldus' opening quote stressed the orientaling relationship between the Easternmost and Westernmost "wonders of nature": here the scribes make their hero retropedal and cyclopean – this suggests a link between Cú Chulainn and the widely attested monstrous races of the East. To some extent the Irish writers internalize the arguments about their peripherality that propagandistic accounts suggest. At the same time, they also subvert that "otherness" by allowing these unusual attributes to transform their defender Cú Chulainn into an unparalleled hero – what was seen as negative, other and foreign become empowering, speed-enabling, and evil-eye endowing attributes that make his opponents quiver.

The next stage of the distortion features animalization as Cú Chulainn's mouth is transformed from a civilized organ, the locus of speech, into a grotesquely distended snapping jaw, and his innards confront us with a proleptic spectacle of being devoured:

His mouth was contorted fearsomely. He dragged back the cheek from the jawbone until his gullet was revealed. His lungs and his liver came up till they were bounding in his mouth and in his throat. His upper palate struck a lion-felling blow (?) against the lower palate, and each stream of fire which washed into his mouth out of his throat was as wide as the skin of a three-year-old ram. The resounding blows of his heart against his rib-cage sounded like the howling of a slaughter-hound or like a lion overpowering bears. The torches of the Badb [war-goddess], poisonous clouds and furious sparks of fire, were seen in the air above his head as the boiling angry rage rose from him (O'Rahilly: ll. 2276–85.)

These images provide a direct link to a crucial early scene in Cú Chulainn's life. The boy arrives late to the smith Culann's fort to find that the massive hound has been set outside to protect the fort and attack all who approach. When the bloodthirsty hound sees the boy it stretches its gaping mouth back "to swallow him whole past the wall of his chest and the breadth of his throat and the midriff of his breast"(O'Rahilly: ll. 880–1.) The boy-hero foils

the hound's plans to consume him and tears the animal apart. While a puppy is trained as watchdog, the boy himself replaces Culann's hound and is consequently renamed Cú Chulainn ("Hound of Culann.")

Returning to the distorted form Cú Chulainn's body takes when warding off a threatening opponent, we see that his violently pounding palate, gaping mouth and chest copy the chopping jaws of Culann's watchdog, and his beating heart is also likened to the sound of a hound's baying, which further reinforces the canine nature of his deformity, the animalistic links having a similarly dehumanizing effect that the animal-heavy pedigree does for Egill. The distorted and fearsome Cú Chulainn boils over with fiery energy, flaming torches rising from his body, and is given a heart that beats with the intensity of a hound's baying or a lion's roar. This Irish "Hound of Culann" is celebrated as the human watchdog and guardian of Ulster's borders, the figure who takes on the mask of the hound when necessary to defend his people. Cú Chulainn's body is built logically, and the elements of his description encompass a wide range of attributes featured on both animals and monstrous figures of the East. There is evident effort invested in projecting and advertising Cú Chulainn's physical aberrance as powerful and dangerous, as an entry in the *Annals of Connacht* demonstrates. Cú Chulainn's aberrance, his gorilla-esque fearsomeness, is seen as so effective that when the Irish Annalists describe the Irish warrior Aed O'Connor's 1256 fight against the Anglo-Norman lord Walter de Burgh, they depict Aed as a latter-day, fire-emitting Cú Chulainn:

the warriors of the host on that field could not look on the face of the high lord [Aed], for two great wide-glancing torches were flaming and flashing in his head, so that all feared to speak with him [...] he uttered his high king's war cry and his champion's shout in the midst of the fight" (Lydon 1988: 59–60.)

Cú Chulainn and Aed are proclaimed in their abnormality, and through them the monstrous, flaming body becomes a site of textual prominence, military power, and heroic celebration. Their very non-normative attributes are here explicitly deployed as the terrifying face that the native Irish warriors show to Anglo-Norman invaders of Ireland.

Both Cú Chulainn and Egill have bizarre bodies that effectively terrify and demonstrate their power. By giving Cú Chulainn's distorted body a narrative logic that could be decoded, at least by an educated Irish readership, the scribes to some extent "systematize" and validate his most monstrous features. Similarly, by depicting some of Egill's most outrageous bodily behavior in terms of Óðinn and important myths about poetry, his body also gains legitimacy. Despite rhetoric that shows Ireland and Iceland, and their inhabitants, occupying marginal, almost inhuman territories, the two aberrant heroes Egill and Cú Chulainn are both endowed with a kind of sophisticated body logic that makes them forces to be reckoned with, and not just ugly thugs from out in the European sticks.

It is telling to briefly ponder the afterlives of Egill and Cú Chulainn as ambiguous heroes that their respective narrative traditions seek to recuperate. In one tale Cú Chulainn is raised from the grave by Saint Patrick himself, repents of his earlier sins, and requests a place in Heaven, which Patrick actually grants. It is significant that the storytellers go to such lengths to anachronistically have Cú Chulainn given a divine blessing by St. Patrick himself. Anxieties about the conflicted form and nature of Egill also emerge at the close of *Egils saga*, which records that "under the altar were found human bones; they were much bigger than other human bones. People were certain that, on account of the stories of old men, they must have been Egill's bones." A priest places Egill's exceptionally large and heavy skull, "entirely ridged on the outside like a scallop-shell," on the churchyard fence, and to determine the thickness of the skull, he took a weighty hand-axe and heavily struck the skull to break it, yet

it whitened, and did not become dented or cracked, and one can tell from this that the skull would not have been easily damaged by blows from small persons while scalp and flesh were on it. Egill's bones were interred down in the outer part of the churchyard at Mosfell (Nordal: 298–99).

The bones are relics celebrating the aberrant nature of Egill and his body – strangely shaped, troubling, but impressive and stubbornly refusing defeat or fragmentation. However, while his bones are allowed into the churchyard, marking an acceptance, they are still put on its edges.

The *Táin* and *Egils saga* endow Egill and Cú Chulainn with authority and power that lasts even after their deaths. But, there is still hesitation on the part of the scribes and manuscript copyists who write about Irish and Icelandic heroic non-normativity. The scribe who concludes the Book of Leinster *Táin* gives us a fascinating look into the power and pull between celebration and censure. The scribe, in Irish, writes: “A blessing on every one who shall faithfully memorize the *Táin* as it is written here and shall not add any other form to it.” Just below that though, the same scribe, in the same hand, switches to Latin and records:

But I who have written this story, or rather this fable, give no credence to the various incidents related in it. For some things in it are the deceptions of demons, others poetic figments; some are probable, others improbable; while still others are intended for the delectation of foolish men. (O’Rahilly: ll. 4919–25, tr. p. 272.)

The scribe begins with a blessing, in the Irish language, for those who keep this version of the *Táin* and its remarkable hero Cú Chulainn alive and in circulation. The same scribe that enables pride in native literature and characters, and furthermore provides the increasingly threatened textual means for celebrating these anatomies that are “off the map,” shifts to the prestige language of Latin and denounces the lively hero and epic as “entertainment for foolish men,” a comment that might be read as speaking to the complex psychology of conquest and colonialism. Despite the scribe’s caveats, however, it is important to devote attention to Icelandic and Irish self-authored bodies, often overlooked in discussions about medieval post-colonialism and alterity, and when encountering characters like Egill and Cú Chulainn who demonstrate a mastery of form through deformation, to consider how they operate as responses to the disempowering takeovers of Ireland and Iceland that began in the 12th and 13th centuries.

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Which came first – the smith or the shaman? *Vǫlundarkviða*, craftspeople and central place complexes

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In his studies of central place complexes in early medieval Scandinavia, Stefan Brink suggests a model of inter-relations between highly qualified smiths, pagan priests, warriors and royal or king-like figures (1996: 239–42). Aspects of the Old Norse poem *Vǫlundarkviða* probably date back to this early period, and the narrative as it is preserved portrays such an interaction between a skilled smith on an island workshop and the military power of a royal family in an aristocratic hall. The role of religious or spiritual features and figures in this poem is, however, difficult to determine. Studies of the smith and the shaman in the history of world religions have influenced the interpretation of the figure of the smith in *Vǫlundarkviða*: philological, literary and archaeological studies alike develop parallels between the figure of the master smith *Vǫlundr* and the figure of the shaman in general, or more specific aspects of Óðinic shamanism, Norse *seiðr* and Sámi *noaidi* (Dronke 1997: 257, 260, 266–68, 318; Grimstad 1983: 201–4; Hedeager 2002: 9). Some traditions and contexts may suggest that “The smith and the shaman come from the same nest”,¹ but it is necessary to remove *Vǫlundr* from that nest. In what follows I will outline several key features that preclude *Vǫlundr* from being categorically similar to the shaman. *Vǫlundr* is a highly skilled craftsman of a different ethnicity than the royal family he interacts with: the artisanal motifs and inter-group relations portrayed in *Vǫlundarkviða* are parallel to similar motifs and structures in both Old Norse mythological narratives and archaeological evidence of the role of craftspeople in early medieval Scandinavia.

Plot Summary:

Vǫlundarkviða survives in the Icelandic *Codex Regius* manuscript of the *Poetic Edda*, dated to 1270. Elements of this narrative also survive in several texts, carvings and runic representations from Scandinavia and the British Isles, dating back as early as the 7th century (Dronke 1997: 269–74; Nedoma 1990: 129–39). *Vǫlundarkviða* is an interspersed prose and verse narrative about the famously skilled smith *Vǫlundr*. He and his two brothers are princes of the Sámi, an indigenous group of people inhabiting areas of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. These three brothers travel on skis, hunt and establish a residence together near a lake. They meet three swan-maidens from the south, who are weaving fine linens on the shore. Each swan-maiden marries a brother. The three couples live together for seven winters before the swan-maidens begin to long and ache for something else: they spend a final eighth winter together, and in the ninth winter, while the brothers are out hunting, the maidens fly away. *Vǫlundr*’s two brothers leave to search for their mates, but *Vǫlundr* remains alone, hunting bears and smithing 700 gold rings. He seems to be anticipating the return of his mate. *Vǫlundr* is now called a prince of elves. The Swedish King *Níðuðr* discovers *Vǫlundr*’s abode and has *Vǫlundr* shackled in his sleep and brought to his hall. Anxious about *Vǫlundr*’s threatening presence, the queen orders that he be hamstrung and sent to work at an isolated island workshop. *Vǫlundr* sleeplessly makes precious objects with remarkable speed for the royal family. He has his revenge in two parts. First, *Vǫlundr* forges three sets of gruesome gifts: silver-gilded bowls from the skulls of the king’s two sons, jewels from their eyes, and brooches from their teeth. Second, *Vǫlundr* seduces and impregnates *Bǫðvildr*, the king’s only daughter. With the aid of a magical device (*vél*) of his own crafting *Vǫlundr* lifts himself

¹ This is a proverb of the Yakut tribe (Dronke 1997: 257; Eliade 1978: 83).

into the sky twice, declaring that his revenge is complete and exactly appropriate to the harms inflicted upon him.

Three features:

Three key features form the basis for abstract comparisons of Vǫlundr and studies of shamanism and relations between the smith and the shaman in various traditions around the world. First, *Vǫlundarkviða* demonstrates dualities that are suggestive of interactions between the Norse and the Sámi, particularly the shamans of the Sámi. Second, Vǫlundr's re-forging of the boys' skulls seems magical and evocative. Third, Vǫlundr's escape flights are suggestive of supernatural or spiritual transformation. Each of these features, however, demands close examination in and of itself. With regards to the third feature, which will not be discussed in detail here, Vǫlundr is a magical figure, but Norse mythological figures like Þjazi and Loki also demonstrate magical flights and transformations that are not necessarily shamanic. Within the limited scope of this presentation I will focus on the first two features, the dualities of *Vǫlundarkviða* and Vǫlundr's re-forging of the boys' skulls.

1) Dualities and Dichotomies

In her summary of “The story according to the Poem” Ursula Dronke emphasizes how *Vǫlundarkviða* portrays a “duality in human nature” (Dronke 1997: 255) between the natural or mortal and the supernatural: the human passion of the women who marry the brothers is, for instance, contrasted with the supernatural wings of the valkyries who fly away. According to this argument, Vǫlundr is part human and part supernatural demon. The basis for the dualisms of *Vǫlundarkviða*, however, seems to have less to do with this duality, and more to do with two other contrasts: 1) the contrast between the Swedish colonial kingship and Vǫlundr's Sámi and elvish extraction; and 2) the power to create material wealth versus the desire and power to control material wealth. Both of these contrasts are part of the cultural context for traders, craftspeople and the central place complex in Migration Period and Viking Age Scandinavia. These contrasts need to be clarified with regard to the interpretation and reception of *Vǫlundarkviða*.

Following the introduction of Níðuðr as a colonial king of the Swedes in the prose prologue of *Vǫlundarkviða*, Vǫlundr is immediately introduced as a *Finn* or Sámi. Norse traders were familiar with the Sámi. The early 13th century *Egils saga*, for example, portrays a series of interactions between the Norse and the Sámi. In the late 9th century events related in Chapters 10 through 17, Þórólfr Kveldúlfsson and his rivals, the Hildiríðarsons, go on independent trips north to collect tribute and trade with the same group of Sámi. Þórólfr's dealings go smoothly, but also with some additional ease and success due to intimidation: this is likely because he takes more than three times the customary number of armed men (Bjarni 2003: 13). Conversely, the Hildiríðarsons travel with the customary thirty men and have much less success in extracting tribute and engaging in profitable trade (Bjarni 2003: 20). If this narration is a characteristic example, then trading interactions between the Norse and the Sámi were complex, with an established history of customs. Meetings were regular and often friendly enough, although with a spectrum of possible degrees of alliance, intimidation, hostility and exploitation.

The literature also demonstrates that the Norse were familiar with the reputation of Sámi shamans. The Latin text of the 12th century *Historia Norvegiae* relates the observations of some Norwegian merchants who witness Sámi shamanism. The writer redacts the commentary of the Norwegian Christian merchants on the “intolerable paganism” and literally incredible “devilish superstition” of Sámi shamanism (Tolley 2006: 1–2). The passage details a number of possibly shamanic actions, including supernatural prediction by the use of an “un-

clean spirit”, theft of desirable items over impossible distances, use of a decorated drum, and transformation into “the shape of a water beast.” It is potentially suspect that these merchants just happen to be present during a shamanic séance: Clive Tolley suggests that the most probable explanation may be that the “Sámi deliberately, but perhaps surreptitiously, arranged the séance for their Norwegian visitors; the aim would be a demonstration of their superiority in the field of magic, the only area in which they were recognised as excelling their otherwise more powerful overlords, with a view to securing a better trading deal” (Tolley 2006: 5).² The Norse people were familiar with the Sámi, and with the reputation of their shamans, and both groups probably used intimidation and other, perhaps ethnically specific, performances to secure better trading outcomes.

Vǫlundr’s ethnic and regional otherness as a Sámi is represented in a more mythical or legendary aspect in the verses of the poem, where he is repetitively called a ruler or kinsman of the elves (Neckel & Kuhn 1983: 118, 122). This elvish nature is first declared just as King Níðuðr and his queen abusively enslave the smith. The context of Vǫlundr’s antagonistic behaviour, coupled with his Sámi and elvish extraction, has led to the implication of dark and demonic supernatural associations from the Christianized discourses surrounding shamanism. Robert Nedoma, for instance, observes that his elvishness establishes that “Vǫlund is of a demoniac nature” (1990: 138). Ursula Dronke similarly suggests that “The poet epitomizes as ‘elvish’ the demonic nature of the human smith – born in the same nest as the shaman” (1997: 256–7). It seems to be Snorri who introduces a suggestively Christian dichotomy between light and dark elves: he assigns the lighter variety to the highest level of the heavens and the darker variety to the subterranean realm (Faulkes 1988: 19). As both Kaaren Grimstad and John Lindow point out, literary evidence on distinctions between dwarfs, giants and the light and dark elves is scant and ambiguous at best (Grimstad 1983:193–95; Lindow 2002: 109–10). Lindow emphasizes that “the only important figure explicitly assigned to the elves is Vǫlund” (2002: 110). Grimstad concludes that “there was often no clear distinction made between” dark-elves and dwarfs: “both lived in the earth, were potentially dangerous to man, and were superior smiths, skilled in magic” (1983: 195). There are, however, no descriptions of Vǫlundr’s environment in this poem that would suggest an underground situation. Associations between *Welandes smiððe* (“Weland’s Smithy”) and the megalithic grave near the Berkshire Downs in the Old English charter of 955 obviously offer a different perspective (Kemble 1964: 332; Dronke 1997: 259; Nedoma 1990: 133), as do more generalized associations between dwarves, smiths and underground workshop environments in mythological and folkloric sources (Ellis Davidson 1958; Motz 1977). But it is important to remember that these associations are not explicitly demonstrated in *Vǫlundarkviða*. In fact, Vǫlundr is described as having a white neck in the second stanza, which would seem to preclude him from membership in the ranks of the dark elves, who – Snorri tells us – are “darker than pitch,” *svartari en bik* (Faulkes 1988: 19). This demonization of Vǫlundr has more in common with the Christian dichotomies of God and Devil, light and dark³ that distort encounters with elves and Sámi shamanism than it does with understandings of the smith in the poem and in the cultural context of trade with skilled craftspeople in the early Viking Age. If it is from shamanic discourses that Vǫlundr’s demonic associations arise, then it must be pointed out that the category of “shamanism” can prove highly problematic, as Alice Beck Kehoe elucidates (2000: 2–6, 15, 37–9, 53–5). Furthermore, nowhere in the poem does Vǫlundr wear a cape, cover himself in a blanket, go into a trance, heal people or carry a staff or a drum: this smith is not to be confused with a shaman.

² cf. Tolley’s two-volume study on *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic* (2009), which was not yet available at the time of this writing.

³ cf. Steinsland 2005: 141.

2) The Skulls

Vǫlundr's re-forging of the boys' skulls is also not a sustained shamanic parallel. In her commentary on *Vǫlundarkviða*, Dronke repetitively cites Mircea Eliade's *The Forge and the Crucible*. One of the key implications made by citing Eliade's work is that Vǫlundr's forging of silver bowls and jewels from the boys' skulls is parallel to shamanic initiation rituals amongst several Siberian tribes (Dronke 1997: 267). According to Eliade's paraphrase (1978: 83), these dream-narratives involve a spirit journey in which the initiate meets a supernatural smith figure who re-forges the initiate's skull using a special anvil, or reassembles the initiate's body using iron either in place of bone or as a connective agent between bones. These narratives involve a consistent sequence of events: 1) spiritual journey to the smith, 2) dismemberment, 3) re-integration of the body, sometimes using metal components, 4) spiritual return journey with confirmed status as shaman.

Vǫlundr's re-forging of the boys' skulls, however, does not operate as a parallel to these shamanic narratives: this is vengeance, not initiation. I acknowledge the abstract parallels involving skulls, smithing, metal, magical skills, transformations and powerful figures of knowledge with different ethnicities or supernatural dwarf/elf extractions. But Níðuðr's sons are really not in a better position to become shamans because of Vǫlundr's actions. Nor is Vǫlundr acting from a motive that could be confused with wanting to promote these two young cubs to a powerful spiritual vocation. Nor is Vǫlundr raising Níðuðr's sons through a warrior initiation rite, a parallel that Grimstad suggests to the smith Reginn raising the hero Sigurðr (1983: 203). The boys travel to the smithy, where the smith decapitates them. Any potential for sustained comparative parallels to shamanic or heroic initiation narratives begins and ends here. The boys' heads are re-forged into bowls and jewels, their decapitated bodies remaining in the waste slag beneath the forge.

3) Textual Parallels

I would like to offer an alternative interpretation of *Vǫlundarkviða*, one that is not based upon placing the smith in the same nest as the shaman. Two brief case studies, one textual and one archaeological, suggest that the basis for Vǫlundr's actions is a statement about the relations between craftspeople and aristocratic power in the central place complex.

Vǫlundr's gruesome bodily transformation of Níðuðr's sons is part of an un-doing of the central place complex that Níðuðr and his queen have attempted to establish. Vǫlundr's actions here are parodic parallels of the re-forging of Ymir's skull and body into the cosmos by Óðinn and his two brothers, Vili and Vé (Faulkes 1988: 9–13). This is the archetypal Old Norse myth of creating a central place complex for the gods and humanity, and Vǫlundr's revenge echoes both the destructive and murderous as well as the creative and magical aspects of this action. Comparing *Vǫlundarkviða* to this creation story highlights imbalances in power and tensions between different types of communities, particularly related to the repercussions of unilateral exploitation of craftspeople. Vǫlundr and *Vǫlundarkviða* are the expression of complex social networks of ideologies and anxieties.

The Old Norse myth of the creation of the cosmos is recounted most fully in Snorri's *Edda* and in *Grímnismál*, and aspects of this narrative also appear in skaldic kennings that arguably have origins in the 10th or 11th centuries. Ymir is the first Frost-Giant, and the first anthropomorphic being: from him are descended all other giants and the gods. Óðinn and his two brothers kill Ymir and create the cosmos from his body parts: the sky is Ymir's skull, and it is held up by four dwarfs, the clouds are his brains, the seas and lakes his blood, the earth his flesh and the mountains his bones, while rocks and scree are made from his teeth and any bones that were broken. This is how the gods first establish their own central place, and a central place for humanity: the respective powerful halls and fertile regions lie at the centre of

this construction, surrounded and protected by Ymir’s eyelashes. The giants, and some dwarfs, are generally the foes of the gods and they live on the periphery of the world in mostly de-centralized pluralized locations (cf. Clunies Ross 1994: 50–6).

There are at least two key parallels to *Vǫlundarkviða* here. First, both are narratives of magical creative actions complicit with murderous destruction and decapitation: the homologous imagery of skulls, bowls and the sky is a consistent feature in early skaldic kennings. One such example is a kenning that refers to the sky as the “wide hand-basin of winds”, *víða munnlaug vinda* (Bragi Frag 2; Faulkes 1998: 34).⁴ This kenning is attributed to the oldest known skáld, Bragi Boddason, who lived during the 9th century and composed verse for several Swedish kings. The 10th century skáld Arnórr jarlaskáld refers to the sky as *Ymis hauss* “Ymir’s skull” (Faulkes 1998: 33). Awareness of the *Vǫlundarkviða* narrative is also apparent in several skaldic kennings. In Þjóðólfr of Hvinir’s early 10th century *Haustlǫng*, for instance, the kenning *grjót-Níðuðr* (“rock-Níðuðr”) refers to the giant Þjazi (Faulkes 1998: 32),⁵ who is also known in the same poem as the god of skis, perhaps suggesting similar associations of itinerancy and Sámi hunting techniques as are seen in *Vǫlundarkviða*.

Second, both narratives perform specific social structures: the aristocratic power of the central place repetitively marginalizes and unilaterally abuses the resourceful powers of skilled craftspeople. The gods establish a central place that, as Margaret Clunies Ross observes in the first volume of *Prolonged Echoes*, is based upon a refusal to acknowledge their giant lineage and also, whenever possible, a unilateral abuse of the resources, skills and magic that are associated with the marginalized giants: the giants live across the sea on the islands at the edge of the world, and it is particularly taboo for male giants to breed with female gods. Anxieties about incursions from the giantlands necessitate Þórr’s constant giant-killing activity. But interactions between the two groups are necessary and ongoing: the “gods needed the giants, their knowledge, their competence and their powerful objects, just as the giants for their part desired objects belonging to the gods” (Steinsland 2005: 143). This all plays out in cyclical revenge narratives, which are the contexts of two of the kennings just cited, and frequently revolve around the theft of cultural objects or the abuse of specialized skills. All this culminates in the apocalyptic downfall of the gods’ reign and the destruction of the cosmos. The parallels to *Vǫlundr*’s infiltration and undoing of Níðuðr’s aristocratic central place and the continuation of his patriline are clear and not at all vague or abstractly comparative: both the mythological creation narrative and *Vǫlundarkviða* demonstrate the destruction and abuse

⁴ *Hinn es varp á víða
vinda ǫndurdísar
yfir manna sjöt margra
munnlaug fǫður augum.*
(Faulkes 1998: 34)

“He who threw into the wide winds’ basin the ski-goddess’s [Skadi’s] father’s eyes above the dwellings of the multitude of men” (Faulkes 2001: 89).

⁵ *Sér það sagna hræri
sorgæra<n> mey færa
þá er ellilyf Ása,
áttrunnr Hymis, kunni.
Brunnakrs of kom *bekkjar
Brisings goða dísi
girðipjófr í garða
grjót-Níðaðar síðan.*
(Faulkes 1998: 32)

“The scion of Hymir’s race [giants] instructed the crew-guider, crazy with pain, to bring to him the maid who knew the Æsir’s old-age cure [Idunn]. The thief of Brisings’ girdle [Brisingamen] afterwards caused the gods’ lady [Idunn] to go into the rock-Nidud’s [giant’s] courts to Brunnakr’s bench” (Faulkes 2001: 87).

that results in acting upon the covetous desire to unilaterally control 1) skilled craftspeople of different ethnic or social extraction and 2) the distribution of valuable goods that define and maintain social structure and power within early medieval Scandinavia. The covetous, destructive and dualistic themes of this poem are mutually shared between the smith and the king and queen, to the benefit of none of them.

4) Archaeological Parallels

The anxieties and differences that are expressed in the mythological texts and in *Völundarkviða* are parallel to the development of communities of itinerant craftspeople that are distinct from agrarian communities in late Migration Period Scandinavia. Johan Callmer's archaeological study of Åhus in southern Sweden suggests that there were long-standing workshop sites throughout Scandinavia that did not have a design like the agrarian complexes that sometimes developed into powerful aristocratic and religious nodes: rather than having an aristocratic hall or large religious space at its centre, the grids at Åhus are regular, with habitation plots suitable to families of five to ten people.

Callmer hypothesizes that these locations developed from small temporary sites into larger communities that were constantly occupied by mostly itinerant craftspeople who formed collaborative and mutually supportive communities. All sorts of crafts were practiced at these locations, especially since close collaboration was necessary in order to make many artefacts. Some of these craftspeople were largely itinerant, while others were more permanent. Many were generalists, while some were specialists. There does not seem to have been one particular figure of the smith or craftsperson, but rather a variety of roles within one developing type of community. Callmer suggests that

The lifestyle, culture, perhaps also their vernacular set the people active as craftsmen and traders aside from the inhabitants of the different regions. Frequently the remoteness (in relation to central locations in the regions) and the coastal location of the places [like Åhus] contributed to this social isolation. Local society of the period had great difficulties in assimilating a population, which by its habits, doings and for many, by its extraction was alien. Consequently it is most likely that many of these traders and craftsmen never became part of the local society and then we must consider the probable issue of the formation of a separate society. We may tend to imagine these people, on the margin of the majority population, weak and vulnerable and exposed to conditionality. This may be a false picture. They gathered many together [Åhus could have hosted 500–1000 at its peak size] and they could certainly instantly muster a relatively large troop of armed men. (Callmer 2002: 155)

Völundr fits into this community: at the beginning of the narrative he lives near the shore of a lake in a cooperative family unit of itinerant craftspeople from distinct geographical and ethnic origins. Völundr is later forced to be at the isolated location of the workshop *í sævar stöð*, “at sea-venue”, i.e. on a beach (Neckel & Kuhn 119; Sveinbjörn & Finnur 1931: 559). This location resembles the culturally liminal yet highly practical workshop and market sites on shorelines or beaches, as well as at sites like the large workshop on the island of Helgö, which may have produced goods for chieftains on site and in “a defined region around Lake Mälaren” (Hjärthner-Holdar, Lamm & Magnus, 2002: 169). It is also plausible that a king like Níðuðr – who had enslaved and maimed a renowned smith like Völundr with his own aristocratic, familial, and foreign connections – might not have been without his own fair share of anxieties about the insurgences of hostile or disruptive traders and craftspeople.

Völundarkviða evokes these anxieties, as do the interactions between the gods and giants in the Old Norse mythological corpus. As Clunies Ross points out, the chief method of maintaining the distinctions between the centralized gods and the marginalized giants is through Þórr

and his suggestively smith-like tool, the hammer. Mjöllnir is made by a magical smith, and it is a sacred tool that reinforces the oppositional structures that, as both Clunies Ross and Lindow argue, are the basis for the creation of the cosmos by the Æsir. Amulets of Þórr's hammer are an early and persistent feature in the archaeological record. The master smiths, the *völundar*, could help to establish and maintain cultural, aristocratic, spiritual, military and agrarian distinctions and prowess in the central place complexes they worked within: they could also threaten to undo them. *Völundarkviða* demonstrates these possibilities, as well as the challenges of sustaining familial and communal structures from both the aristocratic, colonial Swedish perspective and the aristocratic, crafting, hunting, itinerant indigenous Sámi perspective.

Instead of concluding that Völundr demonstrates shamanic magico-religious power over fire (Eliade 1978: 79–81), or that *Völundarkviða* has degenerated from a sacred initiation rite into a misunderstood narrative about the profane revenge of a dark demonic smith (Dronke 1997: 256–257; Nedoma 1990: 138; Grimstad 1983: 204), I prefer to end with an ongoing appreciation for the complexity of the specific contexts of various smith figures in central place networks and the persistence of these structures in Old Norse literature. These complexities are brought together in figures like Völundr, poems like *Völundarkviða*, and in the objects and central place complexes made by skilled craftspeople, like the iron *seiðr*-staff from Klinta with a miniature Trelleborg-style hall on top of it (Price 2002: 184). Smiths made these structures: they were not alone.

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Love affairs versus Social Status: A Theme in *Kormáks saga*?

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Kormáks saga is considered to be among the earliest sagas of Icelanders, as it is generally presumed to have been written in the period of 1200–1220. The dating of the saga has mainly been based on the absence of textual connection with any other sagas. In addition, the saga is rather primitive in both composition and style, which could indicate that it belongs to the first written sagas of Icelanders.

The early dating of *Kormáks saga* has made the question of its origin of considerable importance. For a long time, scholars have believed that the principal source of the saga could be its many verses (in all 85 verses). Most of the verses (64) are ascribed to Kormákr Ögmundarson, the saga's main character. Most of them have been considered authentic and composed by Kormákr in tenth century (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: lxxx–lxxxiii). The prose has been thought to have derived from oral tradition; some part of it may have originally belonged to the verses although this is not true of other parts, especially those where discrepancies can be found between verse and prose (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: xciv–xcv).

In his study, *Skáldasögur* (1961), Bjarni Einarsson argued for foreign influences on the saga, both in terms of verse and prose. He believed that the verses was composed by the saga-author and that they had been influenced by French troubadours love poetry. Bjarni also maintained that the main-theme of the saga, the tragic love between Kormákr and Steingerðr, also had French connections. More specifically, that it was derived from a version of the Tristan romance which was known in Scandinavia as *Tristrams saga* in the Norwegian translation of 1226. Bjarni's thesis has not won general acceptance among scholars but it did spark a debate about the origin of the saga (Andersson 1969: 7–41, Bjarni Einarsson 1971: 21–41, O'Donoghue 1991, Finlay 2001: 232–71).

In this paper, I will discuss one of the episodes in *Kormáks saga*, which tells of the love-affair between Kormákr and Steingerðr and the reason why Kormákr didn't want to marry her. This episode has many parallels with a narrative pattern in the sagas of Icelanders. The analysis of the theme in this particular episode could suggest that the whole episode is based on this narrative pattern.

“*Að venja kvámur sínar ...*”: A Narrative Pattern in the Sagas

In a memorable scene, the author of *Kormáks saga* tells of Kormákr's and Steingerðr's first meeting in Gnúpsdalr and how they fell in love with each other. In this scene Kormákr speaks his first verses about Steingerðr and in the first stanza he expresses the feeling that this love will bring him bad luck (in prose order): “Nú varð mér ramma-ást í mínu jötuns snótar leiði; menreið réttumk risti fyr skömmu; þeir fœtr fald-Gerðar munu verða mér at fári optarr an nú [...]” (207).¹ Thus, from the first moment of their love-affair, fate seems to be against the lovers, and the question remains why fate was against them?

After their first meeting, Kormákr decides to continue visiting Steingerðr; this is told by using a common phrase in the sagas of Icelanders: “Eptir þetta *venr* Kormákr *göngur sínar* í Gnúpsdal at hitta Steingerði [...]” (215, italics are mine). In the sagas, the phrase *að venja kvámur sínar* is more common, in fact *göngur* in this context, is only used in *Kormáks saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*. On the other hand, the phrase *að venja kvámur sínar* occurs, in twelve sagas of Icelanders (lexis.hi.is; searchwords *göngur* and *komur*). In most of these sagas this

¹ All citations to *Kormáks saga* are taken from Einar Ól. Sveinsson's edition in *Íslenzk fornrit VIII* (1939).

phrase appears as a part of a narrative pattern that tells of love-affairs which cause problems in society; a man *venr kvámur sínar* to a woman, because he wants to have a love-affair with her, but since he has no plans to marry her, his behaviour is seen as unacceptable. His visits are therefore not looked upon favourably by the family of the woman because they bring dishonour to the woman and her family.

This pattern occurs in all of the skaldsagas, i.e. *Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa* and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, but also in eight others sagas of Icelanders. The difference between the skaldsagas and the other sagas is that this pattern becomes the main-theme in the former and leads to a love triangle conflict between the skalds and the husbands of the women. This pattern, a man's love of a married woman has been designated as the love-motif (Bjarni Einarsson 1961: 40–51). In other sagas of Icelanders, the pattern is not the main-theme, or engender the main conflict, but is only an issue in one or two episodes (or one to three chapters) in the sagas. The sagas of Icelanders tells therefore only about the conflict between the visitor of the woman and her father, or her closest relatives, and ends there.² This entails that the woman's future life is not an issue in these narratives. To distinguish this narrative pattern from the love-motif, which includes the love-triangle, we can label it as the *venja kvámur*-pattern.

The skaldsagas have two variants of the love-motif which explain why the skalds did not get married to their beloved girlfriends (Bjarni Einarsson 1961: 49). In *Kormáks saga* and *Hallfreðar saga* the reason is in fact made unclear and therefore never directly mentioned in these sagas. In the other two skaldsagas, on the other hand, the reason for the love triangle is very clear; Björn and Gunnlaugr were betrayed by their rivals and this is why they did not get married. In this case, both *Kormáks saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*, share the same narrative pattern as the sagas of Icelanders regarding the part that tells about why the love-affairs caused problems. As we will get back to later, *Kormáks saga* contains many parallels with the *venja kvámur*-pattern as it features in other sagas.

In the sagas of Icelanders the purpose of the visitors is only erotic and therefore not intended to have any social function, including marriage. As a result the behaviour of the protagonist is seen as unacceptable. But why did the protagonists behave in this way which dishonours their girlfriends and brings problem to their families? The sagas do indeed give us some answers to this question.

Class differences seem to be one of the causes. Besides the skaldsagas, the best-known narrative of the *venja kvámur*-pattern, is perhaps the one that tells about the love relationship between Ingólfr and Valgerðr which figures in *Hallfreðar saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*. Ingólfr was the son of Þorsteinn Ingimundarson, chieftain in Vatnsdalr and according to *Hallfreðar saga* assumed to be “mestr maðr þar í sveitum” (*ÍF* VIII, p. 141). Valgerðr belonged to a lower social class; she was the daughter of Óttarr Þorvaldsson – and the sister of Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld – who was a farmer but, according to the saga, a rather wealthy one (*ÍF* VIII, p. 141). In *Hallfreðar saga*, Ingólfr shows no interest in marrying Valgerðr even though her father has offered him to do so. Ingólfr's lack of interest is not explained in the saga but the communication between him and Óttarr underlines their different social status; because of his high status, Ingólfr indicates that Óttarr is not in a position to interfere in his affairs: “Hann kvazk mundu vera sjálfráði ferða sinna, hvat sem Óttarr segði, lét svá að eins skipaðan dalinn, at hann kvazk engis manns nauðarmaðr vera skulu.” (*ÍF* VIII, p. 143). Ingólfr's attitude towards Óttarr and his daughter leads to a lawsuit between the two families. At Húnavatnsþing,

² The only exception is perhaps to be found in *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch. 29, 40 and 47), that tells about the love-affair between Björn Breiðvíkingakappi and Þuríðr of Fróðá. In the beginning Þuríðr's brother, Snorri goði, gets involved in this affair but eventually it leads to a conflict between Björn and Þuríðr's second husband, Þóroddr skattkaupandi.

Þorsteinn manages to judge single-handedly in the lawsuit and he uses the opportunity to get rid of Óttarr from his neighbourhood: “ek geri hálf hundrað silfrs til handa Óttari, en hann skal selja jarðir sínar ok ráðask í brott ór þessi sveit (*ÍF VIII*, p. 144).

Vatnsdæla contains another version of the story; the lawsuit is described in a different way and it becomes Óttarr’s own decision to move from the district (ch. 37). But Ingólfr’s attitude towards Óttarr is here also characterised by hubris and accordingly the underlying theme in both versions is the different social status of the participants. After Óttarr moves to Norðrárdalur, Ingólfr continues to visit Valgerðr, although this is against the wishes of her father. At that time Ingólfr had married Halldís, the daughter of Ólafr from Haukagil. The saga does not tell anything about their relationship or marriage, but since her father is introduced as a wealthy man in *Hallfreðar saga* (*ÍF VIII*, p. 141), Halldís seems to have been a more appropriate wife for the chieftain’s son.

In *Fljótsdæla saga* class differences is also the reason for why lovers do not get married. Helgi Droplaugarson has a love-affair with Helga Þorbjarnardóttir who belongs to a lower class than his. A neighbour of Helga tries to prevent the affair and seeks support from Bersi, Helgi’s foster father. Because of the different social status of the lovers, Bersi realises that Helgi is not going to marry Helga: “ok þó at Helga væri gefin fóstra mínum, þá þætti mér þar fríð kona vel gefin hraustum manni. En þó get ek, at honum þyki sér þat of lágt fyrir mannvirðingar sakir.” (*ÍF XI*, p. 250). In the end, Bersi manages to get Helgi to break off the relationship with Helga, a relationship which seems to be the last one: “Helgi leitar aldri á þá konu optar ok öngva aðra svó at menn viti. Er þat ok alþýðu manna sögn, at Helgi hafí öngva konu elskat svó at menn viti.” (*ÍF XI*, p. 256).

Fóstbræðra saga tells of Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld’s not very serious love-affairs. Þormóðr first has an affair with Þórdís, the daughter of Gríma in Ögur. The lovers seem to belong to the same social class for both are children of rather wealthy farmers, so class-differences is not an issue here. On the other hand, Gríma does not like Þormóðr’s visits to her daughter and offers him to marry her. Þormóðr refuses on the following grounds: “eigi er skaplyndi mitt til þess at kvángask; en þó vætti ek mér ekki framar en eiga dóttur þína, en þó mun þat fyrir farask.” (*ÍF VI*, p. 161). In Þormóðr’s case it is obvious that he just wants to have fun. For instance the saga tells that he was often bored at home, at his father’s farm, and his way of having fun was to visit the girls. The same observation is also applicable to the relationship with his second girlfriend, Þorbjörg Kolbrún (ch. 11).

In sagas where class differences is not an issue the reason why men do not want to get married is usually not mentioned. Consequently, we can probably assume that protagonists simply wanted to have fun as in the case of Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld. But in at least two of the sagas, *Ljósvetninga saga* (ch. 1) and *Vatnsdæla* (ch. 18), the issue is protecting women from violent and abusive men. In most of these sagas, those involved belong to the farmer class. Indeed only two sagas tell about love-affairs within the chieftain class, i.e. *Ljósvetninga saga* (ch. 5) and *Þórðar saga hreðu* (ch. 5).³

It is interesting to note, that many of the men involved in the *venja kvámur*-pattern, are in fact skalds that belong to the farmer class, i.e. Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld and Björn Breiðvíkingakappi. Indeed Kormákr is the only one who belongs to the chief-

³ In two sagas, the women involved are widows, but in other sagas they are young and unmarried girls who still lived under the protection of their father or close relatives. Widows had more rights than unmarried girls (Meulengracht-Sørensen 1995: 34–35), but in their private life they do not seem to have had more rights than unmarried girls; both Þuríðr of Fróðá in *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch. 29) and Áshildr in *Flóamanna saga* (ch. 18) are not allowed to have relationships with men, even though they wanted to, and for the same reasons as young girls because it brings dishonour to them and their families. In *Eyrbyggja*, for instance, Þuríðr’s relationship with Björn Breiðvíkingakappi, becomes so embarrassing for her family, that in the end her brother, Snorri goði, insists that Björn should leave the country.

tain class. Since skalds have such an important role and are so visible in this narrative pattern, there is a reason to believe that because of their talent, they had a privileged status in society. For this reason they were able to act like men of higher social rank. Their privileged status meant that on occasion they had the opportunity to marry women of higher rank. Hallfreðr's refusal to marry Kolfinna, who belonged to the same class as him, seems to reflect his ambition to marry for higher social status (Torfi H. Tulinius 2001: 201–205).

As a result, the *venja kvámur*-pattern is common in the sagas of Icelanders. It occurs in twelve sagas, including the skaldsagas, and in some sagas in more than one episode. Since this pattern is so ubiquitous, we can assume that it derives from oral tradition. The pattern could in fact reflect a social problem at the oral stage and therefore, in some extent, social reality regarding relations between the sexes. First, the pattern reveals a class divided society where men of higher social rank were neither able nor willing to marry beneath them. The pattern therefore reflects a society where marriage agreements were supposed to either maintain or improve one's social status. Secondly, it reflects a social problem in the Saga Age, where people, belonging to either same or different class, did not follow unwritten rules or traditions of society about sexual relations.⁴

Class differences: A Theme in *Kormáks saga*?

The episode in *Kormáks saga* (ch. 4–6) that tells about the love-affair between Kormákr and Steingerðr has many parallels with the *venja kvámur*-pattern. Class differences seem to have been the reason why Kormákr did not wish to marry Steingerðr. On the other hand, the author of the saga does not seem to have wished to emphasise that fact and therefore he blames Kormákr's refusal of Steingerðr solely on Þórveig's curse (*seiðr*). This episode is therefore very inconsistent, for the author's oral source does not seem to fit with his interpretation of it. This is perhaps the reason why scholars have not agreed with the author's explanation and constructed their own interpretations.⁵

After Kormákr's first meeting with Steingerðr in Gnúpsdalr, he tells his mother, Dalla, that he will continue to visit Steingerðr. Dalla responds negatively to her son's decision for she realises that it will cause problems for Steingerðr's father: "Dalla kvað mannamun mikinn ok þó eigi víst, at til ynðis yrði, ef þetta vissi Þorkell í Tungu." (215). These words, *mannamunr mikill*, indicates that there was a class differences between Kormákr and Steingerðr. Although it was in favour of Steingerðr to marry Kormákr, Dalla nevertheless seems to know that her son's visits will not please the girl's father. Her words therefore indicates that she knew that her son had no intention of marrying Steingerðr and that his visits will only cause problems for Steingerðr's family. When Þorkell is later informed about the situation, he reacts quickly, and his daughter is forced to move home to Tunga: "Þorkell spyrr nú brátt, hvat um er at vera, ok þykkir sér horfa til óvirðingar ok dóttur sinni, ef Kormákr vill þetta eigi meir festa; sendir eptir Steingerði, ok ferr hon heim." (216).

⁴ *Hallfreðar saga* is the only saga, that deals directly with this issue as a social problem. Þorsteinn Ingimundarson tries to prevent his son's unwelcome visits to his girlfriend, and when he talks to his son, his words indicate that his son's behaviour was becoming a social problem among young men of higher rank: "Annar hátt hafi þér en vér höfðum á unga aldri, gerið yðr at ginnungum, er höfðingja efni eruð; lát af tali við dóttur Óttars bónda." (*ÍF* VIII, p. 143). His words also reveal that this problem was related to the younger generation and not his own.

⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1939) believed that it was Kormákr's "skáldlund" that prevented him from marrying Steingerðr: "Nú á dögum munu menn yfirleitt heldur leita annarra skýringa: til skáldlundar Kormáks. Hallfreður vildi ekki kvænast Kolfinnu, þegar kostur var, að því er saga hans segir, og fleiri þvilik dæmi kynni að mega finna úr ævi annarra skálda. Astæður þeirra eru margvíslegar. Hjá Kormáki hefur það án efa mátt sín mest að hann var ekki til þess búinn að skipta á skáldskap sínum og hversdagslífi." (lxxx). See also Hans E. Kinck (1921: 61–77) and Guðrún Lange (1992: 85–106).

But despite of the fact that Þorkell does not accept the relationship, Kormákr continues to visit his daughter. His behaviour demonstrates that he has no respect for Steingerðr or her family and this attitude further underlines their class differences; in terms of his social authority it does not seem have bothered Kormákr what kind of attitude Þorkell had in this issue.

Because of the different social status of the lovers, Steingerðr is not an appropriate wife for Kormákr. In spite of the fact that Kormákr was deeply in love with Steingerðr, her lower social status seems to have prevented a marriage agreement. The pre-history section of the saga includes an introduction of Kormákr's noble family in Norway. His grandfather, Kormákr was "ríkr ok kynstórr" (203) who had participated with king Haraldr hárfagri in many battles. Kormákr's father, Ögmundr, is then described as a promising young man who also participated in Viking expeditions with the king. But after Ögmundr settles down in Iceland the saga has not much to say about him; he is married to Dalla and he dies when their two sons, Kormákr and Þorgils, reach maturity. Dalla then takes over the farm along with her sons under the protection of Miðfjarðar-Skeggi who was the most powerful chieftain in Miðfjörðr at that time. The pre-history emphasises Kormákr's noble origin, and later in his life, especially on his Viking expeditions abroad, Kormákr demonstrates that he has the same ambitious nature as his father and grandfather had.

Steingerðr is a farmer's daughter but despite her lower status it could nevertheless be maintained that the author did not seek to specifically highlight the social differences of the two lovers. This is at least true of Steingerðr's lower status as the author's explanation of the *seiðr*-incident later in the saga suggests. The introduction of Steingerðr's family shows that the author had limited knowledge about her family background. For instance, he does not mention the social status of her father: "Þorkell hét maðr, er bjó í Tungu; hann var kvángaðr, ok áttu þau dóttur, er Steingerðr hét; hún var í Gnúpsdal at fóstri." (206). But from the context of the saga, we understand that he was a farmer and probably a rather poor one, as indeed his conflict with Kormákr illustrates.

Þorkell does not seem to have any powerful supporters to assist him in his conflict with Kormákr. The only available help he can muster comes from a certain Narfi, who seem to have been Þorkell's workman, and the two sons of the witch Þórveig, Oddr and Guðmundr. Despite their efforts to keep Kormákr away from Steingerðr, they do not succeed.⁶ Finally, the sons of Þórveig try to ambush Kormákr but he kills both of them. After their killing, the different social status of Kormákr and his opponents is underlined. When Kormákr later visits Þórveig and because of his power he is able to chase her away from Miðfjörðr and then refuse to pay fines for the killing of her sons: "skaltu flytja þik í brott at ákveðinni stundu, en ek vil allra bóta varna um sonu þína." (221). As noted the same pattern is found in *Hallfreðar saga*, in the episode which describes the lawsuit between Þorsteinn and Óttarr. In this respect one could also mention the last conflict between Snorri goði and Björn Breiðvíkingakappi in *Eyrbyggja* (ch. 47), when Snorri forces Björn to leave the country. This episode also underlines Snorri's powerful position in the district. An underlying theme in these narratives thus appears to be conflict about social power between chieftains and farmers which results in demonstration of power from the former.

Þórveig had no other choice than to move from the district, but as a witch she was able to use her own power by putting a curse on Kormákr: "Þat er líkast, at því komir þú á leið, at ek

⁶ A similar episode is to be found in *Ljósvetninga saga* (ch. 1) where a farmer's vulnerability is underlined in his conflict against the visitor of his daughter. This episode (ch. 5) in *Kormáks saga* also has another parallel with *Fóstbræðra saga*. Both Steingerðr and Þórdís alert their lovers about a planned ambush by their opponents but neither Kormákr nor Þormóðr take the warnings seriously (*Fóstbræðra saga*, ch. 9). As Bjarni Einarsson (1961: 64-65) has pointed out, there is also a parallel between these sagas in relation to the account of the first meeting of the lovers, i.e. Kormákr and Steingerðr (ch. 3) and Þormóðr and Þorbjörg kolbrún in *Fóstbræðra saga* (ch. 11).

verða heraðflóttá, en synir mínir óbættir, en því skal ek þér launa, at þú skalt Steingerðar aldri njóta.” (222). Despite of Kormákr’s social standing in the district, he is not able to have the last word in this conflict.

Þórveig’s curse (*seiðr*)

Despite their class differences, Kormákr seems in the end to have persuaded to propose to Steingerðr. A scene (ch. 6) suggests that it was Steingerðr who made him do it: “Nú biðr Steingerðr Kormák stunda til föður hennar ok fá hennar, ok fyrir sakar Steingerðar gaf Kormákr Þorkatli gjafar.” (223). But when Kormákr formally proposes to Steingerðr and the wedding day has been planned, he gets cold feet. The reason for his change of hear was, according to the saga, the following: “Nú fara orð á milli þeira, ok verða í nökkurar greinir um fjárfar, ok svá veik við breytiliga, at síðan þessum ráðum var ráðit, fannsk Kormáki fátt um, en þat var fyrir þá sök, at Þórveig seiddi til, at þau skyldi eigi njótast mega.” (223).

The only thing mentioned here which could explain why Kormákr changed his mind, relates to money. This in turn could support the notion that it was actually their different social status which made Kormákr change his mind; it was not economically advantageous for him to marry Steingerðr.⁷ Although class differences seems to have been the reason for the fact no marriage took place, the author, provides another explanation when he blames it on Þórveig’s curse. It could therefore be argued that the author’s explanation contradicts the source he had on this matter. But since the curse is directly linked to Kormákr’s conflict with Þórveig, the question arises if the curse did also belong to the narrative pattern that this episode seems to be based on?

Bjarni Einarsson (1961) believed that the *seiðr*-incident in *Kormáks saga* derived from the Tristan story. In both stories curse plays an important role in deciding the fate of the lovers but, as Bjarni points out, it also works in the opposite way:

Hér verður að gá að hvers konar sögu höfundurinn er að setja saman og hver er hin líklega höfuðfyrirmynd hans. Álögin sem elskendurnir verða fyrir og eiga síðan við að stríða til æviloka minna beint á sögur um Tristan. Þar er það töfradrykkur sem veldur þeim álögum að Tristan og kóngsdóttir fá með engu móti ráðið við ástríðu ástarinnar og eru á hennar valdi til hinztu stundar. En í Kormáks sögu meina álög elskendunum ævilangt að njótast. Hin beinu áhrif álaganna eru ólík í þessum tveim sögum, en í báðum eru afleiðingarnar ævilöng ógæfa söguhetjunnar og konunnar sem hann elskar. (82–83).

Since supernatural power is used in some of the sagas, which include the *venja kvámur*-pattern, the question arises whether the curse is part and parcel of this pattern? Besides *Kormáks saga*, supernatural power, including witchcraft (*fjölkyngi*), plays an important role in *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*, and although a different motif is used in *Kormáks saga*, the function of the supernatural power is used as a punishment of people that have done other people harm. The use of supernatural power in this way could in fact suggest that the *venja kvámur*-pattern is originally based on folk narrative, since it is used by people in order to punish people that have done them harm. That fact could suggest that these texts are originally told from the people’s point of view.

⁷ Scholars have believed that it was because of Kormákr’s status as a skald that he did not want to marry at all (Hans E. Kinck 1921: 61–77, Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: lxxx). But it is worth noting that later in the saga (ch. 8–9), Kormákr considers a marriage to another woman. Hólmgöngu-Bersi, Steingerðr’s first husband, offers Kormákr to marry his sister, Helga, in his attempt to reconcile with him. Surprisingly, Kormákr considers accepting Bersi’s offer, presumably because Bersi was a wealthy man which made his sister an appropriate marriage for Kormákr.

Although Kormákr is the main character in *Kormáks saga*, he is usually not described in a positive way in that sense that he does not have the sympathy of the saga's author. The depiction of him is actually rather negative. For instance this presentation of Kormákr can be observed in his conflicts with Steingerðr's husbands, Hólmgöngu-Bersi and Þorvaldr tinteinn. The negative attitude towards Kormákr is, on the other hand, particularly noticeable in sections of the saga which takes place at home rather than abroad. In his travels abroad, Kormákr is represented as a successful Viking who participates in expeditions in many countries. The attitude towards him in these episodes is accordingly much more positive than in other parts of the saga. A distinction must therefore be made between what we could term the private and a more public traditions about Kormákr's life (Meulengracht-Sørensen 1995: 62–63; Baetke 1956: 15–26). The private tradition seem to be originally based on folk narrative, since the point of view of the people is a dominant element in these narratives.

Witchcraft plays an important role in the *venja kvámur*-pattern in *Fóstbræðra saga*. When Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld refuses to stop visiting Þórdís, her mother, Gríma in Ögur, has her slave, Kolbákr, to fight with Þormóðr. But without Gríma's witchcraft, Kolbákr would never have been successful against Þormóðr. In their fight, Kolbákr causes an injury to Þormóðr and for that he is later sentenced to outlawry. But Gríma rewards Kolbákr for his help, by giving him his freedom and ensuring that he is able to leave the country. In this episode, it is Gríma and her people who have the saga's sympathy. Her witchcraft is shown to be a positive element in her dispute with Þormóðr and it is her witchcraft which ensures her success against Þormóðr. The saga's sympathy is with the people. At the end of the episode, even the slave Kolbákr is described in a positive way compared to Þormóðr: "Kolbákr rézt í lið með víkingum ok reynisk harðfengr maðr í öllum mannraunum. [...] Eigi höfum vér heyrt getit at Þormóðr hafi fengit meiri sæmð síns áverka en sekðir Kolbaks." (*ÍF* VI, p. 169).

In an another episode (ch. 11), supernatural power is used as a punishment for Þormóðr. He composed the so-called *Kolbrúnarvísur* for his second girlfriend, Þorbjörg kolbrún. His first girlfriend, Þórdís, becomes very jealous and Þormóðr then amends the verses, "kvað nú Kolbrúnarvísur ok snýr þeim ørendum til lofs við Þórdísi, er mest váru á kveðin orð, at hann hafði um Þorbjörgu ort. Gefr hann nú Þórdísi kvæðit til heilla sátta ok heils hugar hennar ok ásta við sik." (*ÍF* VI, p. 173). Þorbjörg kolbrún then appears to Þormóðr in a dream and punishes him for what he has done to her:

Nú mun ek launa þér því lausung þína ok lygi, at þú skalt nú taka augnverk mikinn ok strangan, svá at bæði augu skulu springa ór höfði þér, nema þú lýsir fyrir alþýðu klækisskap þínum, þeim er þú tókt frá mér mitt lofkvæði ok gefit annarri konu. Muntu aldregi heill verða, nema þú fellir niðr þær vísur, er þú hefir snúit til lofs við Þórdísi, en takir þær upp, er þú hefir um mik kveðit, ok kenna eigi þetta kvæði öðrum en þeim, sem ort var í öndverðu. (*ÍF* VI, p. 174–75).

During the night, Þormóðr wakes up with so much pain in his eyes that he is unable to sleep for the rest of the night. He is then forced to change the poem to its original form and explain the whole situation to the people: "Nú lýsir hann fyrir alþýðu, hversu farit hafði um kvæðit, ok gefr þá af nýju við mörg vitni Þorbjörgu kvæðit. Þormóði batnaði þá skjótt augnavekjarins, ok verðr hann þá alheill þess meins." (*ÍF* VI, p. 176–77). In *Hallfreðar saga* we find a similar incident, where Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld is punished by King Ólafr Tryggvason (ch. 10). The missionary king appears to Hallfreðr in a dream and punished him for his bad behaviour in his conflict with Gríss, Kolfinna's husband. Hallfreðr then follows the king's advice and stops bothering Kolfinna and her husband.

Fóstbræðra saga and *Hallfreðar saga* share the same motif of the main-protagonists of these sagas being punished for their bad behaviour. In *Kormáks saga*, we find a different mo-

tif, but the function of the use of supernatural power is still the same; people that have done harm to others are punished and the punishment is directed at men that have dishonoured women and their families. The curse in *Kormáks saga* could therefore originate in the *venja kvámur*-pattern that seems to be the source for this episode in the saga.

As a result, the episode (ch. 4–6) in *Kormáks saga* which tells about the love-affair between Kormákr and Steingerðr has many parallels with a narrative pattern in the sagas of Icelanders, or the *venja kvámur*-pattern as I chosen to label it. Since this is a common pattern in the sagas, we have to assume that it derives from oral tradition. In some extent, this pattern could reflect social reality at the oral stage, or a social problem relating to sexual behaviour. The pattern reveals a class divided society that, for instance, refuses men of high rank to marry women of a lower rank. The analysis of the particular episode in *Kormáks saga* indicates that it was class differences that prevented Kormákr from marrying Steingerðr. On the other hand, the author of the saga did not seek to emphasise the different social status of the lovers, especially Steingerðr's low status. He moreover explains Kormákr's refusal of Steingerðr by blaming it on Þórveig's curse. Since supernatural power does occur in some of the narratives, containing the *venja kvámur*-pattern, and the function of it is the same, the following question arises: Does the curse also derive from the same narrative pattern that appears to be the source for the whole episode in the saga?

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The ethical map of the *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*

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A less-researched aspect of the saga ethics is its connection with ethno-geography – that is, inhabitants of different countries have different ethical features attributed to them. I attempt to outline some points of an “ethical saga map,” which encompasses Gotaland, Sweden, Russia and Ireland, using *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, a late 13th-century *fornaldarsaga*, as a source. Sagas of this kind offer a highly stylized picture of the world, but they still reflect the ideas the medieval Icelanders had about other lands, even if in a simplified form. *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, in particular, focuses on the three bridal quests (Kalinke 1985; Kalinke 1990), and the regularity of heroes’ travels offers perfect comparative material. I also include a short inheritance episode predating the quests and providing an important moral counterpoint to the three quests. The saga references two more geographic locations – England, and a nameless island, which is the dwelling place of the sorcerer giant Grimnir, but I’m omitting them here, since the four stories I work with cover the bulk of the saga text and plot.

The inheritance story takes place in Gotaland (*Gautland*), which is where the saga protagonist comes from. Hrólfr Gautreksson’s qualities make him the perfect king, as explicitly stated by his father (Hrólfs saga 57), and his fitness to govern overrides even the nominal rules of inheritance in the country, which prioritize the eldest son (Hrólfs saga 56) – in this case it’s Hrólfr’s brother Ketil, described in the saga as an adorable, but not very competent sidekick of Hrólfr (Hrólfs saga 150). The ascension of Ketil to the throne could prove troublesome, but his father manages to solve the problem while avoiding conflict: upon his deathbed he simply asks his sons, the queen and the important people of the country to let Hrólfr become his successor instead of Ketil. The suggestion is supported by all parties involved, including the elder son himself, and proves to be a wise decision indeed, because Hrólfr eventually achieves dominance over one more kingdom (Hrólfs saga 150) – a feat Ketil is hardly expected to accomplish – and settles there, returning Gotaland to his brother as a reward for the moderation Ketil had shown.

Settling the matters of the crown, the brothers embark on bridal quests. The first one finds the titular hero wooing Þornbjörg, the daughter of Eirek, king of Sweden (*Svíþjóð*). The problem with Þornbjörg is that she became a maiden king, or *meykóngur* (Wahlgren 1938; Matyushina 2006), identifying as male and excelling as a warrior. She received a third of Sweden from her father, and began to reign there as king (not a queen) in her own right, ridiculing and maiming all male suitors. Hrólfr is pushed into courting Þornbjörg by his brother Ketil, despite objecting that the time isn’t right and the enterprise is doomed to fail. It really fails, and Hrólfr spends several years accumulating forces and battle experience in viking raids, before making another move, at a time he deems appropriate. Freed from outside interference, he succeeds in defeating Þornbjörg and taking her captive, all only to ask her to consider his marriage proposal, to which she agrees, abandoning the crossdressing. Of note is the fact that king Eirek, father of Þornbjörg, disapproves of her behavior from the beginning and thinks good of Hrólfr, although the suitor gets no help from the Swedish king while battling his daughter.

The second bridal quest takes place in Russia (*Garðaríki*). The suitor in this case is Ketil, the prospective bride Álof, daughter of Hálfðan, the ruler of Russia, and the root of all problems lies with the berserks living at the latter’s court. The leader of berserks is secretly plotting to marry Álof himself, and therefore scorns and bans all other suitors as unworthy of her. The princess and the king, even though he is described in the saga as “a wise man and well-liked” (Hrólfs saga 91; translation after: Hrólfr Gautreksson 77), become influenced by this behavior and begin to refuse the suitors, making no exception for Ketil, even though this raises the objection of Þórir, king Hálfðan’s mightiest follower, who points out that the rejec-

tion will harm the king of Russia, because he has no chance victory in the fight with Hrólfr-backed army of Ketil. When ignored, Þórir withdraws his support for Hálfðan, who is promptly defeated. Þórir is still pushed into fighting Hrólfr by Álof, who invokes his earlier moral obligation to her, but when the two heroes (reluctantly) go into combat, Þórir loses. Hrólfr, however, spares the king of Russia, and hires Þórir into his own army after the battle.

The third bridal quest takes place in Ireland (*Írland*). Asmund, the blood-brother of earlier suitors Hrólfr and Ketil, woos Ingibjörg, the daughter of Hrólfr, king of Ireland, who is described as “a great man for sacrifices,” able to see into the future with the help of his “evil and depraved belief” (Hrólfr Gautreksson 102). The saga also mentions his ruthlessness (*harðfengi*) (Hrólfrs saga 113). Hrólfr of Ireland, just as the ruler of Russia, rejects the suitors of his own daughter. Hrólfr Gautreksson advises against the expedition to Ireland, but eventually takes part in it, fulfilling his obligations to the blood-brother. His pessimism proves right again: his forces are outnumbered and annihilated by the Irish, and he and Asmund are captured by the king of Ireland, who dooms them to a dishonorable death by starvation. Their survival and victory are ensured by two things: first, Hrólfr Gautreksson’s far-sightedness, which led him to keep a military reserve in Gotland, and second, the sympathy of Ingibjörg, described as an “intelligent good-looking girl,” (Hrólfr Gautreksson 102) who saves Hrólfr and Asmund. In the end, the quest is accomplished, Asmund and Ingibjörg marry, and the king of Ireland is defeated, but spared.

Table 1. Summary of the four conflicts of *Hrólfrs saga Gautrekssonar*:

Country	Nature of conflict	Opponents	Power of opponents	Peacemakers	Peacemakers’ influence
GOTALAND	Inheritance debate	two princes	no conflicting parties	both princes, the queen, all vassals	general consensus
SWEDEN	Bridal quest	princess (maiden king)	control over 1/3 of the country	king of the country	nominal sovereign
RUSSIA	Bridal quest	berserk vassals → king & princess	control over the whole country	top vassal	strong standing at the court
IRELAND	Bridal quest	king of the country	control over the whole country	princess	no open influence

The key ethical categories of *Hrólfrs saga Gautrekssonar* are wisdom and moderation, on one hand, and arrogance on the other. All of these concepts were well-represented in medieval Icelandic culture: for instance, wisdom, usually denoted with the words *speki* / *ráðspeki* and *vísdomr*, is given a lot of attention in Eddaic poem *Hávamál*, described by Thomas Anderson as an archaic “moral treatise” (Andersson 1970:588). The principal role played by moderation (*hóf*) in saga culture was conclusively proven by a host of researchers during the debate of the 1960–1970s, although saga scholars failed to reach a consensus concerning its roots, traced either to Christian influence (Hermann Pálsson 1966; Lönnroth 1969; Fulk 1986; Ciklamini 1988) or authentic features of the Icelandic society (Andersson 1970; Karlsson 1985; Vilhjálmur Árnason 1991; Guðrún Norðal 1998). Wisdom and moderation were also interconnected semantically, since moderate behavior, which required the individual to be capable of adequate estimation of one’s surroundings and rationalization of the psychological impulses (anger, desire etc.), was impossible without a certain level of intellectual capacity.

Arrogance in the saga tradition served as the opposite of moderation, representing overblown and limitless pride. The main Old Norse words for this concept were *ofsi* and *ofmetnaðr*, their semantic field also incorporating “tyranny” and “pride”; a number of researchers also pointed to its connection with the Christian concept of *superbia* (Ciklamini 1988; Vésteinn Ólason 1998:177).

Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar contains a number of lexemes relevant to these ethical categories, namely *vísdomr* “wisdom” (Hrólfs saga 132, 140), *ráðligr* “cleverly” (Hrólfs saga 51, 61), *hógværð* “equanimity” (Hrólfs saga 62), *dramb* “arrogance” (Hrólfs saga 61), and *áleitni* “pettish disposition” (Hrólfs saga 70). This linguistic evidence proves that the author(s) of the saga gave thought to ethical matters; however, since *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* conforms to the typical saga pattern of describing the moral principles without naming them (Vésteinn Ólason 1998:166), linguistics alone are not enough to reconstruct the ethical map of *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* in its entirety, and must be supplemented by the analysis of the narrative, which is why I included plot descriptions of three bridal quests and the inheritance episode in Gotland, which sets the moral blueprint for the rest of the saga.

Wisdom in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* is presented as an individual’s ability to judge the circumstances adequately, i.e. perceive events, persons and their interrelations in an undistorted way, thus being able to make correct forecasts concerning the situation one’s dealing with. This allows the character to avoid excesses in his – or her – behavior (there’s an impressive number of wise female characters in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, albeit supporting ones), which brings wisdom in close connection with moderation – a trait that has its importance for the saga further emphasized by the mercy Hrólfr and his brothers-in-arms show to their enemies.

Arrogance in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, on the other hand, is the result of an erroneous judgment of circumstances. More precisely, an arrogant individual is the one that overestimates his – or her – social status (again, no gender discrimination here) and considers other people to be inferior, even if one’s own personal achievements and qualities aren’t sufficient to justify the claim of superiority. Arrogance is usually associated with people from outside of the titular hero’s native Gotland; this may be interpreted as a reflection of the ethnic xenophobia, which the Gotlanders (with whom the audience is expected to associate with) faced during their travels. However, even assuming the dislike was initially ethnic in nature, in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* it was transferred into the realm of morals.

The perception of ethics in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* has a distinct geosocial dimension: the moral qualities are projected on the society of each described country, reflecting the level of its otherness in the eyes of the author(s) of the saga. The titular hero is shown as the perfect wise man, to the point where he becomes compatible with the “noble heathen” type of characters, singled out by Lars Lönnroth in the *Íslendingasögur* (Lönnroth 1969), where he serves as a moral example for the other characters and the audience of the saga. Hrólfr and his allies can perhaps be labeled “true Scandinavians,” as opposed to the backward Swedes, satirized in *Gautreks saga*, a text interconnected with *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* (it tells of Hrólfr’s father) (*Gautreks saga* 3–11).

Hrólfr and, to a lesser extent, his brothers-in-arms serve as “Kulturtregers,” or, rather, “Moraltregers,” following the right ethical code and bringing it to the three regions they visit. With each bridal quest, the virtues of the visitors – wisdom and moderation – are matched against the arrogance of local inhabitants. The aboriginal vice, however, differs in form and scope.

In Sweden, the visitors have to deal with womanly arrogance based on gender reversal: the king’s daughter, a “maiden king,” considers herself a man (this is actually a stock motif for *fornaldarsögur* and other younger sagas). The princess has the support of only one third of the land, and the supreme ruler of the country disapproves of her behavior, although has no means to stop her.

In Russia, the king and the princess both adopt an arrogant model of behavior, but its source is found in the king’s berserk vassals, not the king himself. Still, since the sovereign is involved, arrogance becomes the law of the land and of its entire people. The king’s dominance and moral influence, however, are not absolute: he is opposed by the country’s second

man – his own top vassal, who also shows virtues of wisdom and moderation, advising his king against looking down upon suitors which don't deserve to be looked down upon. The vassal fails to change the king's mind, but the attempt is still notable. Also, while the king becomes arrogant, he's not aggressive (unlike the berserks): he refuses Ketil's suit, but avoids insults and shows no desire to fight, asking politely to be left alone.

Ireland comes across as the most hostile place of all. The source of its hostility is the arrogance of its sorcerer king, who is devoid of any positive traits found in the rulers of Sweden and Russia. Not only he uses witchcraft, which is emasculating and disgraceful for a warrior (Clunies Ross 1998:32–33), and is an explicit and devout pagan, which could elicit no sympathy from the Scandinavian audience of the 13th century, he's also unnecessarily cruel, as shown by his dishonorable and cruel treatment of Hrólfr, his war prisoner, who could have at least hoped to be granted a noble death for his valiant slaying of the attacking Irishmen, but gets no mercy from his Irish namesake. There's no-one to stop the Irish king: his court has no open opposition, and the princess, which helps the imprisoned suitors, is powerless and has to act in secret – relying, it should be noted, on her own wit and cunning, i.e. showing a form of wisdom.

The settings and plots of the three bridal quests in *Hrólfrs saga Gautrekssonar* obviously don't mirror the social realities of the 13th century (or the times before the settlement of Iceland, which the saga was supposed to describe) literally. The maiden king, the berserks, the powerful evil sorcerer are all stock characters that abound in the *fornaldarsögur*. However, they still may yield some information about the ways in which the author(s) of the saga perceived ethics, ethnogeography and their relationship.

All European countries shown in the bridal quests of the saga share the same social structure consisting of a ruler, his offspring, a number of mighty vassals, possibly split into several factions, the simple subjects of the king, who appear in the story only as nameless soldiers, and the aliens, represented by the people of Gotland, which has the same structure as well, except for the aliens. The latter should be considered a separate category, since they have a significant influence on the social context of the countries they travel to. The relationship between Gotlanders and the inhabitants of other lands is established on the ethical plane: the moral foreignness, which determines the level of the country's enmity, increased from Sweden to Russia and then to Ireland, with the most significant watershed found between Sweden, which is still largely cordial to outsiders, and the other two regions, where the dislike of aliens, caused by the wrong ethical position, determines the whole country's policy. Russia and Ireland have their own differences as well, with the Russian ruler shown in the saga as a man subjected to bad influence, but not devoid of good qualities, and the Irish one coming across as a model villain.

The moral gap between the main heroes of *Hrólfrs saga Gautrekssonar* and the inhabitants of the lands they visit is never absolute: the characters that personify the countries are arranged and shift on a «wisdom ↔ arrogance» scale, influenced by external factors, the prime one being the actions of the protagonists, who are guided by wisdom and moderation and transmit the right ideals to others (this doesn't exclude military conflicts, but Hrólfr and his friends try to avoid those and usually strive to minimize their consequences, refraining from unnecessary killings). Besides, constructive cooperation between the people from Gotland and other countries is also possible: they intermarry and befriend each other, with the Gotlanders even sometimes becoming rulers of these lands, all of this proving that the moral – and therefore ethnic – otherness can be overcome.

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Reception and function of stories about the East

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In this paper I will discuss the intended reception mode and function of texts based on the materiality of the manuscripts they appear in. The “texts” I will concentrate on are two versions of the Old Norse *Elís saga*. The first version is the Old French *chanson de geste Elye de Saint-Gille* as it appears in the manuscript BNF 25516, from North East France from ca. 1280. The second version is the Old Norse *Elís saga*, as it appears in the Norwegian manuscript De la Gardie 4-7 folio, dated to ca. 1270. In the following, I will first present the theoretical starting point for my argument, then the relevant evidence from the two manuscripts, and thereafter comment on the implications such evidence may have.

Introduction

The first issue to address is of methodological nature and concerns the relationship between the materiality of a manuscript and the intended reception mode of the same manuscript. What aspects of a text and a manuscript may be interpreted to elucidate the issue of reception mode and on what grounds?

One method is to study the prologues and epilogues, and other relevant parts of a text, for information on reception, like for example: “As you will hear”/ “As you have heard”/ “[...] those who read and hear”, etc.¹ Another method is to search for various rhetorical devices, like address to the audience, narrator’s comments, use of direct speech, use of temporal vs. spatial adverbs, etc. Such rhetorical devices may be regarded as tools used by a consciously writing author, who intended a specific reception mode for his text.² Yet another method is to study whether various grammatical aspects of the language in a text may seem to have been adapted to a certain mode of reception. For example, using various colloquial grammatical constructions in a written text may have been a way of adapting it to an intended listening audience.³ Further, the style and the rhythm of a text, like for example extensive use of alliterations, end rhyme, assonance and other metrical patterns, may also indicate that the text was intended to be listened to. A fifth possible method for revealing intended reception mode is studying the narrative structure of a text and discussing how the dramaturgical line of the plot may have functioned if the text was listened to or read privately. A final method, which distinguishes itself slightly from the others, is investigating the way the text appears in the manuscript – the way it is written (*e.g.* abbreviated and punctuated⁴), and the way it is arranged and structured on the manuscript page (by means of illustrations, rubrics, initials, etc.⁵).

Since the methods for discussing reception are rather manifold, one problem that appears is that the different types of evidence may occasionally point in different directions. This has been commented by for example D.H. Green (1994, 2002) and rendered unproblematic. He

¹ Such studies of Old French sources have been done by Crosby (1936:105), Coleman (1996), Vitz (1999); Clanchy (1993) discusses the significance of such terms in Latin, Middle English and Old French; D.H. Green (1994, 2002:36–53) focus on Middle High German language and texts; Terje Spurkland (1994, 2000) has studied the respective Old Norse terms in various sources.

² Various rhetorical devices have been discussed from orality-literacy perspective, both when it comes to composition, transmission and reception. Some scholars that have discussed rhetoric aspects of various texts in relation to reception are D.H. Green (1994), Suzanne Fleischmann (1989, 1990), Keith Busby (2002), just to mention a few.

³ See Fleischman (1990a, b).

⁴ See M. Parkes (1992), Derolez (2003).

⁵ See Paul Saenger (1982, 1997), Keith Busby (2002).

claims that one and the same text may have been intended to have been both publically and privately read, both listened to and looked upon, in various contexts and settings.

Still, a frequent drawback in the existent research is the failure to combine and consider all the different types of evidence a text in a manuscript presents. How does the materiality of a manuscript relate and correspond to the rhetorical, lexical, grammatical, or structural aspects of the text? In this paper I will therefore adopt such an eclectic method of reading a text. I will study one aspect of the materiality of the manuscript – initials – and discuss their correspondence to various textual aspects, in order to comment on the intended reception mode of the text. Further, it will be interesting to see whether the correspondence between the graphical and the textual is the same or different in the two versions that will be studied. What may the similarity/ difference in this relationship indicate of the reception and function of the two versions in their respective historical and geographical contexts?

The text versions and their content

The Old French *chanson de geste Elye de Saint-Gille* is extant in only one medieval manuscript, which is dated to the second half of the 13th century and seems to have originated in North-East France, possibly by commission of a member of the House of Flanders (Raynaud 1879:13; de Winter 1985:234; Busby 2002:534–5). In the beginning of the poem, it is retold how Elye, who is a son of a feudal lord, proves his worthiness of being a knight, is dubbed and leaves home to find adventures, after being challenged by his father. He encounters a series of troublesome episodes on his journey – he fights against Saracens to help a group of Christian warriors and gets captured on a Saracen's ship, from which he escapes. This leads to his meeting his fellow comrade, Galopin, a former thief, with whom Elye fights yet more Saracens. Unfortunately, Elye is wounded and Galopin helps him hide in the gardens of a castle, which turns out to be the home of his enemies, but also of Rosamunde, a famously beautiful Saracen princess. She not only heals his wounds and saves his life but eventually is also baptised because of her love for Elye. Elye fights several more battles against various Saracens, but at the end, he is compelled to wait for military assistance. A great Christian army, consisting of the king and his well-known vassals, comes to his help. They take over the Saracen castle, baptise all the people and turn it into a Christian stronghold. Since Elye has overseen Rosamunde's christening, the two can not get married. Galopin and Rosamunde are, instead, married and become the rulers of the new Christian stronghold, while Elye, the king and the army return to France, where Elye is married to the king's sister.

The Old Norse version of the same poem is in prose and it appears in one Norwegian and several Icelandic manuscripts.⁶ In this context, I will study the Norwegian manuscript as a base of comparison with the Old French manuscript. The manuscript DG 4–7 is dated to ca. 1270 and it was written in south-west Norway, possibly around the town of Bergen, either in the royal chancellery or in the nearby Lyse abbey, both of which were scribal milieus of sufficient stature to produce a manuscript like DG 4–7 (Tveitane 1972:13; Holm Olsen 1940:83). Note that the two manuscripts are rather contemporary and they are both related to great political and cultural milieus.

The content of *Elís saga* in DG 4–7 is, however, somewhat different. First, the text is not entirely extant. There is a lacuna, which must have contained the section where Elís is captured on the Saracens' ship and his escape, in addition to some other information.⁷ We are therefore unfamiliar with the exact reading and structuring of this section. The other major difference concerns the ending of the Old Norse saga. The saga ends prior to the grand battle

⁶ See Introduction in Köbling's (1881) edition.

⁷ The lacuna in DG 4–7 is filled by the version from AM533 4to in Köbling's edition.

between Christians and Saracens, and thus appears as a different story than the Old French poem. The battle is very weakly suggested as a possible future plan, besides the potential for future marriage between Elís and Rosamunda.⁸

Initials – size and styles

The Old French poem is structured in terms of initials in various sizes. The first initial spans over eleven lines and is as wide as one of the two columns the text is written in. The majority of the initials in *Elye* are two-line capitals. These initials are simple with no extra decoration, appear alternatively in red and blue, and visualise the textual partition of the poem. Besides, there are a few nicer three-line pen-flourished initials which appear in connection to illustrations. There are in total six illuminations in the poem which contribute further to a specific structuring of the text.

The initials in the Old Norse version are all two-line initials, with the exception of the initial in the beginning of the saga, which spans over five lines. The latter is however missing, as are some of the two-line initials.⁹ The initials that are inserted are relatively simple, either green with red details or red with green details.

In the following the placement of the initials in the two text versions will be related to four different textual aspects: the rhythm in the text, various rhetorical devices, lexical evidence on reception mode and the narrative structure of the text-versions.

Initials and rhythm

The initials in the Old French version correspond to the rhythmical pattern of the poem, since there is a change in assonance with all initials, but one.¹⁰ Besides, while the majority of the poem is written in dodecasyllable form, with the caesura dividing the verse into 6+6 syllables, some of the verses appearing in relation to initials are decasyllable (6+4 or 4+6).¹¹ Thus the graphical emphasis of the initials would have been audible because of the assonance change or/ and the shortness of the verse.

The Old Norse version of the text is in prose and may in general be characterised as less rhythmical than the poem-version. But still there are a couple of rhythmical patterns that are used in relation to the initials. First, alliterations are often used in the beginning of chapters in order to render the text rhythmical and audibly appealing. Besides, at the end of some of the chapters, one may unveil a certain prose rhythm/ *cursus*, possibly originating from Latin. Kirsten Berg points out that determining conscious use of *cursus* depends on the punctuation principles in the manuscript, the merging of words and the style of the text (Berg 1999:171–72). She claims to find a conscious use of *cursus* in several translated sagas from the second half of the 13th century – *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, *Konungs Skuggsjá* and *Elís saga* and *Elís saga* in DG 4–7 (Berg 1999:175, 177).

Initials and rhetorical devices

The initials in the Old French text correspond to various rhetorical devices as well. Some of these are narrator's comments, which appear either at the end or in the beginning of chapters. The comments vary in character, some include emotional exclamation and appeals to God,

⁸ Note that the ending of the Old Norse in the Icelandic manuscripts differs from the DG version, since the final grand battle is accounted for. However, the end differs from the Old French version as well.

⁹ See Tveitane (1972) and Holm-Olsen (1940) for possible explanations.

¹⁰ For a presentation of the various assonances, see Raynaud 1879:10–11.

¹¹ Note that such shorter verses appear also independently from the initials, and may rather be explained by their special content and narrative function in the poem.

others contain a qualitative evaluation of an event or a protagonist, others refer backwards and forward in the story, yet others have proverbial qualities.

Narrator's comments occur in relation to initials in the Old Norse version of the text as well. These are in general less emotional than in the Old French. Some of the comments have intertextual character and refer to the Christian faith of the narrator. Sometimes the narrator expresses his personal evaluation of the situation. The whole of chapter 14, for example, is an address to the audience by the narrator, which has proverbial character (50a1):

Nu lyðit goðgæfliga. betra er fogr fröðe en kuiðar fylli. þo scal við saugu súpa. en æi ofmikitt drecka sœmð. er saugu at segia ef hœyrenðr til lyða. en tapat starfi at hafna at hœyra -----

Now listen carefully! It is better to be knowledgeable than full in the stomach; one may drink when stories are told, but not too much; it is honourable to tell stories, if people listen, but it is a wasted effort, if nobody listens.

Note also that this chapter is an addition in the Old Norse version, which in style and content may remind a traditional so-called *Hávamál*-wisdom.

A second rhetorical device that appears in relation to initials is repetitions. Various types of repetitions appear in the Old French text. The first type is when important information from one chapter is given in the beginning of the next. Sometimes the repetition involves also lexical repetition, with variation. Some phrases are repeated often and may be considered formulas, but these appear not only in correspondence to initials. Another type of repetition that occurs in the Old French text is of episodic nature, when a similar event occurs two or three times. Some new details or a tiny twist takes place, and thus distinguishes the new episodes from the previous and drives the narration forward. It is the frame or the structure of the episodes that is repeated. It has been observed that the length in number of verses of such repeated episodes may vary, and amplifying the episode may be a means of emphasizing it (Heinemann 1987:24).

Repetitions occur in the beginning of chapters in the Old Norse version as well, but the nature of the repetition is different from those in the Old French version. Many of the repetitions are much shorter, and constitute just a clause of the first sentence of a chapter, in structures like "When he heard that [...] / When he saw [...]". On several occasions there are also repetitions on lexical level, with variation or oppositions. There are also some examples of the episodic repetition, when a similar event occurs two times. But not all episodic repetitions from the Old French are preserved in the Old Norse version.

Another rhetorical tool which appears very often in correspondence to initials is temporal adverbs and connectives. In the Old French version, the two temporal adverbs are *quant* and *or*. In the Old Norse version, however, the temporal adverbs are more varied, and include *nú*, *sem*, *nú sem*, *þa*, *en nú síðan*, etc.

Thus, it seems that the same types of rhetorical devices are used in correspondence to the initials in both versions, but these are used in different modes – the narrator's comments are fewer and less emotional, the repetitions are also fewer, while more types of temporal adverbs are used. Note also that the extensive use of temporal adverbs, narrator's comments and repetitions, have been interpreted, independently from the materiality of the manuscripts, as tools which render a text suitable for listening audience

Initials and lexical evidence

Further, in the beginning and end of the Old French poem, and other places (possibly places for breaks, but not always in relation to initials), there is explicit lexical evidence that the text was to be listened to. Here are some examples:

Or faites pais, Signor, que Dieus vous benëie / Now, be silent lords, may God bless you (ch. 1, 1)

Or escoutés, Signor, que Dieus grant bien vous don/ Now Listen, my Lords, and may God provide well for you (ch. 19, 572)

Or vous dirons noveles du bachelor Elies/ Now we will tell you the news of the young knight Elye (ch. 60, 2083)

The very beginning and end of the poem are also rich in lexical evidence relevant for the intended reception mode. Regarding all the examples at once, the intended reception by hearing of the text is plausible. Note also that such comments appear also in the middle of various chapters and are not always corresponding to initials

As in the case of the Old French poem, the beginning and ends of the chapters in the Old Norse version do often contain relevant lexical information. The first, last and several other chapters contain constructions of the type “Listen [...]”/ “Hear [...]”. The saga starts (ch. 1, 43a15):

HÆYRIT horskir menn. æina fagra saugu. dyrlegs drengscaps. um raustan riddera scap & lofsæla atgerð. æins uirðulegs hertoga. er stiornn & riki.

LISTEN, wise men, to a beautiful story of glorious manhood, of valiant chivalry, of the glorious and praiseworthy deeds of a virtuous count, who is powerful and mighty [...]

The short chapter 14, which was cited above (see p. 3), also contains interesting lexical evidence.

The information regarding the reception of the two texts is, thus, not corresponding fully – some pieces are missing and other new ones are present in the Old Norse vs. Old French version. In general, however, such information is less abundant in the Old Norse than in the Old French version.

Initials and narrative structure

The initials divide the Old French poem in *laissez*/ chapters between five and 376 verses. With regard to *chanson de geste*, it has been suggested that sometimes these may be structured by means of long or short *laissez* in order to provide a rhythm and variation in the poem’s flow, which possibly corresponds to the narrative structure of the poem. In order to comment on such a hypothesis with regard to *Elye*, I have studied the dramaturgical plot of the poem, defined by means of the length of the chapters. The poem is, thus, given a narrative structure with clear summits, that are reached sometimes gradually by means of secondary peaks preceding and following them (section 22–40) and are other times set up more independently (section 44–48). If the content of the long/ short chapters are studied a certain tendency may be revealed. The sections consisting of *laissez* which are of similar and relatively low length contain similar type of information – a series of events in a single scene, in which the narration is driven forward at a constant speed, episodic repetitions which have similar narrative significance, or alternating voices in one dialogue. Thus, these sections seem to set up a rhythm to the narrative structure of the whole poem, due to their content.

The next question concerns then the content of the absolutely longest *laissez* in the poem and the secondary summits, which may be regarded as long in comparison to their surroundings. The plot of the poem, if described in terms of these peaks, is a story about Elye who is

off on his way to find adventures; he is taken prisoner on a ship, from which he escapes; he meets his comrade Galopin; they end up at Sobrieborg, where they meet Rosamunde; the Saracen princess saves Elye's life and is later about to be married to another man. The poem ends with a great fight and victory for the Christian army, but a somewhat unhappy ending for the couple. Besides, the illustration program of the poem seems tightly related to the narrative structure of the poem, as defined by the length of the *laissez*, since the theme illustrations correspond very closely to the themes of the peak-*laissez*. Thus, I would claim that there exists certain correspondence between the placement of the initials and the narrative structure of the story, since the series of *laissez* of similar length contain episodes of similar function, providing a regular speed to the evolvment of the plot, while the longer *laissez* correspond to the most significant episodes, where there is a break in the regularity of plot evolvment, and thus provide a skeleton of the narrative.

The Old Norse text is divided in chapters of various lengths as well – these vary from four to 105 lines. Note that while the Old French poem had 69 chapters, the Old Norse text has only 54. The difference may be explained, to some degree, by the lacuna in the manuscript. Besides, as already mentioned, the Old Norse version is shorter than the Old French.

Besides, the narrative structure of the saga, if defined by means of the length of the chapters, is not marked by distinguished summits as clearly as the Old French poem. Thus, it may be said that the correspondence between the placement of the initials and the narrative structure of the text is not as strong as in the Old French poem. One explanation for that may be that the scribe did not consciously employ a strategy to structure his text by means of the lengths of the chapters. This was possibly a less common strategy when a prose text was written than when a *chanson de geste* was written. If the theme of the narrative peaks in the Old French and Old Norse texts are compared, it turns out that some of the summits are the same, but not all. There is absolute correspondence in three of these summits – when Elís meets the messenger on the road (chapter 5 in both versions), when he meets the thieves and Galopin (ch. 29 in Old French, ch.24 in Old Norse), and when Rosamunde's father decides to marry her off to another man (ch. 47 in the Old French poem and ch. 37 in Old Norse saga). Otherwise, the description of the starting point for Elís' seek for adventure is important in the Old Norse text, but is not emphasised equally in the Old French. Still, the same scene was depicted in the first illustration of the poem. The episode when Elís and Galopin meet Rosamunda and she heals Elís appears as a summit in the Old Norse version, but only as a secondary summit in the Old French. The episode when Galopin steels the horse is a secondary summit in the Old French poem, and does not appear as a major episode in the Old Norse version. Further, the episode when Elís goes out to fight a duel with a Saracen in order to protect Rosamunde from being married is central in the Old Norse version and is not important at all in the Old French version. The Old French version ends with a description of a grand battle, a newly Christianised land and a couple of marriages; none of these episodes occur in the Old Norse version, even though the battle is suggested as a possible continuation of the plot. Thus, despite the similarities, the narrative structures of the two versions defined by means of initials are different. While the Old French text appears as a description of a series of adventures of one protagonist, that culminates with a grand battle between Christians and Saracens, the Old Norse version appears more as a story about a hero and his relations to his father, his mother, his friend, his lady and his enemies.

Implications

In the previous, I have studied and compared the correspondence between one graphical aspect (the initials) and four textual aspects (rhythm, rhetorical devices, lexical evidence, and narrative structure) of two versions of one text – the Old French *chanson de geste Elye de*

Saint-Gille and the Old Norse *Elis saga*. The main result from this investigation is that in both versions a certain correspondence was at stake, but the type and degree of correspondence differed. These results have several possible implications

When it comes to intended reception mode of the two versions, the Old French version seems to have been intended for both ocular and aural reception, based on the presence of illustrations and the correspondence between the graphic and rhetoric emphasis. One possibility is then that it was to be publicly read to audience that had visual access to the manuscript prior to or during the reading *séance*. The Old Norse manuscript seems to have been intended for being listened to rather than looked at.

When it comes to the possible function of the two versions, the difference in their structure renders their core message rather different. The Old French poem is a story about crusades, about taking and Christianisation of new land, about strong Christian norms and a powerful king. The Old Norse saga, on the other hand, is a story of personal adventure, inner conflicts, friendship and love relationship. These themes also appear in the Old French poem, but remain secondary having in mind the final scene in the poem, which is entirely missing from the Old Norse saga.

Since the Old Norse text is different than the Old French, it seems that it was not translated/ rewritten word for word, but changes were made, as seemed appropriate. One obvious reason for that is the difference in form (verse vs. prose) which would have necessitated some changes. But still, this may not be an explanation for omissions, additions, difference in narrative structure and in used rhetorical techniques.

Such changes may further indicate that translating/ copying (since we do not know who made the changes – the translator or the copyist) were activities similar to composing, which required competence in available rhetorical tools and their appropriate use. The translator/ scribe may thus be characterised as competent and erudite in classical composition techniques, such as change of narrative structure, abbreviation and addition, just to mention a few.

Finally, the materiality and textual style of the Old Norse saga has, in the previous, been claimed as different from the Old French poem. Some aspects of the Old Norse text, such as the prose-rhythm, the variation of temporal adverbs, however, may remind of other Old Norse texts from the same period. Therefore, it may be said that the scribe of the Old Norse version complied with local standards for retelling which may testify that Old Norse language and literary tradition had greater status than the original Old French language and literary tradition for the scribe. It should be said that the conclusion may be quite different if another aspect of the text, or a different text, is investigated. Such a conclusion has been made by other scholars working on translations, but none of them have studied the same aspects of the texts as I have.

To summarise, based on the correspondence between the materiality of the two manuscripts BNF 25516 and DG 4–7 and the textuality of the two texts *Elye de Saint-Gille* and *Elis saga*, it appears that more-or-less the same story about travelling to the East was intended to be received in different ways and possibly to fulfil different functions. In the transmission process, the story has changed character from being a political narrative of national importance to being a didactic story of personal conflicts and ideals.

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From saga to Chronicle: Motif Migration inside Medieval Scandinavia

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Three monumental historiographical works enlighten us on the history of the Norwegian and the Danish royal dynasties during the Viking age and the Middle Ages: Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, dated to the beginning of the 13th century; *Heimskringla*, written by Snorri Sturluson around 1230; and *Knýtlinga saga*, perhaps composed by Snorri's nephew, Óláfr Þórðarson, some decades after the composition of *Heimskringla*.

The first Swedish comparable work, *Erikskrönikan*, was written more than half a century after *Knýtlinga saga* in the period 1320 – 1335, and most probably soon after King Birger Magnusson's expulsion from Sweden and his son Magnus Birgersson's execution, during the years 1320 – 1322 (Ferrari 2008). Whilst the strong similarities between *Heimskringla* and *Knýtlinga saga* have already been recognized and pointed out (Bjarni Guðnason 1982: 115–117), as well as the circulation of literary, mythological, and folkloric motifs between the Latin chronicle and the vernacular sagas, the relationship between the Swedish chronicle, and the preceding Danish and Norwegian historiographical works is less investigated.

The differences between the Swedish chronicle and the older Scandinavian histories are, in fact, striking: whereas Saxo alternates prose and verse, following the literary tradition of the *prosimetrum*, and the two king sagas are mainly works of prose with poetic insertions, *Erikskrönikan* is a verse composition which fits in the genre of the rhymed chronicle. Both the identity of the patron, and of the poet of *Erikskrönikan*, are still a matter for discussion among scholars, but no serious doubts exist with regard to the social and cultural context in which the text was composed and performed: not only the hints contained in the text itself, but also the whole ideology of the chronicle, point to the aristocratic milieu which held power in the Swedish kingdom after King Birger's flight to Denmark and the acclamation of Magnus Eriksson – then still a child – as the new king of Sweden (Vilhelmsdotter 1999: 41–47; Péneau 2005: 34–40; Ferrari 2008: 55–56).

Since the reign of Magnus Ladulås – Magnus Eriksson's grandfather – the Swedish court and aristocracy had rapidly adopted chivalric norms, language and habits, thus conforming to the continental standards of political organization and to the ideology of power which already had spread into the neighbouring kingdoms of Denmark and Norway (Harrison 2002: 150–160). Such political and cultural reshaping was strongly facilitated by the dynastic intertwining of the reigning families of Northern Europe (Mitchell 1997; Würth 2000). Literature played a relevant role in this process of modernization and *Europeanization* of Scandinavia, and the relationships between the courts of Norway, Sweden and Northern Germany were surely responsible for the use of the stylistic devices of the genre “rhymed chronicle” in order to present Swedish history from the beginning of the 13th century up until the more recent and dramatic events of the first two decades of the 14th century. In the period immediately preceding the composition of *Erikskrönikan*, the German-born queen Eufemia of Norway had given a strong impulse to the formation of a Swedish literary system by commissioning the translation into Swedish of three courtly romances – the so called *Eufemiavisor* – which she intended to give as a gift to her future son-in-law, the very same Duke Erik Magnusson who is the central figure of *Erikskrönikan* and the father of King Magnus Eriksson. With these three romances, which adapted to the Swedish language the metrical rules of the contemporary German narrative poetry, Eufemia contributed in a decisive way to differentiating the Swedish literary system from the West Norse tradition. The influence of the *Eufemiavisor* upon *Erikskrönikan* is recognized by all the scholars in the field, but it is difficult to think that the

author of the chronicle had no acquaintance with some of the German rhymed chronicles. Eufemia was not the only link between the Swedish and the North German courts: king Magnus Ladulås married Helvig, the daughter of Count Gerhard of Holstein, and his sister Rikiza was married, the first time, to the Norwegian King Hákon hinn ungi, and the second time to Heinrich I of Werle. From this second marriage was born Rixa von Werle, which married Albrecht II, Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Albrecht was in Stockholm in 1289 and, as the *Erikskrönikan* relates (ll. 1146–1161), on that occasion he was made a knight by King Magnus Ladulås' son, the future King Birger Magnusson. Considering the tight relationships between the courts of Sweden and Braunschweig, it seems most likely that the author of *Erikskrönikan* had the opportunity to get acquainted at least with the Braunschweiger Reimchronik, a rhymed chronicle which was written in the circle of the Dukes of Braunschweig during the second half of the 13th century (Pipping 1926: 774–776; Lönnroth 1987: 107; Mitchell 1996: 27; Péneau 2005: 13–14).

The political and personal connections between the aristocratic élites of Sweden, Norway and Northern Germany can thus explain the formal and stylistic choices made by the author of *Erikskrönikan* and the decision to “import” into the young and weak Swedish literary system a new literary genre, that of the rhymed chronicle, which had already established itself in the neighbouring German cultural milieu (Even-Zohar 1990a and 1990b). Just as important as the relationships between the Swedish and the German dynasties, however, were the complicated and quite often stormy relationships among the Scandinavian courts. Valdemar Birgersson, the elder brother of King Magnus Ladulås, married princess Sofia, the daughter of the Danish King Erik Plogpenning. Sofia's cousin, the Danish King Erik Klipping, actively took part in the conflict between Valdemar and his younger brother, supporting first Valdemar and then Magnus. After conquering the Swedish throne, Magnus married his daughter Ingeborg to Erik Klipping's son and successor, Erik VI “Menved”, and arranged the marriage between Erik Menved's sister, Margrete, and his own heir, Birger (Bagge 2007: 8). Consequently, Erik Menved supported his brother-in-law to the very end in his fight against the brother, Duke Erik of Södermanland, who, on his part, for most of the war was supported by the Norwegian King Hákon V and by his influential wife, the already mentioned Eufemia of Rügen. Moreover, the tempestuous relationships inside the dynasties as well as between the royal families and the aristocratic élites were the cause for the presence in the Scandinavian courts of numerous exiles, who looked for shelter in the neighbouring lands.

Such a vast, interconnected social and political network makes it unlikely that the great historiographical works which were composed in connection with the Danish and Norwegian courts, or directly under the patronage of Danish and Norwegian kings, were unknown in the Swedish aristocratic milieu and, more specifically, to the author of *Erikskrönikan*. Furthermore, the genre of *konungasögur* was productive throughout the 13th century, as Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* and *Magnús saga lagabætir* testify. It is therefore reasonable to wonder whether, in the case of *Erikskrönikan*, traces of an intertextual practice which involved not only other Swedish texts – the Eufemiavisor – and texts which belong to the same literary genre – the German rhymed chronicles –, but also the previous Scandinavian historiographical works are perceivable.

With regard to its structure, *Erikskrönikan* consists of a series of episodes, organized according to the guiding principle of the succession of the kings. This structural principle is shared by the rhymed chronicles as well as by *Heimskringla*, *Knýtlinga saga* and Saxo, and therefore it cannot by itself say much about any intertextual relationships between the Swedish chronicle and some particular text. In one respect, however, *Erikskrönikan* shows an interesting similarity with the *Knýtlinga saga*. In order to relate the vicissitudes and the deeds of the Danish kings, this saga follows in the steps of Snorri's *Heimskringla*: Snorri had put the figure of the holy king Olaf Haraldsson in the middle of his history, thus making of this king's

life the very core of his entire work. Likewise, the author of *Knýtlinga* saga puts the figure of Knut the Saint in the middle of *his* saga, assigning to his life the same ideological and structural function that Olaf's life played in the *Heimskringla*. For the author of the *Knýtlinga*, however, it was of fundamental importance to give a prominent position also to another figure of the Danish past, the figure of Knut Lavard. We cannot with certainty know to which purpose the saga was written, and to which audience it was addressed. Possibly it was commissioned by King Valdemar the Victorious in order to have a vernacular counterpart to the history of the Norwegian kings written by Snorri Sturluson, and possibly it played a role in the Icelandic political public discourse in the middle of the 13th century (the last hypothesis does not exclude the first one). In any case it was necessary for the author of the saga to single out and to exalt also the figure of Knut Lavard, who was the father of Valdemar the Great and thus the direct ancestor of Valdemar the Victorious (Bjarni Guðnason 1982: 144). To this end the author deviates from the adopted narrative scheme: as he comes to the reigning period of King Niels (1104–1134) he does not focalize on the king, but on Knut, making of Niels and of his son Magnus the antagonists of the Duke and the villains of the tale. A comparable narrative strategy, on the other hand, is carried out also by Saxo in book 13 of *Gesta Danorum*. The same shift in focalization occurs in *Erikskrönikan* as Duke Erik enters the scene, with the substantial difference that the story of his conflicts with his brother, King Birger, and of the civil war following his murder in prison, occupies the greatest part of the chronicle, almost reducing the preceding sections, devoted to the stories of the previous kings of Sweden, to the rank of a long prologue.

It must be admitted that the story of Erik Magnusson presents striking similarities with that of Knut Lavard, which had occurred almost two centuries before: both noblemen were the ambitious and resolute sons of a king, they had been excluded from the succession, but had succeeded in creating a strong power base and a vast network of alliances, thus representing a danger for the ruling kings. Both Erik and Knut Lavard were deceitfully imprisoned and killed by close relatives – a brother, in the case of Erik; an uncle and a cousin in the case of Knut – and in both cases civil war had been the result of the murder. Furthermore, in both instances the war concluded with the defeat of the murderers, and the sons of the murdered dukes finally ascended to the throne. This apparent parallelism in the two stories is rooted in the historical events of which Erik and Knut were the protagonists, and it cannot therefore demonstrate by itself the existence of intertextual relationships between the Swedish chronicle, *Knýtlinga* saga and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. However, if we take into consideration the literary motifs and the explicit intertextual references present in *Erikskrönikan*, the hypothesis of a relationship between the Swedish chronicle and the older Danish histories appears to be more convincing.

First of all, it is worth noticing that even if Duke Erik Magnusson is never explicitly presented in *Erikskrönikan* as a saint, the narrative of his death and that of his brother Valdemar shows them as innocent victims which suffer martyrdom by command of their own wicked and treacherous brother. The parallel established by the narrating voice between King Birger and his accomplices on the one side and the biblical figure of Judas on the other side suggests that a religious interpretation of the events is implied. Judas is mentioned the first time as the narrator, anticipating the imprisonment of the two unaware brothers, curses the author of such a perverse deception:

han wari fordömpder nw ok ää
 med iudasse ok sälla thee
 Ther nidre sithia i heluitis poth
 ok ä haffua ilt ok aldreggh goth

(“May he be damned forever / together with Judas and the wicked / which sit down in hell’s abyss, / they always suffer and never have any joy”, ll. 3632–3634)

The comparison is proposed a second time soon after, as the narrator describes the banquet offered by King Birger to his brothers. In commenting on the scene, the narrating voice first states that the king, his wife and his men treated Erik and Valdemar as Judas treated Jesus (“the haffdo som iudas wider crist”, l. 3767) and then adds:

[J]ak hörde for pascha at man laas
i scriptenne aff iudas
at han swek van herra i tro
thy skal han i heluite boo
ok haffua ewynnelika wee
swa skulo ok alle the
ther oärlika myrda ok forradha
j then pina ther aldreg komber nade
The mogha sarlika jäwa om sik
som forrado hertogh Erik

(“At Easter I have heard read / about Judas from the Holy Scriptures: / that he betrayed Our Lord / and therefore he will dwell in hell / and suffer forever. / The same will happen to everybody / who shamefully kills and betrays: / they will all suffer pain without mercy. / Especially they have to fear for themselves / who betrayed Duke Erik”, ll. 3768–3777)

The “motif of Judas” is present in Saxo as well as in Ælnoth’s *Gesta Swenomagni Regis et Filiorum eius et Passio gloriosissimi Canuti Regis et Martyris* and in *Knýtlinga saga* (Ferrari 1998: 96–100). In Saxo, in fact, Knut the Saint is deceived and betrayed by Blacco, a character which actually has two counterparts in *Knýtlinga saga* – Ásbjörn Eydanajarl and Eyvindr Bifra – whereas Knut Lavard is deceitfully killed by his cousin Magnus.

Of particular interest for our discussion is the description, in *Erikskrönikan*, of Erik and Valdemar’s reaction to the unexpected and treacherous aggression of their brother’s men. The dukes are sleeping together, naked and defenceless, as a group of warriors break into their room. Valdemar reacts immediately, trying to strike back, but Erik dissuades him from fighting:

Hertogh Erik sagde lat wara som er
war stridh dugher ekki nw här

(“Duke Erik said: ‘let things go their own way / there is no use to fight now’”, ll. 3858–3859)

An analogous distribution of roles between the brothers – the younger more impulsive and willing to fight, the elder wiser and ready to accept the impending death – is present also in the narratives about the last hours of Knut the Saint. *Knýtlinga saga*, in particular, emphasizes the difference in attitude between King Knut and his brother Benedikt in a series of dialogues in which the younger brother exhibits his courage and his will not to surrender to the assailants, whereas Knut calmly prepares himself to die.

It is unlikely that the authors of *Knýtlinga saga* and of *Erikskrönikan* were unaware of the structural similarity between their narratives and the episode of the arrest of Jesus as related in all four gospels (Matt 26, 51–55; Mark 14, 47; Luke 22, 49–51; John 18, 10–11). This similarity actually suggests a confrontation between the deceitfully killed noblemen and Jesus Christ as a model of sanctity, thus contributing to exalting the protagonists of the narratives (Jansson 1971: 172–173). The sanctity of Knut IV and Erik Magnusson, moreover, is confirmed by

further allusions contained in the description of their death. Like the first Christian martyr, Stephan, Knut is hit by a stone, which is thrown through a window of the church in which he has found shelter, while – like the holy King David – he is singing psalms, and finally he is treacherously pierced by the sword of the Judas-like character Eyvind Bifra. Also Saxo makes use of symbolic elements in order to draw a parallel between the king and Jesus: in his description of his death, Knut is pierced by a spear (“immissæ per fenestram lanceæ mortifico iactu confossus”, Liber XI, 15) while he is lying on the floor with his arms spread out (“propassis utrimque brachiis, ante aram securus occubuit”, Liber XI, 15). As to Erik, according to Erikskrönikan he is shut in a tower together with his brother Valdemar, and their hands are nailed to a stock in front of them (“thera hender waro nâgelda a stokkin fram”, l. 3948), so that their suffering is alike to that of Jesus nailed on the wood of the cross (Jansson 1971: 174).

The parallel strategies carried out by Erikskrönikan on the one hand, and by Saxo and the author of Knýtlinga saga on the other one, make it at least thinkable that the Swedish chronicler had some knowledge of the Danish tradition. This supposition is enhanced by an interesting similarity that we can find between the narrative about King Birger’s deceitful invitation to his brothers Erik and Valdemar in Erikskrönikan and Prince Magnus’ invitation to his cousin Knut Lavard in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum*. In both cases the hero of the narrative falls in the trap set by a close relative, and in both cases he is uselessly warned about the danger. Erik and Valdemar are riding on the road to Nyköping as a young knight (“en vnger riddare”, l. 3708) rides towards them and tries to dissuade them from entering the king’s castle, saying: “ridhin i bade i husit sänder / thz skal ider angra ok alla idra frender” (“if you ride to the castle / both you and your relatives will regret it”, ll. 3712–3713). Nevertheless, the dukes do not listen to the unknown knight, and Erik even reproaches him for sowing discord between them and their brother.

Sven-Bertil Jansson, in his interesting and stimulating study of the genre “medieval chronicle” pointed out some structural similarities between the story about a treacherous invitation as narrated in Erikskrönikan and the same motif in the Nibelungen matter, and came to the conclusion that the Swedish chronicler probably had the opportunity to be acquainted with the Norwegian *Piðreks saga* (Jansson 1971: 176–184). Already Saxo Grammaticus, however, had recognized a similarity between the story of Knut Lavard’s murder and the one of Krimhild’s vengeance against her brothers, and he not only explicitly mentioned Krimhild’s story, but also made use of it in the construction of his narrative. In Saxo’s account of Knut Lavard’s death, Magnus sends to the Duke a Saxon singer, who has to bring him the message that he will wait for him in the woods. In vain one of Knut’s servants tries to convince his lord not to go unarmed to the meeting, the Duke answers that he does not need to entrust his life to the sword (“nequaquam se in salutis tutelam ferro opus habere respondit”, XIII, 6). The singer himself attempts then to warn Knut by singing a song about Krimhild’s notorious intrigue against her brother, in the hope that he would understand the allusion and save himself (“Igitur speciosissimi carminis contextu notissimam Grimildæ erga fratres perfidiam de industria memorare adorsus, famosæ fraudis exemplo similibus ei metum ingenerare tentabat”, XIII, 7).

Saxo, actually, mentions the story of the Nibelungen without retelling it, but we can assume that, given the strong structural similarity between the narratives about Knut Lavard’s and Erik’s imprisonments, the Swedish chronicler took Saxo’s reference to the Nibelungen matter as a hint to shape his narrative according to the structure of the story about Krimhild’s vengeance.

Furthermore, the possibility that the author of Erikskrönikan knew the story of the Nibelungen is made plausible by an allusion contained in the passage where the narrating voice refers to Erik and Valdemar’s army:

skulle man leta wt til riin
han kunne ey bätre hälade faa
än hertogane haffdo mz sik tha

(“even if one had searched as far as the Rhine / he could not find better heroes / than the ones the dukes had in their army”, ll. 2267–2269)

His knowledge of *Gesta Danorum*, on the other hand, seems to be confirmed by another allusion contained in line 3916. In describing Birger’s joy after his brothers’ imprisonment, in fact, the narrating voice points out that the king behaves “exactly as if he were a Hamlet” (“rät som han ware en amblodhe”). The word *amblodhe* is a *hapax legomenon* in the Old Swedish text corpus, and one cannot be completely sure that it did not generically mean *madman*, but, taking into account the other intertextual clues present in the chronicle, a reference to Saxo’s work looks much more credible (Pipping 1926: 680–681; Jansson 1971: 176; Jansson 1993: 236).

Even if we are not in possession of unquestionable proof, we find several clues in the text of *Erikskrönikan* which point to an intense cultural interchange between the Northern European courts and the intellectual circles connected to them. In his choice of the literary genre, its author was inspired by German rhymed chronicles which, at least, were known to the German noblemen present at the Swedish court in the second half of the 13th and at the beginning of the 14th century; in his use of metrical and stylistic devices he was surely indebted to the *Eufemiavisor* (Vilhelmsdotter 1999: 36–47), whose composition was commissioned by the German-born queen of Norway for her future Swedish son-in-law. Finally, the strategy of presenting the hero of the narrative as a saint-like figure, the structural organization of some episodes in the text, and the exploitation of motifs present in Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* and in *Knýtlinga saga* make it very likely that the Swedish chronicler had the possibility of acquiring knowledge also of the historiographical tradition connected with the Danish court.

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Narrative Trajectories between Nodal Points in the Cultural Landscape

– The Eriksgata of King Ingjald

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This paper will discuss the fictional narrative of king Ingjald in *Heimskringla* and *Ynglingatal*. The story of Ingjald may best be described as a mercurial career in arson. In my interpretation of this text as an archaeologist, I would like to emphasize the narrative structure in relation to archaeological finds and place names rather than get entangled in the spurious historicity of the protagonists. The episode of Ingjald is there as a narrative concept in the shape of a life's journey. When analyzing this, it becomes apparent that it is not the traditional cyclical itinerary where a kleptocratic ruler travels between his farms that is under the loupe. By contrast, the narrative is linear with three consecutive arsons serving as nodal foci. This trajectory can be applied to the cultural landscape of the Mälars Valley. In this paper, it will be argued that the trajectory of the story essentially follows the Eriksgata from Uppsala to Rönö in time and space (Fischer 2005:188–90). Although the Eriksgata is first mentioned only in the law code of Uppland, *Upplandslagen* of 1296, new research on the Migration Period and Vendel Period burials and gold hoards, as well as Viking Period runestones, will highlight the importance of certain relevant central places and place names along this route that are also mentioned in the written sources (Arrhenius 2004, Fischer and Victor 2008). The first journey of the Eriksgata has traditionally been described as departing from Uppsala across Lake Mälaren into Södermanland. In its second leg in the inland hundred of Daga, it was said to pass between Norrtuna and Södertuna in Frustuna parish before turning southwest by Björnlunda via the Sö 2 Axala inscription on a rock wall along the route. Then the Eriksgata arrived in Aspa, with four runestones along the route, past the Aspa hög, a possible legal mound. The exact itinerary of the next step is more uncertain. The story unfolds as follows:

The other children at play pick upon Prince Ingjald. At the insistence of his foster father Svipdag the blind, young Ingjald eats a wolf's heart as a child (*Ynglingasaga* 34).

Ingjald's father Anund dies (*Ynglingasaga* 35).

Ingjald vows to enlarge his inherited kingdom in front a group of invited neighboring potentates. These petty kings are then subject to arson in Uppsal (*Ynglingasaga* 36).

A rival king, Hiorvard Ylving arrives in *Myrkvafljóðr* (*Ynglingasaga* 37). This ought to be Mörköfjärden.

War in *Svipioð* (*Ynglingasaga* 38). This name first appears on Sö Fv1948:289, the third node discussed below.

Granmar is arsoned *in Sili* (*Ynglingasaga* 39). This ought to be in the area of Kolsundet on Selaön, but as Wessén notes (1952:43): "Första vokalens kvantitet ses ej av hs". This is the site of Tuna in Ytterselö parish on Selaön in Södermanland. Here, I shall focus on the cremation burial ground of Tunaby Mellangård (SHM 9435), excavated at the turn of the 20th century by the Swedish archaeologist Bernhard Salin and his Finnish colleague Alfred Hackman. Grave 24, with an the unusual find of a barbaric imitation of a solidus struck for emperor Theodosius II sometime after 441 AD has remained somewhat of a riddle (e.g. Åberg 1953). I have since been able to show that the imitation is die-identical with a 1991 find from the solidus hoard of Botes, Etelhem parish, Gotland (Fischer 2008). With 84 solidi from the period 402–533, the Botes hoard is the largest solidus hoard in Scandinavia (Fagerlie 1967, hoard 137b).



The solidus imitation from Tunaby Mellangård. After Janse 1922.

Ingjald and his daughter Åsa are arsoned in *Ræningi* (Ynglingsaga 40). The third important central place is to be found in Aspa and Ludgo parishes in Rönö, Södermanland. Here, the Daga hundred legal assemblies and execution grounds and runic inscriptions line the Eriks-gata before the journey stretches across Rönö south via Jönåker and Kolmården to Svintuna in Östergötland. Wessén (1952:44) shows that this place name is sometimes spelled differently: *ræningi*, *reiningi*. Cf. Codex Frisianus (attributed by Wessén to an Icelandic scribe, 1325): *rauningi*. Cf. Sö Fv1948;289 **ostrith : lit : -ira : ku(m)... ...usi ÷ at : anunt ÷ auk : raknu- alt : sun : sin ÷: urthu : ta...R : – (t)an...-...(k)u : ua-u : rikiR : o rauniki : ak : snia- lastiR : i : suithiuthu**. Jansson (1987:105) argues for Codex Frisianus as the correct source and argues that its location is identical to Aspa, Ludgo parish.

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Odin eller Kristus på *Vindgameiðr*?

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1. Sophus Bugge og *Hávamáls* kristne opprinnelse

Sophus Bugge hevdet i 1889 at myten om Odin på treet, kjent fra *Hávamál* 138–141, hadde en kristen bakgrunn og var inspirert av korsfestelsen. Bugges tolkning møtte ”levende, for ikke at sige harmfuld, Modsigelse” (Ohrt 1929–1930:273), og har på bakgrunn av den sterke kritikken nærmest forsvunnet helt fra forskningen. I leksikonet ”Medieval Scandinavia” fra 1993 nevnes for eksempel ikke teorien med ett ord, ei heller Bugge. (Mitchell 1993:444–445)

Bugge forutsatte en betydelig bibelsk og kirkelig lærdom hos dikteren. Om vi vender på dette, og isteden søker å finne hvordan diktstrofene, slik de fremstår i manuskriptet, ville blitt mottatt av et publikum med noe bibelsk og kirkelig lærdom på 1200-tallet, vil vi kanskje kunne bruke Bugges argumentasjon på en annen, og mer gyldig måte. Det er i denne sammenhengen jeg vil søke å finne ut hvordan datidens mennesker forsto versene. Kunne man på 1200-tallet unngå å tenke på Kristus når diktet forteller om Odin hengende på treet, såret med spyd, og nektet mat og drikke? Mytens opprinnelse er i denne sammenhengen ikke viktig for forståelsen av hvordan strofene om Odin på treet ble oppfattet i kristen middelalder.

Diktet finnes i Codex Regius (R) av Eddadiktene. Diktets første strofe er også sitert i begynnelsen på Snorres Edda, og den siste delen av strofe 84 finner vi *Fóstrbræðra saga* kap. 21. Diktet består av flere forskjellige deler, kanskje så mange som seks, og er antagelig satt sammen av en redaktør på 1200-tallet (Evans 1993:272). Jeg forutsetter at versene 138–141 utgjør en helhet, og nøyer meg med å gå dypere inn i disse. I tillegg velger jeg å forutsette at strofene handler om Odin, uten å gå inn i andre mulige forklaringsmodeller.¹

Manuskriptets publikum var antagelig geistlige, prestelærde, eller i det minste etter forholdene godt utdannede mennesker, godt trent i tekstlige tolkningsteknikker. Bare kostnadene ved produksjonen av et slikt manuskript forutsetter et høyere sosialt sjikt, og lesekunsten var fremdeles forbeholdt de få.² Det var i Norden på 1200-tallet stor interesse for fortidens kultur og historie, noe som ga seg utslag i blant annet Snorres Edda og i den store interessen for sagalitteratur som vi nyter godt av den dag i dag. R er antagelig samlet som et ledd i denne interessen for den fortidige hjemlige kultur, og for å kunne forstå de kompliserte poetiske omskrivningen i skaldediktningen, kenningene.

2. Typologi og euhemerisme.

En av måtene man i middelalderen forsto historie på, var gjennom typologi, med elementene *typus* og *antitypus*, samt det sammenbindende begrepet *praefiguratio*. Gerd Weber har i en artikkel fra 1987 brukt denne modellen for å forklare middelalderens nordiske historieskrivning. Jeg vil her søke å bruke samme modell på de fire strofene fra *Hávamál*. Typen prefigurerer antitypen, vanligvis slik at passasjer fra det Gamle Testamentet sies å prefigurere hendelser i det Nye Testamentet (Weber 1987:97). En eventuell bruk av denne typologien som en ”historisk typologi” også utenfor en bibelsk kontekst er kontroversielt, da man kan hevde at prefigurasjon kun kan forstås som en sammenheng mellom det Gamle Testamentet og frelsen, som gjengitt i det Nye Testamentet. Etter Weber vil dette synet ta fra oss et viktig instrument for å forstå middelalderens historiografi og historiske tankegang.

¹ For eksempel Grønvik 1999

² ”down to the thirteenth century, written traditions were largely islands of higher culture in an environment that was not so much illiterate as nonliterate.” Stock 1983:7

Augustin, som ble sett på som en ugjendrivelig autoritet i perioden, hadde vist at det ikke fantes noe slikt som profan historie. All historie foregikk etter Guds Store Plan. Prefigurasjon var ikke begrenset til bibelsk historie, men gjaldt hele frelsningshistorien, fra Adam og Eva ble drevet ut av Paradiset og til Dommedag. Frelsningshistorien, og dermed grunnlaget for en forståelse av prefigurasjon, omfattet hele menneskehetens historie (Weber 1987:98).

Etter hvert som Europa ble kristnet, opplevde de forskjellige nasjonene Kristi komme gjennom evangeliet. Verdens frelsningshistorie kunne dermed deles inn i flere mer eller mindre parallelle nasjonale frelsningshistorier, hvor det nasjonale kristne vendepunkt foregikk på et senere stadium av verdenshistorien sammenlignet med det historiske øyeblikk hvor Kristus ble inkarnert i denne verden. Som Weber fremhever, er det da bare naturlig at kristne historieskriverne i middelalderen ville brukt typologi som et bindeledd mellom deres førkristne nasjonale historie og tiden etter omvendelsen (Weber 1987:99–100).

Denne generelle historiske typologien var mindre åpenbar enn den bibelske, i dette tilfelle da de germanske folkene var lenger vekk fra Gud. Allikevel kunne Guds plan for verdens frelse manifestere seg, dog i en mer obskur form, også i den førkristne historien til en nasjon. For en kristen middelalderhistoriker, opplært i typologisk tankegang, var det mulig å skjelne sammenhengen, også der den ikke var umiddelbart tydelig. Prinsippet om bibelsk typologi brukt også utenfor den rent bibelske sfære var altså helt i tråd med det generelle verdenshistoriske perspektivet hevdet av Augustin, og også av senere autoriteter som Gregorius av Tours og Otto av Freising (Weber 1987:100). Som eksempel på hvordan denne typologiske tankegangen ble brukt også i Norden på 1200-tallet, viser Weber til Snorres fremstilling av Kong Frode i *Skáldskaparmál*. Frodefreden kobles her til *Pax Romana*, fredsperioden under Augustus, som ble forstått som et resultat av Kristi fødsel. Snorre knytter her den norrøne historien til verdenshistorien, og kobler indirekte Frode til Guds større plan (Weber 1987:102–103).

Også i kirkekunsten kan vi spore den samme tankegangen. Nes kirke i Telemark fra ca. 1150 har på portalene både Davids kamp mot Goliat og Gunnar i Ormegården, som gjennom harpen kan kobles typologisk til David. Gunnar går igjen på flere stavkirkeportaler, gjerne sammen med Sigurd Fåvnesbane (Weber 1987:104–105). Kan hende har vi også den samme tankegangen bak fremstillingene av Tor og Midgardsormen på steinene fra Hørdum i Danmark, Altuna i Sverige og Gosforth i England (Janson 2005, Flaten 2007). Den norrøne helten eller euhemeriserte guden får gjennom prefigurasjon et kristent tolkningsinnhold. Óláfr hvítaskáld gjorde det samme i den tredje grammatiske avhandling, hvor han knyttet den norrøne poesien til den klassiske, gjennom Æsenes utvandring fra Asia (Fidjestøl 1999:11). Slik oppnådde man å knytte den norrøne forhistorien til den kristne verdenshistorien.

Ved hjelp av euhemerisme kan altså også ikke-kristne myter være sanne, i det de egentlig handler om menneskers verk i førkristne tider, og da nødvendigvis må være en del av Guds større plan. Middelalderens historieskrivning blir da et spørsmål om tolkning, slik Snorre også sier det i *Skáldskaparmál* 66 (*at ráða skáldskapinn*).³

Jeg vil bruke den gamle norske homilieboken (GNH)⁴ som et eksempel på hva slags tekster som var tilgjengelige på 1200-tallet. Manuskriptet med denne samlingen er antagelig blitt til i et monastisk miljø, men har flere tekster felles også med den gamle islandske homilieboken. I tillegg er flere av homiliene oversettelser av tekster fra kjente kristne tenkere som Gregor den store, Alkuin og Wulfstan, og bør kunne sees som et forholdsvis representativt eksempel på vestnordiske, norrøne religiøse tekster.

³ Weber 1987:108 Se hele Webers 1987 for flere eksempler.

⁴ Henvisningene er til side:linje

3. Forskningshistorie

Sophus Bugge hevdet altså i 1880-årene at myten om Odin på treet var å forstå som inspirert av beretningen om Kristus på korset (Bugge 1889). Med sin store kildekunnskap trakk han frem mange likhetstrekk som virker tilforlatelige, men også en del som ved nærmere øyesyn kanskje ikke vil holde mål. Slik tidens skrivemåte var, tok han en del sjanser, og fremmet flere antagelser. Som et eksempel kan vi lese ”Vi tør ogsaa tro, at Nordboerne videre har udviklet det rent germanske Grundlag uden Indflydelse udenfra, at Sagn om Guder og Helte er spirede frem af udelukkende nordisk Rod.” (Bugge 1889:3).

Bugges hovedtese var at mange av de nordiske gude- og heltesagn gjengir eller har oppstått under påvirkning fra de britiske øyer, hvor hel- eller halvhedenske nordboere har vært i kontakt med kristne menn, munk og prester. Fra disse har nordboerne hørt religiøse eller verdslige sagn, dikt, legender og overtroiske forestillinger som har blitt grunnlag for enkelte av de norrøne gude- og heltesagn vi kjenner i dag (Bugge 1889:8–9). Bugges fokus var i hovedsak på mytenes opprinnelse, ikke på hvordan de var blitt forstått i en gitt periode (Bugge 1889:16).

I det store lente Bugge seg mye på utenomnorrøne kilder. Dette er en alvorlig svakhet. Flere av parallellene han brukte for å underbygge sine ideer er også fjerne fra den norrøne verden rent tidsmessige. Tidlige kristne tekster og senmiddelalderske dikt er vanskelige å bruke som kilder til førkristen tro. Bugge var allikevel ikke i tvil om at myten har fungert i et førkristent samfunn, uavhengig av mytens opprinnelse.

Bugges teori fikk både tilhengere og motstandere, og en debatt raste til dels kraftig gjennom hele starten på 1900-tallet.⁵ I mer moderne tid er det mange som ikke nevner teorien om et kristent opphav i det hele tatt,⁶ mens andre kun nevner den kort.⁷ Gabriel Turville-Petre gikk i 1964 ganske grundig gjennom myten, og tok også Bugges teori med i betraktningen. Han så klart likheten, og skrev som følger: ”If the myth of the hanging Óðinn did not derive from the legend of the dying Christ, the two scenes resembled each other so closely that they came to be confused in popular tradition.” (Turville-Petre 1975:43). Som en slags konklusjon kom han til at det ikke var umulig at myten om Odin var påvirket av fortellingen om Kristus på korset (Turville-Petre 1975:50).

I hovedsak har imidlertid de fleste forskere etter 1930 sett på myten som rent førkristen, eller trukket inn indoeuropeiske paralleller. Ferdinand Ohrts ord summerer ganske treffende opp forskningstendensen: ”Til Slut, og vel til Overflod, skal ett fremhæves. Kvadet ikke alene vil være hedensk men det er hedensk.” (Ohr 1929–1930: 285).

4. De enkelte strofer

Det er en jeg-person som taler i strofene, og en som tydeligvis fremdeles er i live, også etter å ha hengt, såret med spyd, uten mat og drikke i ni netter. Dette minner om GNH, hvor for eksempel deler av *De nativitate domini sermo* er gjengitt i veldig direkte tale: *Ec var grafen. ok ræis ec upp af dauða* (GNH 34:25).

138. Veit ec, at ec hecc	Jeg vet at jeg hang
vindgameiði á	i det vindkalde tre
nætr allar nío,	ni hele netter,
geiri undaðr	med odd såret,
oc gefinn Óðni,	til Odin gitt,

⁵ Se Reichardt 1957 for en gjennomgang av denne debatten frem til 1957.

⁶ For eksempel de Vries 1934, Dumezil 1969, Strøm 1999, Clunies Ross 1994, Schjødt 1995, Steinsland 2005

⁷ For eksempel Reichardt 1957, Davidson 1990:144, Holtmark 1970:125. Kure 2006:4–5 sammenstiller Odin og Kristus, uten å gå inn på Bugges teori.

<i>siálfr siálfom mér,</i>	sjøl gitt til meg sjøl,
<i>á þeim meiði,</i>	i det treet
<i>er mangi veit,</i>	som ingen veit
<i>hvers hann afrótom renn.</i> ⁸	av hvilke røtter det rant. ⁹

”Jeg vet at jeg hang på det vindblåste tre”. Dette forblåste treet er tradisjonelt forstått som galgen, og Odin er vel belagt som for eksempel *gálga farmr* – galgens byrde,¹⁰ *hangagoð* og *hangatýr* – de henges gud.¹¹

Men også Kristus kan henge i galgen. Bugge viste til flere eksempler fra angelsaksisk, oldsaksisk, oldhøytysk og gotisk hvor korset omtales som en galge (Bugge 1889: 293–294). Også i den mer hjemlige litteraturen finner vi uttrykket, som i et senmiddelaldersk islandsk dikt referert av Bugge, hvor vi kan lese at Kristus bar *sjálfs síns gálga* – bar selv sin galge. Av Bugge ble det argumentert filologisk og meget teknisk for likheten på de to retterinstrumentene (Bugge 1889:292–296). I mine øyne er den enkleste forklaring at korset som torturinstrument var ukjent i germanske områder. Som en forklarende oversettelse har man da satt ”galge” i stedet for ”kors”, som ikke har gitt de germanske kristne noen assosiasjoner utenfor kristen bruk. I så fall vil det si at galgen her i Norden var alminnelig kjent og hadde et semantisk innhold som kunne brukes også i fortellingen om Kristi endelikt.

Uavhengig av kulturforskjeller var det én konkret gjenstand misjonærer hadde med seg som symbol på sin tro: krusifikset. At førkristne nordboere med et forhold til en høyeste gud som henger torturert på et mystisk tre for å oppnå visdom (og dermed makt) sammenblander Odin og Kristus i denne sammenhengen er ikke uforståelig (Reichardt 1957:26). Om dette er opprinnelsen til versene som behandles her, får være usagt i denne sammenheng. Men det er da ikke underlig at også kristne mennesker som omtrent to hundre år senere hører eller leser *Hávamál* strofe 138–141 ubevisst gjør akkurat den samme øvelsen, bare med motsatt fortegn. I diktet om Odin vil de naturlig se Kristus.

Korset kalles flere steder et tre, som for eksempel i den gamle norske homiliebokens *Dominica palmarum sermo*, hvor det heter *tre pinslar* (GNH 80:27), og i *Jn inuentione sancte crucis sermo*, hvor vi også finner ”[...]bøte hann þat á pinslartre er hinn fyrsti maðr misgerðe á girnðar-tre (GNH 103:18–19). Her ser vi ikke bare at korset likestilles med et tre, men kunnskapens tre fra Skapelsesberetningen prefigurerer korset; Adam som type og Kristus som antitype. På bakgrunn av dette kan vi anta at 1200-tallets mennesker, og da i sær prestelærde, har kjent prefigurasjon som en i det minste bibelsk historisk forklaringsmodell.

At Odin hang ni netter på treet, legger Bugge ikke særlig vekt på (Bugge 1889:304). Imidlertid er det i evangeliene fremhevet at Jesus hang ni timer på korset. Når man i middelalderen hører om en som henger ni netter, vil dette, satt i en sammenheng som denne, være med på å forsterke inntrykket av at vi har med en typologisk Kristusfortelling å gjøre. Odins ni netter, *nætr allar nío*, kan ha funnet gjenklang i både kristne og eldre, hjemlige forestillinger. Nitallet går igjen i mange norrøne førkristne forestillinger, og har sannsynligvis en annen, førkristen bakgrunn også i *Hávamál*. I alle evangeliene, bortsett fra Johannesevangeliet, finner vi at Jesus roper ut i den niende timen på korset, og deretter dør.¹² Noen norrøn oversettelse av dette er så vidt meg bekjent ikke bevart, men da det har en såpass sentral plass i fortellingen rundt Jesus på korset, ville det ikke være unaturlig om nitallet også var med i en ikke bevart oversettelse¹³, eller vi kan regne med at prestelærde med

⁸ Alle sitater fra *Hávamál* er hentet fra Jón Helgasons utgave.

⁹ Oversettelsen ved den norrøne teksten er fra Holm-Olsen 1993. Oversettelsene ellers i teksten er mine.

¹⁰ Eyvindr Finsson skáldaspillir: *Háleygjatal* 1. Alle henvisninger til skaldedikt er til *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*

¹¹ *Hávamál* 14, Víga-Glúmr Eyjólfsson 10

¹² Matt. XXVII:46–50, Mark. XV:34–37, Luk. XXIII:44–46

¹³ Det har for eksempel antageligvis eksistert en oversettelse også før *Stjórn*. Se Seip 1980:520

latinkunnskap kjente dette fra *Vulgata*. Dette blir dog bare spekulasjoner, og vi kan ikke uten videre gå ut fra at 1200-tallets mennesker ville gjort den mentale koblingen mellom Odin og Kristus på bakgrunn av nitallet i evangeliene.

Et merkelig sammenfall er det mellom Odin og Kristus i at begge fremstilles som såret med spyd. For Odin er spydet i flere sammenhenger fremhevet som guddommens spesielle våpen (Ström 1999:108). Blant annet kalles han *geirs dróttin* (spydets herre), i *Sonatorrek 22*, og noe mer usikkert *Gungnis váfaðr* (Gungners rister eller vind) i et fragment tilskrevet Bragi inn gamli.¹⁴ Det ser ut til at det har vært mulig å ofre mennesker, da gjerne motstanderne i kamp, til Odin ved hjelp av et spyd.¹⁵ For Kristus' del er det Longinus som med sin lanse gir ham et sår i siden etter at døden har inntruffet.¹⁶ Longinus ser ut til å ha vært viktigere i andre deler av den vestlige kristenheten enn i det norrøne området. Også at Odin henger såret på treet, *geiri undaðr*, kan vi finne igjen i homilieboken. *Peir logðu spiote í siðu mer sva at bloð ran á iorð* finner vi i *De natiuitate domini sermo* (GNH 34:24–25).

I verset heter det også *gefínn Óðni, siálfr siálfom mér* – gitt til Odin, selv til meg selv. Det kan vel sies at Jesus ofret seg selv på korset til Gud, for menneskenes skyld. Med treenigheten i bakhodet, kan man absolutt også si at Kristus ofret seg til seg selv.¹⁷ Men hvor utviklet var denne forestillingen på 1200-tallet? At Odin er gitt til seg selv, krever en forståelse av treenigheten for at koblingen mellom Odin og Kristus skal fungere. Dette kan vi vel regne med at menn med noen grad av prestelærdom hadde. Vi finner som et eksempel et ekko av denne forestillingen i Snorres *Gylfaginning*, hvor Hárr, Jafnhárr og Þriði kan sees som et litterært grep for å vise en ufullkommen norrøn variant av treenigheten.

At ingen vet hvor treet røtter finnes, kan igjen gi assosiasjoner til homilieboken, hvor det forklares hvordan den delen av korset som ikke kunne sees, allikevel holdt det hellige korset oppe, slik den usynlige guds makt styrer alt synlig (GNH 104:18–23).

Sett under ett gir hele strofen store muligheter for å forstås som en typologisk Kristusfremstilling.

<i>139. Við hleifi mic sældo</i>	Brød fikk jeg ikke,
<i>né við hornigi,</i>	de brakte ikke horn;
<i>nýsta ec niðr;</i>	speidet ned fra treet,
<i>nam ec upp rúnar,</i>	tok så opp runer,
<i>æpandi nam,</i>	tok dem med skrik,
<i>fell ec aptr þaðan.</i>	og fra treet falt jeg.

Denne strofen er mer tvetydig. At Odin hverken fikk brød eller drikke, kan selvsagt ha blitt sett i sammenheng med Kristus som fikk eddik på en svamp å drikke,¹⁸ men det er ikke vektlagt i homiliebokens fremstilling av korsfestelsen. Vi kan kanskje regne med at prestelærde med kunnskap fra *Vulgata* kan ha koblet de to fremstillingene sammen, særlig på bakgrunn av det foregående versets mer tydelige mulige referanser til Kristus.

Etter Bugge fikk Kristus galle å spise og eddik å drikke,¹⁹ men det blir i begge sammenhenger en negativ opplevelse. Odin får ingenting, Kristus får uspiselig mat og udrikkelig væske.

¹⁴ Bragi inn gamli, fragments 4

¹⁵ Se for eksempel Turville-Petre 1975:47 for en oversikt

¹⁶ Bugge vil her også vise til engelsk og irsk middelaldersk tradisjon, hvori Kristus fikk banesår av dette spydet. Dette velger jeg å ikke ta hensyn til her, da det ikke kan godtgjøres noen sammenheng med norrøne kilder. Bugge 1889:39–41

¹⁷ Se for eksempel Joh. XX:30

¹⁸ Matt. XXVII:48, Mark. XV:36, Luk. XXIII:36, Joh. XIX:29

¹⁹ Bugge 1889:346, jeg har ikke funnet kilden til forestillingen om at Kristus fikk galle å spise.

Nýsta ec niðr, jeg speidet ned, kan vanskelig passes inn i fortellingen om Kristus på korset. Bugge ville se en sammenheng med Joh. XIX:30, hvor det står at den døende Jesus ”bøyde hodet ned”. I neste linje finner vi *nam ec upp rúnar*, tok jeg opp runer. Runer må i denne sammenhengen forstås ikke bare som skriftegn, men som hemmelig kunnskap. Denne kan godt ha hatt en sammenheng med runestavene, men det går ikke klart frem av diktet hvordan det er tenkt at runene blir ”tatt opp”. Vi må vel allikevel forstå det slik at han hentet ny kunnskap nedenfra, fra dypet eller underjorden. Odin tilegner seg kunnskap, slik som i så mange av de andre historiene vi kjenner om ham. Men kunnskapen er bare til ham, den kommer ikke umiddelbart noen andre til gode. Nå kan det sies at det er nødvendig at Odin oppnår ny viten for å bevare verdensordenen, men det går ikke frem av strofene. I de fire versene som her behandles, er det Odin selv som er i fokus. Det virker ikke som om noe av det han foretar seg er til gagn for andre enn ham selv. Bugge henviser til Nikodemusevangeliet, hvori det går frem at Jesus etter sin død skal få herredømme over hele verden. De underverk han gjør kalles *mysteria per mortem crucis*, og skal altså ha inspirert historien om Odin som mottar mystisk hemmelig kunnskap gjennom en slags dødssituasjon på det vindblåste treet. Deler av dette evangeliet ble tidlig oversatt til norrønt, som *Niðrstigningsarsaga*, og har antagelig vært godt kjent for 1200-tallets norrøne elite. Her fortelles det hvordan Kristus farer ned til helvete etter sin død, slipper fri alle rettferdige sjeler, og siden inntar sin maktposisjon i himmelen. Men sammenhengen med *Hávamál* 139 er ikke umiddelbart åpenbar.

Når Odin skrikende, *æpandi*, tar opp runene har vi en tydeligere sammenheng. At Odin tok i mot kunnskapen så høylydt kan selvsagt settes i forbindelse med at Jesus i følge evangeliene ropte ut med høy røst før sin død. Det fortelles i evangeliene at Kristus ropte på korset, en eller to ganger. Imidlertid er ordet som brukes i *Hávamál* nært knyttet til *ópi*, som vi finner senere i R, i *Skirnismál* 29. Her er det i en ganske annen sammenheng, i en regle eller besvergelse med sterke seksuelle undertoner, brukt av Skirne for å tvinge Gerd til å godta Frøys amorøse tilnærmelser. *Ópi* oversettes som en trolldomsrune som forårsaker ”skrik og yl” (Heggstad 1958:508) eller ”vanvidsskrig” (LP 446). Sammenhengen mellom skrik og runer virker reell, særlig når vi kan legge til at en av de mest produktive svenske runeristerne signerte steinene som *Œpir*. At det er en sammenheng i samme manuskript må veie tyngre enn et mer usikkert bibelsk samsvar. Imidlertid er det ingenting i veien for at en skriftkyndig også her hadde sett en sammenheng.²⁰

I siste del av verset sies det *fell ec aprtr þaðan* – falt jeg derifra igjen. Kristus falt på ingen måte ned fra korset, men ble hentet livløs ned. At Odin så faller ned fra treet igjen, ser jeg liten åpenbar kristen symbolikk i.

Om vi ser på hele strofen, så er det her mulig å tolke Odin som Kristus, men det er slett ikke nødvendig, og det blir bare aktuelt om vi ser strofen i sammenheng med den foregående.

<i>140. Fimbulliód nio</i>	Ni storgaldrer
<i>nam ec af inom frægja syni</i>	fikk jeg av den navngjetne sønnen
<i>Bolþors, Bestlo foður,</i>	til Bøltorn, Bestlas far;
<i>oc ec drycc of gat</i>	og en drikk fikk jeg
<i>ins dýra miadar,</i>	av dyrebar mjød,
<i>ausinn Qðreri.</i>	øst av Ódrøre.

Sophus Bugge hoppet behendig over dette verset i sitt resonnement, og behandlet det heller senere i boken. Det er fullt forståelig, da det ikke passer godt inn i noen kristen kontekst. I stedet gikk Bugge rett på vers 141. Her må imidlertid også vers 140 tas med i betraktningen i den rekkefølgen den står på i R.

²⁰ Jeg forstår her skriftkyndig som en som er kyndig i Skriften, altså bibelen.

Fimbullióð er store eller mektige sanger, forbundet med trolldom. Når vi blir fortalt at det er ni av dem, så kan dette ikke lenger på noen måte sammenstilles med Kristi ni timer på korset. At Odin får ni kraftige trolldomssanger fra den vidgjetne sønnen til Boltor, Bestlas far, passer ikke inn i noen kjent forestilling om Kristus på korset. Her er det tilsynelatende Odins onkel på morssiden som er opphavet til den hemmelige kunnskapen, mens Kristus maktposisjon følger av hans rolle som Guds sønn.

Bugges eneste kristne tolkning i verset var hvordan den dyrebare mjøden, *inn dýri mjøðr*, kan sammenlignes med episoden når disiplene mottok den hellige ånd (Apostl. II:33), i et latinsk dikt beskrevet som ”den guddommelige nektardrikk” (Bugge 1889:353–354). Han var imidlertid uvanlig ydmyk på dette punkt, og ga ikke inntrykk av å ha funnet den eneste rette tolkning av strofen (Bugge 1889:354). Det er da heller ikke særlig sannsynlig at dette latinske diktet skal ha påvirket forestillingen om den hellige ånd i norrøne områder på 1200-tallet.

Når strofen forteller at Odin fikk drikke av det dyrebare ølet, vektlegges det at det er øst fra kjelen *Óðrerir* hvor en del av skaldemjødet befinner seg. Vi er her midt i en av de viktigste Odinsmytene, om hvordan han ved svik fikk skaldemjødet fra Suttungs datter Gunnlöð.²¹ Denne myten var ikke bare viktig for forståelsen av skaldediktningens opprinnelse, men blir også presentert bare noen vers tidligere i diktet slik det fremstår i R. Vi må regne med at manuskriptets målgruppe har kjent denne myten, og derfor har koblet strofen til skaldediktningen. Koblingen mellom skaldskap og kunnskap var sterk, da historie og annen kunnskap i stor grad ble formidlet gjennom dikt. Å nevne Suttungs mjød her ville virket forsterkende på viktigheten av den kunnskapen Odin tilegner seg på treet.

Det er med andre ord ingenting som knytter denne strofen til Kristus. Her spilles det på andre, kjente, Odinsmyter, av hvilke myten om skaldemjødet også er belagt ellers i diktet.

<i>141. Þá nam ec frævaz</i>	Da ble jeg frodig,
<i>oc fróðr vera</i>	og fikk meg kunnskap,
<i>oc vaxa oc vel hafaz;</i>	vokste og trivdes vel;
<i>orð mér af orði</i>	av ord økte ord
<i>orðz leitaði,</i>	meg ord på ny,
<i>verc mér af verki</i>	av verk søkte verk
<i>vercs leitaði.</i>	meg verk på ny.

Denne siste av våre strofer virker mer nøytral. Fruktbarhet og kunnskapsrikdom, vekst og trivsel er religionsnøytrale, positive begrep. At det ene ordet ledet til det andre, den ene handlingen til den andre likeså. Bugge vil også her se en likhet med Nikodemusevangeliet, hvor Kristus står opp fra de døde ”som den guddommelige, altbeseirende Herre.” (Bugge 1889:352). En 1200-talls leser eller lytter kan godt ha lest et kristent innhold inn i strofen, men det var ikke opplagt at vedkommende gjorde det.

Konklusjon

Noe av kritikken mot Bugge gikk ut på at han forutsatte en veldig høy grad av kristen lærdom hos dikteren bak strofene. Om vi altså i stedet forutsetter en ganske god kjennskap til kristen lærdom hos strofenes publikum på 1200-tallet, blir sammenstillingen av Odin og Kristus mer fruktbar. Imidlertid viser det seg da at Bugges argumentasjon i liten grad kan brukes, etter som hans grunnlagsmateriale både tids- og stedsmessig er vanskelig å knytte til 1200-tallets norrøne områder.

Da det frankiske imperium og andre europeiske nasjoner etter hvert ble kristnet, ble det nødvendig å integrere deres nasjonale historier i den kristne verdenshistorien. Typologi ser ut

²¹ *Hávamál* 104–110, og i gjenfortalt med flere detaljer i Snorres *Skáldskaparmál*

til å ha utviklet seg fra en rent bibelsk tolkningsprosess til en overordnet forståelsesmetode for generell historie i løpet av denne prosessen (Weber 1987:131, note 19). Om vi går gjennom strofene med et typologisk 1200-talls utgangspunkt, basert på tidens tilgjengelige religiøse skrifter og teorier, ser vi at strofene hver for seg tilsynelatende gir et forvirrende uttrykk.

Bare strofe 138 gir alene et klart kristusbilde. Strofen har så mange likhetstrekk med kristusfremstillinger som var kjent i det aktuelle området under den aktuelle perioden, at det nok var vanskelig for en leser ikke å se dette som en typologisk kristusfremstilling. Strofe 140 gir umiddelbart et lite kristent inntrykk. Vers 139 og 141 kan godt forstås som omhandlende Kristus, sett i sammenheng med strofe 138. Også strofe 140 kan, med ideen om Odin som en ufullkommen historisk type til antitypen Kristus passes inn i sammenhengen. Sett under ett, gir de fire versene et betinget kristent uttrykk. En leser med noe kirkelig kunnskap på 1200-tallet har altså ikke kunnet unngå å tolke *Hávamál* 138–141 som en typologisk kristusfremstilling. Og dette er den mest sannsynlige lesergruppen for manuskriptet hvor diktet er bevart.

Vi har her å gjøre med et transformasjonsprodukt, hvor en førkristen myte fikk et nytt meningsinnhold da samfunnet hvor myten fungerte fikk en ny religiøs ideologi. Ferdinand Ohrt var i slutten på 1920-årene nær tanken, når han på spørsmålet om hvorvidt *rúnar* i strofe 139 gjelder skriftsystemets (*futharkens*) opphav eller bruken av ”visse Magtruner som Odin fandt” svarer: ”Digteren kan have ment det sidste, selvom Hávamáls Redaktor har tænkt sig det første.” (Ohrt 1929–1930:277). Dikter, redaktør og leser vil nesten uvegerlig ha hatt forskjellige oppfattelser av innholdet i disse strofene, avhengig av tid, sted og vedkommendes bakgrunn. Isolert fra resten av *Hávamál* ville disse fire strofene antagelig blitt forstått som en kristusfremstilling av de som arbeidet med manuskriptet som nytt, selv om myten om Odin på treet hadde hatt et helt annet meningsinnhold i førkristen tid.

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The Story of Hrólfr Saga Kraka as the manuscripts tell it

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I will by looking at the manuscripts wherein Hrólfr saga Kraka appears, try and tell the story of the saga within the North. Instead of focusing on the text, I will look at the material: the parchment, the paper, the ink, the scribe, the collation of the books and more, and try to answer:

When was it popular?

Why was it popular?

With which other sagas was it associated?

How did it migrate around the North?

All of the answers to these questions and other questions will, I hope, add up to a picture of the life of the saga.

A New Etymology for *Hamlet*? The Names *Amlethus*, *Amlóði* and *Admlithi*

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The name of the *Gesta Danorum* character *Amlethus* (predecessor of *Hamlet*) is often held to be related to the Icelandic *Amlóði*, which is found in a single skaldic verse. Two of the most influential explanations for the apparent connexion between *Amlethus* and *Amlóði* hinge on the Irish name *Amlaidhe*, which has been viewed as a complex corruption of Scandinavian **Anlaifr* or **Anl(e) óðe*. However, in more recent research *Amlaidhe* is interpreted as a straightforward Irish rendering of Old Norse *Haflíði*; and I wish to propose that a different Irish name may provide simpler etymologies for *Amlóði*, *Amlethus*, and ultimately *Hamlet*. My suggestion is that *Amlethus* and *Amlóði* both derive from Irish *Admlithi* ('Great Grinding'), and are therefore equivalent to the mill name *Grotti* which appears with *Amlóði* in skaldic verse.

Snorri Sturluson and oral traditions

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Snorri Sturluson was a poet of exceptional skill. This is generally overlooked when considering Snorri's knowledge of poetry and its content. Edda will be taken to reflect his knowledge of and competence in the poetic system, and specific poetry and poems known or otherwise available in his immediate environment: it is approached as a concrete example of applied knowledge. Snorri's knowledge of oral traditions and their cultural activity is viewed through patterns of quotation as well as Snorri's own composition in order to develop an overview. The poetic system is addressed as a coherent and dynamic whole which is best approached as systems of registers, meters and prosodies with conventional constellations according to genre and application (Frog 2009:280–288). However, the conventional binary division of the poetic system into 'eddic' and 'skaldic' categories retains a practical (though not analytical) value for discussion.

1. The Corpus

The Codex Regius (**R**) manuscript of Snorra Edda will be treated as the model text for discussion, excluding *Grottasöngur* and the *pulur* at the end of Edda. Extended quotations from ecphrasis poems (49 stanzas) are distinguished in statistics.

Table 1. Extended quotations from ecphrasis poems.

Subject	poem quoted	total stanzas	stanzas ¹
Þórr and Geirroðr	<i>Þórsdrápa</i>	17	73–91
The Rape of Iðunn	<i>Haustlöng</i>	13	92–104
Þórr and Hrungrnir	<i>Haustlöng</i>	7	65–71
Sörli and Hamðir	<i>Ragnarsdrápa</i>	5	154–158
Hjaðningavíg	<i>Ragnarsdrápa</i>	5	250–254

All statistics are considered approximations presented in the concrete terms of a defined corpus. 'Counting' stanzas is inherently problematic. 'Stanza' is used inclusive of stanzas not quoted in full. Eddic stanza divisions and numbering follow Neckel & Kuhn 1962; 'quotation' follows Faulkes 1988 and Faulkes 1998, with the addition of the long line of verse attributed to Hrólfr Kraki (Faulkes 1998:59.15). Skaldic stanzas are counted and numbered according to Faulkes 1998, adding the repeat quotation of 111.1 in prose (Faulkes 1998:36.8) and counting the Bragi-*tröllkona* exchange (300a–b) as two stanzas. This gives Bjarne Fidjestøl's (1985:323) total of 373 skaldic stanza quotations. 19 quotations repeat a helming,² 2 quotations of different helmings from the same stanza can be identified (though there are probably more),³ totalling 21 repetitions, 3 from *Haustlöng* (93.1–4, 94.1–4, 65.5–8).

¹ All stanzas in *Skpm* are numbered according to Faulkes 1998.

² In *Gylf*: *Vsp* 52; Faulkes 1988:9, 51–52. In *Skpm*: 3=226; 5.5–8=278; 12=308; 33.5–8=40; 65.5–8=108; 93.1–4=341; 94.1–4=305; 111.1=p.36.8; 118=291; 126=347; 146=232; 186.4–5=389; 196=287; 210=316; 217=314; 279.1–2=394; 282=344; 386.1–2=411. The prose introducing 357 (Faulkes 1998:95.9) indicates a repeat quotation (cf. Faulkes 1998:36.8; 92.26; 93.13) but the lines are not found elsewhere. As there may be as many as 9 additional stanzas from the same poem in Edda, this may be an honest mistake.

³ *Skpm* 3(=226)//337; 117//143.

Table 2. Stanza quotations in Edda: ‘/’ indicates totals ‘include/exclude’ quotations in Table 1; ‘–’ indicates totals ‘include – exclude’ repeat quotations.

Work	total stanzas	‘skaldic’ stanzas	‘eddic’ stanzas
Edda	467/418 – 446/400	373/324 – 353/307	94 – 93
<i>Skáldskaparmál</i>	390/341 – 370/324	371/322 – 351/305	19 – 19
<i>Gylfaginning</i>	77 – 76	2 – 2	75 – 74

2. Edda and the orality of poetry

As Bengt R. Jonsson has stressed, “*the natural state of oral poetry is to remain oral and[...] such poetry is rarely written down without a real incitement*” (Jonsson 1991:145, his emphasis). Snorri exhibits no interest in documenting whole poems – except *Háttatal*. Codicological evidence seems to imply that the documentation of ‘complete’ oral poems was a development which followed a gradual rise in poetic quotation and pedagogy within the manuscript tradition, a process which only seems to have come into full bloom with Snorri’s works (cf. Quinn 1997; Harris 1985; Nordal 2009). The documentation of complete oral poems (distinct from quoting them) requires them to have value and relevance *as metrical texts* in a written mode of expression to fulfil a function related specifically to reading – almost certainly different from their significance and functions as oral phenomena.

Poetry was quoted on the basis of relevance. There is very little overlap in verses quoted in different genres of medieval Icelandic literature (Fidjestøl 1985:322–333). Snorri’s work is the first vernacular *ars poetica* and unique for its extensive presentation of mythological material. Bjarne Fidjestøl (1985:323) found that Snorri is our only source for 317 of Edda’s 373 skaldic stanzas, and that his work had a tremendous impact on uses of mythology in oral poetry and manuscript contexts (cf. Fidjestøl 1999:293). The vast majority of poetry quoted in Snorri’s exegesis of poetics appears to derive from oral traditions which the unique work gave cause to write down.

3. Skaldic quotations

Without repetitions, 353/307 skaldic stanzas are quoted in Edda. Attributions are made to 67 poets. Only 20 stanzas remain ‘anonymous’, including *Eiríksmál* (20), the *tröllkona*’s verse (300b), and three stanzas (200, 236, 375) attributed to poets in other manuscripts or sources. Authorship was clearly essential to the identity of verses. Snorri seems to have anticipated that his audience would recognize poets by name, and perhaps could recognize a poet through his verse: cf. 13 attributions to “Einarr” when Einarr Skálaglamm (15 stanzas) and Einarr Skúlason (35 stanzas) are both often quoted. Poem titles only appear introducing extended quotations (Table 1) with one exception (137); the patron/subject of the poem may be indicated when his identity is relevant to a circumlocution under discussion (282, 293, 296, 297): the poet is named in all these cases. Snorri appears to have had a significant arsenal of poetry at his disposal, quoting from more than 85 different poems,⁴ yet the poem title or other context of the quotation is only stated for 8 quotations and those in Table 1.

Skaldic stanzas are primarily quoted for examples of nominal circumlocutions. This provides the basis for their selection and organization. Half to two-thirds of the stanzas quoted can be described as recalled according to the ‘content’:⁵ e.g. poems, stanzas and lines on sea faring for ship- and the sea-circumlocutions. The majority of stanzas treating mythological subjects preserved only in Snorra Edda are quoted in this capacity. Within these sections,

⁴ This minimal estimate is inclined to reduce quotations to a minimum of possible poems; 16 stanzas are treated as *lausavísur*; 50 are removed from consideration as problematically ambiguous.

⁵ A practical and effective system for efficiently, distinguishing, classifying and describing these patterns of quotation is still being developed, hence they will only be addressed here in general terms.

Snorri moves between content-based quotation and elements of the surface texture such as heiti (cf. 5) and kennings (cf. 13) within kennings. The series of 22 quotations (16 poets) for two specific indices of lord-heiti associated with dynasties (390–411) are indicative of an ability to recall stanzas on the basis of specific elements in the surface texture of a poem. The relationship between surface-texture and referent combine, for example, in the series of man- (195–200) and woman-kennings (201) with ‘gold’ as a modifier (6 poets, one unattributed; most include the lexeme *gull-*) followed by 17 man-/woman-kennings with a tree-heiti as a base-word (202–218: 10 poets; 3 unattributed). The latter appear to actively avoid repeating heiti and are therefore unlikely to represent more than a portion of examples Snorri was prepared to produce. It implies that his memory was trained in recalling kenning-referent or heiti-referent combinations. Quotations repeatedly seem selected on a much narrower basis than the circumlocution addressed: e.g. 9 of 12 examples of sky-kennings appear in variations of ‘ruler of/under the sky’ (105–116: 8 poets). These are clearly recalled on the basis of the circumlocution in which the sky-kenning occurs. The examples are summoned on such specific terms that Snorri must have quite literally known a tremendous amount of poetry ‘inside and out’.

4. Medieval Icelandic poetry: A coherent system

Quotations in *Skáldskaparmál* (*Skpm* hereafter) focus on providing examples of poetic circumlocutions. This presentation occasionally blurs into presenting or authenticating mythological information⁶ or interpreting specific circumlocutions (e.g. 153). This is symptomatic of the intimate relationship between the system of poetic circumlocutions and the pre-Christian cultural milieu in which their referents and patterns of association developed (Clunies Ross 2005:114–115, 134–138). Snorri reinforces and promotes this relationship through Edda, and promotes the use of mythological and heroic material associated (by Snorri) with eddic verse in skaldic compositions. This is emphasized in the introductions to quotations in Table 1 by the formula *eptir þessi/þeiri sögu orti/hefir ort*, rather than *svá kvað* etc. This would seem to be a natural development from the apparent in the rise of interest in manipulating eddic poetry and its subjects by skaldic poets during the 12th century (Fidjestøl 1980 *passim*.; Faulkes 1998:223), although Snorri and his nephews appear largely responsible for the significant revival of interest in mythology and mythological reference in skaldic verse (Fidjestøl 1999:293).

Only 19 eddic stanzas are quoted in *Skpm*: *þula*-like stanzas, situational verse, more rarely authenticating verse for mythological information, but only a gnomic verse (240) is quoted for a single heiti. With the exception of 240, the pattern of eddic quotation is consistent throughout Edda although skaldic poets composed, knew and referred to poetry which we class as ‘eddic’ (Clunies Ross 2005:6–28). Neither Snorri nor other medieval treatments of metrics differentiate between eddic and skaldic meters (Nordal 2009:33n). Óláfr Þórðarson’s *ars poetica* quotes eddic examples alongside skaldic without distinction (Sigurðsson 2004:100–114), and in addition to two skaldic stanzas, the First Grammarian quotes two probable long lines of eddic poetry to demonstrate a minimal pair.⁷ Snorri is inclined to divide the corpus as part of his compositional strategy, but his division does not entirely coincide with a modern eddic-skaldic dichotomy. He treats *Eiríksmál* (20) as an ‘eddic’ composition: it is referred to

⁶ E.g. 11 of the first 15 stanzas for ‘Þórr’ (42–56: 7 poets) are associated through the battle with Miðgarðsormr; one stanza (50) lacks a circumlocution for Þórr, implying emphasis momentarily shifted to ‘content’. Conversely, the impoverished section on Freyr (60–63) presents three stanzas authenticating mythological information (one of which is eddic) and only one kenning-example, which may reflect difficulty (or bias) in producing examples of Freyr-circumlocutions.

⁷ Sigurðsson 1966:42: *hödu þá er Hölgaatröll dó (fornyrðislag?); en heyrði til hoddu þá er Þórr bar hverinn (ljóðahátt?)*. It is reasonable to assume that this comparison of two alliterating expressions of mythological content is not random. On the *The First Grammatical Treatise* and vernacular poetics see Nordal 2009.

by title without author and lacks a circumlocution. The Bragi-*tröllkona* exchange (300a–b) is in an anecdote and included for short *pulur*. The narrative context and mythic being identify it with eddic situational verse as opposed to ‘skaldic’ quotation which did not distinguish *lausavísur*. Snorri recognizes and promotes the poetry as a coherent and interrelated system, but his pattern of quotation appears to have been influenced by his general inclination to systematize and categorize (cf. Clunies Ross 1987).

5. Variation in eddic and skaldic verse

The eddic-skaldic dichotomy is bound up with romantic ideas of ‘skaldic’ poetry as the poetry of the aristocracy in opposition to ‘eddic’ poetry as the poetry of *das Volk*. Oral-Formulaic Theory revised this dichotomy into ‘improvisational’ and ‘memorized’ traditions. Oral-Formulaic Theory as outlined by Albert Lord (1960) was developed from South-Slavic epic and is not appropriate for the description of ‘eddic’ poetry (cf. Mellor 1999; Haymes 2004; Thorvaldsen 2006) as is the case for other oral poetic traditions more similar to eddic poetry such as *byliny* (cf. Vesterholt 1973) or kalevalaic epic (cf. Harvilahti 1992). Skaldic verse was subject to a highly crystallized process of transmission, particularly on the level of coherent syntactic expressions (1–4 lines) and the 4-line helming as a sequential series (cf. Rubin 1995). Metrical constraints can be attributed a significant role in the stability of the line and couplet in *dróttkvætt*. By association, stability is projected onto skaldic *fornyrðislag* and skaldic *ljóðaháttir* where it is attributable to convention and raises the question of equivalent stability in eddic poetry.

Unless all Icelandic examples of eddic poetry are traced back to a single manuscript exemplar for each poem, eddic poetry exhibits stability on the level of the line comparable to ‘skaldic’ verse. This includes the *Lokasenna* stanza quoted by Snorri, which verbally corresponds almost verbatim to *Ls* 21.1–2, 47.3 (*legskaðu:lezkaðu*), followed by *Ls* 29.4–6 as a second helming. The strong verbal, acoustic and functional similarities of *Ls* 21.1–2 to *Ls* 47.1–2 and Snorri’s use of *legskaðu* rather than *letskaðu* in *Ls* 47.3 (the only lexical variation) make a manuscript dependence unlikely. Eddic stability on the level of the line seems reasonably attributable to that tradition. Comparisons across sources reveal that lexical variation within the ‘eddic’ line only rarely exceeds that found in ‘skaldic’ verse. Consequently, verbally equivalent or near-equivalent lines cannot be assumed to indicate dependence on a manuscript exemplar (cf. *Þkv* 14.1–6 and *Bdr* 1.1–6). Comparisons of skaldic verse across sources reveals inconsistencies in attribution and apparent variation in the organization of stable syntactic units (particularly helmings) into stanzas and larger compositional structures. We are therefore most likely to encounter evidence of oral variation or dependence on a manuscript exemplar in larger compositional structures. The *Lokasenna* quotation is unusual for its ‘mix-matched’ helmings, but this is also found in other eddic quotations where its occurrence may be statistically related to the number of stanzas quoted from a poem (Table 3) and the nature that poem’s of stanzas.⁸

Snorri documents 5 stanzas of the poem *Alsvinnsmál* across three quotations (328–330, 332, 380). Two (332, 380) correspond to *Alv* 20 and 30. Both stanzas exhibit variation, which might be considered extreme in 380/*Alv* 30 (1.2 *með goðom/i helju*; 1.3 *kölluð er gríma með goðum/kalla grímo ginregin*) although it remains within the repeating patterns of the poem (e.g. *Alv* 30.3=*Alv* 20.3; *kalla í helju* in *Alv* 20.6). Stanzas 328–330 are not found in *Alv* nor have any place in that poem. In AM 748 I (A), ‘*Alsvinnsmál*’ is changed to ‘*Kálfsvísa*’ for 328–330 and two lines are added to 330, implying familiarity with a relevant poem; ‘*Alsvinnsmál*’ is changed to ‘*Alvíssmál*’ for stanzas 332 and 380. Lines 2 and 3 of 380 are

⁸ Cf. the organization of helmings in his quotation of *Vsp* 26; *Vsp* 46.5–8+47.1–4 (apparently) as a single stanza; the order of long lines in *Vsp* 5.5–10; see also variation in *pula* quotations in *Gylf*.

changed to agree with *Am* 30.2–3 (cf. 1.4 *ósorg/óljós*). This is only one of many revisions undertaken by this enthusiastic scribe and may be evidence that a copy of *Alv* was in the AM 748 I collection of eddic poems. Codex Upsaliensis (U) gives ‘*Ölvíssmál*’ for ‘*Alsvinnsmál*’ without revising the text (380; 332 is omitted) and leaves 328–330 unattributed. The attribution of an additional situational *ljóðahátt* stanza to Þórr indicates revision by someone with knowledge of eddic poetry, while the curious suspensions in *Vsp* quotations are clearly modelled on manuscript traditions and seem applied by analogy in *Gm* quotations, indicating good familiarity with manuscript copies of eddic poems.⁹ The ‘*Ölvíssmál*’ attribution may be associated with manuscript influences applied from memory. Snorri’s *Alsvinnsmál* appears to have been a different poem from the Codex Regius *Alv*. Manuscript redactor(s?) attempted to correct this according to their knowledge of *Alv*. This example is important because Snorri may not have associated other stanzas with the same poems we do: a range of variation on the level of compositional units or segments may have been a natural part of this oral tradition, resulting in *Hávamál*, *Hyndluljóð* and *Fáfnismál*. The same phenomenon is common in kalevalaic poetry and should not be dismissed as ‘corruption’, particularly when we do not know how extant variants may or may not reflect the broader cultural activity of a poem.

Table 3. Eddic stanza quotations. ‘S’ indicates quotations in Skpm; all others found in Gylf. ‘*’ indicates the ‘poem’ in which a specific stanza is preserved may not be the poem from which Snorri quoted it. ‘#’ indicates situational verses attributed to speakers in the narrative frame of Gylf.

Poem	evidence	total	<i>bula</i>	authent.	situational	attributed	unattributed	speech–act
<i>Völuspá</i>	E	31/30	7	24/23	–	28/27	3	–
<i>Grímnismál</i>	E	*24	6	*17+*S1	–	11	*12+*S1	–
<i>Vafþrúðnismál</i>	E	9	–	8	#1	1	7	#1
<i>Vsp in skamma</i>	/	1	–	1	–	1	–	–
<i>Lokasenna</i>	E	1	–	1	–	1	–	–
<i>Heimdalargaldr</i>	U	1	–	1	–	1	–	–
Njörðr/Skaði	A	2	–	–	2	–	–	2
Gná’s ride	U	2	–	–	2	–	–	2
<i>Skírnismál</i>	E	1	–	–	1	–	–	1
Þökk’s verse	U	1	–	–	1	–	–	1
<i>Fáfnismál</i>	E	*3	–	*1	S2	–	*1	S2
Þórr’s verse	U ¹⁰	1	–	–	S1	–	–	S1
Hrólf’s verse	E	1	–	–	S1	–	–	S1
Topographical (142)	U	1	–	S1	–	–	S1	–
<i>Alsvinnsmál</i>	/	5	S3	S2	–	S5	–	–
<i>Þorgrímsþula</i>	U	4	S3	S1	–	S4	–	–
<i>Bjarkamál in fornu</i>	A	3	S3	–	–	S3	–	–
* <i>Hávamál</i>	E or /	1	–	–	#1	–	–	#1
*Wisdom competition	U	1	–	–	#1	–	–	#1
*Gnomic verse (240)	U	1	–	S1	–	–	S1	–

6. Eddic quotations

Snorri quotes 94/93 stanzas of eddic verse from ca. 20 poems (as known to him). Table 3 shows that complete variants are preserved of 8 (E), 2 are attested in other sources (A), corresponding stanzas of 2 are found in extant poems other than Snorri knew them (/), and 8 are otherwise unknown. The total quotations are divided according to application (authenticating

⁹ Lasse Mårtensson and Heimir Pálsson (2008) examine the use of suspensions in stanzas in U quoted from *Vsp*, *Gm* and *Sexstefja*. They argue that the suspensions were copied directly from manuscript versions of *Vsp* and *Sexstefja* into the original Edda. I would like to thank Heimir Pálsson for supplying me with a copy of this article before it had become publicly available.

¹⁰ A second stanza is attributed to Þórr later in the same narrative in U.

or situational) and attribution (attributed, unattributed or speech-act/situational verse). ‘Þula’ indicates lists of heiti longer than one stanza and may be considered a subclass of authenticating verse.

Snorri opens *Gylf* with two skaldic stanzas and quotes eddic verse in the dialogue between Gylfi and Trinity-Óðinn. This is clearly part of his organizational strategy. 63 of the 74 eddic stanzas quoted in *Gylf* derive from three Odinnic wisdom poems which provide overviews of cosmogony, cosmography and eschatology. These poems are quoted exclusively as authenticating verse. The pattern of quotation appears directly related to Trinity-Óðinn as the speaker and the function of *Gylf*. Only four additional poems are quoted as situational verse. *Völuspá in skamma* is preserved as *Hdl* 33, where a *völva*-poem has been assimilated into the narrative framework. It may have been an Odinnic wisdom poem or the *völva* may derive authority through *Völuspá*. The *Lokasenna* stanza is attributed to Óðinn. *Heimdalargaldr* is a statement by Heimdalr about himself. Snorri emphasizes these speakers with the demonstrative pronoun *sjálf*. In Edda, the only other use of this pronoun in stanza attribution is **Gm* 44 spoken by the ‘Æsir themselves’. This use of *sjálf* is found in all manuscripts, with slight variation in U.¹¹ **Gm* 44 is spoken by Óðinn in *Gm*, and Snorri appears to have employed *sjálf* exclusively to qualify an exceptional attribution for authenticating verse, hence he appears to have known this stanza from a poem other than *Grímnismál*. Thus 62 stanzas quoted derive from three Odinnic wisdom poems, one from the associated *Völuspá in skamma*, and three which qualify an exceptional attribution with a verbal cue. *Fm* 13 is the single exception. Like stanzas from *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* (rarely *Völuspá*), it is unattributed, and it is the only stanza quoted in *Gylf* not found in a mythological poem. *Fm* 13 is an atomic answer associated with the question in *Fm* 12.4–6: the formulaic helming *Fm* 12.1–3 contextualizes it in the poem and could be easily exchanged. *Vafþrúðnismál* only receives attribution in an exceptional context. If Snorri knew *Fm* 12.4–13.6 from *Vafþrúðnismál*, it would explain the stanza’s appearance in a context where quotation is otherwise highly systematic.

Snorri’s deployment of situational verse is both sparing and strategic. Three situational verses are attributed variously to Gylfi, Hár and Þriði in the beginning of *Gylf*. This appears to be associated with his narrative strategy and art of intertextual relations. **Háv* 1 is attributed to Gylfi as the first direct speech. Potential verses from an unknown wisdom competition are the first direct speech attributed to Trinity-Óðinn. The first quotation from *Vafþrúðnismál* is *Vm* 30.4–6–31: *Vm* 30.4–6, spoken by Óðinn, is attributed to Þriði introducing his quotation of the giant’s response. The giant’s response is the only attribution to *Vafþrúðnismál* in the text. Strategies are more evident in mythological narratives: attributions are restricted to a single figure or two figures in a single exchange; no figure is attributed with more than one stanza; attribution always occurs at a narrative climax; situational verse and authenticating verse are never attached to the same narrative irrespective of its length – i.e. incorporating Þökk’s verse was a *choice* which according to Snorri’s narrative strategy *excluded* the quotation of any additional poetry in relation to the Baldr-Cycle. The same pattern of situational verse appears in *Skpm* (cf. also 300a–b), although narratives with situational verse are accompanied by related skaldic verses (apparently as exemplars of application or to be explicated by the prose rather than authenticating it *per se*).

Snorri subjected his quotation of eddic poetry to self-imposed restrictions which significantly limited the number of verses quoted. He avoided their use as examples of poetic language; limited the poems appropriate for authenticating verse in *Gylf* and authenticating verse

¹¹ Following R: *Svá sem hér er sagt at Óðinn mælir sjálf við þann Ás er Loki heitir* (Faulkes 1988:26); *ok enn segir hann sjálf í Heimdalargaldr* (Faulkes 1988:26; compare U: *ok enn segir í sjálfum Heimdalargaldr*); *svá er hér sagt í orðum sjálfra Asanna* (Faulkes 1988:34; this and the rest of the prose passage between the *Vm* 41 and **Gm* 44 quotations has been replaced by *ok enn segir* in U). It is interesting but circumstantial that omissions in U resolve conflicts between Edda and the Codex Regius poems.

(for which eddic material was appropriate) was not a priority in *Skpm*; avoided quoting more than 1–2 stanzas from any narrative poem; and his abstinence from combinations of situational and authenticating verse may reflect an avoidance of over-quotation. Snorri clearly felt no ‘need’ to affirm his mythological narratives with eddic verse: several of his longest and most prominent narratives are unaccompanied by verse although it is probable that he knew some.¹² His self-imposed restrictions imply that, like his skaldic quotations, Snorri had the option of selectivity. It is fairly certain that he knew far more eddic verse than is quoted, particularly considering the intimate relationship between his knowledge of eddic and skaldic poetry. This should not, however, be confused with his applications of that knowledge.

7. Eddic poetry and mythological narrative

A ‘poem’ is not identical to a ‘myth’. Mythological narratives are best approached as ‘extra-textual entities’ which are adapted, applied and communicated in range of contexts, applications and modes of expression – factors which can effect form, organization, emphasis and interpretation. Snorri’s emphases and priorities are not necessarily identical to poems and other cultural activity associated with the extra-textual entities which he adapted and applied in Edda (and e.g. *Ynglinga saga*). For example, Snorri’s knowledge of *Skírnismál* has been criticized because he quotes *Skm* 42 but scarcely mentions Skírnir’s adventure, focusing on Freyr and the loss of his sword (e.g. Gunnell 1995:222). However, Snorri has applied his knowledge of the (quoted) poem and the extra-textual entity according to the narrative priorities of *Gylf*: social relations and Freyr’s weapon at Ragnarøk are relevant while Skírnir and Gerðr are secondary. Similarly, the Njörðr-Skaði stanzas are quoted in *Gylf* while the prose on their marriage appears independently in *Skpm*. Snorri may have known a tremendous amount of eddic poetry, but his applications are not necessarily intended to represent the poems themselves. His prose is generated in relation to his knowledge and understanding of specific poems and the extra-textual entities (developed through a range of genres and modes of expression) which they reflect. He also adapted and manipulated these as culturally loaded referents in relation to other models, referents and the strategies and priorities of Edda as a work.

8. Snorri and oral traditions

Snorri’s citations exhibit tremendous facility with existing skaldic poetry. His description of the kenning system is both intuitive and guided by an ‘academic’ agenda (Clunies Ross 1987), but he has clearly internalized this formulaic system, its conventions and strategies of application (Fidjestøl 1997). Some observations, such as differences in conventions for consonant and vowel alliteration (Faulkes 1999:4), could come from active instruction or the conventional discourse surrounding poetics, while his presentation of the metrical extremes of the *dróttkvætt* line appear derive from his own sensitivity to relationships between meter and language (Kjartansson 2009). *Háttatal* shows that he had internalized idiomatic conventions of word-placement which only emerge through statistical analysis (Frog 2009:288–289), indicating a high (or even unconscious) sensitivity to the relationship between lexical item and metrical position. He utilizes traditional compositional strategies in *dróttkvætt* such as the ‘multiform’, a constellation of associated verbal systems and formulæ on the level of texture.¹³ This degree of internalization is indicative of an extensive knowledge of poetry far in

¹² The banishing of Miðgarðsormr, Hel and the binding of Fenrir (cf. *Ls* 38, 39, 41); Þórr’s visit to Útgarðar (cf. *Ls* 60, 62); Þórr’s fishing expedition (cf. Sigurðsson 2004:13–17).

¹³ *Háttatal* 39.4, *málmskúrar dyn – hjálmur*, is one of 10 examples of a full-line *dróttkvætt* multiform which involves the even-line *i dyn* X formula, the *álmr-málmr-hjálmr aðalhending* frame (cf. the *álmr-málmr-hjálmr-hilmir skothending* frame) and a conventional lexeme which completes the 2nd, 2nd-3rd or 3rd-4th metrical positions (*skúr-* fills this function in 4 of the 10 examples; *við-* and *þing-* each in two). This variation on the metri-

excess of the of stanzas quoted and raises questions about genres and contexts through which Snorri and other poets must have exercised their art in order to develop their competence (cf. Frog 2009): it seems probable that during his life, Snorri was responsible for slightly more than the nine stanzas attributed to him (averaging 1 every 7 years) in addition to *Háttatal*. His internalized understanding implies that he grew up in an environment where the poetry was a living tradition in which he participated – observing that the core of Snorri’s knowledge of poetry and poetics was almost certainly established in his youth, before the turn of the 13th century, and Edda may reflect back on ideal conceptions of that time.

Edda is clearly concerned with the relationship between the poetry of *höfuðskáld* and anonymous wisdom and narrative poetry, attesting to an intimate relationship between them. The prose presentation emphasizes the content of this poetry and the extra-textual entities of its referents. This content is treated as essential for understanding the system of poetic circumlocutions, both for the interpretation of earlier poets and the generation of new compositions. It is also promoted as material suitable for treatment in skaldic composition (in addition to its independent entertainment value). This appears to reflect Snorri’s knowledge and understanding of the poetic system and its circumlocutions, with the implication that eddic poetry played a significant role in the development of his own internalized understanding. There is a certain incongruity between the practical quotation of eddic *pulur* and *pula*-like stanzas as examples of poetic language and the general restriction of eddic quotation to narrative or as examples of literal information in a stanza for use as a heiti or in a kenning. Snorri appears to be consciously de-emphasizing the independent value of eddic poetry in the promotion of skaldic art. This may be related to his emphasis on tradition and traditional models found explicitly in the works of *höfuðskáld* (Faulkes 1998:5, 85), leading to an assertion of hierarchical relationships among genres. Consequently, Edda does not present ‘displays’ of knowledge of eddic poetry, but almost the reverse. Knowledge of and familiarity with eddic poetry and eddic subjects appears essential to Snorri’s competence in the poetic system, and his knowledge of eddic verse probably far exceeds that quoted. Conversely, Snorri’s prose is generated according to the various priorities and intentions of Edda, which inclines toward practical (and entertaining) referents for the poetic system (cf. Fidjestøl 1997:48–50) rather than the specific contents of individual poems. Snorri was not attempting to ‘reconstruct’ the pre-Christian mythology or give an ‘accurate’ representation of it for its own sake, and we should not underestimate that part of the *fróðleikr ok skemtun* of Edda (Faulkes 1998:5) was the *skemtun* of throwing things at Baldr (Faulkes 1988:45).

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cally bound *i dyn X* formula (in which X = a 2-syllable genitive forming a battle kenning) is one of four variations on the formula that replace the preposition (of 21 examples from 24 occurrences of *dynr* as an unpounded noun in *dróttkvætt*). This example is of particular interest because the unique syntactic break between *dynr* and *hjálmr* appears to be an artful display of skill which requires the recognition of the multiform to be fully appreciated. (Frog 2009:288–299.)

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Hundingr und Saurr: zum Mythologem «Hund» im Altnordischen

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Die Episode in „Hákonar Saga Góða“, wo der König Eysteinn seinen Hund Saurr den Einwohnern von Trondheim zum König aufzwingt, wird von den Forschern mit den Berichten von Plutarch und Claudius Aelianus über dem Hundekönig der Äthiopiern verglichen (Krappe 1942, Alexeev 1969). Wie soll aber diese Saurr-Episode im Vergleich zu der altnordischen Überlieferung und Mythologie bewertet werden?

Snorris Erzählung hat direkte Parallelen in einer Reihe altnordischer Quellen: „Af Upplendinga konungum“ I, „Hversu Noregr byggðist“, das Skáldatal, „Gesta Danorum“ VII, „Chronicon Lethrense“ III („Annales Lundenses“), „Rydårbogen“ („Annales Ryenses“). In einigen Chroniken („Chronicon Lethrense“ V, „Rydårbogen“) heißt der Hund *Raki/Rakke*, eigentlich ‚Hund‘, ‚kleiner Hund‘. Im letzteren Fall kann man von einem Apellativum oder von einer Übergangsstufe vom Apellativum zum Eigennamen sprechen: Vgl.

„Rakkæ koning sprang i bland andær hundæ“ (Karker 2001: 114),

was in der modernen Textausgabe als „hundekongen“ und nicht als „Rakke kongen“ übersetzt wird, also „der Hundekönig sprang unter andere Hunde“. Bei Snorri Sturluson, im „Skáldatal“ und in „Af Upplendinga konungum“ trägt aber der Hund einen konzeptuell wichtigen Eigennamen: *Saurr/Sorr* ‚Mist, Dreck‘. In „Ólafs Saga ins Helga“ 137 wird dasselbe Motiv knapp erwähnt, und der Name des Hundes dient bei Snorri als Hinweis auf die ganze Geschichte.

Aus den Texten darf gefolgert werden, dass die Legende vom Hundekönig vor allem mit schwedischen Königen verbunden ist: Gunnarr („Gesta Danorum“, der Sieg über den Norwegern), Eysteinn („Af Upplendinga Konungum“), Adils („Rydårbogen“), Hákon (Hakun, Erniedrigung der Dänen in „Chronicon Lethrensis“; in „Annales Lundenses“, 14. Jh. – Athisl). Es ist bemerkenswert, dass in allen Fällen, wo der Hund Saurr genannt wird, der Königsname *Eysteinn* lautet.

Snorri Sturluson schrieb die Figur des Königs Eysteinn, der seinen Hund den Trøndern aufgezwungen hatte, der Epoche des Hakons des Guten zu (10. Jh.). Denkbar wäre, dass die Aufmerksamkeit des Autors zu Eysteinn fast ausschließlic durch den Zusammenhang dieses Königsnamens mit dem Motiv vom Hundekönig Saurr verursacht worden war.

Das Namenpaar „Eysteinn“ – „Saurr“ führte Snorri zu einem Missverständnis. Laut anderer Texte ist Eysteinn ein schwedischer König einer wesentlich früheren Epoche. So wird in „Af Upplendinga Konungum“ Eysteinn der Böse aus der Dynastie der Ynglinger genannt (die einmalige Erwähnung „Eysteins konungs illráða“). Eysteinn der Sohn von Adils (vgl. Erwähnung von Adils in „Rydårbogen“ und in „Annales Lundenses“) war der Schwiegervater von Hálfðanr Hvítbein (Weißknochen). So stellt sich heraus, dass dieser Eysteinn nicht ein unbekannter Gegner Hakons des Guten (Mitte des 10. Jhs), sondern ein legendärer König aus dem ausgehenden 6. Jahrhundert ist. Dabei ist für Snorri der schwedische König Eysteinn nur mit der Thematik des Ingingatals verbunden.

In knappen Zeilen des Skáldatals, wo eine Menge Skalden nur bei Namen genannt wird, kann man aber die Geschichte des Skalden namens *Erpr Lútandi* finden, dessen Werke nicht erhalten sind. Dem Skáldatal gemäß schuf Erpr eine Drápa nach dem Befehl des Königs Eysteinn beli (Eysteinn Vielfraß, auch Eysteinn hinn illráði, Eysteinn der Böse genannt), des Zeitgenossen von legendären Ragnarr Lodbrok (Ende des 8. Jhs.).

Im Ganzen zeichnet sich in diesem Sagenkreis eine invariante legendäre Gestalt des bösen Königs namens *Eysteinn*, der eine ganze Reihe Beinamen hat: *harðráði* ‘der Gestrenge’, (die *Ynglingasaga* 44 über Eysteinn dem Sohn von Adils), *illráði* ‘der Böse (Herrscher)’ (die drei obengenannten Quellen mit dem Namenpaar „Eysteinn“ – „Saurr“), *hinn illi* ‘der Böse’ (die *Saga* von Hakon dem Guten), *beli* ‘Vielfraß’ (das *Skáldatal*). Die Situation wird durch die Verwechslung dieses Königs mit dem Eysteinn dem Mächtigen (*hinn ríki*), einem legendären König aus der Dynastie der Ynglinger (9. Jh.), verwickelt.

Diese Namenverhältnisse bezeugen, dass die von Snorri mitgeteilte Geschichte in der altnordischen Überlieferung tief eingewurzelt ist.

Die altnordische Legende vom Hundekönig wird gewöhnlich als Widerspiegelung des interkulturellen Mythologems „Hund als König“ interpretiert. In der gelehrten Tradition des klassischen Altertums ist dieses Motiv dank Plutarch und Aelianus bezeugt, die eine äthiopische Stammsage mitgeteilt haben (Literatur s. oben). Da handelt es sich aber nur um eine lokale Sage und um keine universelle Mythe. Bei genauer Betrachtung der altnordischen Geschichte vom Hundekönig können wir einen wesentlichen Unterschied zur äthiopischen Sage sehen: Die Wahl (eine gewaltsame Ernennung) des Hundes zum König hat zum Zweck, laut allen altnordischen Quellen, die Erniedrigung des besiegten Volkes (vgl. die Wahl zwischen dem Sklaven und dem Hund). Analogischerweise dient das Königsbefehl dem Skalden Erpr, eine *Drápa* zum Ehren des Königshundes schaffen, zur Erniedrigung des Skaldes, der ein schweres Verbrechen (einen Mord im Heiligtum) begangen hat. Die Erniedrigung wird durch den pejorativen Rufnamen des Hundes besonders betont.

Darin besteht die Eigenart der Saurr-Geschichte. Ein Hund und ein Rufname des Hundes „an sich“ tragen sowohl in der altnordischen, als auch in der altgermanischen Tradition keine negative Bedeutung. Wenden wir uns an Beispiele.

In Edda-Liedern gibt es keine Vergleichung „Sklave – Hund“ und keine Vergleiche derart. In allen Kontexten wird der Hund als mächtiges chthonisches Wesen dargestellt: Der chthonische Hund Garmr tritt zusammen mit dem Wolf Fenrir hervor, *Hyndla* ‘Hündchen’ ist der Name einer Riesin, die im *Hyndlalied* von Freyja als *mær meyja* ‘Maid der Maiden’, *mín vina* ‘Freundin’ und *Hyndla systir* ‘Hyndla, Schwester’ bezeichnet wird. *Hundingr* heißt der Held, dessen Geschlecht mit den Nachkommen des Wolfs, Ylfingar, kämpft. Diese Sippenfehde kann man als Widerhall eines altgermanischen Ritus betrachten (Höfler 1992), aber der Name *Hundingr* hat in der Tradition nichts Entehrendes. Im Ganzen wird der Hund dem Wolf gleichgestellt. Vgl. Snorris Beschreibung der Berserkern in der *Ynglingasaga* 6, die sich *sem hundar eða vargar*, ‘wie Hunde oder Wölfe’ benehmen.

Wie Otto Höfler erwies, war der Hund ein Machtssymbol der Langobarden: Vgl. Beschreibung der Langobarden als „Cynocephali“ bei Paulus Diakonus („*Historia Langobardorum*“ I, 11), ihren alten Nebennamen Winnili ‘wütende Hunde’ (Etymologie von Rudolf Much) und Hundsymbolik in den Namen und Beinamen der Scaligerfürsten und ihrer Verwandten (Cangrande I., Cangrande II., Mastino I., Mastino II., Cansignorio, Canfrancesco, Cagnola) neben dem Hundsymbol als Bildzeichen der Familie (der Hundehelm von Cangrande und gekrönte Hunde, Wappenschilder haltend). Der Forscher betonte, dass in der selbst in der späten dänischen Überlieferung der Wilde Jäger (= Odin) *Kong Hundhoved* ‘König Hundekopf’ heißt (Höfler 1973: 249). Höfler machte auch darauf aufmerksam, dass der berühmte Führer der nord-norwegischen Bauern in ihrem Kampf gegen Olaf den Heiligen *Þórir Hundr* ‘Thorir Hund’ genannt war:

Personennamen wie Wolf, Wolfgang oder das im Norden so geläufige Björn bezeugen noch in späten Zeiten alte Ideen von irgendeiner Wesensverwandtschaft. „Hund“ aber, in so vielen Sprachen als Schimpfwort verwendet, scheint uns wenig geeignet als Mannsname. Und doch

begegnet er, und in einem sehr handhaften Sinn, auch in hohen Schichten der alten Kultur“ (Höfler 1992: 52).

Die Erbdrápa des Skalden Sighvat berichtet, Thorir Hund sei durch zauberkräftiges Fell gegen Schwerthiebe geschützt gewesen (Höfler 1992: 53).

In den isländischen Sagas ist eine Vergleichen „Sklave – Hund“ auch nicht bezeugt. Aber man kann feststellen, dass die Gestalt des Hundes ihre Verbindung mit der archaischen konzeptuellen Sphäre nach und nach verliert und ambivalent wird. Einerseits, erhält die Tochter einer Königin ihren Namen nach dem Rufnamen des Hundes (*Yrsa*, „Hrólf's Saga Kraka ok kappa hans“ – „Helga þátr“ 9), andererseits, ist das adlige Mädchen von ihrer Mutter verschmäht und darum ist ihr „Hundenname“ ursprünglich pejorativ eingeschätzt (obwohl die eigentliche Bedeutung des Namens *Yrsa* ‚Bärin‘ die Möglichkeit einer Umwertung gibt). Diese durch die synchrone Stellung eines Haustieres bedingte Ambivalenz des Hundes liegt dem Gestalten- und Wortspiel in den Sagas zugrunde. Vgl. den Kontext der „Völsungasaga“, wo Gunnarr die Mannen von Atli mit gewisser Verachtung, aber im Kontext des Kampfes als *smáir hundar*, ‚kleine Hunde‘ bezeichnet, und die Verheimlichung der Kinder unter den Hunderufnamen *Hoppr* und *Hó* („Hrólf's saga kraka ok kappa hans“ – „Fróða þátr“ 2). Es sei aber zu bemerken, dass als „Welfe“, „kleine Hunde“ die Königssöhne, Nachkommen eines adligen Geschlechts bezeichnet werden: Vgl. *gnadda niðfarna* ‚die ins Dunkel weggegangene kleine Tiere‘, über die Söhne von Atli in „Atlakviða“ 33. Die von Jakob Grimm und Otto Höfler behandelten Geschichten vom Langobardenkönig Lamissio und vom Ursprung der Welfen, wo die adligen Jungen für blinde Welfe um Rettung willen ausgegeben oder gehalten worden seien (Höfler 1992: 58), bezeugen den altgermanischen Charakter dieses Motivs.

In einigen isländischen Sagas werden solche Eigenschaften des Hundes wie sein Verstand und seine Fähigkeit, fast menschliche Gefühle zu empfinden, besonders hervorgehoben. So sind Gunnars Hund *Sámr* in „Njals saga“, den Gunnarr geschenkt bekommen hat („Njals saga“ 70), und der getreue Hund in „Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar“ 17, den Hálfðanr vom Tode rettet, wobei der Hund vor Freude weint und später sein Leben für Hálfðanr opfert. In diesen Fällen wird aber der Hund wie ein reelles Haustier mit hervorragenden oder sogar magischen Eigenschaften beschrieben (aber kein chthonisches Wesen oder „hamrammr“, Werwolf). Der Hund ist hier eine Art Eigentum: Vgl. Selsnautr „Sels Gabe/Eigentum“ vom Hund in „Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar“. Die Hunderufnamen in den Sagas haben keine negative Färbung: *Hoppr* und *Hó* (s. oben) – eine auf die ursprüngliche Alliteration der Namen *Helgi* und *Hróarr* anspielende Onomatopöie (weiter, in der Episode mit den Pferden, werden Hálfðans Söhne *Hamr* und *Hrani* genannt), *Vigi* in „Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar“ 32 – vom an. *vígja* ‚treiben‘, *Sámr* in „Njals saga“ 70 – eigentlich ‚der Schwarze‘.

Wie Otto Höfler für den Namen *Thorir Hund* nachgewiesen hat, ist der Vergleich eines Menschen mit dem Hund nicht schmähsch (s. oben). In „Fróða þátr“ finden wir weitere Belege: *Helgi* und *Hróarr*, die Söhne von Hálfðanr, werden nicht bloß für Hunde ausgegeben, sondern vielleicht sogar in die Hunde verwandelt, weil ihr Beschützer *Vífill* als Zauberer beschrieben wird, der Feinde magisch ablenken kann. Die Hunderufnamen *Hoppr* und *Hó* gelten als Signal zum Fliehen der Jungen vom König Fróði. Die Lebensrettung unter dem Hunderufnamen ist also ein besonderes Glück, das mit Hilfe von Magie erreicht wird und keinen Schatten auf die Königssöhne wirft.

Das Wort *Hund* (an. *hundr*) ist in den Sagas kein Schimpfwort. Vielmehr, zeigen die „Hundezüge“ im alltäglichen Benehmen eines Menschen auf etwas Außerordentliches: So handelt z.B. *Þrándr* in „Færeyinga saga“ 38. Er riecht seine Hand, mit der er die Erde betastet hat, und entdeckt die Menschenspuren, dann schnüffelt er die Erde wie ein Hund und findet die Verfolgten. *Þrándr* wird in der Saga wie ein kluger und würdiger Mann beschrieben, er ist

schön und kann höflich reden, und die Erzählung von seinen „Hundeeigenschaften“ trägt keine negative Bewertung.

Wie kann man denn auf diesem Hintergrund die Geschichte des Hundekönigs Saurr interpretieren?

Das Motiv vom Hundekönig passt in den allgemeinen Rahmen hinein, wo der Hund als Eigentum des Königs begriffen wird (vgl. z. B. *Þrymskviða* 6). Beachtenswert ist, dass in allen Fassungen der Legende vom Hundekönig der Hund als Königseigentum beschrieben wird: Vgl. Saur konungshund (im Akkusativ, als Objekt) ‘Saur den Königshund’ im *Skáldatal*. Offensichtlich aus diesen Gründen wird er dem Sklaven gleichgestellt. Eine Möglichkeit solcher Gleichsetzung finden wir in „*Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*“, wo der besiegte Hundingr die Sklavendienste erfüllt (wobei der Text doch keine direkten Vergleiche mit dem Hund bietet).

Der Hund Saurr wird bei Snorri absolut negativ begriffen. Darauf gibt es eine ganze Reihe deutlicher Hinweise.

Der Rufname *Saurr* ‘Mist, Dreck’ korrespondiert mit an. *saurr* m. ‘Schmutz, feuchte Erde’, ‘Mist, Dreck’, *saurigr*, *saurugr* ‘schmutzig’, *saurga* ‘verunreinigen’, *saurnir* ‘Schild’ eigentlich ‘der Befleckte’ (de Vries 1962: 464); vgl. auch *saur-reiðir* ‘Dunggrube’, *sauru-ligr* ‘unrein, unkeusch’, *sauru-liga* ‘in unreiner, unkeuscher Weise’, *saur-yrði* ‘unreine, unkeusche Worte’, feste Wendung *aurr ok saurr* ‘Schmutz und Mist’ (Cleasby, Vigfusson 1957: 515, 525). Das altnordische Wort wurde ins Alt- oder Mittelenglische entlehnt: Vgl. me. *sowre*, *soore*, ne. dial. *saur* ‘Kuhmist’, *soor* ‘Dreck’ (de Vries 1962: 464). An. *saurr* gehört zu der breiten Sphäre der gut erhaltenen und motivierten Kontinuanten von idg. **seur/-l-* ‘Feuchte, Schmutz’ mit den Ablautvarianten **sour/-l-* und **sur/-l-*: Vgl. got. **bisauljan* ‘verunreinigen, beschmutzen’, *bisaulnan* ‘sich beschmutzen, sich besudeln’, an. *sol-* ‘Schlamm, Pfütze’ im Ortsnamen *Soleyar* (de Vries 1962: 529), norw. dial. *søyla* ‘beflecken’, ae. *sol* n., *solu* f. ‘Sumpf’, as. *sulwian* ‘beschmutzen’, ahd. *sol* m./n. ‘schmutzige Pfütze’ (Lehmann 1986: 72), im Ganzen zu idg. **seu-/*sou-* ‘fließen, rinnen’ (Pokorny 1959: 912–13, de Vries 1962: 464, Lehmann 1986: 72).

Deutliche negative Konnotationen hat der Name *Saurr* in „*Eiríks Saga Rauða*“, wo das Wort als männlicher Beinamen gebraucht wird: Eyjólfur Saurr ist ein Verwandter Valþjófs, dessen Hof von Eyríks Sklaven beschädigt wird. Eyjólfur tötet diese Sklaven und wird von Eyríkr aus Rache umgebracht.

Im Kontext von „*Hákonar Saga Góða*“ bekommt der Name *Saurr* eine entwickelte Motivierung und bildet das semantische Zentrum der Episode. Außer der bestimmt negativen Färbung des Namens selbst tritt das Verhältnis von Eigennamen *Saurr* zum Appellativum *saurr* hervor: Laut Snorri, müssten die Gefolgsmänner von Saurr den Hundekönig auf ihren Schultern da tragen, wo es schmutzig (*saurugt*) wäre. Der Ortsname *Saurshaugr* spielt dabei eine bedeutende Rolle.

Der Ortsname kommt in Norwegen oft vor, weil er eigentlich ‘feuchter/schmutziger Hügel’ bedeutet. Aus genauer Betrachtung der Landkarte Norwegens geht hervor, dass der Ortsname *Saurshaugr*, heute *Sørhaugen*, sehr häufig bezeugt ist und allgemeine Verbreitung hat, weil er mit solchen Naturobjekten, wie Flüsse, Moore, Sümpfe und Inseln fest verbunden ist. Es gibt also eine ganze Reihe *Sørhaugen* (nicht weniger als 15), die nicht auf die Unterdrückung der Norweger, sondern auf die Moorgegend hinweisen. Der Ortsname wurde von Skandinaven nach England übertragen: Vgl. *Sowerby* (West Yorkshire, England, eine Siedlung auf der Sandbank des Flusses Calder) < **Saurr-by* ‘Siedlung in Moorgegend’.

Als Magnus Olsen nachwies, waren die Ortsnamen mit dem Bestandteil *-haugr* bei Trondheim mit dem Ahnenkult verbunden und wurden als Sippenheiligtümer verehrt; in der Regel waren es Grabhügel der früheren Epoche (Olsen 1926:263–271, de Vries 1937:102–103). Ein solcher Hügel diente als sakrales Zentrum:

„Es ist [...] bezeichnend, dass die heidnischen Germanen für öffentliche Handlungen, die einen mehr oder weniger religiösen Charakter gehabt haben, gerne hochgelegene Stellen gewählt haben. In erster Linie gilt das von Dingversammlung; sie fand auf einem natürlichen oder sogar von Menschenhänden aufgeworfenen Hügel statt[...] Ein Hügel in der Nähe des Königshöfles ist[...] wohl als Grab eines Vorfahrs zu betrachten[...] Wir wissen sogar, dass Königsgräber mehrfach als Dingshügel benutzt worden sind[...] Der nordische König, der auf dem Ahnengrab thront[...], konnte[...] in unmittelbare Berührung mit den Ahnengeistern seiner Sippe treten[...]“ (de Vries 1937:101–102).

Hier sehen wir die Gedankenweise, auf die der „landschaftliche“ Ortsname *Saurshaugr* von Snorri in diesen Koordinaten reinterpretiert werden könnte. So ist Saurshaugr in seiner Erzählung zu einem Ahnenhügel geworden, wohin der fremde König einen Hund setzte, mit anderen Worten – zu einer entweihten sakralen Stelle der Trønder.

Also kommt der Hundekönig Saurr bei Snorri nicht als ein Widerhall der altgermanischen Vorstellungen vom Hund als Machtssymbol, sondern als eine originelle Darstellung einer wandernden altnordischen Stammsage. Die Geschichte von Saurr ist keine Mythe und keine gelehrte Überlieferung, sondern eine gesellschaftskritische Empfindung, in künstlerischer Form verkörpert.

Snorris Erzählung vom Hundekönig ist die ausführlichste in der ganzen altnordischen Überlieferung, und hier wie in anderen Fällen wirkt er als wahrer Künstler. Es scheint nicht zufällig zu sein, dass sich markante typologische Parallelen zu diesem Kontext in der Erzählung von Michail Bulgakov „Das Hundehertz“ zur Erscheinung treten. Der Hund trägt einen Namen des niedrigen Status – an. Saurr ‘Mist, Dreck’: russ. Шарик < шарый ‘grau, bunt’, ein gewöhnlicher Rufname für den Köter (vgl. Vasmer 1973: 406, 411). In beiden Fällen wird in den Hund mit Hilfe der Magie der Verstand hineingelegt. Die menschliche Rede fällt aber dem Hund schwer, es bleiben Rudimente des Bellens. Der Hund gerät auf den Höhepunkt der macht hin, wobei der neue Herrscher mit groben und unvernünftigen Sklaven assoziiert wird – Þórir Faxi bei Snorri: „Proletarier“ mit Schwonder bei Bulgakov. Dann kehrt aber der Hund in ursprünglichen tierischen Zustand zurück, und die neue erniedrigende Regierung hat ein rasches und ruhmloses Ende. Besonders charakteristisch ist der Schluß der Bulgakovs Erzählung, wo der Professor mit dem konzeptuellen Familiennamen *Preobrazhenskij* (ein russischer Priesterfamiennamen vom aksl., russ. *преображение* ‘Verklärung [Christi]’, ‘Verwandlung’), der den Hund zu einer Persönlichkeit der gesellschaftlichen Lebens verwandelt hat, eine umgekehrte Verwandlung ausführt und dabei vom Autor „Zauberer“ genannt wird. Es sei aber betont, dass diese Ähnlichkeit rein typologisch ist, weil Michail Bulgakov nie Skandinavistik studierte und die Heimskringla kaum lesen könnte (die russische Übersetzung erschien 1980; wenn auch Bulgakov den Bericht vom Hundekönig bei Plutarch und Aelianus berücksichtigt hat, sehen wir beim russischen Verfasser eine selbständige Begründung des Themas).

Die Parallelen auf dem Gebiet der sozialen Satire und Antiutopie werden damit nicht erschöpft. So wird z. B. im Roman vom modernen österreichischen Schriftsteller Christoph Ransmayr „Morbus Kitahara“, wo es sich um eine Alternativweltgeschichte handelt, eine Welt beschrieben, in der ein im Krieg besiegt Land (Parallelen zu Deutschland und Österreich nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg) nach der Niederlage deindustrialisiert und in eine Agrargesellschaft zurückverwandelt wird (Parallelen zum Morgenthau-Plan). Eine der drei Hauptfiguren, der ehemalige Häftling Ambras, der von den Siegermächten befreit worden ist, und dem die Verwaltung des Steinbruchs versklavten Kriegsverlierer obliegt, wird „der Hundekönig“ genannt.

Die Autorschaft von Snorri gehört aber, wie Michail Steblin-Kamenskij für die Sagas formuliert hat, zum Typ der unbewußten Autorschaft des Mittelalters (vgl. Steblin-Kamenskij

2003:125–129). Mit künstlerischen Mitteln schafft Snorri die Illusion einer tiefen Sachkenntnis und sogar eines absoluten Wissens, der Weisheit der „weisen Leuten des Altertums“ (vgl. Prolog zu der Heimskringla). Dazu dienen sowohl auffallende, auf die Einbildungskraft wirkende Details der Erzählung (eine Übergangsstufe zu der Autorschaft der Neuzeit), als auch Eigennamen: *Hákon der Gute*, *Eysteinn der Böse*, *Þórir Faxi*, *Saurr*, Ortsnamen: *Upplendirgar*, *Þrándheimr*, *Þrændir*, *Eynafylki*, *Sparbyggjafylki*, *eyjunn Iðri*, *Saurshaugr*. Die Hinweise auf die Überlieferung (Variante des Beinamen von König Eysteinn) sind auch vorherbestimmt, das Vertrauen zur Erzählung und zum Erzähler zu steigern.

Im Ganzen läßt die Betrachtung der skandinavischen Überlieferung vom Hundekönig zum Schluß kommen, dass die Funktionierung des Mythologems „Hund“ im Altnordischen folgenderweise formuliert werden kann: Von „Kong Hundhoved“ Hundinger zum „Hundekönig“ Saurr.

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Summary

The article is concerned with the investigation of the episode about the dog king in „Hákonar Saga Góða“ against the background of the mythical functions of „dog“ in Old Germanic tradition. Here is the pejorative dog name Saurr ‘mud, dirt, excrements’ of primary importance, for it obtains a crucial lexical support in the context and becomes both the conceptual focus of the narrative and the basis of the poetic etymology given by Snorri Sturluson to the local Norwegian place name Saurshaugr ‘damp/dirty hill’.

The Good, the Bad and the Undead

New Thoughts on the Ambivalence of Old Norse Sorcery

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Introduction

This short paper presents, in a condensed form, a review of my most recent studies on the aspects of Old Norse sorcery and the initial results my PhD project which is currently undertaken at the *Department of Archaeology, University of Aberdeen*¹.

The ambivalence of Old Norse sorcery

Numerous Old Norse accounts such as sagas, skaldic poems and Eddic poetry but also medieval Norwegian chronicles (for example *Historia Norwegie*, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* and *Ágrip af Noregskonungasögum*) and rune-stones contain information on the enigmatic performers of a very special magical craft often referred to as *seiðr*. When taken collectively those sources imply that *seiðr* was a kind of operative magic which – among other things – enabled its practitioners to foresee the future, heal the sick, change weather conditions, reveal the hidden, shift into animal form or travel to other worlds in a state of trance. *Seiðr*, however, also had a darker side and could be employed to inflict physical or mental harm. At present, the darker aspect (or as Dag Strömbäck 1935; 2000 would see it: "black *seiðr*") of this practice lies at the core of my studies.

The undoubted existence of the two distinct facets of *seiðr*, which are so evident in the written accounts, has recently led me to reinterpreting a number of very atypical Scandinavian burials (Gardela 2008b: 60; 2009a: 208–209; 2009b; 2009c). After having conducted a preliminary analysis of the available archaeological material I am inclined to believe that when given a closer look and viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective those graves may provide actual, material evidence for what some scholars understand as "social ambivalence of Old Norse sorcery" (Dillmann 2006: 457–586). Furthermore, they imply that there existed multiple forms of treating the deceased sorcerers and that the manner of burying the dead was dependant not only on the role which they played during their lives but also on a social perception of their actions and the very nature of their craft.

The archaeology of sorcerers

In 2002 Neil Price published his influential book entitled *The Viking Way. Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* where he convincingly argued that it is possible to identify a number of Viking Age graves as belonging to ritual specialists involved in the practices of *seiðr*.

The graves discussed within his book (Price 2002: 127–161, 191–203) can be divided into a number of categories. Some of the alleged seeresses and sorcerers were buried in wagons, others in wooden chambers and a few of them were even interred on boats. Alongside several extremely rich graves, there are also less elaborate inhumation and cremation burials. In a number of cases the deceased were accompanied by animals such as horses or dogs. Although

¹ Due to the review-form of the present paper I will only reference the most vital literature and avoid debates of more general nature. History of research on Old Norse sorcery as well as the latest advancements in the studies of *seiðr* can be found in the works of Price (2002); Solli (2002); Heide (2006a); Dillmann (2006) and Gardela (2008a; 2008b; 2009a; 2009b; 2009c).

all those graves are in many respects different from one another, there exist a number of interesting confluences. It is impossible to elaborate on them here, but it is significant to note that the main argument that makes it possible to view them as a special, coherent group of burials is the presence of iron “rods” in each one of them.

Those “rods”, which in several cases were decorated with bronze knobs, are currently believed to be attributes of the ritual performers and labeled as *staves of sorcery* (a term first introduced by Neil Price in 2002). As Price (2002: 175–180) argued, the staff was one of the main attributes of the Late Iron Age performers and there exist many sources which confirm that they were strongly associated with the practices of *seiðr*. Furthermore, an account from *Laxdæla saga* (ch. 76) suggests that the deceased seeresses were actually interred with their staves. This piece of literary evidence strongly supports the archaeological interpretations of the graves with iron rods as belonging to *seiðr*-workers.

New perspectives on the *staves of sorcery*

In my master’s thesis (Gardela 2008a) and a number of academic papers (2008b; 2009a) I aimed at expanding the earlier interpretations of the staves and argued that the iron “rods” from the graves of potential ritual performers possessed an extremely rich symbolism. I suggested that they corresponded with the symbolic concepts that were related to both domestic and military tools and activities. The staves, in my view, worked as multi-layered metaphors and could have been perceived by the contemporary societies as objects of truly otherworldly qualities.

In one of my most recent articles (Gardela 2009a) I argued that it is possible to discuss the *staves of sorcery* in the light of “the archaeology of personhood” – a theory recently developed in the works of Chris Fowler (2006) – and perceive them as persons in their own right. This approach has led me to a reconstruction of the complex processes of creating, using and abandoning/depositing/destroying/killing the staves. The most remarkable result which this research has revealed is that some of the staves known from the archaeological contexts actually “died” in the same way as the human sorcerers. This is particularly apparent in the case of the staff found in the grave Ka. 294–296 in Kaupang-Skiringssal (Vestfold, Norway), which was found lying under a large rock (Stylegar 2007: 96; Gardela 2009b: 193–195). As we shall later see, there exist a number atypical burials in Scandinavia, where individuals are also literally crushed with large stones. In my opinion, such graves could have belonged to malevolent *seiðr* performers and form a very distinct “new” category of sorcerers burials.

Furthermore, it can be added that there exist very interesting parallels to the Scandinavian *staves of sorcery* in the Slavic and Baltic archaeological and ethnographical material (Gardela 2008b: 51–52; 2009a: 201). I believe that by viewing the *seiðr*-staves in a cross-cultural context, we might also arrive at a better understanding of the nature of their owners.

The *Kriwe* priest and the concept of divine crookedness

The names *Krīvis* in Lithuania and *Kriwe* in Prussia were sometimes attributed to a pagan high-priest. However, it has been argued that *Kriwe* was not really a name of a particular person, but rather a term used for defining a certain category of ritual specialists (Tomicki 2000: 472; Banaszkiwicz 2002: 39–43; Kowalik 2006: 395–397; for an earlier – hard to accept – interpretation rejecting the existence of *Kriwe*, see Rowell 1994: 128). The prefix *kriv-* seems to be related to Indo-European concepts of twisting, turning or crooking (Tomicki 2000: 471–472).

One of the most famous sources which discusses the role of *Kriwe* is the *Chronicon terrae Prussiae* written by Petrus de Dusburg in the 14th century (Rowell 1994: 38–39, 125–128; Kowalik 2006: 395–397). In his description the author mentions a pagan temple in

Romuva/Romowe where a priest named *Kriwe* resided. He was the guardian of the sacred fire, possessed divinatory skills and was greatly respected by the society. The most important tool of his trade was a crooked staff. Another account can be found in the work of Simon Grunau from the 16th century, where we read about *Kriwe-kriwaito*, referring to a pagan priest in the temple of Perkunas in Wilno/Vilnius (Tomicki 2000: 472).

In his paper, Tomicki (2000: 472) interestingly argued that the name *Kriwe* could be related to the particular features of his staff. In his view the original *Kriwe* staffs might have been very similar to the staffs which were used as symbols of power over village communities in Poland and Lithuania until the 20th century. In Poland such items were known as *krzywula* (*krzywula*), *kluka*, *kula* and in Lithuania *krivule*, *krievias* or *krive* (Tomicki 2000: 427). Staffs of this kind were often made from a very unusually shaped and twisted branch or a root (Tomicki 2000: 427).

Tomicki (2000: 428) also mentions that references to sticks or clubs used as symbols of power could also be seen in the names of mythical or semi-historical characters such as Kij, Krak, Krok, Klukas and others (see also Banaszekiewicz 2002: 39–43).

He further argues that the pagan practice among the Baltic peoples could have also been referred to as *krzywanie* (Tomicki 2000). This term is closely related to everything that is unusual or supernatural, but also to looking inside a web or reaching into the other world.

All this implies that both the ritual practitioner *Kriwe*, his practice *krzywanie*, and the crooked staff *krzywula* were connected to the concepts of physical and metaphorical “crookedness”. This “crookedness” was however not seen as a fault at all, but rather as a complex metaphor of supernatural qualities of the ritual performer as well as his actions and tools.

I strongly believe that the Viking Age *seiðr* performers and their *staffs of sorcery* recently identified in the archaeological material could also relate to concepts of “divine crookedness”. As we have seen, this idea of “crookedness” seemed to be vital in the representations of tools for sorcery or authority among the Baltic peoples and also in the later Balto-Slavic folklore. It could also explain why most of the Viking Age iron staffs have a rather strange looking “expanded ‘handle’ construction”. Apparently it is very similar to some of the 19th and 20th century staffs of the *krzywula*-type (Mierzyński 1885; Moszyński 1968: 897). Thus the physical and metaphorical “crookedness” of the *seiðr-staff* might actually prove to be another way of expressing the “otherness” of the ritual specialist to whom it belonged.

The malevolent sorcerers and stones in graves

The Old Norse sources which contain information on the lives of *seiðr*-workers strongly suggest that there was a certain ambivalence in the perception of their actions. On one hand there existed greatly respected specialists whose main domain was conducting divinatory rituals and helping the contemporary societies in overcoming various problems related to their everyday lives. On the other hand, however, there were also a number of sorcerers who got involved in malevolent actions and committed acts of theft or murder. The saga accounts imply that there were specific methods of punishing the evil sorcerers. In most cases the punishment for practicing evil sorcery was stoning to death (Ström 1942: 102–115)². From an archaeological perspective it is striking that the sagas provide rather precise details about the ways in which the evil sorcerers were interred. As the sources suggest, after the stoning procedure, the bodies of the deceased were also covered up with stones. It is also significant to note that the burial often occurred in a secluded place where people were least likely to pass by. Already during their lifetimes, the sorcerers were seen as rather ambiguous and marginal figures and this aspect of marginality seems to have also been apparent after their death.

² Other forms of punishment involved outlawry, drowning or burning.

In my latest research I have aimed at listing all the available Old Norse accounts which contain the motif of punishment by stoning and later comparing the evidence with a number of atypical burials from Late Iron Age Scandinavia (Gardeła 2009b; 2009c). So far, I have been able to identify seven Scandinavian graves in which the individuals (both women and men) were buried under large stones. Two such graves are known from Iceland³, four from Gotland⁴ and one from Gerdrup in Denmark. It is remarkable that the stones were placed directly on the bodies of the deceased, as if they were intended to “pin” them to their graves. What this meant is hard to interpret, but it is possible that the crushing with stones was done to avoid the dead from returning to the world of the living. However, such a strange ritual could have also had a number of other meanings (Gardeła 2009c). For example, according to several Old Norse accounts (*Hamðismál* st. 26, *Ragnarsdrápa*, *Skaldskaparmál* ch. 7, *Völsungasaga* ch. 44) stones seem to possess the capacity of breaking magic spells and piercing magically enhanced armor. If this was the case, perhaps the stones were placed in the graves to once and for all neutralise the magical skills of the deceased? Or maybe the stones prevented other people (other sorcerers?) from raising them from the dead, through the practice known as *útiseti*? Because the Viking mentalities were so diverse, we must always remain open to many interpretational possibilities.

The sorcerers from Gerdrup – a special case study

One of the most remarkable graves, which I consider as belonging to potentially malevolent sorcerers, was found in 1981 (Christensen 1982) in the village of Gerdrup (Zealand, Denmark) to the north from Roskilde. The burial mound was originally located on an beach ridge near an old tributary of the fjord.

The grave was more than a metre deep, filled with blocks of grass peat (Christensen 1997: 34) and it contained well preserved skeletal remains of two individuals – a man and a woman. They were both aligned NW. In the northern part of the grave against the man’s head there was also a large stone (Christensen 1981: 21).

According to Christensen (1981: 21) the interred man was hanged, as suggested by twisted cervical vertebrae. Due to the peculiar position of his legs it is likely that his feet were bound⁵ with a rope or some organic material (which unfortunately did not survive until the present day). He was buried lying on his back, aged around 35–40 years old and equipped only with a knife (16cm long) placed on the bottom part of his chest (Christensen 1981: 21–22). In Christensen’s view the man was a *prall* (a slave), but this might not necessarily be the only plausible interpretation (Gardeła 2009b; 2009c).

³ Grave KT-25: 1 from Haugavað near Traðarholt (Árnesysla, South-West Iceland) and Grave KT-145: 2 from Vað (South-Múlasýsla, East Iceland) (Þóra Pétursdóttir 2007: 39, 54).

⁴ All graves of this kind were found in Fröjel, Gotland: Grave 32/88, Grave 9/89, Grave 19/89 (Carlsson 1999) and an unnumbered grave discovered in 1998 (Carlsson 1998: 10–11).

⁵ As Gade (1985: 161) observed, hanging in medieval Scandinavia was a penalty for treason, insolence, murder and offences of sexual nature like: adultery, seduction or abduction. It was also inflicted upon those who committed acts of theft, plundering or marauding (Gade 1985: 161). It is interesting to note, that in the Late Iron Age some individuals could have been hanged by the feet (Gade 1985: 173). Hanging by the feet would not cause the twisting of cervical vertebrae, but it is not impossible that – in case of the man from Gerdrup – the braking of the neck occurred after the hanging procedure, when the rope was cut. Perhaps the man fell from the tree and hit his head against the surface? Some scholars have (in my opinion very convincingly) suggested that in the memorable episode from *Hávamál* (st. 137) Óðinn was also hanging with his head down from the tree Yggdrasil (Fleck 1971: 142; Słupecki 2003: 120) and this motif of “ritual inversion” has many parallels around the world (Fleck 1971). It seems to me that the hanging of the man from Gerdrup had some very strong ritualistic overtones. On the possible relation between hanging and the initiations of *seiðmenn* see Solli 2002; 2008.

45cm to the east from the skeleton of the man there laid a skeleton of a woman. She had her head placed to the north and feet to the west. What is most remarkable, however, is that the woman was lying on her back and her body was crushed by two large boulders. One of the stones (30x45cm) was placed directly on her chest and the other one (20x30cm) was lying on her right leg (Christensen 1981: 21). Another boulder was placed to the east from the woman, several centimetres from her waistline. She was roughly 40 years old and equipped with a knife (14cm long). On her waistline the woman had a bone case containing small iron pins. Additionally she was given a roughly 40cm spear which was lying around 5–10cm from her right leg (Christensen 1981: 22).

Another ambiguous feature of the grave is that both the man and the woman seem to be “covering” their genitals. Furthermore, the poses in which they were interred appear to mirror each other: the man has his right hand placed on his right lap and the woman has her left hand placed on the pelvic girdle. The left hand of the man is under his pelvic girdle and the woman’s right hand is under her pelvic girdle as well.

In this context we might recall the account of Ibn Fadlān who had a unique opportunity to observe a funeral of a Rus chieftain by the river Volga in the year 922. In his elaborate description of the burial ceremony he mentioned how the closest relative of the deceased – while being completely naked – approached the funeral pyre walking backwards and covering his anus⁶. It is quite possible that the covering of the anus was done to avoid the penetration by spirits⁷.

Eldar Heide (2006b: 355–356) recently suggested that perhaps the reason why *seiðr* was seen as a perverse practice resulted from the fact that the practitioner was believed to become possessed and penetrated by spirits during the ceremony. Due to this act of metaphorical penetration a male *seiðr*-worker was immediately ascribed a feminine role. Furthermore, as Heide argues (2006: 356), while some spirits entered the body through the respiratory passages others – the more hostile ones – perhaps did so through the backside. We cannot be sure why the two individuals from Gerdrup had their hands placed under the pelvic girdle but perhaps this had something to do with the notions sketched above. In this context we may also recall the finds of Migration Period golden bracteates, such as the one from Allesø in Denmark, where a man is covering his genitals with his right hand (Duczko 2002: 176).

Christensen argued that it is likely that the deceased woman was considered as a sorceress and that the peculiar deposition of her body within the grave might reflect the acts of stoning that we know from the written accounts (1981: 27–28). I agree with Christensen but I am convinced that the spear placed by her right leg was in fact a special kind of *staff of sorcery* (Gardela 2008b: 59–60; 2009b: 209). We know from the Old Norse written accounts that staffs often “transformed” into spears (Gardela 2008b: 59) and that the spear Gungnir was an important attribute of the god Óðinn – an undoubted master of *seiðr*.

To conclude, I find it incredibly remarkable how closely this burial reminds the passage from *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch. 20) where there is a mention of a man named Oddr who was accused of cutting off a woman’s arm and for that act sentenced to death by hanging. Immediately afterwards his mother, a sorceress named Katla, was stoned to death for helping Oddr to hide from his pursuers. The hanged man, the stoned woman and the location of the grave itself at a beach near to the fjord reflect the grim story of the death of Katla and her son Oddr very clearly. No other potential sorcerer’s burial seems to parallel the written accounts as

⁶ As we read in the account of Ibn Fadlān (translation after Montgomery 2000: 20) : „Then the deceased’s next of kin approached and took hold of a piece of wood and set fire to it. He walked backwards, with the back of his neck to the ship, his face to the people, with the lighted piece of wood in one hand and the other hand on his anus, being completely naked”.

⁷ On this notion see for example: Price 2002: 360–361; Duczko 2004: 151–152; Heide 2006c: 168.

closely as that from Gerdrup. Of course we must be mindful that the events in *Eyrbyggja saga* take place in Iceland and not Denmark, but it is apparent that the same custom of treating the dead sorcerers was known in many parts of Late Iron Age Scandinavia.

My hypothesis, which shall be expanded in the nearest future, is that from among all the burials of the alleged Viking Age ritual performers, there could be distinguished two basic categories: graves with staffs and graves in which the individuals were crushed with stones. The first category could perhaps be ascribed to highly regarded seers and seeresses whereas the other category belonged to malevolent sorcerers who committed some violent acts. The existence of such distinct types of burials in the archaeological material reflects the ambivalent nature of Old Norse sorcery which is observable in the written accounts⁸.

Conclusions and future research

The archaeological evidence for the ambivalence of Old Norse sorcery has until now never been discussed in the academic literature, but the problem of ambiguity of Viking Age magical practices was certainly observed in the earlier works of philologists and historians of religions. In my opinion by trying to build bridges between those disciplines it is possible to create a new and fascinating picture of the Viking Age realities.

In the further stages of my research the evidence from the Scandinavian world will be viewed in comparison with the worldviews and burial practices of the Slavs⁹ as well as the Baltic and Finno-Ugric peoples.

⁸ Of course this view is open to expansions and alterations. The past was not simply "black and white" and in many respects the Viking mentalities were as complex as those of our own. It is quite probable that there may exist more types of sorcerers' burials. In my view, female graves with spears or graves in which the spears were thrust into the ground could perhaps also belong to potential ritual specialists. This problem, however, requires further research and cannot be discussed here.

⁹ In the Slavic archaeology there exists a concept of the so-called "vampire burials" (Wrzesiński 2008). In those graves, the individuals are often found with their heads chopped off or they are buried facing the ground. In some cases the bodies of the interred were also covered with stones. My preliminary hypothesis is, that perhaps some of the alleged "vampire burials" (especially the ones with stones), actually belonged to Slavic sorcerers or pagan priests.

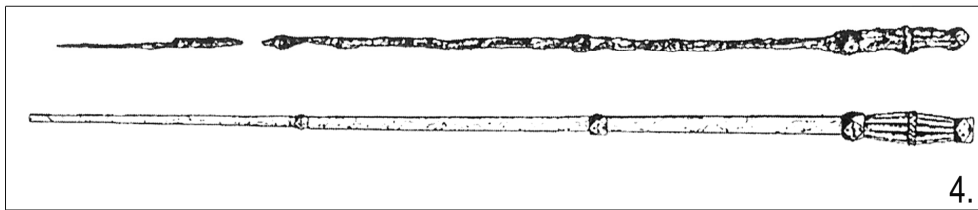
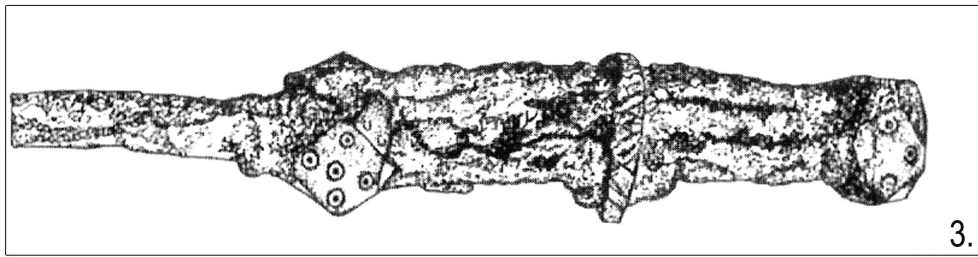
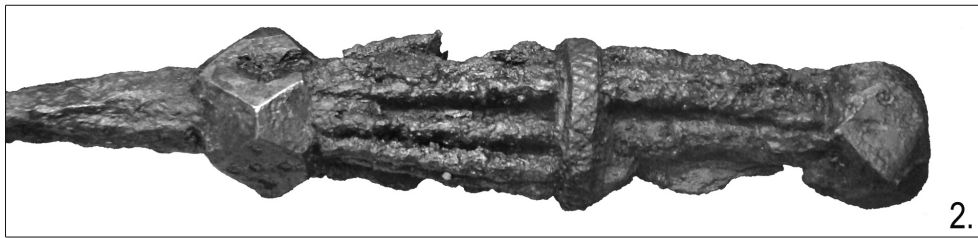
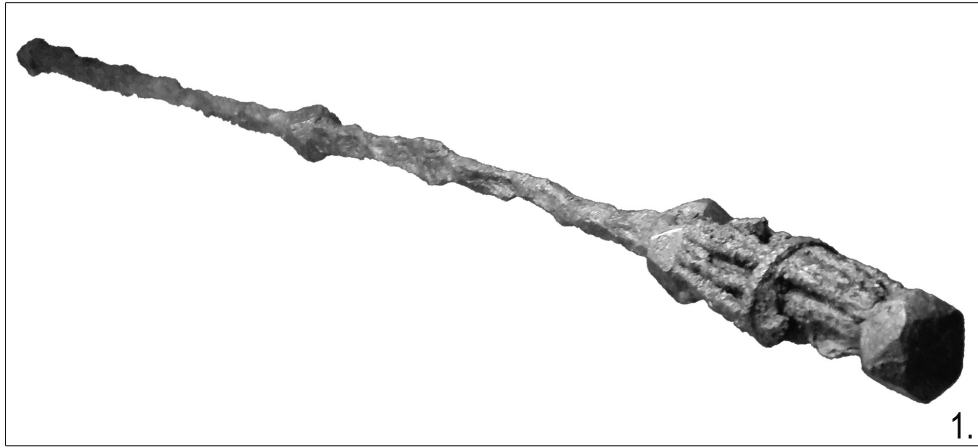


Figure 1. An iron staff of sorcery from grave Bj. 834 at Birka (Uppland, Sweden). Photographs © Leszek Gardela, drawings after Price 2002: 182–183.

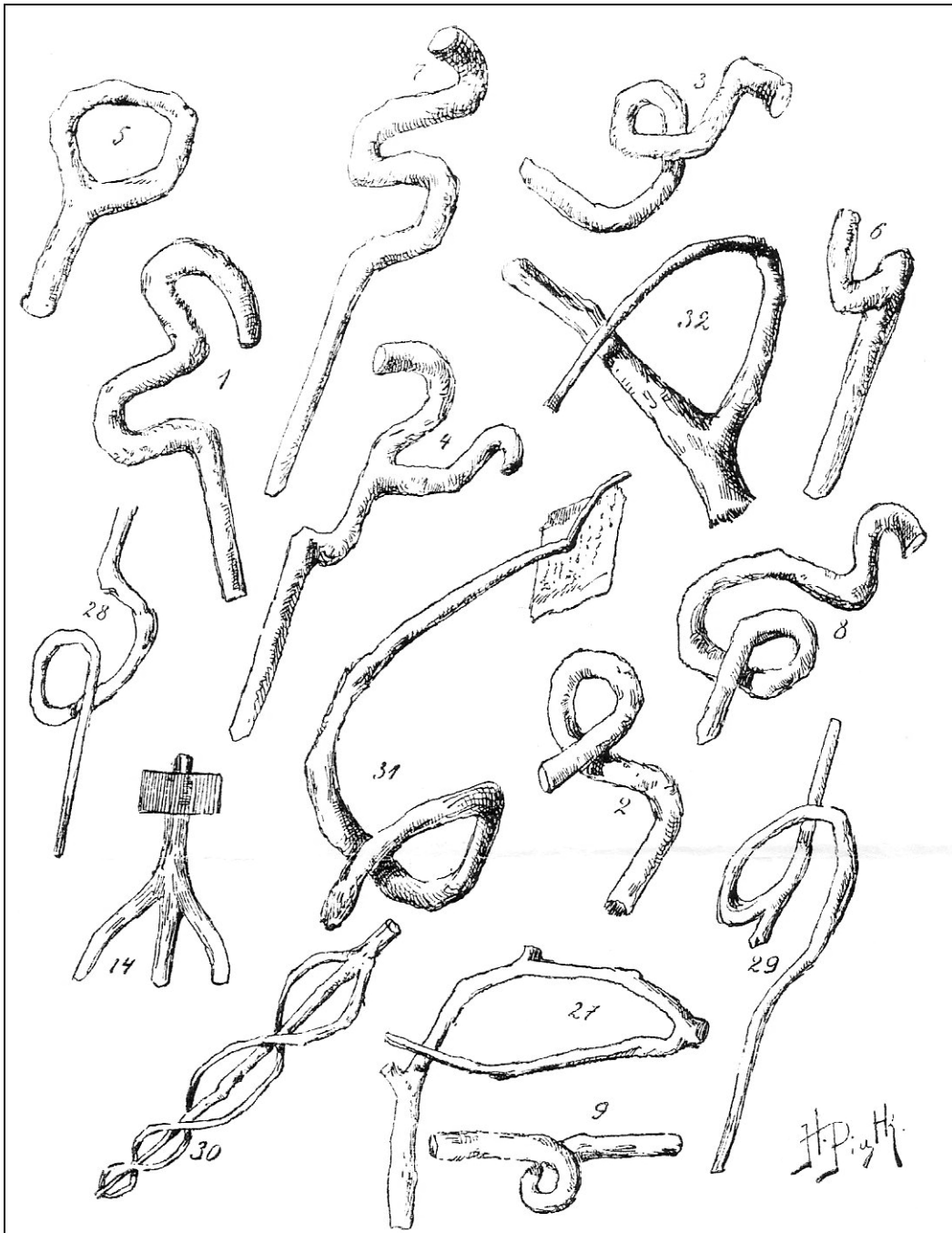


Figure 2. A selection of nineteenth-century staffs of the krzywula-type from Lithuania and Poland. After Mierzyński 1885: figure 1.



Figure 3. The remarkable Gerdrup grave (Zeeland, Denmark). After Christensen 1997: 35.

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The Mental Map of Greenland in the Icelandic Sagas

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In my paper I shall discuss the mental map of Greenland as it is presented in the Icelandic Sagas. I have previously studied the sagas' mental map of the lands south and west of Greenland as well as of the British Isles. This I have discussed in view of historical memory and contemporary knowledge with emphasis on one of the social roles of oral storytelling about remote places and voyages to faraway lands: Namely that stories inform the audience of the world's geography, that is in which direction people can sail and which features can be expected to be outstanding to the seafarer's eye when he comes up to previously unknown coasts. Still another way to experiment with this line of thought is to analyse stories in Iceland about characters who are in or visit Greenland: Do these stories draw up or reflect a comprehensive mental map of the area and if so, could that map serve as a realistic background for the travels and movements described and thus be of informative value for those who have not visited this part of the world themselves? For this purpose it is irrelevant whether or not the stories reflect a profound knowledge of the historical reality in Greenland, which narrative function the landscape may have or if supernatural phenomena play a considerable role in the stories. The important question is if the stories can be regarded as an encyclopedic medium of traditional geographical knowledge about Greenland in the minds of the Icelandic audience.

Sensory deceptions. Concepts of mediality in the Prose Edda

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1. The rubric

Gylfaginning is preceded in the U manuscript of the *Prose Edda* by a well-known and much-cited rubric, which gives the work the title it still bears today, and ascribes it to an author: *Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson eptir þeim hætti sem hér er skipat. Er fyrst frá Ásum ok Ymi, þar næst Skáldskaparmál ok heiti margra hluta, síðast Háttatal er Snorri hefir ort um Hákon konung ok Skúla hertoga.* (Faulkes 1988:xiii; cf. Snorri Sturluson 1977:1), ‘This book is called *Edda*. It was compiled by Snorri Sturluson in the manner in which it is arranged here. There is told first about the Æsir and Ymir, then *Skáldskaparmál* [the language of poetry] and terms for many things, finally *Háttatal* [list of verse-forms] which Snorri has composed about King Hakon and Duke Skuli’ (Faulkes 1987:[vi]).

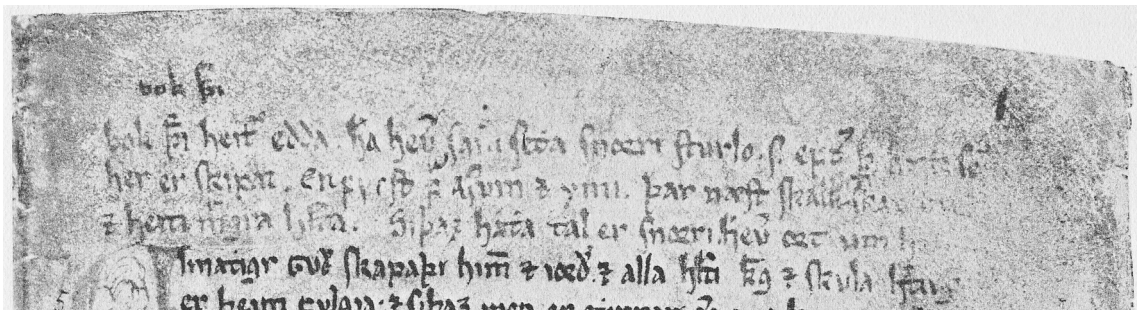


Illustration 1. DG 11 (Snorri Sturluson 1962:[unpag.])

If we turn our attention for once away from the content of these statements – if we refrain, that is, from enquiring into the likelihood of Snorri’s authorship of the *Edda* (cf. on this Faulkes 1988:xiiiif.) – it is apparent that the rubric in its first sentence refers deictically to the work’s status as object (*bók þessi*), as a concretely existing manuscript or ‘book’, and in its second, draws attention to the composition of this book as a whole: it is a text made up of several parts. The writer of this note, using highly stereotyped formulations, emphasises at the outset that a (medieval) text always exhibits a material dimension as well as a thematic-aesthetic one; then he reviews the origins of the work, ascribes it to an author/compiler (one who he assumes will be known to the audience), provides the text as a whole and its parts with titles (cf. Faulkes 1988:xviif.; Faulkes 1998:vii) and gives an overview of its structure. With *setja saman* ‘compile’, in the sense of ‘add, bring together, arrange’, and *yrkja* ‘to compose’, he avails himself of a specifically poetological terminology.¹

¹ Anthony Faulkes translates *setja saman* with ‘compile’, *yrkja* with ‘compose’ (Faulkes 1988:xiiiif.), Arnulf Krause uses ‘zusammenstellen’ and ‘dichten’ (Snorri Sturluson 1997:7), Karl G. Johansson and Mats Malm render the two terms with ‘sätta samman’ and ‘dikta’ in their Swedish translation of the *Prose Edda* (Snorri Sturluson 1997a:24).

bok þessi heitir edda. hana hefir saman seta fnoiri sturlo son eptir þeim hæti sem
her er skiptat. Er fyrft þra afvm ok ymi. þar næft skaldskap[ar mál]
ok heiti margra hluta. Sþaz háta tal er fnoiri hefir oit um hak[on]
Almatigr ævð skapari himin ok ioið. ok alla hluti konung ok fkvla hertug[a]

Illustration 2. DG 11 (Snorri Sturluson 1977:1)

The first sentences of DG 11 show, then, a scribe with a decided awareness of a process which one can call *medial*. A move to the performative can already be observed in this short passage at the beginning of U, a performativity which, with its stress on the elements of staging, framing, and reflection, is characteristic for the specifically pre-modern mediality of the *Prose Edda* as a whole.² The fragmentary *Edda* manuscript AM 748 I b 4to, from c. 1300–25 (cf. Faulkes 1988:vi), for example, contains the following passage, which bears out the medial significance of the opening rubric in U: *Hær ær lykt þæim lvt bokar ær Olafur Þorðarson hæfir samansett ok vpphefir skaldskaparmal ok kænningar æptir þvi sem fyri fyndið var í kvæðvm höfvtskallda ok Snori hæfir sþan samanfæra latit* (Snorri Sturluson 1852:427f.; cf. Faulkes 1998:xii) ‘Here is ended that part of the book which Óláfr Þórðarson has put together, and begins the language of poetry and the kennings, according to that which was found in the poems of the chief skalds and which Snorri later caused to be brought together’.

Numerous similar passages in other texts³ show that the rubric in U is no random scribal note. The following section at the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* especially deserves attention. It not only functions as a kind of prologue to this part of the work, but also refers to the conception of the *Prose Edda* as a whole (‘this book’, ‘at the beginning of this book’): *En þetta er nú at segja ungum skáldum þeim er girnask at nema mál skáldskapar [...]: þá skili hann þessa bók til fróðleiks og skemtunar. [...] En eigi skulu kristnir menn trúa á heiðin goð ok eigi á sannynði þessarar sagnar annan veg en svá sem hér finnsk í upphafi bókar er sagt er frá atburðum þeim er mannfólkit viltisk frá réttri trú [...] hvernig Asiamenn þeir er Æsir eru kallaðir folsuðu frásagnir þær frá þeim tíðindum er gerðusk í Troju [...]* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:5), ‘But these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry [...] Then let such a one take this book as scholarly enquiry and entertainment. [...] Yet Christian people must not believe in heathen gods, nor in the truth of this account in any other way than that in which it is presented at the beginning of this book, where it is told what happened after mankind went astray from the true faith [...] how the people of Asia, known as Æsir, distorted the accounts of the events that took place in Troy [...]’ (Faulkes 1987:64–5).

An awareness of the significance of the medially reflective – and therefore literary-theoretical and poetological – aspects of medieval texts achieves explicit formulation in such passages of the *Prose Edda* (it probably also finds expression in its title, as *edda* is already used in the fourteenth century in collocations such as *eddu list* (‘art of edda’) or *eddu reglur* (‘rules of edda’) to mean ‘poetics’). They draw on an already well-developed terminology and deliver precise insights into the formation and function of narratives in their capacity as

² On mediality in premodern literary texts, cf. especially Kiening 2007.

³ For a discussion of the historical terminology for the various aspects of writing in the prose texts of the Norwegian and Icelandic Middle Ages, see Glauser in press.

written texts. Whoever composed the rubric of the U manuscript of the *Prose Edda* was well aware that his text would be received in the context of a differentiated written culture.⁴

2. Gangleri asks

In contrast to this discussion of mediality, which assumes an established written culture as its reference point, another well-known and oft-cited instance in the *Prose Edda* presents a medial situation which appears to be part of a quite different tradition. The drawing which occupies page 50 of the U manuscript of the *Prose Edda* (cf. Snorri Sturluson 1962:[unpag.];



Snorri Sturluson 1977:XVIII), the oldest (fourteenth-century) and also by a significant margin the best-known illustration of the Codex Upsaliensis, shows on the left a standing figure, supporting himself on a staff, who is named as Gangleri – the legend over this figure reads *Gangleri spyrr* ‘Gangleri asks’–, and on the right three crowned figures, named as Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði, sitting on a sort of triple throne.

From a media-historical perspective, we are confronted here, for one, with a highly consequential shift in medium *from text to image* (translation of content from one medial form to another), and/or with mixed media, text *and* image (simultaneous application of several medial forms on the same occasion). Furthermore, the non-linguistic medium of the drawing brings a medial situation into focus in which verbal, close-range communication is represented in the context of a dialogue between physically present speakers and listeners. In this simple drawing the human voice, intimately bound to a physically present body – the clear gestures of the figures, for instance, signpost this – is the centre of attention. This is a completely different kind of medial situation

⁴ Faulkes (1998:xix) has already pointed out that *Skáldskaparmál* in particular makes numerous references to the text as written object. A few of the many examples: *Hér skal heyra hvé skáldin hafa kennt skáldskapinn eptir þessum heitum er áðr eru rituð* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:11), ‘Now examples will be given of how the poets have referred to poetry using such terms as were noted above’ (Faulkes 1987:70); [...] *svá sem kvað Eyvindr ok fyrr var ritat* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:14), ‘as in the poem of Eyvindr quoted above’ (Faulkes 1987:72); *Hér er þess getit [...] sem fyrr er ritat* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:18), ‘Here reference is made [...] which was written about above’ (Faulkes 1987:75); *Nú skal enn segja dæmi af hverju þær kenningar eru er nú váru ritadar, er áðr váru eigi dæmi til sögð* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:20), ‘Now there shall be told more of the underlying stories from which those kennings just listed have originated, and of which the origins have not already been told’ (Faulkes 1987:77); *Þessi nafn himins eru rituð, en eigi höfum vér fundit í kvæðum öll þessi heiti* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:85), ‘The following names for the heavens are written down, but we have not found all these terms in poems’ (Faulkes 1987:133).

from that presented in the introductory rubric of U, in which an act of communication between an author and belated, perhaps physically distant – in any case, not *necessarily* present – readers is sketched out.⁵

In the *Prose Edda*, learned written culture is supplemented by the textual imagining of traditional oral communication. The various frame and interior narratives, in *Gylfaginning* as well as in *Skáldskaparmál*, map this quasi pre-written form of communication on to the thematic level, when Gylfi/Gangleri talks to Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði, or Ægir/Hlér to Bragi.⁶ The fundamentally dialogical principle of the sections couched as wisdom conversations (to which *Háttatal* also belongs) receives explicit emphasis in innumerable scenes of narrating in the elaborate frame-stories of *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, and contributes significantly to the poetological and medial self-reflexivity of the text. The dialogical structure is directly thematised in the second chapter of *Gylfaginning* by one of the figures involved, namely, Hár: *Hann [Gangleri] segir at fyrst vil hann spyrja ef nokkvorr er fróðr maðr inni. Hár segir at hann komi eigi heill út nema hann sé fróðari, ok 'Stattu fram meðan þú fregn, / sitja skal sá er segir.'* (Snorri Sturluson 1988:8), 'He [Gangleri] said that he wished first to find out if there was any learned person in there. High said he would not get out unscathed unless he was more learned, and 'Stand out in front while you ask:/ he who tells shall sit.' (Faulkes 1987:8).

At the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* the text also explicitly signals that the following narrative is a rendering of a conversational situation, when it says that '[t]he person sitting next to Ægir was Bragi, and they drank and conversed together. Bragi related to Ægir many events in which the Æsir had been involved. He began his account where[...]' (Faulkes 1987:59). (*Næsti maðr Ægi sat Bragi, ok áttusk þeir við drykkju ok orðaskipti. Sagði Bragi Ægi frá mǫrgum tíðindum þeim er Æsir hófðu átt. Hann hóf þar frásögn at [...]*, Snorri Sturluson 1998:1). And when Hár closes his portrait of the god Thor in chapter 21 of *Gylfaginning* as follows: '*En engi er svá fróðr at telja kunni ǫll stórvirki hans, en segja kann ek þér svá mǫrg tíðindi frá honum at dveljask munu stundirnar áðr en sagt er allt þat er ek veit.*' (Snorri Sturluson 1988:23), 'But there is no one so wise that he can recount all his exploits, though I can tell you so many stories about him that much time will be taken up before all I know is told.' (Faulkes 1987:22–3), the text refers to an oral, improvised story-telling which rests on a reservoir, in principle inexhaustible, of orally-delivered narratives which can be recalled contextually.

A sophisticated narrative about the genesis of mythic narratives, that is, nothing less than a metapoetic, medially-reflexive, self-displaying 'history of textual origins' (cf. Kiening 2007:345), is to be found in the conclusion of *Gylfaginning* which, after staging the final disillusionment of the questioner, suggests transmission from mouth to mouth as the kernel of tradition: *Gengr hann [Gangleri] þá leið sína braut ok kemr heim í ríki sitt ok segir þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrt. Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maðr ǫðrum þessar sögur. En Æsir setjask þá á tal ok ráða ráðum sínum ok minnask á þessar frásagnir allar er honum váru sagðar [...]* (Snorri Sturluson 1988:54), 'Then he [Gangleri] went off on his way and came back to his kingdom and told of the events he had seen and heard about. And from his account these stories passed from one person to another. But the Æsir sat down to discuss and hold a conference and went over all these stories that had been told him[...]' (Faulkes 1987:57).

3. Sensory deceptions

⁵ On the significance of bodily presence and non-linguistic communication in the medial context of saga literature, cf. Glauser 2007.

⁶ Faulkes distinguishes three extended conversational sequences in *Skáldskaparmál* (cf. Faulkes 1998:xix–xxi).

The distancing ironisation implicit in the dissolution of the illusion-creating frame at the end of *Gylfaginning* refers to a further fundamental condition of narrative, insofar as it shows how literature (oral and written) rests at heart on deception; he who believes in it succumbs to a fraud. The text, that is to say, repeatedly makes clear that the stories about Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði or about Bragi are myths, which must be considered under the sign of sensory deception, *sjónhverfingar* (where the English term, in contrast to the Icelandic one, includes other senses as well as seeing, for example, hearing). At the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, the magically-skilled Swedish king sets out on his way in order to discover why the Æsir are so knowledgeable: *Hann byrjaði ferð sína til Ásgarðs ok fór með laun ok brá á sik gamals manns líki ok dulðisk svá. En Æsir váru því vísari at þeir höfðu spádóm, ok sá þeir ferð hans fyrr en hann kom, ok gerðu í móti honum sjónhverfingar. En er hann kom inn í borgina þá sá hann þar háva holl [...]* (Snorri Sturluson 1988:7), ‘He set out to Asgard and travelled in secret and assumed the form of an old man and so disguised himself. But the Æsir were the wiser in that they had the gift of prophecy, and they saw his movements before he arrived, and prepared deceptive appearances for him. When he got into the city he saw there a high hall[...]’ (Faulkes 1987:7). This episode is highly interesting from a media-theoretical viewpoint, because it demonstrates by means of a small scene how unreliable the human senses, here the sense of sight (‘he saw’) are in actual fact.

This pattern of deception and countering deception is repeated at the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*, as Ægir – like Gylfi, a master of magic – approaches Asgard: *Hann var mjök fjölkunnigr. Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðs, en er Æsir vissu ferð hans var honum fagnat vel ok þó margir hlutir með sjónhverfingum.* (Snorri Sturluson 1998:1), ‘He was very skilled in magic. He set out to visit Asgard, and when the Æsir became aware of his movements, he was given a great welcome, though many things had deceptive appearances’ (Faulkes 1987:59). As Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði break off the conversation at the end of *Gylfaginning* and the illusion which has sustained the dialogue is lifted, the text, significantly, uses verbs of perceiving (‘hear’, ‘look’, ‘see’), which refer to the medial situation, [*þ*]ví næst heyrði Gangleri dýni mikla hvern veg frá sér, ok leit út á hlið sér. Ok þá er hann sésk meir um þá stendr hann úti á sléttum velli, sér önga holl ok önga borg. (Snorri Sturluson 1988:54), ‘[n]ext Gangleri heard great noises in every direction from him, and he looked out to one side. And when he looked around further he found he was standing out on open ground, could see no hall and no castle’ (Faulkes 1987:57).

Literary fictions, as these stories from the *Prose Edda* demonstrate in an admirably pregnant fashion, rest on the basic principle of trickery of the senses; they are, in fact, phantasmagoric. The multiply framed and interrupted narratives about the old stories of the gods stage rhetorical and medial situations and show how myths arise out of such illusions. Perhaps the best example of reflection on medial conditions in the *Prose Edda* is given by the story of the origin of the mead of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál*. The story of the ‘precious mead’ – itself a powerful medium, mediating between the earthly and supernatural – is dominated by fraud, deceit and aggression. One of the central myths of the *Prose Edda*, it is at the same time a story about how stories come to be, how they develop and are passed on, a multi-dimensional meta-narrative about literary art and its medial forms, which carries out a complex poetological and medial discussion. In mythic narratives – this is one of the lessons Gangleri may draw from his conversation with the Æsir (*njóttu nú sem þú namt* (Snorri Sturluson 1988:54), ‘may the knowledge you have gained do you good’ (Faulkes 1987:57)) – but, of course, not only there, one should not believe too readily in what one thinks oneself to see and hear.⁷ The nar-

⁷ Faulkes (1988:xx) briefly discusses ‘the fictional nature of the frame story’ in *Skáldskaparmál* and asks among other things whether ‘the absurdities were deliberately intended as a joke or included for ironical purposes’.

ratives of *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* construct phantasms, then promptly deconstruct them again.

As Christian Kiening has shown in a groundbreaking article on mediality in the pre-modern era, medieval texts tend to display, stage and reflect medial conditions (cf. Kiening 2007:esp. 339–43). The tutorial in deconstructive reading offered by the dialogically conceived sensory deceptions of the *Prose Edda* is at the same time self-displaying, as regards basic medial situations and processes of literature in the Middle Ages. This reflexivity concerns not least the numerous performative aspects of medieval texts, also treated in the *Prose Edda*.

This implicit poetics of the *Prose Edda* suggests a further circumstance which is of importance in the current connection. The work contains no myths ‘in themselves’ and does not consist of direct, immediate myth-tellings. Rather it belongs to the genre of mythography, and presents a prototypical medial situation: the *Prose Edda* de- (or in-)scribes and discusses the narrating of mythic narratives. This literally mythographic aspect refers in itself to the mediality of the text. In this way the *Prose Edda* shows very clearly that, as the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg pointed out in his now-classic work *Arbeit am Mythos* (‘Work on Myth’, Blumenberg 1981), mythological content is never available as such, but rather is always received, that is to say, mediated through a middle term. From the viewpoint of religious history, this creative process of reworking appears as a rule in a negative light, when a one-sided view is taken of the process of dismantling old forms in favour of different accentuations of the same content in new media. This is the case, for example, in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson’s investigation of the history of the mead of poetry, whose committing to writing in the medial context of the Icelandic High Middle Ages he interprets as the ‘desecration’ of an ancient northern myth (cf. Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 2005). But from the perspective of literary and media history, the processes of revision and transmission, treated on various levels in the text itself, yield extremely interesting indications of how the Middle Ages imagined the coming into being of mythological narratives. When we are told at the end of *Gylfaginning*, as cited above, that the Æsir sat down to discuss, took counsel, and recalled the stories they had previously told Gangleri, it is the multilayered character and complexity of narration in different media which is the theme. Terms like *minnask* (‘recall’), *frásagnir* (‘stories’), *segja* (‘say, narrate’), *setjask á tal* (‘sit down to discuss’), *ráða ráðum sínum* (‘take counsel’) make evident the significance of memory, the human voice, and the collective, performative act of story-telling for the genesis and transmission of literature. Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði and Bragi, as mediators in the narrative frame of the *Prose Edda*, mark the (often precarious) medial situations at the intersections between individual medial forms. From the point of view of the history of mediality, the *Prose Edda* is a text which both has a rich array of contextualisations in a written culture, and simultaneously bears in itself many traces of other medial forms; furthermore, in its dense network of representations and reflections of different medial situations, it displays a sophisticated textual self-consciousness.

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On the Reception of Eastern Europe in Pre-Literate Iceland¹

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The presence of East-European matter in Old Norse-Icelandic writings reflects a sphere of specific interest to Icelanders. In spite of its distance from other countries, Iceland never became a culturally isolated country and was in constant communication with the external world (Vésteinn Ólason 1998:31). The abundance of travel stories which are a dominating theme in Icelandic sagas of different genres (Andersson 2000; Jesch 2005:119; Zilmer 2003, 2006), is clear evidence of this. The sagas testify that news about Eastern Europe was brought to Iceland by informants (both Icelanders and foreigners) who either traveled ‘*austr*’ themselves or heard stories told by or about someone who did. The reasons for traveling to this area much depended on various forms of activity, and almost all of them can be exemplified by referring to the sagas where they are preserved both as episodes of different length and as isolated details. Icelanders traded regularly in Rus’ – this is attested by Grágás (Ch. 259) and reflected in many sagas; in Iceland they met merchants who brought there not only various goods but also new stories (a merchant brought from Sweden to Iceland the story of Yngvar which is told in *Yngvars saga víðförla*). Icelanders took part in viking raids (Gunnarr of *Brennu-Njáls saga* raided in the Eastern Baltic) and in military expeditions (Ketill the Icelander was a member of Yngvar’s detachment in *Yngvars saga víðförla*); they served as body-guards of foreign kings (Icelanders were in the service of Haraldr Sigurðarson; the main hero of *Bjarnar saga Hit-dælakappa* and Barði from *Heiðarvígasaga* give service to the Russian Kings Valdamarr and Jarzleifr). With the advent of Christianity some pilgrims who traveled to Holy Places reached Eastern Europe and Rus’ (Þorvaldr, a hero of *Kristni saga* and *Þorvalds þáttur víðförla*, traveled as far as Polotsk and died there; another traveler by name of Brandr víðförla visited the place where Þorvaldr was buried and composed a verse about him). The role of skalds in transmitting East-European subjects must have been very high in Iceland, and people with this professional activity should be mentioned in the list of informants who contributed to enriching the knowledge of Icelanders about distant worlds (Jesch 2005:119); thanks to their artistic talent and trained memory many East-European themes may have been introduced in Iceland and other Nordic countries.

For those who listened to tales about a person’s travels there must have existed a conventional set of key features distinguishing a particular region from all others. There is no doubt that often-repeated place-names assisted in creating a mental picture of the region. Even if a person had a very vague idea about an exact geographical location of a town, a river, a lake or a mountain, these places were recognised by him as belonging to a certain area. The first to be remembered were general terms, such as the names of the countries (*Garðaríki*) and of the region (*Austrlond*, *Austrvegr*), the most often visited towns (altogether 10 Russian towns are mentioned in the sources, among which *Hólmgarðr* dominates), etc. (see Table 7 in: Drevnjaja Rus’ 1999:466–474) An argument for an easy comprehension of East European place-names by the audience, even if they were not part of an immediate saga context, can be found in such textual evidence as, for example, the use of the nickname *Hólmgarðsfari* (Hrafn from Vík in *Færeyinga saga*, ch. 8; Skinna-Björn in *Landnámabók*, ch. 55) attached to the names of people who traveled to Rus’. In spite of the fact that the written sagas do not include

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any expanded narratives about the travels undertaken by these saga heroes, one can be sure that they did exist, and that *Hólmgarðr* as the destination of Hrafn and Björn could not have been misunderstood by the audience of their “lost tales”. Unusual objects, originated in the East-European region (such as a hat of special form or cloth, ‘*gerzkr höttr*’: *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ch. 46; *Gísla saga Surrsonar*, ch. 55; *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 12, etc.), also bore a connection to a certain geographical place in Rus’.

Similar to place-names, the names of several historical persons, Russian rulers of the tenth to eleventh centuries, were often repeated in the written sagas. It is not at all clear whether these people became as easily recognizable as Russian place-names and whether their personalities were as easily identified in Iceland at the time preceding the creation of the corpus of written kings’ sagas. In the sagas of Icelanders the name of Jarizleifr (Yaroslav the Wise, 1019–1054), the most popular of Russian rulers with the saga authors, is not often met. Valdamarr (Vladimir Svyatoslavitch, ?–1015), Jarizleifr’s father, the second most popular Russian personage, is mentioned only in *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa* (c. 1230). Of these two, let’s look more precisely at the narrative tradition connected with Yaroslav.

The historical foundation for literary plots connected with Yaroslav were intensive contacts between the European North and Rus’ during the period of Yaroslav’s reign. The name of “Jarizleifr” (Jaritláfr, Jarizláfr, etc.) is mentioned in a wide variety of Old Scandinavian writings of different genres, such as early historiography (the synoptics), hagiography, skaldic poetry, sagas of different types. Special attention given to the personality of Yaroslav in the works of modern scholars naturally has resulted in the fact that practically every scrap of written evidence concerning him has been known and commented on. In Russian historical scholarship priority can be given to Elena Rydzevskaja who in her article “Yaroslav the Wise in Old Icelandic Writings” (1945) summarized the material known about Jarizleifr. Rydzevskaya showed that king’s sagas are the richest in the plots in which Yaroslav is involved. The historical evidence given by them constitutes the major part of everything known to us about the contacts of Rus’ and Scandinavian countries in the first half of the eleventh century. At the same time all the diverse connections that took various forms were presented as descriptions of the personal relations of Yaroslav with Norwegian and sometimes Swedish kings. Rydzevskaya grouped the data and revealed that in the written texts there are four principal situations around which “Yaroslav’s plots” appear:

1. The marriage (c. 1019/1020) of Yaroslav to Ingigerðr, the daughter of Olaf the Swede. Ingigerðr had been betrothed to Óláfr the Saint of Norway, but her father broke the engagement and arranged her marriage to Yaroslav who, intending to marry a Swedish princess, sent messengers to Sweden with his proposal.

2. The arrival of Óláfr of Norway (c. 1029) in Rus’ after a series of failures in his struggle with Knútr. On his return to Norway in 1030 Óláfr left his little son Magnús with Jarizleifr and Ingigerðr who took very good care of him.

3. After Óláfr died in 1030, his brother Haraldr fled to Jarizleifr who made him the leader of his Varangian troops. Twelve years later on his return from Byzantium to Rus’ Haraldr married Elizabeth, Yaroslav’s daughter.

4. The arrival of Norwegian chieftains (1034) who decided to make Magnús Ólafsson the king of Norway. Yaroslav and Ingigerðr let Magnús go with them on their promise to be faithful to the son of Óláfr (Rydzevskaya 1945:67–68).

Each of these four historical situations is described in the sagas with a different degree of detail: the later the text, the more developed are its East-European plots. Thus, the synoptics primarily enumerate the facts and don’t contain evaluative statements, individual characteristics or dialogues. On the other hand, in Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla* and in *Flateyjarbók* the episodes with Jarizleifr are rich in details and descriptions. The continued use of the plots in later texts seems to testify to a better knowledge and understanding of the East-European

material, compared to that in the earlier writings, thanks to its repetition in a fixed literary form. To make a survey of Yaroslav's appearance in Old Norse-Icelandic writings, let's supply the four groups singled out by Rydzevskaya with such cases as the use of Yaroslav's name in, for instance, informative formulas which explain the relationship between Russian princes or between members of Russian and Scandinavian ruling dynasties. Sometimes references to Yaroslav are aimed at determining place (Old Rus') and time (the epoch of Yaroslav) and cannot be classified in any of the four groups.

One finds Yaroslav's episodes in the earlier writings, created at the end of the twelfth or at the beginning of the thirteenth century, i.e. in those writings which were composed at the beginning of the Icelandic written tradition. Medieval authors do not disclose their sources of information about Yaroslav and his time. Memories of this Russian ruler might have been an element of oral stories about Icelanders or their Norwegian or Swedish relatives and friends who were in service in Rus', who traded there or visited it for other reasons. It's not easy to decide how widely such stories were known in different parts of the European North, on the one hand, and in different parts of Iceland on the other. With the development of literacy historical topics received their fixed form and more people were able to learn stories told in a uniform manner, but shortly before that, in the second half of the twelfth century, Russian history could hardly have had the form of a common body of learning shared by people in different localities in Iceland, due to the facts that, firstly, communication between Rus' and Iceland was sporadic, and, secondly, because people in various parts of Iceland must have enjoyed listening to different stories told by different story-tellers who, in their turn, had different backgrounds, and sometimes actual knowledge of the events they described.

For an illustration let's read a passage in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr monk (c. 1180) which seems to elucidate the reception of Jarizleifr by the audience, different from that of the learned clerics. The episode refers to the time of St Vladimir, the father of Yaroslav the Wise, but it still has a bearing on Yaroslav.

Text *A* in AM 310, 4to (1250–1275, ONP:450):

I þenna tíma reð firir Garða ríki Valldamarr konungr með miclum ueg. *Sua er sagt* (my italics. – G.G.) at moðir hans var spakona oc er þat callat ibokum phitons andi er heiðnir menn spaðu. þat geck miok eptir er hon mælti. oc var hon þa a orvasa alldri. Þat var siþr þeira at iola aptan hinn fyrsta scylldi bera hana astoli firir hasæti konungs. Oc aðr menn tóki til dryckio þa spyrr konungr moður sina ef hon sæi eða vissi nocquorn hasca eða scaða yfir gnapa sinu ríki. eþa nolgaz með nocquorum ufriði eða ótta. eða aðrir agirntiz hans eigu. hon suarar. Eigi se ec þat son minn er ec vita þer horva meinsamliga eþa þinu ríki oc eigi oc þat er skelfi þina hamingio. En þo se ec micla syn oc agetlega Nu er borinn aþessum tíðum eiN konungs s. iNoregi oc a þessu ari sa er her man up fõþaz iþessu landi. oc sia man verða agetligr maðr. oc dyrlegr hofþingi. oc eigi man hann scaða gera þinu ríki. helldr man hann þat margfalliga auca yðr til handa. oc siþan man hann aptr huerva til sins lanz þa er hann er a ungum alldri. oc mun hann þa oplaz ríki sitt þat er han er til boriN. ok mun hann konungr vera oc skina með mikilli birti. oc morgum mun hann hialpare vera inorðalfu hæimsins. En scamma stund mon hans ríki standa yfir Noregs ueldi. beri mek nu abrot þui at ec man nu eigi framarr segia. oc ðrit sagt er nu. þessi Valldamarr var faðir Jarizleifs konungs.

(*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr monk: 20. Ch. 6).

Text *S* in Holm. perg 18, 4to (c. 1300, ONP:355):

Nv aþessi tíþ reð austr firir Garða ríke Valldamarr konungr oc var hann agætr maðr. moþir hans var spakona ok sa hon marga luti firir oc geck þat eptir er hõn melti. hon var aorvasa. ok var þat siþr hennar. at hõn var borin i hællina hvern iola aptan oc skylldi segia hvat þa veri tíðenda vm

heiminn. ok sat hon a stoli firir haseti konungs oc er men voro komnir isæti sin oc bunir til drykio. þa melti konungr. Hvat ser þu moðir. eþa er nockot haskasamlikt mino rike. Hon melti þat se ekki at eigi stande þitt rike með soma ok veg. Hit se ek at þessi stvndv tíþ er borinn iNorege konungs s. með biortvm fylgiom ok hamingiom ok er mikit lios yfir honum. hann mvn her upp fozaz i þesso lande oc styðia þitt rike a marga lvnd ok mvn siþan aptr hverfa til sinna ættlanda. ok vera þar konungr agætligr oc dyrligr. ok mvn skiot þo missa ok er hann er kvaddr af heimi. þa ligr fyrir honum miklo meiri dyrð en ek kvnna vm at tala oc berit mik nv a brævt. oc mvn ek nv eigi segia framaR. Þesse ValldamaR var faðer Iarizleifs f. Holta f. Valldamars f. Harallz f. Ingibiargar moþur Valldamars Dana konungs.

(*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr monk: 20–21. Ch. 5).

A popular folklore motif (Boberg 1966:84; D1812: magic power of prophecy) structures the episode predicting the future for Óláfr Tryggvason. What differs the story told by Oddr munk from other stories of the same sort is that the future for the perspective king of Norway is being predicted by a *spákona* – a pagan sorcerer, the mother of King *Valdamarr ór Garðaríki*, who doesn't belong to the same cultural tradition as Óláfr himself (E. Rydzevskaya found an analogue to this episode in *Ásmundar saga kappabana*. – Rydzevskaya 1935:14). The texts in *A* and in *S* stem from a common original (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1936:57–68), of which *S* is a shortened version. They reveal different stages in the presentation of the whole episode. An indication of this is the way in which the author of the first written saga had to explain the name of Valdamarr to his readers. In *A* he uses a simple 'father–son' relationship. In *S* he substitutes it with the evidence of the genealogy of the Russian ruling dynasty, in that part of it which has connections with the dynasties of Scandinavian countries (Pashuto 1968:passim, 419–420; Jackson 1991:159–163; Nazarenko 2001:582):

”Þesse ValldamaR (*Russian king Vladimir Svjatoslavitch*) var faðer Iarizleifs (*Russian king Jaroslav the Wise*) f. Holta (*Russian prince Vsevolod Yaroslavitch*) f. Valldamars (*Russian king Vladimir Monomakh*) f. Harallz (*Russian king Mstislav Vladimirovitch*) f. Ingibiargar (*Russian princess Ingibjörg, the daughter of Mstislav, the wife of Danish king Knut Lavarde*) moþur Valldamars Dana konungs (*Danish king Valdemar I*)”.

The dates of the rule of the last mentioned Danish king Valdemar the Great (1157–1182) provide evidence that this genealogy was compiled earlier than the ascendancy of Valdemar II, the son of Valdemar the Great and queen Sofia, Russian by birth, that is before 1202. Had it been written at the time of Valdemar II, the author would have mentioned eight stages in the pedigree and marked four, not three, Russian and Danish rulers named Valdemar/Valdamarr.

The accuracy in *S* cannot be explained by its dependence on a contemporary written source, as no other source contains this combination of names (Jackson 1993:187–188). The genealogy is definitely not of Icelandic origin: in this case it would have been easier for an author at the end of the thirteenth century to refer to the marriage of Ingigerðr, a Swedish princess, and Yaroslav, who was Valdamarr's son. An attempt to draw the genealogy as far as to king of Denmark Valdemar I suggests the Danish line of borrowing.

In *A* the prophecy episode ends by stating: “þessi Valldamarr var faðir Iarizleifs konungs”. Here the reference to Jarizleifr has not been supplied with additional commentary, as if the author was sure that the name he mentions is one of those which do not need comment. He himself knows the person he is referring to, and he has no doubt that his audience shares his knowledge. The name of Jarizleifr, he is sure, can be faultlessly associated with only one person, the famous king of Rus'. The introductory sentence in *A* “I þenna tíma reð firir Garða ríki Valldamarr konungr með miclum veg” was evidently not enough to explain which of the several personalities who bore this name. By mentioning the name of king Valdamarr's son Jarizleifr the author identifies þessi Valdamarr. A special interest of the saga authors and their

audience in king Jarizleifr's time naturally resulted from the popularity of kings' sagas devoted to the lives of St Óláfr, Magnús Ólafsson and Haraldr Sigurðarson, whose life and adventures often brought them to Rus' during Yaroslav's reign. Some of the stories might have been supported by the evidence of the ancestors of the informants who themselves took part in these travels. Stories about Óláfr Tryggvason, on the other hand, referred to earlier times and belonged to a different tradition which did not coincide with entertaining stories of other Norwegian kings' exploits in Eastern Europe.

The prophecy tale in manuscript *A* comprises a *sva er sagt* formula which points to an oral tradition as the source of the story. In the sagas of Icelanders, however, as Th. Andersson showed (Andersson 1966; see also: Manhire 1974–1977), such oral references might become a literary convention; in the earlier writings other than the sagas (Nikulás Bergsson. *Leiðarvísir*: 12, 17; Ari Þorgilsson. *Íslendingabók*. ch. I:48, ch. VII:53) their basic function of referring to generally known facts or traditions is clearly revealed (similar formulas are known in the early Slavic traditions; see: Schaveljov 2007:89–96). For the authors of the first written sagas, who worked in the period of “a recording of available tradition” (Andersson 2006:2–3), the original function of the *sva er sagt* reference seems to be more than natural. And if this is so, the prophecy tale would have been borrowed by Oddr Snorrason from an oral source; this gives additional support to the idea that East-European themes were indeed part of the earlier oral tradition.

From the fact that the author had to specify the identity of king Valdamarr, whose mother predicted a glorious future for Óláfr Tryggvason, by using the name of Yaroslav (in *A*), it follows that this tale did not belong to the most popular stories about Óláfr Tryggvason. The changes introduced by the author of *S* point to the version in *A* as the earlier version of the prophecy tale, which the audience in Iceland was not yet familiar with. It might have been borrowed by Oddr Snorrason from someone who knew the Norwegian oral traditional tales. The results of J. McKinnell's study of the use of the *völva* as a free-standing motif in the sagas (McKinnell 2003) give additional support to this conclusion. E. Rydzevskaya classified both this tale and the legend of Óláfr's activity in baptizing Rus' as belonging to the circle of Christian legends about the king which had a limited dissemination (Rydzevskaya 1935:12).

The identification of Valdamarr by means of his son Yaroslav breaks a standard rule of ‘son – father’ genealogical reference. It gives grounds for believing that at the end of the twelfth century, connecting the names of these Russian kings in narrative and written practice was not yet habitual. We can also assume that by this time oral stories about East-European and Scandinavian contacts of the first part of the eleventh century, in which Yaroslav appears as an active figure, became widely known in Iceland. Consequently, there is not enough evidence to speak about the popularity of the Russian king Vladimir.

And finally, the tale illustrates that at the time when Oddr Snorrason composed his saga the narrative tradition of Iceland did not rely exclusively upon local samples. It was attracting and adapting oral legends and stories from other Nordic regional traditions.

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Saintly Exile: the commemoration of King Óláfr inn helgi in the poetry of *Heimskringla*

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Skaldic verse dominates Snorri Sturluson's saga about Óláfr Haraldsson in *Heimskringla*: while recounting the kingship, exile, and sainthood of his protagonist, Snorri cites fifteen named skalds and weaves a total of 178 skaldic stanzas into the prose text. This is one of the reasons Carl Phelpstead has called the saga a 'mixed' text in which 'verse and prose, history and hagiography are brought into dialogue so as to present a realistically paradoxical portrayal of Óláfr as holy Viking, *beatissimus tirannus*' (Phelpstead 2007:118). Snorri emphasizes and even enhances the conflicting aspects of Óláfr's life through a heteroglossia of different voices throughout the narrative (Phelpstead 2007:127). Such conflicting voices can be heard even within the small corpus of one skald's poetry in the saga: the *lausavísur* of Sigvatr Þórðarson jockey with stanzas from his named *drápur*, while political statements collide with personal elegies as the prose text binding them in place creates only the illusion of chronological order in his work. Constantly reinvented as missionary king, saintly exile, and royal martyr throughout the course of the saga, Óláfr's identity is unstable; his poet is likewise forced to adapt his poetry and the role his poetry plays in the celebration and commemoration of his patron.

The preservation of skaldic verse within later prose narratives has in large part been responsible for the way in which the skaldic stanzas were traditionally read, with far more critical attention paid to the so-called 'authenticating' verses – long, formal poems such as the *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* and the *Knútsdrápa* – than to the 'situational' verses, namely the *lausavísur*.¹ Diana Whaley's division of the verses into 'authenticating' and 'situational' is based less on the content of the individual stanzas and more on their prose introductions (Whaley 1993:245–266). Whaley theorises that 'authenticating' verses validate or elaborate on the events of the prose narrative; 'situational' verses tend to represent dialogue integrated more fully into the text (Whaley 1993:251). However, such divisions suggest that there is something inherently 'authenticating' or 'situational' about a verse, an interpretation which ignores the stanza's composition before it was incorporated into the later saga. There is a gap between the composition of a skaldic stanza and its preservation in a written saga, and these gaps are too often ignored or glossed over. I would like to open up the gaps between prose and poetry by examining the relationship between Sigvatr's verses and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, particularly as Sigvatr's expressions of grief and loss chronicle the exile and death of Óláfr, and the subsequent return of his son Magnús from his exile in the east to reclaim the Norwegian throne.²

Chapters 181–229 of *Óláfs saga helga* tell the story of Óláfr's first defeat in 1028, his exile in Russia, and his final battle at Stiklarstaðir in 1030. The remaining twenty-one chapters re-

¹ The *Erfidrápa* is Sigvatr's most popular poem in terms of critical attention (Phelpstead 2007, Rainford 1996, and Naumann 1986). Sigvatr's *Knútsdrápa* has also prompted a significant amount of investigation (Townend 2001 and Jesch 2001). A recent article by Judith Jesch is particularly revealing of the scholarly bias in favour of Sigvatr's political *drápur*: examining three *lausavísur* by Sigvatr which praise Óláfr's queen Ástriðr, Jesch attempts to raise the profile of the verses by objecting to their status as *lausavísur*. Noting their similarities with conventional praise-poems, she suggests that they may have been drawn from a longer, formal poem and are thus, she implies, more worthy of attention (1994:1–18).

² The question of Snorri's authorship is too large to treat fully here. Sverre Bagge has discussed the exact extent to which Snorri was the author or compiler of *Heimskringla*, as well as the many different voices in that debate. He concludes that we can safely consider Snorri as the main authorial influence behind the text (Bagge 1991:23–25). I will refer to Snorri as the author of the prose text in this paper.

cord Óláfr's posthumous miracles and the Danish occupation of Norway. Snorri first cites three stanzas from Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa* in his *Óláfs saga helga* after an account of the king's defeat in 1028. The stanzas praise Óláfr's adherence to traditional forms of kingship and criticise those who forced him into exile.³ The first of these is typical:

Goll buðu opt þeirs ollu
 úthlaupum gram kaupask
 rautt, en ræsir nítti,
 ríklunduðum undan;
 skör bað hann með hjörvi
 (her land skal svá verja)
 ráns biðu rekkar sýna
 refsing, firum efsa (4.1–8).

Often those who went on raids offered red gold to the high-spirited ruler to buy themselves off, but the king refused. He bade the hair to be cut off from men with the sword. So should the land be guarded here. The men got an obvious punishment for robbery.

The gnomic approval of 'so should the land be guarded' casts the king's actions in the pre-Christian tradition of the 'land-guardian', as depicted most famously by Einarr skálaglamm in *Vellekla*:

Engi varð á jörðu
 ættum góðr, nema Fróði,
 gæti-Njörðr, sás gerði,
 geirbríkar, frið slíkan (17.1–4).

Except Fróði, there was never in the world a guarding-Njörðr of the spear-board of a good family who protected such peace.

Sigvatr echoes the earlier poem even more closely in the following stanza when he says, 'friðr bættisk svá [...] fylkis lands' [the peace of the king's land was thus restored] (5.3–4). Folke Ström has demonstrated that the skalds eulogising Jarl Hákon stressed the earl's adherence to the pagan religion and its beneficial effect on the land (Ström 1981:440–58). However, by the eleventh century the motif of the 'land-guardian' had been incorporated into praise-poems for the early Christian kings, as in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*.⁴ Sigvatr's lausavísa 26 is not quoted in *Heimskringla* but it takes the idea even further, explicitly equating Danish rule with famine, in marked contrast to the prosperity of Óláfr's Christian reign. By recycling such an image in his praise of Óláfr, Sigvatr locates his patron within the model of traditional Scandinavian kingship and thus shows the loss the country has sustained by his departure.

Such skaldic parallels between the saintly Óláfr and the pagan Jarl Hákon are not, however, obviously conducive to the promotion of Óláfr's cult. In the surrounding prose narrative Snorri betrays a great anxiety about these three stanzas and the image of kingship they promote: he identifies the king's actions three times as 'rétt' [just] (*Heimskringla* 1945:328–30). This frames the 'land-guardian' role promoted by the verses within a Christian interpretation of just kingship and prevents the reader from interpreting Óláfr's rather violent actions as un-

³ These stanzas are also grouped together as stanzas 4, 5 and 6 of Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa* by the editors of the *Skaldic Project Homepage*. All Old Norse citations in this paper are taken from the *Skaldic Project*. Translations are my own.

⁴ See stanzas 12, 19, and 28.

kingly. The verses are neither ‘authenticating’ (they do not support the description of an important historical event) nor ‘situational’ (they are not integral to the plot). Rather, they provide Snorri with an opportunity to excuse his hero’s sudden reversal of fortune: he asserts that the king ‘vildi heldr láta af tígninni en af réttðæminu’ [wished rather to give up his kingdom than (his) just rule] (*Heimskringla* 1945:330). In this way Snorri reinterprets Óláfr’s exile not as a military defeat, but as a choice on the part of the king, a voluntary laying down of his power in deference to Christian justice. Separated from the prose text, Sigvatr’s verses evoke a connection between Óláfr and traditional Scandinavian kingship models; framed by the text, they are reinterpreted to explain his exile and defeat through quite a different lens.

After the loss of their king, Óláfr’s followers are transformed from warriors into worshippers as Óláfr himself transforms from defeated ruler into royal saint. Sigvatr, the king’s most devoted follower, takes the lead in this process. His most famous possession is his gilded sword, a gift from King Óláfr. The first verse Sigvatr speaks in the saga is a *lausavísa* that encapsulates the traditional poet-patron relationship as the young poet thanks the king for his gift:

Ek tók lystr né lastak
 (leyfð ið es) þat síðan,
 sóknar Njörðr, við sverði
 sá’s mín vili – þínu;
 þollr, fekt húskarl hollan
 (höfum ráðit vel báðir)
 látrs, en ek lánardröttin,
 linns blóða mér góðan (3.1–8).

Eagerly I took your sword, Njörðr of battle; I do not speak ill of that afterwards. Praise is my occupation and my wish. Fir-tree of the blood of the serpent’s litter, you win a faithful follower and I a good lord. We have both benefited.

It is not surprising therefore that swords and other such weapons figure prominently in the kennings of the *Erfidrápa* and are key to the transformation Óláfr’s followers undergo after his death. The first stanza to describe the battle of Stiklarstaðir in *Heimskringla* shows Óláfr’s standard-bearer Þórðr Fólason leading the charge into battle (7.4–8). Like Sigvatr’s sword, the standard is ‘fagrla gylta’ [beautifully gilded] (7.7); also like the sword, which cements the king’s relationship with the poet, the battle-standard draws the drótt together as ‘saman hjörtu’ [hearts together] they enter into the conflict (7.4). The king heroically advances first behind this standard:

Mest frá k merkjum næstan
 mín dróttin framm sínum,
 stöng óð fyr gram, gingu,
 (gnógr styrr vas þar) fyrri (12.1–4).

I heard my lord went the very nearest in front of his standard; the pole went forth before the lord; there was enough tumult there.

In this stanza, the possessive ‘mín dróttin’ further emphasises the collective nature of the warrior band and in particular the poet’s close relationship with the king.

In contrast to the king’s golden swords and standards, Sigvatr uses metaphors of unadorned poles to describe the enemy’s forces:

Áðr vitu eigi meiðar
ógnar skers né hersa
(þjóð réð þengils dauða)
þann styrk búandmanna (20.1–4).

Beams of the skerry of terror did not know before then the strength of the farmers or of warriors. The people planned the king's death.

The use of the word *meiðr* to describe the enemy echoes again the pre-Christian kennings of *Vellekla*: in that poem, the skald praises Jarl Hákon as a 'þrøngvimeiðr gunnar lunda' [oppressing-pole of the trees of battle] (24.1–4). Suggesting also the verb *meiða* [to injure or maim], Sigvatr's use of the word characterises Óláfr's enemies as pagan and deadly. Similarly, the second helmingr of that stanza calls the enemy swords 'sárelds viðir' [trees of wound-fire] (20.6). The enemy's poles of terror and wound-branches are very different from the golden swords and standards of King Óláfr's army. Their swords are not expensive works of art, but deadly instruments of destruction.

There is, however, a reversal in the pole and sword imagery in Snorri's *Magnúss saga ins góða* when King Óláfr has become the venerated royal saint. The word *meiðr*, previously used to describe the rebellious warriors, appears in a subsequent stanza to describe the pilgrims coming to Óláfr's tomb:

Gört's, þeims gótt bar hjarta,
gollit skrín of mínum
(hrósak helgi ræsis;
hann sótti goð) drótni;
ár gengr margr frá mæru
meiðr þess konungs leiði
hreins með heilar sjónir
hrings, es blindr kom þingat (24.1–8).

A gold shrine is made for my lord, who carried a good heart. I praise the sanctity of the king; he sought God. Many a pole of the ring who came there blind walks early from the bright king's illustrious way with healed eyes.

Apart from stanza 12, cited above, this is the only other instance of the phrase 'mínn dróttin' [my lord] in Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa*. In the previous instance, the king was seen advancing at the head of his troops under a golden standard; here, the king lies in a golden shrine. Whereas *meiðr* formerly described the hostile forces driving Óláfr out of his kingdom, here the same word is part of a kenning for the pilgrims coming to visit the saint's relics; it suggests the pilgrim's staff rather than the soldier's sword. Such a comparison implies that the same men who fought against the king now pay their respects at his tomb, in keeping with Sigvatr's assertion that 'iðrask nú [...] þess verks búendr' [the farmers now repent of this deed] (11.2–4). Such a transformation is likely a nod towards reconciliation under the reign of Magnús and refocusses attention from the king's ignominious flight into exile to the pilgrims' holy journey towards his shrine.

Snorri, however, primarily quotes stanzas from the *Erfidrápa* not in the saga of King Magnús, during whose reign it was composed, but in the saga of King Óláfr to support his own account of the king's final battle. At first Snorri seems to emphasise the authority of skaldic stanzas in general and to justify his use of them in a historical text: King Óláfr deploys his skalds in the field, saying,

Skuluð þér [...] hér vera ok sjá þau tíðendi, er hér gerask. Er yðr þá eigi segjandi saga til, því at þér skuluð frá segja ok yrkja um síðan (*Heimskringla* 1945:358).

You will be here and see the events of what happens. Then the news will not need to be told to you, because you will tell and recite it afterwards.

Each skald immediately recites a verse and the warriors learn by them by heart (*Heimskringla* 1945:358–60). However, Sigvatr is clearly a special exception to the rule: he has gone on pilgrimage to Rome. When the skalds mock his absence, the king says,

Ekki þarf Sigvatr at sneiða, þótt hann sé eigi hér. Opt hefir hann mér vel fylgt. Hann mun nú biðja fyrir oss, ok mun þess enn all mjök þurfa (*Heimskringla* 1945:358).

It is not necessary to scorn Sigvatr, although he is not here. He has often followed me well. Now he will pray for us, and it will be a very great need (for us).

This episode in the saga indicates a re-imagining of the role of the court poet and of how Sigvatr is most useful to a king who will soon become a saint. The three skalds who fulfil the traditional role of remaining on the battlefield with the king also die with him; their poems are not remembered. Sigvatr's new identity as the Christian pilgrim and his voluntary exile from the battle ensure not only that his prayers may help the king, but also that he will survive. Rather ironically, in light of the king's words to his three skalds, Snorri primarily uses Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa* to corroborate his account of the battle.⁵ The *Erfidrápa* then goes on to describe the first miracles that take place after Óláfr's death. It is clear therefore that as the Viking warrior Óláfr transforms into a saint, his skald's role also changes: Sigvatr has become not only a eulogist but also a hagiographer.

The *Erfidrápa* is not the only sequence of verses to commemorate the king's death. Sigvatr's absence from the battle also prompted him to compose a series of *lausavísur* mourning the death of the king, which Snorri incorporated into the beginning of his *Magnúss saga ins goða*, the next saga in *Heimskringla*.⁶ Each of the verses is identical in structure, contrasting past happiness with present sorrow. In the first *helmingr* of each stanza, Sigvatr describes a circumstance that reminds him of his grief: he hears a man mourning the death of his wife (20); ravens fly over the harbour (21); the king's warriors play war games (22). Verbs are primarily in the present tense: 'maðr missir' [a man loses], 'sék' [I see], 'geng ek frá' [I turn from] (20.1; 21.1; 22.1). The second *helmingr* of each stanza then shifts into the past tense when Sigvatr meditates on the loss that has caused this grief. Words such as 'forðum' and 'endr' [formerly] emphasize the past (21.4; 21.7); the repetition of the verb *minna* [to remember] further highlights the poet's separation from earlier and happier days (21.2; 22.5). This contrast between past and present is a distinctive characteristic of Old English elegy, which, as Joseph Harris has observed, 'consists predominantly of dramatic monologues in which a human speaks in the first person about the past[...]the contrast with the speaker's present, a contrast invested with sadness, is constant' (Harris 1983:47). Harris' observations on the similarity of elegy in Old Norse is based largely on Eddic poems and on the longer *erfidrápur*, but this opposition between past and present is certainly in evidence in Sigvatr's *lausavísur* as well.

⁵ Heather O'Donoghue observes that Snorri's description of this battle is the most factual among the three prose narratives – *Óláfs saga helga*, the *Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr*, and *Fóstbræðra saga* – that describe it, and that Sigvatr's verses play a particularly important corroborating role in his account (O'Donoghue 2005:72–73).

⁶ These are *lausavísur* stanzas 18 and 20–24 in the *Skaldic Project*. Chapters 9–10 continue with *lausavísur* 25, 26, and 28–30.

These stanzas also contain moving descriptions of Sigvatr's physical reaction to his grief. Discussing the paucity of descriptions of emotion in the sagas, William Ian Miller notes that physical indicators rather than emotion words are often used to signal feeling in a sort of 'somatic semiotics' (Miller 1992:100). However, Sigvatr's poetic descriptions are more complex than Miller's saga examples: not only does Sigvatr describe his physical reaction to grief, he metaphorically compares grieving with being wounded in battle. In *lausavísa* 20 the poet encounters a man weeping over his wife's death; he then compares the husband's grief to a warrior who has lost his lord and who cries 'víg tár' [battle-tears] (20.8). This word could be both a kenning for the blood a warrior would shed as he continued to fight a losing battle, and also the tears that would be wept over the lord's death as a result of that battle. In *lausavísa* 22, the poet says, 'emk sem bazt, í brjósti, / bleikr' [Pale, I feel as though wounded in the heart] (22.3–4). This metaphorical use of the verb *binda* in conjunction with a paleness that could be the result either of grief or of the loss of blood further compares injuries suffered in war to the body's expression of grief. The poetic language thus blurs the distinction between emotional injury and physical injury in Sigvatr's verses. Countering the accusations of desertion Sigvatr faced for his absence from the battle, such metaphors re-imagine the poet as one of the warriors who fought with the king. Poetic grief thus becomes a substitute for heroic death.

Snorri structures the prose text around these *lausavísur* in a way similar to the battle sequence surrounding Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa*. In this instance, the prose narrative describes not a battle but a journey, locating the recitation of each *lausavísa* progressively closer to the poet's farm in Norway as he returns from Rome. Sigvatr speaks the first verse in Rome itself before he moves on to an unnamed village; he then travels to Hillarsund, Kaupang and Trondheim before arriving at his own farm, reciting a verse at each location.⁷ It is surely no coincidence that when the prose text finally locates Sigvatr at home in Norway, the stanza Sigvatr recites is one which extends his grief to his entire native land:

Há þótti mér hlæja,
höll, of Nóreg allan,
fýrr vask kenndr á knörrum,
klif, meðan Áleifr lifði.
Nú þykki mér miklu,
mitt stríð es svá, hliðir,
jöfurs hylli varðk alla,
öblíðari síðan (24.1–8).

When Óláfr lived, the high, sloping cliffs seemed to me to laugh through all of Norway. Earlier, I was known on the ships. Now the mountainsides seem greatly unhappy to me, such is my adversity since I lost all the lord's favour.

These stanzas form a bridge in the narrative between the death of King Óláfr and the coronation of his son Magnús five years later. By including skaldic verse that mourns the death of Óláfr rather than celebrating the Danish occupiers who briefly follow his rule, Snorri keeps his focus firmly on the succession of the Norwegian royal house. In this case, sorrow functions as a refusal to eulogize: the narrative emphasis shifts to the poet and then via the poet's grief to the gap created by the king's absence, but never to the king who killed him.⁸

⁷ *Lausavísur* 18 and 20–23 respectively.

⁸ Snorri also uses poetic lament in *Óláfs saga helga* when describing Óláfr's victory over Jarl Svein. Corroborating his account of the battle with Sigvatr's *Nesjavísur*, the only stanzas Snorri cites to represent the enemy's experience come from Bersi Skáldtorfusson's *flokkr* about Óláfr *helgi* in which the skald laments the fall of his patron (*Heimskringla* 1945:65–67). In this episode, the focus of the verse is similarly on the poet's grief rather than on the enemy king's prowess.

Despite the similarity of his *lausavísur* to the Old English elegies, Sigvatr differs from the Anglo-Saxon poets in one very important respect: he does not present the king's death as the passing of an age that can never come again. Sigvatr's *Bersöglisvísur* stands in marked contrast to The Seafarer's celebrated assertion that:

nearon nu cynigas ne caseras
 ne goldgiefan swylce iu wæron
 þonne hi mæst mid him mæþa gefremedon
 ond on dryhtlicestum dome lifdon.
 Gedroren is þeos duguð eal, dreamas sind gewitene,
 Wuniað þa wacran ond þas woruld healdap (83–87).

There are not now kings nor emperors nor gold-givers as there once were, those who performed among themselves the greatest of glorious deeds and lived in the most noble renown. All that company has perished; joys are departed; weaker people remain and inhabit the world.

Rather, in *Magnúss saga ins góða*, Snorri uses Sigvatr's *Bersöglisvísur* to show how the king's son gradually learns to step into his father's shoes, re-establishing not only the hereditary line of kingship, but also the poet-patron relationship that was destroyed by Óláfr's death. The nine stanzas of *Bersöglisvísur* incorporated in *Heimskringla* are almost more interesting for what they leave out than for what they include, suggesting deliberate choice on the part of the saga-author. The reconstructed poem in the Skaldic Project database contains a number of stanzas that, like the *lausavísur* discussed above, express the theme of past happiness and present sorrow.⁹ However, Snorri incorporated none of those stanzas into *Heimskringla*. Instead, the stanzas he presents from *Bersöglisvísur* are those which echo the models of kingship promoted earlier by the *Erfidrápa*.

The first stanza of *Bersöglisvísur* reiterates the connection between the kingship and the well-being of the land when Sigvatr asks, 'tyst / hvé lengi skal / hans grund?' [How long shall his land be sad?] (1.6–8). In the *Erfidrápa* Óláfr maimed thieves and robbers (5.1–8); in *Bersöglisvísur* his son Magnús is similarly a 'veltir þjófs' [toppler of the thief] (10.1–3). Sigvatr locates this model of kingship within a long line of Norwegian rulers when he reminds Magnús of the successful reigns of his predecessors: underlining the importance of father-son relationships, Sigvatr calls Hákon góði 'fóstr Aðalsteins' [Æðelstan's foster-son] (5.5–8), while the two Óláfrs are 'Haralds arfi' and 'sonr Tryggva' [Harald's heir and Tryggvi's son] (5.5–8; 6.5–6). In the final stanza quoted in *Heimskringla*, Magnús has stepped fully into his father's shoes when Sigvatr calls him, as he once called his father, 'mínn dróttin' [my lord] (14.2). In this phrase, the poet-patron relationship that formerly applied to Óláfr and Sigvatr has been re-applied to the skald and Magnús. This is Sigvatr's last verse in *Heimskringla* and it marks the beginning of a new reign as the prose comments,

Eptir þessa áminning skipaðisk konungr vel[...]Magnús konungr gerðisk vinsæll ok ástsæll öllu landsfólki. Var hann fyrir þá sök kallaðr Magnús inn goði (*Heimskringla* 1951:31).

After this admonition, the king changed for the good. King Magnús became popular and beloved by all the people of the land. Because of that reason he was then called Magnús the good.

⁹ See for example stanza 16: 'goll bark jafnt of allan / aldr ok hverk sjaldan / hrygg á hvárrí / tveggja hendi flotna sendis' [Always through the course of his life I, seldom sad, wore gold on both of my two hands, the plunder of the sailors' messenger] (16.5–8). This stanza, along with many of the others, is preserved in *Flateyjarbók*.

Having established Magnús as a law-abiding king, Snorri no longer uses Sigvatr's verses and the poet disappears from the pages of *Heimskringla*.

Sigvatr's verses have thus been used to trace the demise of one ruler and the re-establishment of another, law-abiding king in Snorri's narrative. His *Erfidrápa* chronicles the exile and death Óláfr; his expressions of grief in the subsequent *lausavísur* during his own temporary exile allow the saga-author to concentrate on the gap left by the downfall of Óláfr rather than on the rule of the Danish occupier. This gap can then be filled by Óláfr's son when he has learned how to emulate his father's method of kingship, allowing Sigvatr, in *Bersöglisvísur*, to transfer the poet-patron relationship successfully to a new king of Norway. In marked contrast to the mournful *lausavísur*, there are no expressions of the poet's grief in this sequence of verses as they are recorded in *Heimskringla*. In Snorri's narrative, the grief expressed by Sigvatr merely acts as an interim state between the downfall of one good king and the installation of another; such expressions are not used when a model king sits on the throne. Skaldic grief has thus become a narrative device through which to discuss a change in rulers and to manoeuvre between the old state of affairs and the new. Sigvatr's function in the saga-narrative is clearly as mutable as his own role as a poet; chronicling the lives of kings, saints and exiles, Sigvatr's poetry is as 'mixed' as Snorri's later text.

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Ekki nýtr sólar

När himlen färgades röd av gudarnas blod

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Bakgrund

Jag har tidigare argumenterat för att de norröna myterna om Fimbulvintern och Ragnarök ytterst återgår på erfarenheter av en långvarig solskymning åren 536–537 e Kr orsakad av ett vulkanutbrott eller möjligen en asteroid eller meteorit. Kraftiga utfällningar av sulfat i isarna på Antarktis och Grönland bekräftar att en mycket kraftig eruption av något slag omkring år 536 (Gräslund 2008).

Uppgifterna i *Gylfaginning* att solen var utan verkan två år i följd är så precisa och målände att de mer ger intryck av faktisk beskrivning än något sägenartat. Just detta tog jag som en maning lyfta fram de uppgifter hos senantika författare som *Prokopios*, *Cassiodorus*, *Zachariah från Mytilene*, *Johannes Lydos*, *Johannes av Efesos*/ *Mikael Syriern* som talar om att solen i Medelhavsområdet var permanent skymd i nära två år, kanske från mars 536 till senåret 537. Jag noterade också att en mycket likartad tradition återberättas i *Kalevala*.

Den indonesiska vulkanen Tamboras utbrott 1815 brukar anföras som det värsta under de senaste årtusendena. Sulfatiska gaser som då slungades upp i stratosfären hindrade solvärmen att nå jorden med en mycket kall sommar som följd året därpå, 1816, ”året utan sommar”, med missväxt och svält i Europa och Nordamerika. Ändå var solen inte synbart skymd en enda dag. Kontrasten är enorm till 536 års utbrott, då solen knappt syntes på nära två år och som enligt studier av fossila trädringar följdes av iskalla somrar på norra halvklotet under hela tio år, 536–545. I norra Sverige sjönk medeltemperaturen under sommaren 3–4 grader, en våldsamt klimatförsämring.

De klimatiska följderna av 536 års utbrott uppfyller alla krav på en ”nukleär vinter”, det slag av långvarig global nedkylning som antas följa av ett allmänt kärnvapenkrig, med kallare och fuktigare väder under alla årstider. Men helt avgörande är de kallare och fuktigare somrarna med begränsad växtsäsong. Förstörd betesväxt och skörd två år i följd ledde i äldre tid ofrånkomligen till svår nöd. Om myten om Fimbulvintern ytterst återgår på konsekvenserna av vulkanutbrottet 536 med full effekt i tio hela år, var det en katastrof av rent gammaltestamentliga dimensioner.

Vidare framhöll jag att stora, tidigare öppna arealer i Skandinavien och Mellaneuropa under mitten och andra hälften av 500-talet växte igen med skog, ett tydligt uttryck för en befolkningskatastrof med effekter över flera generationer. Härtill kommer den av klimatkatastrofen troligen utlösta Justinianska pestepandemin, som kraftigt minskade befolkningen i åtminstone södra och mellersta Europa.

Till bilden hör också att majoriteten av järnålderns många byar i östra Mellansverige under 500-talet övergavs för att i reducerad storlek flytta till litet högre och torrare mark i närheten, en bebyggelseomläggning av enorma dimensioner. Likaså tycks så gott som all fast bosättning norr om mellersta Hälsingland ha slagits ut i ett par generationer. Andra klimatiska marginalområden, som delar av sydsvenska höglandet, kom sedan att länge ligga för fåfot, i vissa fall till vår tid. Till detta kommer för Sveriges del färre bosättningsspår, gravar och fornsaksfynd. (För referenser till denna bakgrundsteckning, se Gräslund 2008.)

I det följande återkommer jag till frågan om myterna om Fimbulvintern och Ragnarök ytterst återgår på denna klimatkatastrof och kan då också visa att likartade mytiska teman uppträder över stora delar av världen, långt bortom indoeuropeisk tradition. Enligt min mening

stärker det i hög grad hypotesen. Jag försöker här också på ett litet tydligare sätt förklara övergången från reell upplevelse till mytisk tradition.

Gylfaginning

I *Gylfaginning* i Snorres Edda omtalas *fimbulvetr*, med ungefärlig betydelse den ”stora”, den ”mäktiga” vintern. I tre av huvudhandskrifterna sägs Fimbulvintern komma som ett förbud om *Ragnarök* och i alla fyra att den förbådas av krig och mänsklig ondska. Beskrivningen i *Gylfaginning* (kap. 51) är densamma i alla huvudhandskrifterna, medan de inledande fraserna är mer kortfattade i Codex Upsaliensis (Dillmann 1991: 187; Hultgård 2004: 51 ff.).

Under namnet Gangleri träder kung Gylfe in i en hall hos asarna och ställer frågor till tre män som sitter där. Texten återges efter Codex Regius (Holtsmark & Helgason 1950: 68 f.):

Þá mælti Gangleri: „Hver tíðindi eru at segia frá um ragnarökr? Þess hefi ek eigi fyrr heyrt getit.”

Hár segir: „Mikil tíðindi eru þaðan at segia ok mörq. Þau en fyrstu at vetr sá kemr er kallaðr Fimbulvetr; þá drífr snær or ǫllum áttum, frost eru þá mikil ok vindar hvassir. Ekki nýtr sólar. Þeir vetr fara .iii. saman ok ekki sumar milli.”

‘Då sade Gangleri: »Vad finns att berätta om Ragnarök? Jag har inte hört något berättas förut.»

‘Här säger: »Många och stora händelser är att berätta om det. Det första är att den vinter som kallas Fimbulvintern kommer. Då yr snö från alla håll, då blir det mycket kallt och vassa vindar. Solen har ingen verkan. Tre vintrar kommer i följd och ingen sommar emellan.» (Johansson 1997 med korrigerings av förf., Gräslund 2008, not 10).

Beskrivningen av Fimbulvintern inskränks till de tre sista meningarna, þá drífr snær or ǫllum áttum, frost eru þá mikil ok vindar hvassir. Ekki nýtr sólar. Þeir vetr fara .iii. saman ok ekki sumar milli. Av dessa framstår Ekki nýtr sóla helt klart som en förklaring till upplysningen om snö, kyla och vassa vindar. Så har också Finnur Jónsson (1902: 71 f.) och Björn Collinder (1978: 81) uppfattat det när de i sina översättningar låter denna mening bilda bisats till den föregående. Men att solen inte är särskilt framträdande om vintern och inte skiner när snön yr från alla håll är ju inte förvånande, det vet varje nordbo sedan barnsben. Och då frasen Ekki nýtr sólar samtidigt förklarar varför det under två år inte blir någon sommar, måste slutsatsen bli att alla tre meningarna talar om samma sak, nämligen att det råder vinterväder under sommaren två år i följd på grund av att solen inte har någon verkan.

Den ganska vanliga översättningen av Ekki nýtr sólar med ”solen skiner inte” är en något för fri tolkning. Här sägs endast att solen ”inte gör någon nytta”, ”inte har någon verkan”. Det lämnar ett visst utrymme för att solens sken kanske kunde skönjas svagt, åtminstone sommartid.

Völuspá

I *Völuspá* 40–41 finns en notis om Fenrisulven och dess avkomma som rimligen också har med Fimbulvintern att göra. Partiet återges här efter Hultgård 2004 som följer Codex Regius i enlighet med Helgason 1971; svensk tolkning Williams 2007):

Austr sat in aldna
í Iárnviði
ok fœddi þar
Fenris kindir.

Verðr af þeim þollom
einna nøkkorr
tungls tíugari
í trollz hami.

Fylliz fiqrvi
feigra manna,
rýðr ragna siqt
rauðom dreyra;
svört verða sólskin
of sumor eptir,
veðr þoll válynd –
vitoð ér enn, eða hva?

Den gamla satt öster i Järnsbogen och
födde där Fenres släktingar. En enda av
dem alla blir i trollgestalt månens rövare;

fyller sig med döda människors lik,
rödfärgar makternas boning med rött blod.
Solskenet var då svart somrarna därefter,
alla vindar onda. Fattar ni, va?

Här redovisas alltså att månen försvinner och att solens sken förmörkas efterföljande somrar och allt väder blir opålitligt. Draget av saklighet blir inte mindre av uppgiften att himlen samtidigt färgas dramatiskt röd, något som brukar ske just efter stora vulkanutbrott (se vidare nedan).

Tidsordningen, att måne försvinner innan solen svartnar, kan naturligtvis vara en tillfällighet. Men då det tar en viss tid innan stratosfären efter en kraftig vulkanisk eruption fylls upp helt av sulfatiska aerosoler, är det naturligt att månen med sitt svaga sken försvinner ur människors åsyn strax innan solen gör det.

Senantika källor talar om att solen och dess sken, liksom månen, blev mörka, svarta eller blåaktiga. Det stämmer väl med närvaron av torra vulkaniska sulfatpartiklar i atmosfären. Det ger också drag av verklighet åt uppgiften i *Völuspá* att solskenet svartnar i samband med *Ragnarök* liksom åt frasen *Ekki nýtr sólar* i *Gylfaginning*, att solen inte har någon verkan. Sammantagna framstår dessa uppgifter i det annars så gåtfulla *Völuspá* mer som en saklig rapport av nyktra ögonvittnen än som förvirrad mytisk överdrift.

Att *Völuspá* endast nämner årstiden sommar i samband med att solen svartnar ter sig också så fullt rimligt eftersom fenomenet leder till katastrof bara om det drabbar sommaren.

Det faktum att *Völuspá* talar om somrar i pluralis framstår som ett viktigt komplement till *Gylfaginning*, där tiden för solförmörkelsen preciseras till två somrar i följd, precis som i senantika källor.

Hyndluljóð

Uppgiften i *Hyndluljóð* om snöfall och skarpa vintrar som ett förebud om *Ragnarök* framstår också som en del av traditionen om *Fimbulvetr* (här efter Hultgård 2004 som följer Helgason 1971):

Haf gengr hriðum
við himin siálfan
líðr lönd yfir,
en lopt bilar;
þaðan koma snjóvar

ok snarir vindar;
þá er í ráði
at rogn um þrióti.

Havet slår med stormvågor mot sjálva himlen,
stiger över landen och luften ger vika
därav kommer snöfall och skarpa vindar
då är gudarnas undergång bestämd

För att en klimatsituation verkligen skall uppfattas som ett förebud om världens och gudarnas undergång, måste den vara abnorm i den meningen att den strider kraftigt mot naturens vanliga ordning. Denna vers kan därför knappast syfta på kalla vintrar som sådana utan rimligen på Fimbulvinterns två vintriga somrar.

Vafþrúðnismál

I *Vafþrúðnismál* frågar Oden jätten *Vafþrúðnir* (efter Hultgård 2004 som följer Helgason 1971):

hvat lifir manna
þá er inn mæra líðr
fimbulvetr með firom?

Vilka människor lever kvar
när den beryktade Fimbulvintern
lider mot sitt slut?

Får vi tro *Vafþrúðnismál* har det alltså funnits en tradition som förknippat Fimbulvintern med en befolkningskatastrof. Ja, tanken ligger implicit redan i frågan. Oden ber inte att få veta hur många människor som överlevde Fimbulvintern, bara vilka som gjorde det.

Vafþrúðnir svarar:

Líf ok Lífþrasir
en þau leynaz muno
í holti Hoddmímis;
morgindöggar
þau sér at mat hafa;
þaðan af alder alaz

Liv och Livþrasir, och de skall gömma sig i Hoddmimes lund; morgondag har de att äta; från dem föds nya slakten

De nordiska namnen Liv och Livþrasir antyder att det rör sig om en hednisk tradition, en slags återskapelseberättelse som knyter an till myten om Ask och Embla. Att bara två individer sägs överleva får ses som en naturlig förenklingsmetafor för en svår befolkningskatastrof.

Från verklighet till myt

Ragnarökmytens slutscener där sol, jord, gudar och människor återuppstår i en paradislignande miljö ser jag som en metaforisk minnesbild av den lyckliga dag då Fimbulvintern äntligen är slut, solen har kommit tillbaka och bättre tider stundar för dem som överlevt.

Enligt *Vafþrúðnismál* (11–12) och Snorres *Gylfaginning* (9) dras solen under dagen över himlen av hästen Skinfaxe för att sedan om natten föras tillbaka åt öster av hästen Rimfaxe som vid ankomsten låter sin fradga falla som morgondag. Fradgan är närande därför att hästen om natten betar på de underjordiska fältens gräs som är bestrött med honungsdag, just

där Mimer håller till vid Yggdrasils nedersta grenar. Så när man poetiskt skulle beskriva den minnesvärda dag då Fimbulvinterns mörker gav vika för den återvändande solen, kan den livgivande morgondaggen i [Hodd]Mimers lund ha varit en för alla begriplig metafor för naturens och människosläktets pånyttfödelse. Scenen föregrips i två efterföljande verser i *Vafprúðnismál* (46–47) där solen, just innan hon slukas av ulven, hinner föda en dotter som efterhand ska överta rollen som sol (Johansson 1997: 91):

hvaðan kómr sól
á inn slétta himin,
þá er þessa hefir Fenrir farit?

Eina dóttur
berr Álfróðull,
áðr hana Fenrir fari;
sú skal ríða,
þá er regin deyia,
móður brautir, mær.

hur kommer sol
på den släta himlen,
när ulven denna sol hunnit upp?

En dotter får Alfrödul
Innan Fenre förgör henne.
Den mön skall rida
moderns väg
när makterna dör.

Talet i *Voluspá* om att himlen färgas röd av gudarnas blod är helt i överensstämmelse med hypotesen om ett våldsamt vulkanutbrott. De stora mängder svaveldioxid som vid kraftiga utbrott slungas upp i de högre luftlagren brukar på nordliga breddgrader under lång tid åtföljas av våldsamt rödflammande spektakulära kvällshimlar. Sådana syner blev omtyckta motiv för många konstnärer efter utbrotten av Tambora 1815 och Krakatoa 1883. Med tanke på att traditionen om Ragnarök i första hand får antas ha rötter i Norge, tar jag som exempel Edvard Munch. I sin dagbok har denne vittnat om hur han hösten 1883 vid solnedgången promenerade med två vänner utanför Kristiania. Det var strax efter Krakatoas utbrott:

– så gik solen ned – himmelen ble pludselig blodrød – jeg stanset, lænet mig til gjærdet træet til døden – over den blåsvarte fjord og by lå blod och ildtunger – mine vänner gik videre og jeg stod igjen skjælvende av angst – og jeg følte at det gik et stort uendleig skrig gjennom naturen. (Eggum 2007)

Det dröjde tio år innan Munch försökte befria sig från sin kusliga upplevelse genom att måla den. Först kom *Skriet* 1893 och de följande åren ytterligare målningar med våldsamt blodröda himlar, även de med känslomässigt laddade namn som *Förtvivlan*, *Ångslan* och *Melankoli*.

Här återger jag än en gång de aktuella stroferna ur *Voluspá* i svensk tolkning:

Fyller sig med döda mannars lik,
rödfärgar makternas boningar med rött blod.
Solskenet var då svart somrarna därefter,
alla vindar onda

Då makternas boningar bara kan syfta på gudarnas himmel och då Fenre hör hemma i gudarnas värld, kan det bara vara gudarnas blod och gudarnas lik saken här gäller. Språkligt sett

tycks det också fullt möjligt att ”manna” här syftar på gudar och inte på människor (Gräslund 2008: 117, not 80). I översättningen ovan, hämtad från Williams 2007, har jag därför ersatt ordet ”människor” för det isländska ”manna” med det mer neutrala ”mannar”, som kan fungera även för gudar.

Även i Snorres version av *Voluspá* i *Gylfaginning* (vers 56) kopplas solens och stjärnornas fördunkling till eld som flamar mot himlen. Här i tolkning av Williams (2007):

Solen svartnar
Jorden sjunker i havet,
Klara stjärnor försvinner från himlen.
Eld rasar mot livgivaren [eld]
Lågan flamar högt mot själva himlen

Munchs chockartade reaktion ger en levande bild av hur järnålderns människor i Norden kan ha upplevt den blodrött flammande himlen efter eruptionen år 536, för vilken just vulkanen Krakatoa brukar göras ansvarig. Munch och *Voluspá* talar samma känslorpråk.

Säkert fylldes järnålderns människor av fasa när de, redan plågade av svält, kväll efter kväll, månad efter månad liksom på storbildsskärm såg himlen färgas röd av gudarnas blod i deras kamp mot onda makter, som i en våldsam upptakt till världsalltets undergång. Men när nu trots allt världen inte gick under, kom minnet av *fimbulvetr* i stället att länge sväva över nordborna som ett skrämmande apokalyptisk hot om en kommande undergång, *Ragnarøk*, ett hot som efterhand blev allt blekare för att till slut finnas kvar bara som rester av en myt.

Att man överhuvudtaget kom på tanken att de odödliga gudarna kunde dö ser jag som ett uttryck för den bittra erfarenheten att gudarna tagit emot människornas böner och dyrbara offer för att de skulle avvärja katastrofen men sedan visat sig oförmögna att göra det. Gudarna var lika maktlösa som människorna. Jag håller det för troligt, att makternas förtroendekapital på jorden efter detta kom att till stor del vara förbrukat under flera generationer framöver.

Lästa på traditionellt vis, är dikternas uppgifter om *fimbulvetr* och *Ragnarøk* precis så kryptiska som man kan förvänta sig av myter. Men insatta i ett bredare skrifthistoriskt och naturhistoriskt sammanhang ter de sig klara, logiska och utan sakliga motsägelser, precis som är att vänta för en tradition som ytterst återgår på en för alla människor gemensam faktisk erfarenhet.

I *Voluspá* och *Vafprúðnismál* förklaras solens och månens försvinnande med att de slukas av odjur. Mätt med dåtidens naturvetenskapliga kunskapsmått är det en högst rimlig förklaring.

Avståndet från år 536 till nedtecknandet av myterna om Fimbulvintern och Ragnarök kan förefalla långt. Men en stor del av den historiska ramen till den poetiska Eddans hjältediktning, som hänför sig till 300–400-talen, är ju ännu äldre trots att händelserna bakom måste ha haft en långt mindre inneboende minneskraft än någonsin den fruktansvärda Fimbulvintern.

Förleden **fimbul-*, ”stor”, ”mäktig”, skulle då vara ett förstärkande epitet för en sammanhängande vinterperiod på omkring två och ett halvt år, en långvinter som övergick all mänsklig hågkomst. När man i efterhand kom att tala om *fimbulvetr* var det därför säkert inte i bemärkelsen den ovanligt svåra vintern utan som den ”oändliga långvintern”, den som aldrig tycktes vilja ta slut. På samma sätt bör då inte heller uttrycket *inn mæri fimbulvetr* i *Vafprúðnismál* tolkas som den ”berömda” eller ”ryktbara storvintern” utan snarare som den ”beryktade” eller ”omtalade” ”långvintern”.

Ragnarøk har denna form i den äldre Eddan medan Snorres Edda har *ragnarökkr*. Som Bernharðsson noterar har det äldre *røk* traditionellt ansetts höra samman med FE *racu* f., ”löpande”, ”flodbädd”, ”berättelse” och med FS *raka* f. och FHT *rahha* f., ”berättelse”, ”tal” varför *Ragnarøk* tolkats som ”gudarnas öden.” Den yngre skrivningen *rökkr* har då förklarats som en folketymologisk förväxling med ordet *rökr*, ”mörker.” Nyligen har dock Bernharðs-

son visat att detta inte har stöd i det språkliga materialet. *Rök* är inte en neutral *a*-stam utan en neutral *wa*-stam och grundordet är substantivet FI *rök(k)*, *rek(k)*, ”mörker” med därtill hörande starkt verb *rök(k)va*, *rek(k)va*, ”mörkna”.

Ordet *rök* är semantiskt komplext och kan också betyda ”orsak”, ”ursprung”, eller ”öde”, och Bernharðsson antar att det är denna spännvidd som kommer till uttryck i att substantivet *rök(k)r* förutom ”skymning” också kan betyda ”gryning.” I valet mellan dessa alternativ tolkar han *Ragnarök* som ”gudarnas gryning” ”gudarnas pånyttfödelse” med hänvisning till att *Ragnarök* avslutas med att gudarna tillsammans med solen, naturen och människorna då återuppstår. Men som Bernharðsson noterar har verbet *rök(k)va*, *rek(k)va* ingen annan känd betydelse än ”mörkna” samtidigt som betydelsen ”gryning” för substantivet *rök(k)r* är belagd endast i ett fall och då från 1600-talet. (Bernharðsson 2007: 34 f.) Med hänvisning till den långvariga solskymning som enligt *Gylfaginning* inleder *Ragnarök*, till traditionen om att solskenet därvid svartnar, till den permanenta solskymning som senantika källor klart belagt för åren 536–537 samt till det dunklare dagsljus som länge brukar råda efter våldsamma eruptioner, förefaller det därför rimligare att ta fasta på den för både *rök* och *rök(k)r* språkligt väl belagda grundbetydelsen ”skymning.”

Som *Ragnarök(k)r* och *fimbulvetr* framträder i *Gylfaginning*, stämmer alltså den språkliga innebörden i det förra begreppet väl överens med den reella innebörden i det senare. *Ragnarök* bör då i första hand tydas som ”gudarnas skymning”, den förmörkelse som inte ens gudarna kan avvärja och som förebådar deras undergång. Jag håller det därför för troligt att benämningen *Ragnarök* återspeglar den stora solskymningen åren 536 och 537 e. Kr.

Liknande myter i världen

Om traditionen om Fimbulvintern och Ragnarök ytterst återgår på erfarenheter av en långvarig solförmörkelse som drabbat hela jorden, borde liknande myter återfinnas utanför det indoeuropeiska traditionsområdet. Redan ett hastigt skummande av ytan av det ofantliga mytmaterialet visar också att så är fallet. Motivet att solen försvinner under lång tid så att jorden försänks i mörker och kyla och livet blir outhärdligt men sedan efter mycket besvär återförs till sin plats på himlen har nästan global spridning, bortsett från Afrika söder om Sahara och Australien. Här endast några exempel.

I *Kalevalas* 47:e sång enligt Lönnrots redigering, beger sig solen och månen ner till jorden för att lyssna på Väinömoins kantelespel. Men båda tas till fånga av Pohjagumman, som stänger in solen i ett berg och månen i en sten, 47:21–29. Översättning av Lars och Mats Huldén:

Länge var det natt i världen,
nedmörkt utan ljus för jännan ;
det var natt i Kalevala,
natt i Väinösläktens stugor,
liksom ock i höga himlen,
där i himlagubbens hemvist.

Överguden Ukko förstår inte vad som hänt (47: 51–58):

Ukko grubblar nu och grunnar
vad slags moln det är för månen,
vad slags dunst som döljer solen,
då man ej förmärker månen,
solen inte längre lyser.

Solen och månen är försvunna länge, så ännu i 49:e sången (1–10):

Solen lyser alltjämt icke,
milda månen skiner icke
över Väinöfolkets gårdar,
Kalevalas kulna moar;
säden frös på alla åkrar,
kräken kunde inte trivas,
det var hemskt för himlens fåglar,
sorgesamt för alla människor,
då man ej såg solen lysa,
månens sken ej nånsin skönjdes.

Efter många om och men befrias till slut både sol och måne och återförs till himlen.

I *Kalevala* sägs alltså uttryckligen att solen är skynd av dis eller tjocka av något slag och att sol och måne är borta länge. Grödan fryser, boskapen far illa och människorna är djupt oroade. Talande är notisen ”det var hemskt för himlens fåglar”, en reaktion typisk för eklipstillstånd. Här möter vi inte heller något tal om vinter, allt utspelar sig sommartid.

Då det i andra delar av *Kalevala* beskrivs detaljer i dräkt och vapen som pekar tillbaka mot den yngre järnåldern, kan det inte vara omöjligt att berättelser om så enastående och skrämmande händelser som ”åren utan sommar” kunnat traderas i sångform i fyrtio generationer. Min hypotes är därför att även dessa partier i *Kalevala* är fragment av goda ögonvittnesskildringar av händelserna år 536–537.

Likartade förklaringsmyter som de i *Eddan* och i *Kalevala* är kända från många andra håll på norra halvklotet. Intressant är att det bara är i myter hos nordliga folk, som ju drabbas extra hårt av klimatkatastrofer, som gudarna går under tillsammans med människorna som i *Ragnarök*. Sådana teman möter vi t ex hos *Ainu* på Hokaido och hos *Kamtchuk*, *Koryak* och andra nordostsibiriska folk (Witzel 2005: 47).

Så har vi den forniranska traditionen om vad som brukar uppfattas som speciellt kalla vintrar (Hultgård 2004; 2007). Men i *Pahlavi*-traditionen talas inte bara om kyla och snö utan också om ett evigt regnande och haglande, något som mer hör samman med uselt sommarväder än smällkalla vintrar. Där talas också om tre på varandra följande katastrofala ”vintrar”, förödande för människor och djur. Men stränga vintrar leder sällan till katastrof, däremot iskalla somrar med förstörd växtsäsong. Till samma mönster ansluter *Avesta*-mytens tal i *Vidēvdād* om en vinter som varar i tio månader, vilket skulle innebära vinterväder under större delen av den långa iranska sommaren.

Välkänd är myten hos nordvästkustindianerna *Haida* om solen som länge hålls gömd av en gammal man medan jorden ligger i mörker. Till slut lyckas Korpen röva tillbaka solen och återföra den till himlen. Varianter på samma tema möter vi hos både *Inuiter* och nordliga skogsindianer som *Cree*, *Crow* och *Cherokee*. (Reid & Bringhurst 1996; Witzel 2005: 49 f.)

Liknande myter förekommer över stora delar av Eurasien, Japan, Sydostasien liksom i Mellanamerika. Ofta omtalas de på ett missvisande sätt som skapelsemyter, men världen med gudar, mytiska eller ibland riktiga människor finns redan. Myterna handlar i stället om hur solen rövas bort av onda makter och göms, eller gömmer sig själv, i en grotta, ask eller liknande. Genomgående är att världen tidigare varit ljus men nu försänks i mörker med katastrofala följder för allt levande. Det hela slutar alltid med att gudar eller mytiska människor måste befria solen och återföra den till himlen så att livet kan återgå till det normala (Witzel 2005).

När det en enda gång sägs hur länge solen är borta, *Miao* (Hmong) i sydöstra Kina, får vi uppgiften *två år*, precis i enlighet med senantika källor, *Gylfaginning* och *Voluspá*. Hos *Yabarana* i Amazonas sägs att solen är borta i flera år (Witzel 2005, 47, 54).

I en myt från *Shao*, centrala Taiwan, berättas att sol och måne stulits av två drakar och att världen då faller i mörker så att skördarna förstörs och folket lider. Efter stora mödor lyckas

ett ungt människopar döda drakarna och placerar ut sol och måne på himlen igen. Intressant är uppgiften att man i samband med att sol och måne försvann hörde *två fruktansvärda buller* och kände att *marken skakade* (<http://www.taiwandc.org/folk-sun.htm>). Eftersom bullret av det ganska måttliga utbrottet på Krakatoa vid Java 1883 både hördes och kändes så långt norrut som Saigon och Bangkok och på Mauritius utanför östra Afrika (Winchester 2003, 260, 262) måste den mycket kraftigare eruptionen år 536 ha hörts och känts tydligt på Taiwan om den, som man ofta antar, ägde rum just i Indonesien.

Även om dessa myter och mytritualer delvis kan ha spridits och påverkat varandra från område till område och ibland kan ha vissa drag av skapelsemyter, är det grundläggande temat i allt väsentligt sådant att det kunde återgå på faktiska upplevelser av åren 536–537 då hela världen under lång tid var berövad både sol, måne och stjärnor.

Låt oss här också nämna den grekiska vulkanön Santorinis våldsamma utbrott ca år 1628 före vår tideräkning. Trädringsserier visar att det nästan hade samma effekt som 536 års utbrott, med en efterföljande kraftig global nedkylning under 4–6 år. Det är fullt möjligt att solen också då var skymd helt eller delvis en viss tid. Hur som helst måste man räkna med svåra följder det nordiska samhället vid början av bronsåldern, det samhälle som under det följande årtusendet visade sådant påtagligt intresse för solkult. Överhuvudtaget finns det skäl att beakta detta utbrott när det gäller tidiga myter inom den indoeuropeiska språkkretsen om solen som försvinner och sedan återförs till sin plats. Eventuella rester av myter från en sådan händelse kan mycket väl ha funnits kvar ännu vid mitten av första årtusendet e. Kr. för att revitaliseras i samband den nya solkatastrofen ett och ett halvt årtusende senare.

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Recreating Tradition: Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Víkingarvísur* and Óttarr svarti's *Hofuðlausn*

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Introduction

Unlike other oral poets, court skalds in the Viking age expected their work to be disseminated, re-performed and perpetuated in a more or less stable form. Verse-composition was tightly bound by conventional metrical, syntactic and stylistic constraints, but at the same time the finished poem was conceived as a unique artefact that proclaimed the virtuosity of its maker. The need to satisfy conflicting demands of conformity and individuation of expression constituted a fundamental creative tension for the poets. Traditional formulas and verse-conventions were not employed mechanically. The craft of verse-making lay in varying established patterns of kennings, epithets and rhyme-combinations, producing originality within narrow formal limits. As Roberta Frank has put it, the skaldic poets 'competed with each other in recreating tradition' (2006:190), fixing the poetic art under their own names. This was not simply a matter of aesthetics; the mastery of the skaldic *íþrótt* bore with it unusual potential for the enrichment and social advancement of its practitioners.

Court poetry from as early as the 10th century evinces patterns of echoes and parallel usages between colleagues and rivals and between successive generations of poets. It is not always clear, however, whether such echoes are deliberate, or what purpose they served if they were. Despite the confidence of much scholarship that the texts of Viking-age poems are recoverable from their anachronistic scribal contexts, fragmentary preservation makes it virtually impossible to ascertain the original distinctiveness and intertextual resonances of any piece, rendering the complexity of interactions between poets largely indiscernible. Furthermore, although twentieth-century scholars often inferred direct connections between poems on the basis of the slightest lexical parallels (e.g. de Vries 1999 I:99–281, *passim*), many of these are probably the inevitable symptom of shared formal constraints. Nevertheless, the case for direct indebtedness does seem reasonably secure where marked similarities occur between poems in material that is thematically significant or otherwise particular to the works in question, especially where it is possible to identify a context in which borrowing may readily be conceived to have taken place (Fidjestøl 1982:240–2). Resemblances of this sort often seem pointed, indicating that court poets engaged directly with the works of their contemporaries and forebears, advertising their capacity to match or surpass them by referencing their verse and developing new formulations from old (Frank 1978:27–8). The clearest examples occur in poems composed for rival dynastic groups in Norway. In Eyvindr skáldaspillir's textual appropriations in his poems for Hákon góði and Hákon jarl (Fidjestøl 1997), or Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's 'polemical citations' in his *erfidrápa* for Óláfr Tryggvason (Von See 1977), the poetics of outdoing comply with the agonistic function of verse-making designed to counter the panegyrics of political adversaries. But similar correspondences are also commonplace in works composed by poets who shared the same patrons, and it is worth considering to what extent this reflects a more general recursive mode of composition in skaldic verse-making.¹

I wish to focus here on a single example connecting poems composed in the first half of the 10th century by Sigvatr Þórðarson and his nephew Óttarr svarti, the two foremost skalds of Óláfr Haraldsson. The case is particularly intriguing because an account of their poetic fraternization is actually registered in the medieval narrative sources. The sagas relate that

¹ Note for instance the repetitive features in poetry connected with the court of Knútr inn ríki (Frank 1994a).

Sigvatr helped his nephew compose and win a hearing for his *Höfuðlausn* (*Höfl*), and it seems clear from the internal evidence of the poem that Óttarr took as his principal model Sigvatr's *Vikingarvísur* (*Víkv*), the earliest surviving poem composed in praise of Óláfr (Finnur Jónsson 1920–24 I:576–7). Nevertheless, there are considerable differences between the two works. These arise partly from their divergent performance contexts, since they were composed at quite different stages in the reign of Óláfr; but the stylistic contrasts arguably also stem from Óttarr's individuation of a derivative work that appears to flaunt his extension of the poetic effect of his model.²

The head-ransom narrative

The versions of the tale of Sigvatr and Óttarr, principally represented in article 10 of the notes on the life of Óláfr Haraldsson attributed to Styrmir Kárason (*ÓH*:688–9, cf. 702–3), and ch. 57 of the *Legendary Saga* (*ÓHLeg*:130), refer to Óttarr's arrival at the court of Óláfr in the early 1020s, soon after the death of his patron Óláfr Eiríksson of Sweden (1021/22).³ The story goes that Óttarr found himself clapped in irons for having once composed a *mansöngur* concerning Ástriðr, Óláfr's queen and the daughter of the late Swedish king. The two versions of the tale agree that Sigvatr came to the help of his nephew, and literally saved his neck. Óttarr recites the poem on Ástriðr to his uncle, and Sigvatr offers one of the only pieces of constructive professional advice and assistance from one poet to another recorded in saga literature: *miok er kuædit ort ok eigi er vndarligt þott konunginum misliki kuædit. nu skulum vit snua þeim visum sem mest eru akuedin ord i kuædinu* (*ÓH*:688; cf. 702).⁴ Óttarr edits the offending *mansöngur* on his uncle's instructions, and following his advice he also composes a praise-poem during his three nights in captivity, to impress Óláfr and his court and act as a head-ransom. Through Sigvatr's mediation, Óláfr gives Óttarr a hearing. Having recited his now considerably bowdlerized *mansöngur* before the king and his retinue, causing considerable uproar, Óttarr redeems himself with a suitably impressive display of praise by performing his *Höfl*. Óttarr puts on such a good performance with his new *drápa* that he wins not only his life, but also an arm-ring from the king, and another from Ástriðr herself. Duly placated, the king rewards him further with a place in his retinue.

Entertaining as it is, this anecdote – and indeed the title of the poem, which only occurs in this context (*ÓH*:689; cf. 703) – cannot be regarded as anything other than a medieval invention (cf. Jesch 2006:253, 265). Óttarr's *Höfl* itself contains only a general plea for patronage, declaring in the first two stanzas that Óttarr has lost his previous lord, *Gauta döglingr* 'the prince of the Götar' (st. 1), and now seeks the favour of the Norwegian king and his retinue (st. 2). Additionally, the whole narrative design is clearly related to the account of Arinbjörn hersir's advisory role in the composition of Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Höfuðlausn* (*Egils saga* chs 61–2), and to the wider family of head-ransom tales in which a wise ally supports the skald as he awaits judgement for some misdemeanour, advising him to compose a praise-poem in order to win his reprieve, and the poet duly meets the challenge of composing his *drápa* in the limited time available, his performance inducing the ruler to show clemency (Nordland 1956; Clunies Ross 2004). Yet even if Sigvatr was not directly involved in the

² For *Víkv*, see Fell 1981. See *Skj* BI:268–72 for Óttarr's *Höfl*: more recent editions are followed where indicated. Translations are my own. The 15 sts of *Víkv* appear in the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* and the *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók* versions of *Óláfs saga*; a few also occur in the *Legendary Saga* and *Fagrskinna* (sts 6, 8, 9). Of the 20 sts and *helmingar* of *Höfl*, sts 3–19 appear in the *Separate Saga*, *Heimskringla*, and *Flateyjarbók*; a few appear elsewhere: the *Oldest Saga* (st. 1); the *Legendary Saga* (sts 1, 19); *Fagrskinna* (sts 8, 19); *Orkneyinga saga* (st. 19); *Knýtlinga saga* (st. 8); *Skáldskaparmál* (sts 2, 19, 20); and the *First Grammatical Treatise* (st. 7). On the preservation and reconstruction of these remains, see Fidjestøl (1982:117–18, 123–24).

³ See also *ÓHÆ*:7, and passing references in *ÓH(Hkr)* chs 70 and 114.

⁴ See also *ÓHLeg*:132, *Of miok er ort, oc gef ec þer þat rað, at snuum sumum ærændum oc fællum or sum.*

composition of Óttarr's poem, it does seem likely that the story transmitted in the sagas responds to Óttarr's conspicuous debt in the so-called *Hqfl*, which lists Óláfr's triumphs before the early 1020s, to his uncle's poem, which had carried the tally of Óláfr's battles as far as his initial successes in Norway in 1015.

Vikingarvísur revisited

The battle-list is a well-used subgenre in skaldic court poetry (Fidjestøl 1982:213–16). Despite the generic form of both *Víkv* and *Hqfl*, it is immediately evident however that the most important model for Óttarr's poem lay in Sigvatr's *Víkv*, for *Hqfl* refers to the same sequence of battles fought by Óláfr Haraldsson leading up to his victorious return to Norway (Moberg 1941:33–49; *EE*:76–82). Each stanza of Sigvatr's *Víkv* describes a single battle, the first thirteen of which are consecutively numbered in the text. The sequence follows Óláfr's progress as he proved his credentials as a war-leader, first in the Baltic and Frisia, and England – where he participated in the devastating campaigns of Þorkell hávi in 1009–12 – , and then in Brittany, Spain and France, before he returned once more to England in 1014 – this time as a mercenary in the service of Æthelred unræd – and then finally sailed home to carve out a kingdom for himself in Norway. The fact that the stanzas now attributed to *Víkv* come to an end with Óláfr's return to his homeland in 1015, before the pivotal victory at Nesjar in 1016, suggest that Sigvatr delivered *Víkv* at an early stage, before Óláfr began to establish his supremacy (Fell 1981:107; Fidjestøl 1982:214–15).

Although he does not adopt the enumerative style used by Sigvatr, Óttarr follows the same basic structural pattern (Campbell 1971:10–11; Fidjestøl 1982:214). Accordingly, many stanzas in *Hqfl* correspond directly with verses in *Víkv*: *Hqfl* 5–6 records battles against Swedes and Baltic Slavs listed in *Víkv* 1–2; *Hqfl* 7 describes Óláfr's assault on London, recalling *Víkv* 6; st. 9, on the battle at Ringmere (*Hringmaraheiði*) in East Anglia, corresponds with Sigvatr's st. 7; Óttarr's st. 10 on the attack on Canterbury corresponds with his uncle's st. 8; st. 11 on the expedition to Poitou (*Peita*) corresponds with *Víkv* 14; finally, *Hqfl* 15 reports Óláfr's encounter with Hákon Eiríksson on his return to Norway, repeating the content of *Víkv* 15. Some victories listed in *Víkv* do not appear among the scattered stanzas associated with Óttarr's poem, namely the Baltic battles of *Víkv* 3–5, and those in Brittany and Spain tallied in sts 10–13. This may reflect the fragmentary preservation of Óttarr's poem, or else a tendency to abbreviate the account of Óláfr's early career in view of the need to introduce more material on his assertion of power in Norway after 1015.

Víkv was apparently composed at an early stage in Sigvatr's career, at a time when Óláfr's aspirations to royal authority had also barely begun to be realized. The poem deals in the clichés of martial poetry, but without excessive praise: it comprises a sober list of the range of experience of a young warlord who has shown his mettle in campaigns overseas. He has sated the beasts of battle, and defeated many foes, and as the young descendant of kings (*enn ungi jofra kundr*, st. 1), and a chieftain's son (*fylkis niðr*, st. 3), he has proven himself as a potential lord of Norway. Composing perhaps seven or eight years later, Óttarr looked back on Óláfr's career from the high point of his reign. *Hqfl* consequently follows Óláfr's trajectory from viking warrior to aspiring ruler and eventual overlord in Norway, extending the chronological sequence and laudatory tone in sts 15–19 well beyond that of the surviving verses of Sigvatr's poem.

Since both poems deal with the same historical material, a certain amount of repetition is inevitable, such as Óttarr's reuse of the place-names associated with Óláfr Haraldsson's victories: *Eysýsla*, *Lundúna bryggjur*, *Hringmaraheiði*, *Kantaraborg*, and *Peita*. There are other more interesting echoes, however. In *Hqfl* 7, commemorating Óláfr's participation in the attack on London in 1009, Óttarr employs a conventional mythological battle-kenning in a ref-

erence to Óláfr as *éla linns kennir, Yggs veðrþorinn*, ‘tester of showers of the serpent [SWORD > BATTLES > WARRIOR], daring in Yggr’s weather [BATTLE]’ (for which reading see *ÓH(Hkr)*:16–17). A similar but characteristically plainer formulation occurs in verse in *Víkv* (st. 6): *þengil bauð Englum Yggs at*, ‘the prince offered Yggr’s clash [BATTLE] to the English’. The use of the Odinic name Yggr in such simple terms for battle is a skaldic commonplace, and the presence of these poeticisms in congruent expressions would appear accidental were it not for the fact that they occur in stanzas referring to precisely the same historical event. The indication that this represents a direct verbal echo might lead us in turn to prick up our ears at what would otherwise seem like a forgettable piece of padding in *Höfl* 7: the parallel here between Óttarr’s arrangement *skildir / (gang) en gamlir sprungu*, ‘moreover ancient shields shattered’ (st. 7), and *(gang), þars gamlir sprungu / geirar*, ‘where ancient spears shattered’, employed by Sigvatr in a much later stanza in *Víkv* enumerating a battle on the Loire (st. 14), now seems the more striking.⁵

One other repeated element in *Höfl* may provide stronger evidence of deliberate quotation. Óttarr’s *Höfl* opens with lines that echo those purported to have been spoken by Sigvatr in his *Lausavísa* 2, which appears to constitute a formal call for hearing connected with *Víkv*:

Hlýð mínum brag, meiðir
myrkblás, þvít kank yrkja[...] (Sigvatr, *Lausavísa* 2/1–2; *Skj* BI:260)⁶

Hear my poem, destroyer of the black [horse of awnings][SAILS > SHIP > SEAMAN], for I know how to compose verse[...]

Hlýð, manngöfugr, minni
myrkblás, þvít kank yrkja. (Óttarr, *Höfl* 1/1–2)⁷

Hear, noble lord, the commemoration of the dark one [Óttarr], for I know how to compose verse.

Fidjestøl has argued that this *vísa* might be considered a loosely attached introduction to *Víkv* (1982:124, 214–5). According to the saga accounts, Sigvatr arrived at Niðaróss in 1015, and was introduced by his father Þórðr Sigvaldaskáld to the aspiring king on his arrival in the north soon thereafter. Sigvatr had come to perform his praise-poem before Óláfr, but the king had stated that he did not want to have panegyrics composed about him and claimed that he did not even understand skaldic poetry (*ÓH* ch. 39; *ÓH(Hkr)* ch. 43). Undaunted, Sigvatr presents himself before Óláfr, and speaks what is presented as an improvised *lausavísa* designed to win a hearing for his longer poem. The Icelander correctly assumes that his display will suffice to elicit a change of heart in the suspicious young ruler, allowing the poet to make a full demonstration of his skill and thereby secure the king’s patronage. Finnur Jónsson interprets the echo of Sigvatr’s *lausavísa* in *Höfl* as the result of textual contamination arguing that Óttarr’s second line is *uden tvívl indkommen her fra Sigvat’s Lv. 2₂; den oplr. linje er således tabt* (*Skj* AI:290). This is certainly possible, although not as engaging as Jan de Vries’s more credulous interpretation, according to which Óttarr, caught in a dangerous situation, deliberately referred back to the first tense but ultimately mutually propitious meeting between Óláfr and his most beloved retainer, Óttarr’s own uncle (1999 I:239). The exact circumstances of

⁵ In each case the repeated rhyming element *gang* belongs to a separate clause.

⁶ *Myrkblás* forms part of a ship-kennung, *myrkblár tjalda drasill*, constituting the determinant of a warrior-kennung based on *meiðir*.

⁷ Finnur finds the opening of *Höfl* too corrupt to reconstruct, but suggests *minni* is the possessive ‘my’, as part of an original statement ‘Hear my *drápa*’. Kock (*NN* §§695, 721, 791) interprets *manngöfugr* as a substantive, and *minni* as ‘memory, commemorative poem’ – producing an echo of the form as it occurs in *Víkv* 1 – and ingeniously reads *myrkblás* as a play on Óttarr’s cognomen, *svarti* ‘the black’.

composition are unknowable of course, but the suggestion of Fidjestøl and de Vries that Óttarr alluded to his uncle's work is supported by a further possible correspondence, for the collocation of *minni* and *kann* in Óttarr's opening lines also recalls Sigvatr's *kann ek til margs enn manna / minni*, 'I still know the memory of men about many things' in the first stanza of *Vikv* proper (st. 1/5–6).

It is conceivable that the structural and verbal parallels to Sigvatr's poem in *Hofl* represented a clever attempt by a younger poet to elicit the king's mercy by allusion to his favoured uncle's maiden performance, as de Vries suspected; but an alternative interpretation is also possible. In referring directly to Sigvatr, it might simply be argued that Óttarr sought to surpass him at his own game, and thus stake his own claim on the king's favour. There are enough similarities in content, form and expression to indicate the two poems are related, but it is also clear that Óttarr produced a far bolder political statement than Sigvatr. By alluding to the form of Sigvatr's poem, Óttarr leant on the precedent of a successful earlier work, but in so doing he made his poem represent the perfection of the heroic career described by his uncle. In his account of Óláfr's early battles in eastern Scandinavia and England, Óttarr follows *Vikv*, but this produces a pattern of direct allusion signalling not only the culmination of Óláfr's early aspirations but also the younger poet's outdoing of his uncle's more cautious work. Although the head-ransom tale appears to reflect an assumption in later tradition that Sigvatr was the superior poet, the evidence of the poetry may be witness to a clever professional strategy on the part of his nephew, bent on securing his social advancement, if not actually saving his neck.

The kinship between the two poems is represented in the fact that their stanzas are cited alongside one another in the accounts of the king's early career in the *konungasögur* (*ÓH* chs 21–5, *ÓH(Hkr)* chs 13–15, 19; cf. *Fsk* ch. 27). This reflects the fact that they describe many of the same events, but it is also a reminder that both poems were preserved as competing witnesses in the memorial tradition. In ch. 13 of *Óláfs saga* in *Heimskringla*, for instance, describing the assault on London, *Vikv* 6 and *Hofl* 7 are cited side-by-side, the juxtaposition inevitably drawing attention to the verbal similarities in the references to *Lunduna bryggjur* and the poets' mythological allusions to *Yggr*. The verses on Ringmere in ch. 14 duplicate narrative content if not actual lexis, but they illustrate the characteristic differences in style between the two poems, and the means by which Óttarr sets out to surpass his model: while Sigvatr does not record the outcome of the battle (*Vikv* 7), Óttarr relates that Óláfr piled up a heap of English corpses and put many to flight (*Hofl* 9). Sigvatr's stanza constitutes a comparatively restrained entry in Óláfr's *curriculum vitae*:

Enn lét sjaunda sinni
sverðþing háit verða
endr á Ulfkels landi
Áleifr, sem ek fer máli.
Stóð Hringmaraheiði
– herfall vas þar – alla
Ellu kind, es olli
arfvörðr Haralds starfi. (*Vikv* 7)

Yet a seventh time, as I hear tell, Óláfr had a sword-thing held in Ulfkell's land [East Anglia], long ago. Ella's offspring [ENGLISHMEN] swarmed all over Ringmere – a slaughter of armies took place there – when the heir of Haraldr [Óláfr] brought about battle.

Óttarr's account of the same event establishes a new tone of vivid hyperbole:

Þengill, frá, at þunga

þinn herra skipum ferri,
 rauð Hringmaraheiði,
 hlóð valkøstu, blóði.
 Laut fyr yðr, áðr létta,
 landfolk í gný randa,
 Engla ferð, at jorðu
 ótt, en mǫrg á flótta. (*Hqfl* 9; *ÓH(Hkr)*:19)

Lord, I heard that your army piled up a heavy heap of the slain far from the ships, reddened Ringmere with blood. The landsmen, the fyrd of the English, bowed before you, fell to the ground in the din of rims [SHIELDS > BATTLE] before it diminished, and many took to flight.

The difference in tone and density of imagery is striking (Finnur Jónsson 1920–4 I:576–7; Ashdown 1930:115). Sigvatr asserts the young Óláfr’s familial credentials as ‘heir of Haraldr’ and a veteran of foreign campaigns – but Óttarr addresses him directly in the second person, as a ruler whose authority is now undisputed and whose youthful exploits have become the stuff of skaldic cliché. Sigvatr uses direct apostrophe twice in the surviving stanzas of his poem (sts 5, 11), but for Óttarr it becomes a central feature of his work, which not only extends the sense of the poem developed in the opening stanzas as a plea for patronage, but also defines more closely the idealized condition of mutual reciprocity between poet and king (Frank 1994b; Jesch 2006:258–61, 264–5).

Óttarr also enhances the aural effect of his verse by adopting a series of metrical flourishes, producing more conspicuously ornate effects than appear in *Vikv*. While Óttarr frequently adopts *aðalhendingar* in the first or third lines of a *helmingr* instead of *skothending* (sts 5/1; 7/1, 3; 10/7; 15/5; 17/3, 7; 18/5; 19/1), no such patterning occurs in *Vikv*. Elsewhere, he uses the echoic rhyme of *dunhenda*, in which the last stressed syllable of the first or third line is repeated as the first stressed syllable of the second or fourth line (sts 1/7–8; 2/3–4; 3/7–8; 4/3–4; 10/7–8; 15/7–8); significantly, perhaps, such patterns do also occur in *Vikv*, but only in two instances (sts 7/6–7 and 8/7–8).

Composing with the advantage of hindsight, Óttarr was at liberty to recast the history of Óláfr’s early career in a more flattering teleological mode. Whereas Sigvatr’s verse on the unsuccessful viking assault on London in 1009 (*Vikv* 6) describes an inconclusive attack on London Bridge by men under Óláfr’s command, *Hqfl* 7 claims, rightly or wrongly, that Óláfr broke the bridge and – quite unhistorically – won land (*hefr lond at vinna [...] þér snúnat*, ‘it has turned out for you that you won lands’). A key concern in Óttarr’s poem is to demonstrate Óláfr’s authority as overlord of Norway by right of conquest. While Sigvatr sets out the impressive range of Óláfr’s experience as a warlord, Óttarr constructs images of him as one who takes, possesses and confers power over land. The claim that Óláfr ‘won land’ in England after the battle of London in 1009 is matched in *Hqfl* 8, which refers to Óláfr’s support of Æthelred II in 1014:⁸ *Komt í land ok lendir, / láðvǫrðr, Aðalráði*, ‘You came into the land, fief-guardian, and granted Æthelred land’.⁹ The English king had gone into exile following Sveinn tjúguskegg’s conquest of 1013, but when Sveinn died early in 1014, Óláfr was employed as a mercenary to fight the Danes during Æthelred’s short-lived restoration. Óláfr’s efforts to help Æthelred assert his rightful claims to sovereignty in England are thus presented

⁸ *Hqfl* 8 is quoted anachronistically in the context of Óláfr’s first battles in England in 1009 in *Fsk* ch. 27, *ÓH* ch. 23, and *ÓH(Hkr)* ch. 13, serving the conceit of the saga accounts which, with the exception of the *Legendary Saga*, make Óláfr the ally of Æthelred from the time of his first arrival in England. On the connection of *Hqfl* 8 with the wars of 1014 see Moberg 1941:47–9; *EE*:78–9; Campbell 1971:11–12; Poole 1987:274–5. The st. should thus be placed just before the account of Óláfr’s voyage to Norway in sts 13–14.

⁹ On the interpretation of *láð* here as ‘fief’, cf. *CVC*:376 s.v.; *ÍO*:540, s.v. 1. See also Rainford 1996:71.

as antecedents to the establishment of Óláfr's own dominion in Norway, now framed as the legitimate assertion of power over allodial territories (*áttlond*, st. 15)(Rainford 1996:46–7).

It is at this point that Óttarr's narrative as we know it extends beyond the historical limits of the surviving stanzas of *Vikv*. The transition is marked by a change in tense, from the preterite verbs employed in sts 3–15 in the account of Óláfr's early campaigns also described by Sigvatr (*Ungr hratt [...]*, 'When young you launched [...]', st. 3; *ungr sóttir þú [...]*, 'when young you laid claim [...]', st. 15), to the past-perfect forms in sts 16–17, describing Óláfr's more recent victories over the petty kings of Opplandene (*hefr ljótu [...]* of *goldit*, 'you have rewarded [them] with ill', st. 16; *Braut hafið [...]* *ór landi [...]* *rekna*, 'You have driven [them] away from the land', st. 17)(Rainford 1996:28). This culminates in the stirring present-tense acclamation of Óláfr's sole kingship in Norway in st. 18:¹⁰

Nú ræðr þú fyr þeiri
(þik remmir guð miklu)
fold, es forðum heldu
fimm bragningar (gagni);
breið eru austr til Eiða
ættlond und þér; Gøndlar
engr sat elda þrøngvir
áðr at slíku láði.

Now you rule over that land which five princes once held; God strengthens you with a great victory. Broad hereditary lands lie under you, east towards Eiðar; no wielder of Gøndul's fires [SWORDS > WARRIOR] has sat over such a fief before.

If there was ever any such heightened moment of closure in *Vikv*, it has been forgotten, but the stanza seems to embody the more sweeping perspective of Óttarr's poem, composed at a point closer to the apogee of Óláfr's power. This final 'ideological statement' makes immanent the original performance context of the poem (Jesch 2006:263). But it also reflects how Óttarr encapsulated the message of *Vikv* within a much more ambitious political and poetic project. Previous rulers may have claimed great domains in Norway, but none who had proved himself as a warlord in such a litany of foreign campaigns (st. 19). Óttarr ratchets up the level of praise further by allowing his poem to culminate in his pious declaration in st. 18 that Óláfr holds Norway like a fiefdom (*láð*) from God. In so doing, he recycles the old skaldic notion that associated successful earthly lordship with divine agency, a topos particularly strongly developed in the poetry of the Hlaðajarlar (Frank 2006). Appropriating such a pagan motif and reworking it to legitimize an unprecedented land-grab in Norway by a zealous Christian convert was a bold stroke, but it was one that allowed the poet to advertise his recreation of tradition, and his departure from it.

Conclusion

While it is immediately evident that *Vikv* and *Höfl* are closely related, *Höfl* is more abundantly larded in praise than the other poem, more ambitious in design, and makes more exaggerated claims for Óláfr as ruler of Norway. In every element of structure and expression, Óttarr produces a more elaborate response to the shared material. Yet by his marked structural and verbal evocations of Sigvatr's poem, Óttarr overtly situates his composition in relation to the work of his older contemporary, the most highly regarded poet in Óláfr's following, invit-

¹⁰ The shift in tense is anticipated proleptically in the intercalary exclamation in *Höfl* 3/6: *nú est ríkr af hvot slíkri* 'You are now powerful from such prowess' (Jesch 2006:263).

ing direct comparisons between them. As such he does more than produce an alternate response to the conventions of the poetic tradition: *Hqfl* systematically upstages *Víkv*, structurally, conceptually and even metrically. Óttarr's performance represents as clear an example of poetic one-upmanship as we possess anywhere in the Old Norse skaldic corpus. It is possible, indeed, that the preservation of *Hqfl* partly reflects Óttarr's success in outdoing the early work of his more prestigious uncle in the eyes of medieval antiquarians, for it is striking that there is not a single stanza of *Víkv* in the poetological treatises and connected works, while four exemplary *vísur* are quoted from *Hqfl* in *Skáldskaparmál* (sts 2, 19, 20) and the *First Grammatical Treatise* (st. 7).

In her recent account of the narrative modality of *Hqfl*, Judith Jesch asks why a court poet would recount deeds that were already well-known to his listeners. She concludes that the point was to produce a 'collective reliving of past experience' and fix it in the public memory (2006:264). But an equally pertinent question here might be to ask why in so doing a skald would allude to an older poem that must also have been familiar to his audience. As Jesch points out, performance secured recognition of a poet's role as a recorder of events for posterity – but it also produced patronage and political advantage. In a conventional form in which the anxiety of influence must have been keenly registered, the work of successful poets presented the benchmark against which subsequent virtuosos and arrivistes were measured. Competitiveness was thus an intrinsic aspect of skaldic verse-making, in which individual practitioners vied against their fellows, past and present, in the demonstration of their own primacy as the conduits of tradition.

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Alternative criteria for the dating of the sagas of Icelanders¹

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1

The dating of the sagas of Icelanders has never been an idle pursuit. A date, however vague, places a saga in a historical context, and therefore has direct bearing on the way it is presented in a modern edition and ultimately perceived by the scholar and the general reader. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his useful essay, *The Dating of the Sagas of Icelanders*, enumerated different criteria for dating individual sagas, of which the date of the earliest manuscript of each saga (though some are only preserved in late copies) is clearly the most tangible. Other valuable clues to the time of writing were to him historical evidence, such as references to datable law codes and social practices, allusions to historical persons and events, as well as literary relations and linguistic evidence.

One of Einar Ólafur's categories seems at first more subjective, even though it has as much footing in a given historical context as references to named persons, that is artistry, 'the skill displayed in the sagas' (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1958:115). In this paper I would like to revisit this 'less concrete' (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1958:40) criterion and consider whether the citation of skaldic verse and the way the settlement is depicted in the sagas of Icelanders can be used as guides to the time of writing. These two criteria are intimately connected with the way the Icelanders' relationship with Norway developed over time and is presented in the sources. The importance of skaldic verse in a courtly milieu in Norway and later in the writing of the sagas of the kings brought skaldic poetry to the heart of the Christian textual culture, and the representation of the settlement of Iceland from Norway became the defining moment in many of the sagas of Icelanders. I have written before on both these aspects of the writing of the sagas of Icelanders, but have not associated them directly with the issue of dating (Nordal 2007:219–37; Nordal 2008:315–18). This paper should be regarded as the first tentative step towards using these two criteria as clues to the date of writing, and rewriting, of the sagas of Icelanders in the 13th and 14th centuries.

2

Skaldic verse-making was one of the most studied literary forms of the medieval period in Iceland. Textbooks and treatises on skaldic poetry reveal evolving attitudes to the way skaldic verse was studied in the 13th and 14th centuries, that is in the period which also fostered the writing of the sagas of Icelanders. The citation of skaldic poetry underpinned Snorri Sturluson's writing of royal historiography in *Heimskringla*, and in his explication of the art of the skaldic poet in his *Edda* he relied to a large degree on the same corpus of verse as he does in *Heimskringla* (though not necessarily the same stanzas). Snorri's nephew, Óláfr Þórðarson, writing the *Third Grammatical Treatise* one generation later, was not, however, restricted in choosing his poetic examples from the historical skaldic canon. It is of note that Snorri's original planning of *Skáldskaparmál* is clearly redefined when the work is placed in context with Óláfr's treatise in the so-called *A*- and *B*-manuscripts of *Snorra Edda* in the 14th century (Nordal 2001:83–6). It is of paramount importance to keep this vibrant reception of skaldic poetry in mind when we explain the use of skaldic poetry in the different saga genres of the 13th and 14th centuries. Below I will not only endeavour to suggest a link between the applica-

¹ Note that a full version will be published by the Center for Medieval Studies in Bergen later this year as part of a collection of essays on the topic of dating the sagas.

tion of skaldic verse in the sagas of Icelanders and the theoretical writings about skaldic verse in the 13th and 14th centuries, but also propose that the way skaldic verse is used in the sagas can be suggestive of their time of writing. Some sagas are preserved in more than one version from the 14th century, and these versions reveal shifting attitudes to skaldic poetry in the 14th century. The transmission of *Njáls saga* is a case in point (see Nordal 2005).

Given the importance of skaldic verse in the learned milieu and in certain aristocratic and religious circles we would expect some correlation between the function of skaldic verse in the poetic treatises at any given time and the role played by verse in different saga genres in the 13th and 14th centuries, such as the kings' sagas, the sagas of Icelanders and the *fornaldarsögur*. If we take seriously the change in the appreciation of the historical skaldic canon as the 13th century wore off, and in the 14th century, we would expect that systematic references to the respected court poets of the canon, as they are identified in *Skáldatal*, *Snorra Edda* and the thirteenth-century kings' sagas, such as *Heimskringla*, would be indicative of the cultural milieu of the sagas authors of the 13th rather than of the 14th century. In my paper on the use of verse in the sagas of Icelanders, published in Margaret Clunies Ross's festschrift in 2007, I approached the question of the importance of verse in the sagas not only from the point of view of the number of stanzas in each of the c. 40 sagas, but also in light of the cultural identity of the poets who are cited in the narrative. I proposed the following grouping of the sagas based on the application of verse in the narrative:

The sagas of the court poets (the skalds' sagas): *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*, *Egils saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Hallfreðar saga* and *Kormáks saga*. The poets in the skalds' sagas are acknowledged and respected poets in the skaldic canon and their verse is cited in *Snorra Edda* and the kings' sagas (Fidjestøl 1985:319–35; Nordal 2001:78–9). The choice of stanzas highlights the generic borderline between the verse in the sagas of Icelanders and the kings' sagas, as there is very little overlap between the genres in the transmission of the poetry. *Egils saga* is preserved in a fragment from the middle of the 13th century. *Kormáks saga*, *Egils saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga* (also in Hauksbók c. 1300) and *Hallfreðar saga* are preserved in Möðruvallabók, c. 1330–70, the two last mentioned are also incorporated in the two great Óláfs sagas of the fourteenth century. *Bjarnar saga* is preserved in a fragment from c. 1300 and *Gunnlaugs saga* in a manuscript from the first half of the 14th century.

Sagas where the main protagonist is a poet: *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Hávarðar saga*, *Víglundar saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*. It is of note that Víga-Glúmr is among the acknowledged poets of the canon in *Snorra Edda*, cited four times in *Skáldskaparmál* in the Codex Regius manuscript, whereas Grettir Ásmundarson and Hávarðr are cited only once (Nordal 2001:78–9). The authors of the poetic treatises never refer to Gísli Súrsson's verse, nor to the poetry by Hörðr, Víglundr and Þórðr hreða. None of the poets in this group, however, is cited in the kings' saga corpus. None of the manuscripts predate c. 1330–70, or Möðruvallabók (where *Víga-Glúms saga* is preserved), and their earliest manuscripts span the period to the middle of the 15th century.

Sagas with a strong royal or courtly emphasis: *Laxdæla saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Finnboga saga ramma*. Theodore Andersson pointed out the special thematic relationship between *Laxdæla saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*, their common interest in the Norwegian royal background (as does Sveinsson 1939:xxxvi) and in portraying strong and unassailable chieftains in the region, '[the sagas betray] the same taste for style and grandeur' (Andersson 2006:155). Andersson does not note their disinterest in skaldic verse. Skaldic verse did not fit into the new courtly framework in Norway in the late 13th century; the last known court poets are from the late 13th century (Nordal 2001:127–30). *Laxdæla saga* is preserved in a fragment from the late 13th century and *Finnboga saga* is contained in Möðruvallabók. The earliest manuscripts of *Vatnsdæla saga*, however, is from c. 1390.

Sagas dated to the 14th century and display distinct learned interest in the past: *Bandamanna saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Hænsna Þóris saga*, *Króka-Refs saga* and *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, and the two Vinland sagas, *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlendinga saga*. These sagas are not concerned primarily with the classic feud pattern, nor are they interested in unveiling moral or legal dilemmas in a close knit Icelandic farming community (*Hænsna-Þóris saga* is clearly an exception and should perhaps be categorized separately along with *Bandamanna saga*). Even though the narrative in the sagas opens in the traditional setting of the Icelandic countryside, a large part of the narrative of some of these sagas is played out outside the farming community in Iceland, to a large degree abroad, e.g. in Norway, Greenland (*Króka-Refs saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Eiríks saga* and *Grænlendinga saga*) and Vinland (*Grænlendinga saga*, *Eiríks saga*), or in a quasi-human setting with giants in the mountains (*Kjalnesinga saga* and *Bárðar saga*). The manuscripts are relatively late (with the exception of *Eiríks saga* in Hauksbók, which is on the borderline of the sagas of Icelanders), figuring the fragments of the great *Íslendingasögur*-manuscripts of the late 14th and early 15th century, Vatnshyrna and Pseudo-Vatnshyrna, written in the north of Iceland (Stefán Karlsson 1970; John McKinnell 1970). *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Flóamanna saga* have been associated with Haukr Erlendsson the noted lawman and the author of one of the versions of *Landnáma*, who lived most of his professional life in Norway (see Helgi Guðmundsson 1967:77–83; Perkins 1978:28–44).

Sagas relating events in the Eastfjords and the north-east of Iceland: *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Gunnar saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* and *Ólkofra saga* in the Eastfjords, and *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Reyk-dæla saga* (the only stanza in the saga is also cited in *Víga-Glúms saga*) and *Valla-Ljóts saga* in the north-east of Iceland. The unique character of this region in medieval literary culture is not limited to the sagas of Icelanders. The same geographical distinctiveness is borne out by the known origin of poets in the 13th and 14th centuries, in the period when the sagas were put to writing (Nordal 2001:133), as well as in the poetry cited in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* (though Óláfr Þórðarson's choice of examples may be determined by his own regional knowledge (Gísli Sigurðsson 2002:118–20). The reason for the exclusion of skaldic poetry in these sagas is possibly regionally determined, rather than aesthetically conditioned. *Droplaugarsona saga* which is the only saga of the Eastfjords to contain verse (6 stanzas), and *Ólkofra saga* are preserved in *Möðruvallabók*, 1330–70, but all the other sagas are preserved in manuscripts from c. 1400 or later.

Sagas where verse is an integral part of the narrative while there is no principal poet: *Njáls saga*, *Heiðarvíga saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Svarfdæla saga*. *Svarfdæla saga* is clearly the odd saga out in this company, yet it has narrative themes in common with *Njáls saga* (the depiction of Yngvildr fagrinn) and *Eyrbyggja saga* (the description of the ghost Klaufi). All four sagas cite verse by known poets of the canon. In *Njáls saga*, *Heiðarvíga saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga* such verses are used to authenticate sections in the account, and in *Svarfdæla saga*, two stanzas are attributed to the well-known poet Þorleifr jarlsskáld. A *þáttr* about Þorleifr is preserved in *Flatexjarbók*. Þorleifr jarlsskáld falls within the literary radar of Óláfr Þórðarson and the author of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, being cited once in each text. The earliest manuscripts of these sagas are dated to the 13th century, such as the oldest fragments of *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Njáls saga*. *Svarfdæla saga*, however, is in a manuscript from the 15th century.

This division of the sagas of Icelanders into these six groups does not take into account the traditional dating of the sagas, yet interesting patterns emerge when we note the earliest manuscripts of each group. I discussed these groups at some length in Clunies Ross's festschrift (2007), but there I did not attempt to link the citation of verse and the identity of the poets to a specific period in time. The canonized poets of *Skáldatal* are found in groups 1 and

6, and on the merit of the existing manuscripts alone these groups should be categorized among the earliest sagas. Even though the stanzas in the kings' sagas and *Snorra Edda* is not drawn from the same poetic corpus as the verse in the sagas of Icelanders, it is apparent that some of the poets in the sagas belong to the respected canon of the learned tradition. The division of the sagas into different categories is always problematic, particularly when employing posthumous assessment of them. The speakers of verse in group 2 are not among the poets of the canon of the kings' sagas, even though some of them are cited in the *Snorra Edda*, yet the authors of these sagas cast their narrative somewhat in the mould of the skalds' sagas.

Three groups are rich in verse (1, 2 and 6), but sagas in the remaining three groups (3, 4, 5) show little interest in skaldic poetry or omit such poetic references altogether. It is striking that these sagas have different emphasis from the sagas with verse: these are the 14th-century sagas with learned interest, some showing particular interest in Greenland, sagas which are played out in the northeast and east of Iceland, and finally sagas which show particular fascination with the royal court and/or with courtly romance. One of those sagas is *Vatnsdæla saga*, which I have categorized with *Laxdæla saga* and *Finnboga saga ramma*, on the basis of their common disinterest in skaldic verse and royal fascination. I am currently reconsidering the association of the exceptional *Laxdæla* with the other two closely related sagas that take place in Húnavatnssýsla.

3

If we can agree that skaldic verse is one of the defining elements behind the writing of the sagas of Icelanders, at least those sagas which make extensive use of verse (even though we may disagree on whether these elements are datable), *Landnáma* is certainly the other literary backbone to the writing of the sagas of Icelanders. The relationship between the sagas and the three medieval *Landnáma*-versions is complex and difficult to unravel. Some modern scholars would say that a comparison between the stories of the settlement in *Landnáma* and the sagas of Icelanders is a futile undertaking. I beg to disagree. Extensive analysis of the relationship between the sagas and *Landnáma* was undertaken by scholars such as Björn M. Ólsen and Jón Jóhannesson, and even though their insistence on direct textual borrowings is certainly too strong, they draw attention to noteworthy patterns of literary relations which bring us closer to drawing up a picture of literary activity in certain areas in the country.

Memories about the pagan past in Iceland and the settlement period were most likely preserved in oral memory from the 9th and 10th centuries to the period in which the sagas of Icelanders were written. It is therefore illuminating to focus on the seventeen sagas which open at the time of settlement of Iceland, and thus reflect the author's or the audience's interest in the migration period and their fascination with the neighbouring countries not only at the time of the settlement but more importantly at the time of writing. These sagas are, in alphabetical order: *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Egils saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Reykðæla saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu* and *Þorskfirðinga saga*.

Only one of these seventeen sagas refers to skaldic verse in relation to the settlement narrative. Önundr criticizes the cold climate in Iceland in *Grettis saga* and the writer of the saga may be using the poetic evidence to introduce a different point of view in the narrative rather than using the verse to authenticate the account. The motivation behind the construction of the *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlement) is contested, but the early settlements of Iceland may have been set in writing in order to secure land claims by ruling families at the time of writing in the 12th century. However, the reason why these settlement stories were preserved in a number of sagas in the 13th and 14th centuries is another matter.

The three known medieval versions of *Landnáma*, Sturlubók, Melabók and Hauksbók, are all attributed to Icelandic lawmen in the post-Commonwealth period, between c. 1270 and 1310. Sturla Þórðarson (d. 1284), Snorri Markússon (d. 1313) and Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) were aristocratic men who had special relationship with Norway. The prologue to *Landnáma* in Sturlubók and Hauksbók reflects a Norwegian point of view when framing the description of the settlement. Fourteen leaves of Haukr Erlendsson's *Landnáma* are preserved in the author's own hand in Hauksbók; the remaining part has only come down to us in a 17th-century copy. Melabók, which has been traced to Snorri Markússon at Melar, is preserved in a fragment from the beginning of the 15th manuscript (Pseudo-Vatnshyrna where it was in company with many of the sagas of the Icelanders), but the text is thought to be interpolated in Þórðarbók from the 17th century. Sturla Þórðarson wrote a version of *Landnáma* which is only preserved in a 17th-century copy of a manuscript from c. 1400 (on the manuscripts, see Jakob Benediktsson 1968:L–LIV). The transmission of *Landnáma* is clearly problematic, and it is time that scholars revisit the question of the relationship between the versions of *Landnáma* and the sagas of Icelanders, and indeed the versions of some of the sagas (for a recent evaluation, see Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001).

Iceland had become part of the Norwegian kingdom (c. 1262–4) when most of the sagas of Icelanders are written, with perhaps the exception of *Egils saga*, the skalds' sagas and possibly *Laxdæla* and *Eyrbyggja*, and some of these sagas may reflect an interest by members of the Icelandic aristocratic elite to argue for close ties between Iceland and Norway, the old homeland for many of the settlers, now the seat of the king. But each saga treats the topic of the settlement independently, and the sagas that begin their narrative in Iceland and omit the migration story, place less importance on these ties. Moreover, the more than twenty sagas that begin their narration after the settlement treat the topic with a lack of interest. Four patterns in the sagas' depiction of the settlement emerge:

Sagas containing a complex migration story and detailed elucidation of the migrating family's relationship with the king. This theme is rehearsed in sagas such as *Laxdæla saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and the sagas of the court poets, such as *Egils saga* and *Kormaks saga*. Some of these sagas, such as *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, are preserved in old manuscript fragments from the 13th century, and are probably among the oldest written sagas of Icelanders.

The emphasis on the history of a fighter-poet's family, where the family's life in Norway is played out in detail, such as in *Grettis saga* and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. Other sagas in this group are *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* (no migration story), *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Víglundar saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*. The portrayals of the hero seem to be modelled on the sagas of the court poets, as we noted above, but in fact these sagas focus on very different themes from the skalds' sagas. All of them deal with personal loss; the loss of land, the loss of freedom, as in the outlaw sagas, and some end on a very tragic note. There is a strong tendency in all of these sagas to deepen the portrayal of the hero by linking him to the family's past in Norway. *Víga-Glúms saga* is not a typical settlement saga, but the family's 'fylgja' in Norway finally settles in Iceland.

Learned interest in the settlement and in the mythic past of Iceland is attested in sagas such as *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga* (not a migration story; begins at the time of the settlement), and *Þorskfirðinga saga*. Some of the settlement stories seem to be drawn from external written sources such as in *Flóamanna saga*'s reference to *Landnáma*. In this group there is an apparent interest in travels to Greenland.

In some sagas we find a silent reference to the settlement, where there is no migration story and little importance placed on the settlement. Among those are sagas such as *Hrafnkels saga* and *Reykðæla saga*.

The correlation between this grouping and the earlier grouping of the sagas of Icelanders is no coincidence. I tentatively suggest that there is an evolution from type 1, to type 2 and 3, with type 4 coexisting at all times, particularly in the later sagas.

Landnáma was most probably written in order to secure the present ownership of the ruling families, and the different versions of the work from the 13th century to the beginning of the 15th century reflect the contiguating interest and demand for passing on and redefining the stories of the migration from Norway. The relationship between the sagas of Icelanders and *Landnáma* is complex; in some cases there is no textual relationship even though the sagas recount similar stories as *Landnáma*, but in other examples there are clear borrowings, such as in the learned sagas.

The shifting focus on the migration to Iceland and the settlement in the sagas of Icelanders reveals the ambiguity in the sagas' deliberation and reconfiguration of the past. The many Christian writers of the sagas regarded the pagan past in a markedly different way, and some went as far as to disregard the settlers' ties to their old homelands. The sagas of the Eastfjords reveal a noteworthy indifference to the memories of the settlement. Only two sagas out of ten begin at the time of settlement (*Reykðæla saga* and *Hrafnkels saga*), but with no accompanying genealogy that links the families with the 'old' world. The stories of the settlement seem to be predominantly associated with events and characters in west and north-west of Iceland; the area where the interest in skaldic poetry and the writing about pagan myth was also most clearly attested, as in work such as *Snorra Edda*, the *Third Grammatical Treatise* and *Heimskringla*. This geographic distinction within the genre can be no coincidence, and throws into relief the importance of constantly keeping in mind the subtle differences between the sagas of Icelanders in their depiction of their relationship with Norway and in their portrayal of their skaldic heritage.

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Hvernig leit Uppsalabók út í öndverðu?

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Handritið DG 11 sem varðveitt er í Háskólabókasafninu í Uppsölum er merkilegt fyrir margra hluta sakir. Í fyrsta lagi er það elsta handrit Snorra-Eddu sem varðveitt er og í öðru lagi hefur það að geyma sérstaka gerð af textanum. Handritið er einnig merkilegt fyrir margar teikningar á spássíum og á auðum síðum og fyrir þá sök að í því eru stuttar skrár eða töl, sem virðist hafa verið skotið inn í Eddutextann. Enn fremur má telja það til athyglisverðra atriða í handritinu að bókfellið virðist ekki hafa verið sparað því að margar blaðsíður voru aðeins hálfskrifaðar í upphafi eða jafnvel hafðar alauðar. Má þar nefna bl. 1v og 26v sem eru alveg auð og bl. 22v, 25r, 26r og 37v sem eru ekki fullskrifuð.

Hér verður fjallað um samsetningu DG 11, en ekki um textann umfram það sem nauðsynlegt er til að átta sig á því hvernig það kynni að hafa litið út í öndverðu.

Til að fá betri mynd af Uppsalabók skoðaði ég hana s.l. sumar. Hún er 56 blöð sem skiptast á 7 kver. Athyglisvert er að fremsta kverið er 10 blöð þar sem fremsta og 10. blaðið eru saman í tvinni. Það er ekki algengt að handrit hefjist á 10 blaða kveri. Algengast er að kver í handritum séu 8 blöð með þeirri undantekningu að aftasta kverið er oft afbrigðilegt. Í DG 11 er aftasta kverið aðeins 6 blöð. Annað sem er athyglisvert við fremsta kverið er að fremsta blaðið hefur upphaflega verið skilið eftir autt og hefst texti handritsins efst á bl. 2r. Textameðvitaður bókavörður eða fræðimaður hefur litið á fremsta blaðið sem saurblað og merkt bl. 2r sem fyrstu blaðsíðu, sem er rangt. Þessi ranga blaðsíðumerking hefur svo fylgt handritinu í útgáfum og umfjöllun um það, en hún verður ekki réttari fyrir þá sök. Fremsta blaðið í fremsta kverinu er auðvitað fremsta blað handritsins og saurblöð sem eru yfirleitt stök og/eða föst við bandið tíðkuðust ekki á miðöldum. Miðaldamenn skildu hins vegar fremstu blaðsíðuna í handriti oft eftir auða og létu hana þannig þjóna hlutverki saurblaðs en hófu skriftir textans þá á bl. 1v. Í sumum lögbókum er þó stundum höfð mynd á bl. 1v sem veldur því að textinn byrjar á bl. 2r en þá er myndin hluti af efni handritsins. Auðvitað mætti hugsa sér að skrifarinn (eða verkbeiðandinn eða verkstjórinn) hafi hugsað sér að á bl. 1v yrði teiknuð eða máluð mynd eins og í lögbók eða handriti heilagra manna sagna, en þá kemur upp spurningin af hverjum sú mynd hefði átt að vera. Hvaða myndefni hæfði kennslubók í skáldskaparfræðum, sem Snorra-Edda virðist fyrst og fremst vera? Varla mynd af konungi eða heilögum manni. Ef til vill var skrifarinn bara vanur að skrifa lögbækur og byrjaði ósjálfrátt að skrifa á bl. 2r, en hvorug tilgátan skýrir þó af hverju fremsta kverið er 10 bl.

Ysta tvinnið í fremsta kverinu er aðeins minna en hin tvinnin í kverinu. Munurinn er hins vegar svo lítill að hann gæti að sjálfsögðu verið tilviljun. Fremsta blaðið er 197 mm á hæð og það 10. er 199 mm á hæð meðan hin blöðin í kverinu eru á bilinu 197–204 mm á hæð. Fremsta blaðið er 128–137 mm á breidd (það mjókkar upp) og 10. blaðið er 140 mm á breidd meðan hin blöðin í kverinu eru 140–145 mm á breidd. Olof Thorell tekur einnig fram að fremsta blaðið sé „tunt och rynkigt“ (1977:ix). Það er skrítið að það skuli vera þunnt vegna þess að það er í tvinni með 10. bl. sem Thorell minnst ekki á hvað varðar þykkt. Ekki tók ég eftir að fremsta blaðið væri þynnra en önnur blöð en vissulega lítur það verr út en mörg önnur blöð í handritinu. Ysta tvinnið er, sem sagt, aðeins minna en önnur tvinn kversins en óljóst er hvort eitthvað er á því byggjandi.

Ég hef ekki neina góða skýringu á takteinum af hverju fremsta kverið er 10 blöð en mér hefur þó dottið í hug að í upphafi hafi skrifarinn ætlað að láta binda þessa Eddu sína (og e.t.v. aðeins hluta Eddutextans eins og komið verður að hér á eftir) inn fyrir aftan aðra bók; þá er eðlilegt að hann byrji efst á recto-síðu. En þegar hann var kominn áleiðis með fyrsta kverið sá hann sig um hönd og ákvað að hann væri kominn með sérstaka bók. Ef það er rétt, vantaði hann saurblað því að hann var þegar búinn að skrifa á það blað sem annars ætti að vera 1r.

Hvernig getur hann leyst það? Jú, hann sækir nýtt tvinn og setur utan um áttablaðakverið sem hann er að skrifa og svo þegar hann er búinn að fullskrifa upphaflegu 8 blöðin heldur hann áfram á aftara blaði nýja tvinnins og skrifar á það og fær þar með 10 blaða kver þar sem fremsta blaðið er alveg autt og textinn hefst á bl. 2r og öll önnur blöð kversins eru fullskrifuð. Síðan sest hann yfir að skrifa á næsta kver og byrjar að sjálfsögðu á recto-síðu fremsta blaðsins sem verður við þetta bl. 11r í stað 9r. E.t.v. er ysta tvinnið í fremsta kverinu aðeins minna en önnur tvinn af þessari ástæðu.

Annað sem vekur athygli við samsetningu Uppsalabókar er að þegar skrifarinn hefur lokið við Gylfaginningu (á bl. 19r sem er fremsta blaðið í þriðja kveri) heldur hann áfram með 17. og 18. kafla Skáldskaparmála, sem stundum hafa verið kallaðir *Bragaræður*, án þess að það sé merkt sérstaklega (það eru aðeins kaflaskil á 19r en ekki þáttaskil). Á bl. 22v lýkur þessum hluta Skáldskaparmála á því að Eilífur Guðrúnarson er nefndur til sögunnar (í 20. línu): ‘Eptir þessi savgo hevir ort eilifr gvþrvnar son i þ[or]s drapo:-’. Það sem eftir er af blaðsíðunni skildi skrifarinn svo eftir auða. Því næst skrifar hann skáldatal á næstu 5 blaðsíður í þremur dálkum á hverri síðu (23r–25r). Hann fyllir þrjá dálka á 23r og 23v, tvo og hálfan dálk á 24r, en aftur þrjá dálka á 24v og lýkur við talið neðarlega í miðdálkinum á bl. 25r. Hann skilur afgangana af blaðsíðum 24r og 25r eftir auða. En í stað þess að halda áfram með Skáldskaparmál á bl. 25v – t.d. með því að skrifa Þórdrápu sem virðist aldrei hafa verið skrifuð í þetta handrit – snýr hann sér að því að skrifa ættartölu Sturlunga (19 línur) og heldur áfram niður síðuna með lögsögumannatal sem hann lýkur við á næstu síðu (bl. 26r:12). Hann skilur svo afganginn af 26r eftir auðan sem og allt bl. 26v. Umrætt 26. bl. er aftasta blaðið í þriðja kveri handritsins og af þeim sökum datt mér í hug að handritið hefði aldrei átt að vera stærra. Það hefði ekki átt að skrifa neitt meira af Snorra-Eddu og skrifarinn hefði aðeins verið að fylla upp í auðar síður kversins með því að skrifa fyrrnefnd töl.

Þá vaknar spurningin hvort það er mögulegt að skrifarinn hafi hugsað sér að skrifa aðeins hluta Skáldskaparmála, þ.e. Bragaræður, og sleppa öðru. Snorra-Edda hefði með öðrum orðum átt að vera lengri í handritinu. Finnur Jónsson (1900:iii) er viss í sinni sök að vanda hvað þetta varðar:

Det var skriverens hensigt, efter afslutningen af Gylfaginning, af Skáldskaparmál kun at skrive de mytiske kapitler, hvorfor han begyndte med k. 17–18 (om Tor og jætterne Hrugne og Geirröd); dette skete enten fordi disse kapitler særlig interessede ham eller fordi han havde knap tid, eller snarest bægge dele på engang.

Ef þessi tilgáta er rétt, hefur skrifarinn (eða verkstjóri hans) aðeins hugsað sér að skrifa Gylfaginningu og hluta Skáldskaparmála. Gylfaginning og tveir kaflar úr Skáldskaparmálum er stuttur texti sem aftur getur skýrt hvers vegna skrifarinn gæti hafa hugsað sér í upphafi að þessi texti væri bundinn inn með öðru efni (sjá hér að framan).

Það kann að vera eðlilegt að skrifarinn vilji hafa Skáldatal á eftir Bragaræðum vegna þess að þarna er hann kominn að fyrsta skáldinu sem nefnt er í Skáldskaparmálum og honum gæti hafa fundist rétt að hafa næst skrá yfir öll skáld sem skipta máli (Heimir Pálsson skaut þessari hugmynd að mér). En í stað þess að halda áfram með Skáldskaparmál þegar hann hefur lokið við skáldatalið, skrifar hann ættartölu Sturlunga og lögsögumannatal og virðist svo hætta skriftum.

Hvað sem þessum vangaveltum líður er ljóst að skrifarinn hélt áfram að skrifa Skáldskaparmál á bl. 27r og hefur skriftirnar á fremsta blaði í nýju kveri í stað þess að halda áfram á bl. 26r á eftir lögsögumannatali eða efst á bl. 26v. Hvers vegna gerir hann það? Því verður auðvitað ekki svarað með neinni vissu og hugsanleg skýring er vandfundin.

Fyrirsögn þessa hluta Skáldskaparmála er athyglisverð (27r): ‘her hefr skalldskapar mal ok heiti margra hlvtá’. Það er sem sagt ekki eins og hann hafi skrifað hluta Skáldskaparmála

áður í sama handritið. Kaflar Skáldskaparmála eru að vísu ekki í sömu röð í Uppsalabók og í öðrum handritum, en megnið af textanum er skrifað á bl. 27r–45r nema Bragaræðurnar sem áður voru komnar.

Handritið sjálft er dálítið merkilegt á þessum stað. Eins og áður segir hefur skrifarinn skilið bl. 26v eftir autt – seinna hafa svo verið dregnar myndir af Ganglera, Háum, Jafnháum og Þriðja á þessa síðu – en það sem vekur athygli er hve máð hún er og óhrein. Hún lítur nefnilega út fyrir að hafa verið ysta blað handritsins um hríð og verið óvarin (hve lengi er algjörlega óvíst). Getur verið að þessi hluti handritsins (26 bl. eða þrjú kver) hafi legið lengi óbundinn áður en afgangnum (30 bl. eða fjórum kverum) var skellt aftan við og bókin bundin inn? Fremsta blaðsíða handritsins er einnig dökk og máð.

Útlit bl. 27r staðfestir hins vegar ekki nýnefnda tilgátu, og enn síður sú staðreynd að textinn er skrifaður strax á fremstu síðu kversins. Þessi blaðsíða er vissulega ekki vel farin en hún er ekki það óhrein eða máð að hún líti út fyrir að hafa verið fremsta (ysta) síða óbundins handrits um langa hríð og hún lítur heldur ekki út fyrir að hafa nuddast lengi við spjald í bandi. Aftasta blaðsíða sama kvers, 34v, er svipuð útlits svo að ætla má að þetta kver hafi legið óvarið í einhvern tíma, en mun styttri tíma en aftasta síða næsta kvers á undan (26v). Í fljótu bragði er heldur ekki að sjá neitt í skrift handritsins eða stafsetningu sem staðfestir að langur tími hafi liðið á milli þess að skrifarinn skrifaði fyrstu þrjú kverin og síðari fjögur, en til að geta dæmt um það þarf mun meiri rannsóknir á skriftinni, táknbeitingu skrifarans og stafsetningunni en ég hef haft tök á að gera að þessu sinni.

Ég mældi stærð blaða Uppsalabókar en það kom ekkert út úr því sem hönd er á festandi. Vissulega eru blöðin í fjórða kveri hennar lægri að meðaltali en í öðrum kverum en þau eru alls ekki mjórri að meðaltali en blöð í öðrum kverum og ekki verður séð annað en að textaflötur sé svipaður út í gegnum allt handritið. Blöð bókarinnar líta ekki út fyrir að hafa verið skorin við innbindingu vegna þess að textaflöturinn situr á þeim stað á síðunum sem eðlilegt má teljast út frá fagurfræðilegu sjónarmiði svo að blaðskurður hefur að öllum líkindum ekki skekkt mælinguna.

Í fyrirlestrinum á ráðstefnunni mun ég ræða þessi vandamál nánar og jafnframt sýna nokkrar myndir af handritinu til að áheyrendur geti betur gert sér grein fyrir útliti Uppsalabókar.

Ritaskrá

UUB DG 11 (Uppsalabók).

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Ansgar's Conversion of Iceland

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In his *Conversion of Iceland* (1975), Dag Strömbäck writes that “The Alþing’s decision to accept Christianity as the state religion of Iceland [in the summer of AD 999/ 1000] leaves us perplexed, mystified” (Strömbäck 1975:26). More recently, in *The Christianisation of Iceland*, Orri Vésteinsson describes the same event as “one of the really strange events in the history of Christian missions” (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:17). In the paper that follows, I would like to argue that considering both the nature of religious belief in the Old Nordic (and apparently also much of the Germanic) area in pre-Christian times, and the methodology of some of the Christian missions issuing from Hamburg-Bremen during this period, there is actually comparatively little to be perplexed or mystified about. In fact, almost everything about the process of what happened at the Alþing on the days in question seems to have followed Rimbert’s comparatively well-known textbook on how best to convert the Nordic peoples without bloodshed, in other words, by using insiders, and by making good use of the weaknesses inherent in “pagan” native practices. Indeed, this was an approach Pope Gregory had previously suggested in his letter to Mellitus in AD 601 (Bede 1965:86 [ch. 30], and something the Romans seem to have demonstrated even earlier in their effective use of the Bructeri seeress, Veleda: see below).

To a large extent, I will be following the arguments set forward by Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinnsson in his *Under the Cloak: A Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland* (originally published 1979; revised and extended 1999) about the course of events in Iceland. Indeed, Jón Hnefill’s proposal for what happened at the Alþingi on this occasion is well grounded in comparative materials and makes good sense in the light of what we know of pagan religious practice. The main section of Jón Hnefill’s outline of “the probable passage of events at Þingvellir” is based largely on Ari fróði’s comparatively trustworthy account in *Íslendingabók* (1968:16), but also draws on *Kristni saga* (1858:22–25) from the mid thirteenth century and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–2000:1, 187–198), composed soon after 1300,¹ especially concerning the idea of human sacrifice taking place and the idea of the Christians arranging a comparable symbolic “sigr gjöf”. The key part of the outline runs as follows:

2: Síðu-Hallr gets the Christians to release him from the official position of lawspeaker and comes to an agreement with Þorgeir the Lawspeaker that he will recite those laws that the Christians should follow[...].

3. The pagans sacrifice eight men, two from each quarter, in order to prevent Christianity from taking over the country. Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði, who according to Ari was still pagan when he made the agreement with Síðu-Hallr, takes an active part in this sacrifice, probably a leading role. When the sacrifice has been completed, Þorgeir lies down under the cloak in his booth, and *gengr til fréttar* (asks the pagan gods about the future), as usually took place at the end of each sacrifice.

¹ The events are also covered in Theodoricus’ Monachus’ *Historia De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* (1177–1188), but only very briefly, suggesting that the whole course of events was essentially the work of God (“the Grace of the Holy Spirit” and “divine intervention”): see Theodoricus Monachus 1998: xxii and 15–16. Another early source which seems to borrow from both *Íslendingabók* and Theodoricus is Oddur Snorrason’s *Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar*: See Oddur Snorrason 1932: 128–130 (written in the late twelfth century). On the relationship between all of these sources (including *Njáls saga*), and their comparative values, see further Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinnsson 1999: 55–62.

4. Þorgeir, as lawspeaker, had the role of being chairman in legal matters, as well as being the political leader of the pagans. As such, he had the final say in any conventional dispute. Through the execution of the sacrifice, he also earned himself the right to have the final say in matters concerning the pagan religion.

5. The morning after, Þorgeir awakes, sits up and tells people to come to Lögberg. There he announces his decision based on what the gods revealed to him during his time beneath the cloak.

6. The pagans accept Þorgeir's decision, strange as it may sound to them.

(Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999:214):

In short, Jón Hnefill is arguing that a particular religious “performance” took place at Þingvellir, designed to win the peaceful formal acceptance of Christianity by those who were opposed to it (and avoid the possibility of civil war).

While he is less convinced than Dag Strömbäck (1975:30–31) and Bo Almqvist (1974:19) that any form of bribe took place when Hallr “keypti at Þorgeiri lögsögumanni” (*Íslendingabók* 1968:16; cf. *Kristni saga* 1858:22; *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* 1958–2000:1, 191; and *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954: 271), Jón Hnefill nonetheless believes that Þorgeir's famed (and clearly publicly-noted) day and night beneath the cloak (*Íslendingabók* 1968:16) was related to a semi-shamanistic consultation with the gods, an activity paralleled in Irish, Scottish, Sámi and Native American tradition, and echoed in a classical account in Geoffery of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* (see Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999:115–117, and 213–214; Wood 1987:56–57; Martin 1999:79; and Turner 1977: 167). According to Jón Hnefill, the period under the cloak was the final step of a recognised sacrificial process (a *blót*), in other words, that of interpreting the “fréttir” from the gods, the sacrifice and interpretation being something which Þorgeir would have been expected to carry out at a time of crisis, since Þorgeir in his role as *lögsögumaður* had the role of “chief priest” at the Þingvellir gathering. Indeed, the law and legal decisions appear to have belonged to a sphere that was closely associated with the sacred.

The question of whether large-scale human sacrifice actually took place at the Alþing on this occasion is, of course, open to discussion (partly because of the questionable reliability of *Kristni saga* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*). Nonetheless, there is natural logic behind the idea that believers in the gods would have expected some form of sacrifice to be carried out at such a time of decision (if not at all pagan Alþingi meetings), and that an outcome, in the form of a deciding contest or another kind of reading of the “fréttir” should have followed this. Parallels might be seen in the sacrifices related to the ritual duels described in *Egils saga* (1933:209: the *blótnaut* which “skildi sá höggva er sigr hefði”) and *Kormáks saga* (1939:290: another *blótnaut*), where the same elements are involved, if inverted (the decision apparently preceding the offering.) There is also natural logic in the idea that at the end result of a sacred ritual “performance” of this kind, conducted on the national stage of the time, would have been accepted without any question by “pagan” believers, simply because this is how decisions seem to have been made for centuries among the Germanic and Nordic peoples.

That the Germanic tribes and Nordic peoples trusted lot-casting as a means of making decisions (Latin: *sortes*; Old Icelandic: *hlutan*; cf. the throwing of *blótsþán* or perhaps *teinlautar*) is well documented from the time of Tacitus onwards. As Tacitus notes in *Germania*, ch. 10, “For auspices and the casting of lots, they have the highest possible regard” (Goetz & Welwei 1995:1, 134–135; trans. Tacitus 1948:108). Similar behaviour is reflected in Willi-

bald's *Vita S. Bonifacii* (from the eighth century) which tells how, even after conversion, some Germans:

[...] continued secretly, others openly, to offer sacrifices to trees and springs, to inspect the entrails of victims; some practised divination, legerdemain and incantations; some turned their attention to auguries, auspices and other sacrificial rites; whilst others, of a more reasonable character, forsook all the profane practices of heathenism and committed none of these crimes (*The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries* 1954: 10–11).

Similar practices and beliefs are reflected in a number of key works such as the Annals of Xanten (see Wood 1987:47), where a group of Vikings facing disease in Paris (in 845) cast lots to find whether the gods would help them; in Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*, ch. 11 (from the late eighth century), which describes how lots are chosen to decide sacrificial victims in Forsiteland/ Heligoland (see *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries* 1954:10–11); in Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* (c. 880: chs. 18, 19, 26–27, and 30: see *Boken om Ansgar* 1986:34; 40; 54–55; and 58–60); where lots are used several times to decide a key plan of action; *Hervarar saga ok Heiðriks* 1943:208 (*blótspán*) where lots are used to decide an appropriate sacrifice when a harvest fails; *Landnámabók* 1968:234 (S 198), where *blótspán* are used to decide the right time to take land; *Völuspá*, st. 62 (“Þá kná Hæmir/ hlautvið kíosa”); and Einar Skálaglamm's *Vellekla*, st. 30 (possibly from the tenth century, and quoted in *Fagrskinna* [1984:118]), where lots (*blótspán* in the prose, *teinlautar* in the poem) seem to have been cast in a field (“gekk til fréttar/[...] á velli;/ Týr vildi þá týna/ teinlautar fjör Gauta”: *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* 1912–1915:A1: 129–130; B1: 122). In all of these cases, the *reading* of the lots is followed without any question, echoing Tacitus' and Alcuin's general statements. It is also hard to attribute all of these examples to hagiographic borrowings. Quite obviously the casting of lots was a sacred moment, creating its own sacred space. It involved the entrance of the holy into the everyday, and several levels of participants, most particularly those key interpreters/ performers who handled the lots, and the audience that waited to hear their announcements, trusting their expertise and the fact that the lots represent a line of communication between this world and that beyond ordinary sight.

A similar trust in using objects to make decisions is seen in the family legends of Icelandic settlers throwing their high-seat pillars into the sea to decide where to settle in *Landnámabók* (1968:42–45, 124–125, 163–164, 232, 302–303, 312 and 317 [S 8–9; 85; 123; 197; 289; 307; and 310]). This divinatory tradition (directly referred to several times as “að fregna til öndvegissúlna”) is almost certainly based on actual practice: it is echoed in a range of oral legends concerning how people decided church sites from northern Sweden and Norway: see Campbell and Nyman 1976: 1, 12–15, and 2, 37–42.² It can also be seen in other accounts from *Landnámabók* of people using *blót* or following the behaviour of horses for a similar purpose (*Landnámabók* 1968:42–44 and 96–97 [S 7–8 and 68]); and in the practice of *seiðr* being carried out at the beginning of winter (i.e. see *Eiríks saga rauða* 1935:206–209). Like those described by Tacitus and Alcuin, these were clearly people who trusted in following omens. The idea that fate is preordained and can not be avoided is, of course, reflected in Fáf-nir's statement in *Fáfnismál*, st. 11, that “í vatni þú druknar/ ef í vindi rær/ alt er feigs forráð”, and in the comment in *Grettis saga* (1936:62), that “verðr hverr þá at fara, er hann er feigr”. That this view of life was deeply rooted in the Nordic peoples, and difficult to eradicate can be seen in the range of divinatory folk customs once practised across Scandinavia during

² That similar legends also existed in northern Norway was confirmed by Reimund Kvideland in an unpublished lecture held in Tartu, Estonia, in the summer of 2005.

Christmas and the New Year period (see, for example, Bø 1974:99–108; and 1985:35–40). It can also be seen in the results of a recent survey of Icelandic belief attitudes (Gunnell 2007).

All in all, it can be argued that anyone who knew the Germanic and Nordic peoples would have been well aware that this near blind-trust in augury was their key weakness. This is well demonstrated by the sarcastic comment made by Hrólfur, the son of Helgi *hinn magri*, when he started sailing towards the Arctic ocean after a advisory consultation with Þórr. Hrólfur, the archetypal member of the younger generation, watching the icebergs approach, wanted to know “hvárt Helgi mundi halda í Dumbshaf, ef Þórr vísaði honum þangat” (*Landnámabók* 1968:250 [S 218]).

There seems little doubt that some Romans were well aware of the value of dealing directly with those who did the readings, as can be seen in the accounts of their interactions with the Bructeri prophetess Veleda, based in the area around Köln in the first century AD. Of Veleda, and the reason for her respect, Tacitus writes in Book 4 of his *Histories* that she was:

an unmarried woman who enjoyed wide influence over the tribe of the Bructeri. The Germans traditionally regard many of the female sex as prophetic, and indeed, by an exercise of superstition, as divine. [...] Veleda’s prestige stood high, for she had foretold the German successes and the extermination of the legions” (Tacitus, Book 4, ch. 61, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:2, 220–221; trans. Tacitus 1975:247).

Veleda’s importance is demonstrated by the fact that in AD 69, Civilis, leader of a revolt against Rome sent her a defeated legionary commander along with other gifts (Tacitus, Book 4, ch. 61, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:II, 220–221; trans. Tacitus 1975:247). At a later point, she was presented with a Roman galley as part of the war spoils taken by her people, who trusted her to make decisions for them (Tacitus, Book 5, ch. 24, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:II, 252–253; trans. Tacitus 1975:285). Tacitus notes:

[...] any personal approach to Veleda or speech with her was forbidden. This refusal to permit the envoys to see her was intended to enhance the aura of veneration that surrounded the prophetess. She remained immured in a high tower, one of her relatives being deputed to transmit questions and answers as if he were mediating between a god and his worshippers (Tacitus, Book 4, ch. 65, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:2, 224–225; trans. Tacitus 1975:250).

The account brings to mind the Danish Iron Age bog offerings of weapons and ships. It also offers parallels not only to the figure of Þorbjörg *lítivölva* on her own raised platform, but also Þorgeir’s isolation beneath his cloak. Of particular interest, however, is Tacitus’ account of how a Roman commander contacted Veleda directly via secret messages, aiming to persuade her to change the “fortunes of war” (Tacitus, Book 5, ch. 24, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:2, 252–253; trans. Tacitus 1975:285–286). Also of interest is Statius’ revelation that in AD 77, the Romans seem to have captured Veleda, and instead of killing her, decided to keep her as hostage (Statius, *Silvae*, 1, 4, 88–90, in Goetz & Welwei 1995:2, 260–261; see also Simek 1993:356). It then seems that she might have been directly involved in getting her people to accept a pro-Roman king in AD 83 or 84 (see, for example, Todd 1975:203).

This account leads us directly to other accounts of outsiders apparently getting local Germanic/ Nordic people to change opinion by means of “taking the radio station” (in other words, controlling the information reaching the people from the gods). The most obvious examples in this regard are those contained in Rimbert’s account of Ansgar’s attempts to convert Sweden in *Vita Anskarii* (c. 880) which repeatedly underlines how lot casting seems to work in Christian favour (by some miraculous means). Most noteworthy is the description of Ansgar’s second mission from Hamburg to the Swedes in 851–852, which, like the rest of the book, would surely have been well known by anyone in close contact with the archbishopric

in Hamburg-Bremen in the tenth century, and its Nordic missionary activities. Hamburg's early involvement in the conversion of Iceland is well demonstrated by the mentions of the failed missionary work both of bishop Friðrekr of Saxony (see *Kristni saga* 1858:1, and *Íslendingabók* 1968:18), and Þangbrandr, who in both *Kristni saga* and *Njáls saga* is said to have been Saxon (see *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954:256; and *Kristni saga* 1858:8). Neither man can have been unaware of Rimbert's book, even if they seem to have failed to read (or listen to readings of) it well enough. Others, however, seem to have paid better attention.

As noted above, Rimbert notes several times how lot casting seems to have played a key role in how the Swedes gained access to the will of the gods (or perhaps Urðr and colleagues). In *Vita Anskarii*, ch. 26, Rimbert describes in some detail how Ansgar, newly returned to Birka in 851–852, was facing the slightly difficult situation of a renewal of pagan faith (apparently in ancestors). The bishop visited the local king, bringing him gifts, and offering him a good meal. The king accepted the presents and the meal, but stressed that he personally had no final say in religious matters. He says simply:

“I neither can nor dare give your mission any promises, without first casting lots to ask our gods for advice, and getting to know the will of the people. Let your mission follow me to the next *Þing* and I will put your case before the people, and with the gods' permission follow your wishes, and then your desire will work out. If not I will also let you know.”

Rimbert then explains that “it was the tradition in that country that any official matter depends more on the will of the people than the king's power” (*Boken om Ansgar* 1986, 54; original Latin in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999:128). The following day at Birka:

The king first of all assembled his chieftains and began to discuss our Father's mission with them. The conclusion was that through the casting of lots [*sors*] they would find out what the will of the gods was in this matter. As was their usual custom, they went out into the open air and threw lots, and the lots showed them that it was the will of the gods that Christianity should be allowed to be founded there.

The *þing* then somewhat grudgingly accepts the return of priests to the area (*Boken om Ansgar* 1986, 55; original Latin in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999:128).

As Ian Wood (1987:55–56) noted, Rimbert's account may contain echoes of earlier hagiographic works like Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*, but, nonetheless, this account seems to reflect local practice, if only because of its emphasis on lot casting taking place in the open air (*in campum*), something that reflects the comment about “teinloutar [...] á velli” in *Vellekla*, st. 30 (see above). Both comments echo the respect for liminal areas and the “wild” reflected in other accounts of religious practice, such as the talk of *örskotshelgi* (“þar sem hvárki er akr né eng”) in *Hrafnkels saga* 1950:120; Skírnir's rune work involving him going off to a nearby *holt* to get *hrá við* [*Skírnismál*, st. 32]); and even Sigdrífa's situation on Hindarfjall in *Fáfnismál*, st. 42.

Rimbert's account of the decisions made via lot casting in Birka is echoed shortly afterwards by another conversion account involving referral to the gods (ch. 30; *Boken om Ansgar* 1986, 58–60). This account relates of how, in 854, a Swedish raiding party found itself in a difficult position in Kurland. The warriors, besieging a city, but far away from their ships:

decided to find out by way of throwing lots whether their gods would help them in such a way that they would either win a victory or escape from there alive. And so they threw lots, but could not find any of the gods who was prepared to help them.

Someone suggests that they next try the Christian god by means of the lots, and “it was discovered that Christ would help them.” They then convince the city to pay them off with a ransom, and return home peacefully. In gratitude to the Christian God, they agree to take up fasting and giving alms to the poor because “this was dear to Christ” (thereby demonstrating what they saw as the chief aspects inherent in Christian faith).

As Ian Wood (1987:56–57) writes:

The augury could [...] be no more than a set of variants on a literary *topos*. [...] For an author trying to depict the Danes as being only just beyond the pale of civilisation auguries could be a useful narrative device. They were observed by pagan Germans. [...] Despite this there is a case for thinking that auguries did play a part in the Scandinavian’s search for divine protection, even if the particular anecdotes recounted by Rimbert are no more than literary constructs. [...] Augury and divination [...] may well have been employed by the Scandinavians as a means of adopting a new deity. Moreover the emphasis on augury in the *Vita Anskarii* may be taken as an indication that the Christians were prepared to accept the *sortes*, at least on those occasions when they supported the process of evangelization; in such circumstances they might be regarded as the manifestation of divine, as opposed to diabolic will. [...] This apparent acceptance of the *sortes* in Scandinavia is a further indication of the overlap between pagan and Christian worlds. The missionaries seem to have been content to work within social norms rather than in opposition to them[...].

Wood (1987:56) notes that the conversion activities in Iceland in 999/ 1000 also seem to involve divination, and, in *Under the Cloak*, Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson (1999:127–128) also notes parallels between Þorgeir’s behaviour and the role of the oracle in Rimbert’s account. Neither, however, notes exactly how close the overall performance (for that is what it seems to be) that took place at Þingvellir is to what Rimbert describes as having happened at Birka. Both performances involve the following features:

- a) Awareness that the acceptance of Christianity (or a new god) can not take place without the formal general acceptance of the people (or their representatives) at a *þing* meeting.
- b) The passing of gifts to the person in charge of interpreting the will of the gods (via lot-casting or a *blót*), a person officially recognised as being a pagan believer, and priest/ leader/ representative of the people.
- c) The performance of a recognised ritual ceremony of divination in a sacred space (recognised and known about by those at the *þing* meeting), carried out by those local people respected by the *þing* as having the ability to interpret the will of the gods, i.e. by those previously given gifts.
- d) The apparent message from the pagan gods (or other divinatory powers) that Christianity should be accepted (something interpreted by the person given gifts earlier).
- d) The same representative’s announcement of the sacred decision of the gods in a different public space in which legal decisions are taken.
- e) The official acceptance of this interpretation by those present.

If we accept Jón Hnefill’s description of the course of events in Iceland, the parallels between the two series of events in Sweden and Iceland (linked by the likely involvement of Hamburg-Bremen in both) are striking (see further Sawyer 1987:82). Whether the conversion accounts in *Íslendingabók*, *Kristini saga* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* are literary motifs based on Rimbert’s work or not (I think it unlikely), they certainly seem to suggest that those responsible for the Icelandic conversion appear to have known Rimbert’s work – or heard stories from it – and were following the peaceful approach to conversion (via local means of divination) hammered home there on several occasions (see above). To my mind at least, the parallels are

more than a coincidence. Indeed, the approach used in Iceland also reflects the statement later attributed by Adam of Bremen to a Danish king, who reminded Bishop Aðalbert that “wild peoples could more easily be converted by persons who spoke their own language and who led similar lives than by persons unacquainted and strange to their customs” (Sandmark 2004:106)

Over and above this, it is worth remembering that, as in Birka, for most people at the Alþingi the so-called “conversion” was actually little more than an official performance. As Orri Vésteinsson (2000:18) argues:

There is more reason to think that an official change of religion held no great significance for those involved and was probably not expected to affect people’s lives greatly [...]. That it did not is supported by the slow development of Christian institutions in the eleventh century.

According to Rimbart, for the Swedes in Kurland, Christianity seems to have centred around avoiding meat regularly for a few days, and giving alms to the poor. For those at Þingvellir in 999/ 1000, the only real consequence was a need to be baptised (and the more sensible seem to have waited until they found some warm water to do this in at Laugarvatn: *Kristni saga* 1858:25). There were no priests, hardly any churches and few could read. Everyone was allowed to go on eating horse meat, bearing out children (the banning of which could have caused practical problems for many farmers), and worshipping in private (at this time, most autumn, winter and spring worship seems to have taken place indoors) (see *Íslendingabók* 1968:17; *Kristni saga* 1858:25; *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 1958–2000:1, 197). For most people there was little immediate change. Nonetheless, the formal performance at Þingvellir (closely following Rimbart’s model which encouraged deliberate use of traditional modes of local religious practice) in the long term paved the way for people to be allowed to take up and encourage the new belief in comparative peace, as it did in Sweden. It also allowed Christians from home and abroad (and most noteworthy from Hamburg where Ísleifr Gizurarson later went to study) to enter into influential positions at the Alþing. This was to have much greater cultural and political consequences.

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Egill Skalla-Grímsson on the Library Site in Trondheim?

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The runic inscription currently identified as N-829 in the corpus edition of medieval Norwegian runic inscriptions (Niy^r)¹ was excavated in 1975 on the municipal library site in Trondheim, Norway. It was not satisfactorily interpreted till 1994, when James E. Knirk in a sagacious little study solved the difficulties of reading and established a close textual connection between the form and content of the inscription and the first half of stanza 48 in the Íslenzk fornrit-edition of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. Even if somewhat damaged and incomplete the runic half-stanza can, according to Knirk, and in all probability rightly so, be read as follows:

*Sá skyli rúnar rísta
er ráða vel kunni
þat verður mǫrgum manni at [...]*

The corresponding part of the stanza in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* reads as follows:

*Skalat maðr rúnar rísta
nema ráða vel kunni
þat verður mǫrgum manni
es of myrkvan staf villisk*

It is quoted as number four of six drottkvætt stanzas in the part of the saga that deals with Egil's journey to Värmland in Sweden (ch. 70–76) – a half stanza that has been dealt with in various ways in scholarly work over the years (cf. e.g. Olsen 1948).

The focus of Knirk's article is, apart from the runological interpretation, the importance of the runic inscription to the long-lasting discussion of the authenticity of the stanza in *Egils saga*. He concludes on this point that “most likely the runic verse preserves an older half-stanza that was remoulded by tradition or by the author of *Egils saga* into the first half of the stanza *skalat maðr rúnar rísta*” (str. 48) and that the inscription “provides insight into the composition of this verse in *Egils saga* and a confirmation of its status as non-authentic” (Knirk 1994, 418–19). By looking upon the runic verse as a source Knirk, then, both explicitly and implicitly dismisses the possibility that the runic inscription should be seen simply as a quotation of the verse in the *Egils saga*. There is no reason, in my opinion, to disagree with a position such as this and the arguments used to support it need not be reiterated here, except that we should be reminded of the fact that the inscribed object in question “has an archaeological dating based on the stratigraphy of the excavation area. The layer in which the stick was found is dated to the period 1175–1225. Thus it is slightly older than or roughly contemporary with the composition of *Egils saga*”, to quote Knirk (1994a, 419) once again. It should be added here that the existence of a runic parallel text to the first half of stanza 48 in *Egils saga* has, since Knirk's discovery of it, been pointed out elsewhere – without much further elaboration, however, on its significance to the composition of the saga text (cf. Hagland 1998, 626f., MacLeod 2001, 419).

The question of authenticity concerning skaldic verse preserved in saga texts in general and in *Egils saga* in particular has, moreover, been much debated – also in quite recent years

¹ Preliminary web-edition <http://www.hf.ntnu.no/nor/Publik/RUNER/runer-N774-N894.htm> Museum nr N-25803 in NTNU Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, Trondheim.

(for an overview, cf. Jónas Kristjánsson 2006). Even so the aim of the present contribution is not to continue that line of discussion.

There are, as I see it, questions other than those concerning authenticity of skaldic verse and of written literary sources that can be asked about the runic verse from Trondheim and the half-stanza in *Egils saga*: How are we to understand the relationship between an independent text, previously unknown to us, such as the runic half-stanza and that of the corresponding part of a stanza in the saga with which we are occupied here? Does it in any way affect our understanding of the saga's composition on this particular point or perhaps of saga literature more in general? The aim of the present contribution is to explore somewhat more in detail questions such as these.

The existence of a half-stanza about the carving of runes evidenced by the inscription from Trondheim does not *per se* need to have anything to do with the use of an almost identical text incorporated in *Egils saga*. The runic inscription, as we can all see, contains a not completely preserved half-stanza in a fairly simple linguistic and metrical form (cf. Knirk 1994, 417). We do not know why the half-stanza was carved on this inconspicuous wooden stick in medieval Nidaros. The inscribed object does not seem to have been intended for any other purpose than that of carrying the inscription – that is to say that we have to deal with a so-called *rúnakefli* in Old Norse terms. We know many runic inscriptions that must have served didactic purposes of various kinds, first and foremost to contribute to the learning and teaching of how to read and write this particular script (cf. e.g. Knirk 1994 and Seim 1998). Judging from its content there is potentially a didactic purpose of some sort underlying even the inscription with which we are occupied here.

From other sources we can, vaguely, see the contours of a lore in metrical form connected to runic literacy. The so-called rune-poems – such as the Norwegian and the Icelandic (cf. Finnur Jónsson 1915, 248–9 and Page 1999) – form part of a runic mnemonic tradition about which we do not know very much. As far as the Norwegian rune-poem is concerned, the age of the preserved text is uncertain and the transmission of it problematic. It is a fairly simple set of so-called ‘runhent kviðlings’, obviously there to help memorize the name of the runes in the futhark, e. g. as in (*Fé*) *vældr frænda róge/fæðesk ulfr í skóge* etc. As has been pointed out by Jonna Louis-Jensen (1994, 41) no definite text of the Norwegian rune-poem has yet been established. The poem as we know it has been tentatively dated in the thirteenth century, but, as suggested by Aslak Liestøl (1977, 308) there are reasons to believe that the Norwegian rune-poem was preceded by an older one about which little is known. There is, however, evidence for an interrelation between a Norwegian and an Icelandic tradition when runic lore such as the rune-poems is concerned. Suffice it here just to mention Jonna Louis-Jensen's convincing solution to a name riddle in a runic inscription from the old church at Bø in Telemark, Norway, dated in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. The solution to the riddle rests on the fact that the carver knew a tradition of rune-poems which was closer to the Icelandic than to the Norwegian poem as we know them at the present state of research (cf. Louis-Jensen 1994, 42). This kind of cross-reference seems to indicate the existence of a common Norwegian-Icelandic lore or tradition of verse connected to runic literacy – as far as the learning and teaching of the futhark were concerned at least (cf. also Hagland 2005). Whether that also applied to popular knowledge or beliefs about the use of runes, we do not know very much. There are runic inscriptions that seem to contain references to magico-medical activities or knowledge (cf. e.g. Dillmann 2006, 55; Gustavson 2002, 43–45), the most well-known of which is no doubt B-257 from Bryggen, Bergen, Norway. The inscription is dated in the late 14th century and opens with the following two verses: *ríst ek bótrunar/ríst ek bjargrúnar*[...] obviously relating in some way or other to the eddic poem of *Sigrdrífumál* (st. 19), other parts of the inscription to other eddic poems (cf. Liestøl 1964, 41–43). Whether an inscription such as this should be regarded as an act of exercising magic *per se*, or whether

it should be understood as a reference to or mediating of lore pertaining to the use of runes, is difficult to decide with any degree of certainty. There has been, I think it is fair to say, a tendency among scholars to perceive of it as a magic act in itself. That, however, is beyond the scope of our present concern.

Even if quite different in content as well as in form the N-829 from Trondheim and the B-257 from Bergen may be understood as having some sort of didactic purpose – didactic in the sense of transmitting lore about the use of runes for specific purposes. The N-829 seems to be a kind of definition of what it takes to be a (successful?) rune-carver, even if we do not have the entire text preserved: In order to be allowed to carve runes the carver should be able to interpret them successfully etc. A statement such as this might even be part of a didactic context in the more narrow sense of the term – the context of learning how to read and write with runes. There are a few runological points to consider here. The unusual form of the *yr*-rune (Û) in N-829 may be vaguely indicative of an Icelandic runological connection. The inscription contains, however, runological and linguistic features that seem to point in several directions as far as the question of a possible provenance is concerned (for further details cf. Knirk 1994, 416). The runological features of the inscription as such, then, do not seem to point in any particular direction as far as the geographical origin is concerned. In an international port such as Nidaros towards the end of the 12th, or beginning of the 13th century a runologically and linguistically heterogeneous inscription like this may be taken, nonetheless, to represent and allude to knowledge shared by people from a greater part of the Norse-speaking area than the local community in which the inscribed object was found.

The B-257, on the other hand, seems to be an attempt at conveying lore about beliefs associated with the art of writing in runes, even if, of course, interpretations other than this are feasible. In the case of B-257 the inscription, regardless of how we understand it, relates to texts that existed at the time of carving, we must assume when taking the archaeological context into consideration. The intertextual dimension of the runic inscription, as I see it, depends on texts that existed primarily in oral form, sufficiently well known to the carver and sufficiently known to be recognized and appreciated by an audience – of which we know very little. In the case of N-829 we cannot point out any particular text, written or oral, other than the version we know from *Egils saga*. The inscription seems to communicate something which was widely known or commonly accepted, we may assume: “This is what it takes to be allowed to carve runes” etc. There is every reason to understand this as a text that was equally well known by a Norwegian and an Icelandic audience as part of some popular lore concerning the use of runes – more or less on the same level as the rune-poems we may think.

How are we, then, to understand the *Skalat maðr rúnar rísta* half-stanza in *Egils saga*? According to Bjarni Einarsson, years before the Trondheim inscription was known to the international community of saga scholars, none of the six drottkvætt stanzas quoted in the Värmland episode of the saga should be looked upon as literary sources. They are all to be considered integral parts of the narrative rather than “footnotes” as in Snorri Sturluson’s kings’ sagas, again according to Bjarni Einarsson (1975, 265). The stanza 48 in particular presupposes that the audience was familiar with the context in which it belonged or was spoken, Bjarni says (1975, 258). As we have seen already, Knirk is not at variance with this point of view. He points out, however, that the first half of the stanza is kept in general terms and could have been used in various contexts, whereas the second half of it corresponds specifically to the immediate narrative context (Knirk 1994, 418). For this reason Knirk assumes, as we have seen, that the first half of stanza 48 may transmit an older half stanza remoulded by tradition or perhaps by the author of the saga.

There is, however, in all probability more to it than that. If the half-stanza as evidenced by the runic inscription from Trondheim, can be taken to convey a piece of commonly known lore transmitted in rhymed style, the use of a similar, but not quite identical half-stanza in

Egils saga seems to acquire a somewhat different significance. It cannot, as I see it, simply be the insertion in the saga narrative of a certain stanza – a stanza that was remoulded by tradition or by the saga author, as suggested by Knirk. In the composition of a saga narrative an insertion like that would as such not significantly surpass the level of mechanical compilation. Having a commonly known piece of rhymed lore about the art of writing in runes as a hind carpet, we may, rather than anything else, understand the version given in *Egils saga* as an artistically creative allusion to something with which a 13th century audience was well acquainted. Within the immediate context of the saga the negation of this particular item of lore would be well understood and appreciated, we must assume. The function of this quote should, then, in my opinion be understood as a deliberate pun made on a piece of lore, commonly known, or known at least by the initiated few in an Icelandic saga audience. In addition the quoted half-stanza represent an elegant and pointed comment – almost an ironical aside we may think – to the surrounding prose narrative. The first half of stanza 48 in *Egils saga* can, in consequence, be compared to the kind of intertextuality we often find in modern literature, e. g. as in Henrik Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*. When Peer in act IV, on the occasion of his excited encounter with the exotic Anitra, feels the urge to quote “an esteemed author” in order to comment upon the excellency of the situation, he notoriously does so, as we all know, in the following way: “das ewig weibliche ziehet uns an” (Ibsen 1931, 158). The initiated part of any audience, will, of course, immediately catch the humour and irony behind this rather crude rendering of Goethe’s *Faust* – “Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan”, and so on.

Ibsen’s text, in this particular case, quite explicitly signals the intertextual reference, so to speak. The first half of stanza 48 in *Egils saga*, however, does it much more subtly or implicitly. It does it to the extent that a modern reader cannot possibly detect the intertextuality at work until an independent text pops up – in this case the runic inscription from Trondheim – revealing to us that there was, in the high Middle Ages, a previously unknown literary context at play here – a context that was in all probability not restricted to the written word alone. Texts like this must have existed also as part of an orally based culture. The independent runic text from Trondheim helps us discover that the saga author deliberately makes use of a more widely distributed literary context than the immediate narrative prose context surrounding the half-stanza in *Egils saga*. He does so in a way that certainly adds to the artistic quality of the saga – it may certainly be seen as part of the saga author’s art. Bjarni Einarsson (1975, 258) presupposes, as we have seen already, that the saga audience knew the circumstance in which stanza 48 was spoken.² This is to say, if I read him correctly, that the understanding of the content of the stanza depends entirely on the narrative context in which the stanza is quoted. Taking the lore indicated by the runic inscription of N-829 into consideration Bjarni’s assumption on this point can be justified only in part: The first half of the stanza exploits common knowledge about runic writing by harping on the particular intertextuality that N-829 reveals to us. This is obviously something that exceeds the framework of the immediate narrative context by universalizing the occasion for a poetic statement. The second half-stanza brings, however, everything back into the flow of narrative that immediately precedes the stanza as a whole and continues after it:

[...].
 sák telgðu tálkni
 tiu launstafi ristna,
 þat hefr lauka lindi
 langs ofrtrega fengit.

² “Også her forudsættes det at tilhørerne ved i hvilken anledning strofen blev kvædet”.

In a case like this, then, we get a tiny glimpse into the saga author's workshop on a very specific point. This glimpse certainly shows us a nuance of the stuff of which sagas are made. It does not, however, seem to add any significant arguments to the long standing discussion of saga genesis. It cannot, for instance, contribute much either in support or in contradiction to Per Wieselgren's self-confident statement that, according to his investigations, "Egs., first and foremost, is the outcome of old oral tradition" (1927, 232)³ – nor does it affect significantly other more general statements on these matters. We shall, in consequence, for the present purpose restrict ourselves to keeping in mind the intertextual aspect – in the broadest sense of the term – of a small fraction only of the long narrative we know as *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* – as one of several aspects of saga composition.

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³ att Egs. övervägande är en produkt av gammal muntlig tradition.

Früheste Übersetzungen im Norden: Konzepte – Ziele – Traditionen

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Übersetzungen lateinischer religiöser Texte zählen zu den ältesten überlieferten Produktionen altnordischer Literatur. Sowohl ihr Medium, die lateinische Schrift, wie auch ihre Ausgangstexte sind »Kulturimporte«, die im Zuge der Christianisierung in den Norden kamen und wesentlich zum Anschluß Skandinaviens an Europa beitragen sollten.

Die Texte, die als älteste didaktische Literatur den religiös-philosophischen Überbau im Norden vermittelten, zeigen die Aufnahme und Transmission dieser fremden Ideen und Konzepte in ihrem Kern: dort, wo Sprache und Inhalt gelernt wurde.

Mein Vortrag soll dies exemplarisch anhand von zwei »Schulertexten« zeigen: *Spakméli Prospers*, einer Prosaübersetzung der *Epigrammata* des Tiro Prosper Aquitanus und dem altnordischen *Elucidarius*. Es soll ein Einblick in die mitunter recht eigenwilligen Übersetzungsstrategien gegeben werden und der mögliche Zweck der Übersetzungen, das anzunehmende Zielpublikum wie auch der spätere Gebrauch der Werke erörtert werden. Ein Vergleich dieser Übersetzungen ist interessant, da der eine der Texte möglicherweise für die Verwendung in einer Unterrichtssituation geschaffen wurde, sich auf jeden Fall an ein gebildetes, vorzugsweise geistliches Publikum wendet, während der andere auf eine breitere, volkstümlichere Verbreitung zu zielen scheint.

Beide Texte waren im mittelalterlichen Europa als Material für den Lateinunterricht weit verbreitet und wurden auch in die Volkssprachen übersetzt. Die altnordischen Übertragungen zeichnen sich jedoch dadurch aus, daß sie erstaunlich früh entstanden: Die älteste Handschrift des altnordischen *Elucidarius* stammt von ca. 1150–1200 und ist damit eine der ersten volkssprachigen Versionen in Europa und eines der ältesten erhaltenen altnordischen Manuskripte überhaupt; *Spakméli Prospers* ist die einzig überlieferte vernakuläre Übertragung der *Epigrammata*, bewahrt in zwei isländischen Fragmenten (ca. 1200 und 1300). Dieser somit recht begrenzten Überlieferung steht der *Elucidarius* mit einer wesentlich reicheren Tradition bis ins beginnende 16. Jh. gegenüber, wie auch der Tatsache, daß die Spuren dieses Textes auch in der autochthonen altnordischen Literatur zu sehen sind. Die verschiedenen Funktionen der Übersetzungen, die sich anhand der Überlieferung erahnen lassen, will ich durch einen Vergleich der Übersetzungsstrategien dieser beiden Texte untermauern.

The Phraseological Matrix of the Völsung-Niflung Cycle

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Extant texts bearing witness to the lengthy oral traditions of the Völsung-Niflung Cycle range widely in genre and style, as well as in date and place of origin. Nearly 1000 years separate the extended digression on Sigemund in *Beowulf* and the *Völsbuch vom gehörnten Sigfrid*, a chap-book first published in 1726. Texts more significant to our understanding of the story are 1. in the North, the variously dated Old Icelandic legendary poems of the *Edda* and the 13th-century *Völsunga saga*, derivative of them and in part also of Þiðriks saga, and 2. in the South, the *Nibelungenlied* (c. 1200) and later narratives primarily dependent upon it.

The nature of those pre-literary traditions upon which such works are ultimately based – arising in part from 5th-century figures and events of the Germanic Migration Period, but much embellished with folkloric attenuations – must remain forever a mystery. And while much has been written attempting to clarify the relationships between extant texts, such endeavours also lack conclusive usefulness, grounded as they are on complex conjecture and inflated by widely conflicting arguments and theories.

In this paper I will consider the stories of Sigurd and his world using a point of view quite different from those of earlier approaches, examining the proverbial corpus of the Völsung tradition as it is manifest in those various texts to which we have access. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, commenting on the significance of proverbs in the sagas, wrote (in his discussion of *Hrafnkatla, Origines Islandicae*, 1905, II, 492): “These saws are to a Saga what the gnostic element is to a Greek play.” In compiling my on-line *Concordance to the Proverbs and Proverbial Materials of the Old Icelandic Sagas* [<http://www.usask.ca/english/icelanders/>] I am trying to provide systematically presented access to the paroemial record of the Old Icelandic corpus for use in literary critical studies and textual research. By identifying the proverbial materials of the Völsung-Niflung Cycle in this paper and analyzing their uses where they occur, I hope to identify those patterns of paroemial wisdom inherent in the underlying oral tradition, their development in the extant versions, and the ways in which they affirm the values and enhance our understanding of the Sigurd stories in their various contexts.

More inroads to pre-Christian notions, after all?

The potential of late evidence

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The Old Norse written sources give us a rich impression of many aspects of pre-Christian Scandinavian culture and religion. But of some topics they do not give us enough evidence for a meaningful image. In such cases we seem to have two options: To give up or try to expand our material. I will argue in favour of the latter. I believe that 19th and 20th century material can provide breakthroughs in the study of pre-Christian notions. It is deeply problematic, and it is difficult to use such material but it is possible, and the alternative in many cases is less satisfactory. – I mean all kinds of late evidence, not least lexical material, although the focus in research has been on folklore.

Background / research history

It seems that most scholars today reject the use of late evidence in the reconstruction of pre-Christian culture and religion. But in the early 20th century central experts on Old Scandinavian religion based their interpretations heavily on 19th and 20th century folklore – like Olrik (e.g. 1901) Celander (e.g. 1911), and Lid (e.g. 1928). Jan de Vries more or less put an end to this in the 1930s (1931, 1932, 1933), arguing that a thousand years of Christianity had changed the popular traditions too much by mixing them up with Christian notions and practices.

Then followed a rejection of the Old Norse prose evidence, too, peaking in the 1950s and 60s (e. g. Sigurður Nordal 1940, Baetke 1951, and Olsen 1966). This hypercriticism was rejected during the 1980s and 90's (e. g. Schjødt 1988, 2000, Meulengracht Sørensen 1991a, 1991b, Bagge 2002). The late evidence, however, has not yet been reinstated, although there is a growing tendency to make use of it (e.g. Ström 1991, Bertell 2003, Ahola 2004, Bek-Pedersen 2006, 2007, Heide 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Such works are still exceptions and occurred even during the hypercritical period (e.g. Rooth 1961). What is accepted within today's paradigm is, generally speaking, only Old Norse evidence and earlier ethnographic, archaeological and iconographic evidence.

Objections to the objections

The continued rejection of late evidence is somewhat peculiar, for several reasons:

- The arguments for rejecting the late evidence are in principle the same as those used for rejecting the Old Norse prose evidence: Because they are far younger than the pagan period they are untrustworthy evidence of pagan traditions. If one in spite of this accepts the Old Norse evidence it seems inconsistent to completely reject later evidence. There is a big difference of degree but no difference in principle. What we do is deeply problematic no matter what. There is no safe ground to seek refuge on.
- The rejection of late evidence also seems inconsistent with the broad acceptance of Indo-European studies. If it is possible to reconstruct parts of an Indo-European tradition after *thousands* of years of contamination, how can it be impossible to do something of the same after less than *one* thousand years?
- Finno-Ugric pre-Christian studies have always been dependent upon late evidence and remains a respected field in spite of this. Why are the same methods impossible in our field?

- Within Medieval Scandinavian history most scholars again accept the retrospective method that based upon 17th century evidence makes assumptions about farms and land distribution half a millennium earlier.

- Place-names are again accepted as evidence for pre-Christian religious conditions, even though many of them are not attested from the Middle Ages.

- Many scholars *occasionally* use late evidence although they seem to accept the ruling paradigm (e.g. Clunies Ross 1981: 379, Lindow 1990, Drobin 1991: 118 ff.). One might expect this to produce dissatisfaction with the paradigm or at least an explanation of why the late evidence is acceptable in those cases but this rarely happens.

- Some works relying on late evidence remain widely accepted or influential, e.g. Magnus Olsen's explanation of the proverb *reynir er björg Þórs* in *Skaldskaparmál* (*Edda Snorra St.*: 106), his explanation of the word *varðlok(k)ur* in *Eiríks saga rauða* (: 412), and his interpretation of *Skírnismál* (Olsen 1909, 1916, 1940).

Some scholars recognize the potential of folklore but ignore it because they believe it is impossible to “filter out” the valuable information from the rest (e.g. Ström 1985: 8, Steinsland 2005: 64). This view may be shared by many.

But a few scholars claim to reject late evidence on principle and completely. This position is an illusion, however, because there is so much in our understanding of the Old Norse texts that is based upon late evidence. Examples of this are *hræll* m., which is mentioned in *Darðarljóð* and refers to a part in the warp-weighted loom; *gagl* n., which refers to a wild goose; *flannfluga* f., which refers to a woman running away from her fiancé, literally from the male member; the verb *rábenda*, which means ‘to bind together from both sides’ and is derived from the neuter **ráband*, which refers to robands (that attach the sail to the yard) but which is not attested in Old Norse, and many bynames, like *belligr*. Their meanings do not emerge from the Old Norse occurrences but are easy to reconstruct on the basis of the modern Scandinavian languages, and are accepted by everyone. Examples like these are abundant although it is often not realized because the explanations are seen as so obvious that the reasoning is not explicit. Mythological examples can be mentioned as well, e.g. the giantess Skaði's epithets *Qndurdís* and *Qndurgoð* (*Edda Snorra St.*: 31). Everyone agrees that *qndurr* m. means ‘ski’ and refers to Skaði's skiing. But this does not emerge from any Old Norse source. The meaning of *qndurr* is taken from the Modern Scandinavian languages (Fritzner 1883–96 I: 54, III: 1088). Other mytho-religious examples are the word *skeggbroddr* m., which has to do with the god Þórr's ability to raise a gale by blowing in his beard (Perkins 2001, Heide 2006a: 284 ff.), and *vörðr* in *varðlok(k)ur*, which refers to some kind of guardian spirit.

I hope this is enough to demonstrate that in some cases all of us accept late evidence. Then I think we should leave behind the question of *whether* it is possible to use such evidence and concentrate on how and to what extent it is advisable and desirable.

Why is it necessary and possible? The nature of our evidence

Late evidence is valuable because lack of information is an even bigger problem for us than unreliable information. Our oldest evidence represent only a small piece of past reality. Even in Iceland only a small part of the traditions that existed in the 13th and 14th centuries were written down in manuscripts that have reached us. From the rest of Scandinavia virtually nothing has reached us. Accordingly our most reliable sources are completely insufficient. Of most past notions they give us no image at all; of others they give us an image that we cannot understand because it is too scant. But parts of what was not written down may have survived in popular traditions until it was collected by folklorists, lexicographers, and others in modern times. Of course most of the pre-Christian traditions were gone by then but it appears that

fragments have survived, especially of simple and basic notions. Such fragments may help us a lot.

I will give an example. According to the Old Norse evidence one of the names of Loki's mother was *Nál* (also *Laufey*. *Edda Snorra St.*: 34, 100, *Sörla þáttr*: 275). It apparently means 'needle' but there is nothing whatsoever in the Old Norse evidence nor archaeology nor iconography that can tell us how this is to be understood. But in 19th and 20th century traditions there is. In Sigfús Blöndal's Icelandic dictionary (1920: 511) there is a saying which connects Loki to the sewing needle: If one licks the end of a thread in order to thread a needle, one "licks Loki's backside" (*sleikja rassinn á honum Loka*) – as if Loki could be conceived of as a thread. In that case his mother being a needle makes sense. In popular notions we also find a link between sewing needles and motherhood: One should never give a woman a needle without the thread in it because that would cause her never to have any children (Scotland, MacCulloch 1936: 255), or: A woman should never let someone else thread the needle for her because this would give her difficult deliveries (Sweden, ULMA 10071, p. 37). In both cases there is apparently an idea that the thread is the baby and the needle the mother. This makes sense because the needle is a natural symbol of women and their traditional work, and the eye of the needle has a shape very suggestive of the female genitals. This again corresponds to the comparison between threading a needle and sexual intercourse, which is widespread. Icelandic tradition also has an explicit connection between *Nál* as the name of Loki's mother, and threads and sewing. In Icelandic, the appellative *loki* m. among other things means 'a knot or tangle (on a thread)', which could be personified and identified with the person *Loki*. When a knot appeared on a thread during sewing or spinning, a verse was pronounced, during the disentangling of the knot:

“Styr heitir hann faðir þinn.
Skónál heitir hún móðir þín,
þau skulu bæði stinga í rassinn á þér,
ef þu ferð ekki upp af þræðinum.”
(Guðni Jónsson 1954: 189)

‘Spearhead your father is called.
Shoe needle your mother is called.
They should both prick you in the arse
if you will not leave the thread.’

In one version of this verse Loki's mother is called just *Nál* 'needle', like in the Old Icelandic accounts (Recording SÁM 85/585, Sigríður Gísladóttir, 1970, Hólmavík).¹

Are we really better off without material like this? Without it we seem to have *no* chance of success but with it there is at least a theoretical chance. I prefer uncertain possibility to certain impossibility.

To this some may object that we do not usually face a situation like this. In most cases the Old Norse sources, perhaps supplemented with other early evidence, give enough information for a meaningful image. Therefore, in most cases late evidence is not needed. Certainly but there are also many problems that have not been solved during more than a century of ingenious study of the Old Norse sources – like the god Loki and the sorcery form *seiðr*. The Old Norse sources give a lot of information about these things – but apparently not enough. Supplementary information from late evidence might help us.

Some scholars fear that the acceptance of late evidence will lead to speculative interpretations because we will be lead astray by false evidence. This certainly is a risk but a strict source criticism may lead to the same because the smaller the amount of evidence, the fewer interpretations are contradicted by it – and the smaller the chance that it contains the necessary material (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1991b: 243). My experience is that I am guided by the material as it accumulates, even if parts of it come from late evidence. The low reliability of 19th and 20th century information does not mean that it is worthless. It only means that we

¹ Thanks to Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir at Iceland's Arnarnagæan Institute for this information.

need more pieces of information in order to build something that we can believe in. But that is OK because there are ten times more of them available.

We should not ignore the difficulties of late material but neither should we ignore the possibilities. There is so much evidence out there that we do not even know about but which may hold keys to our problems – like the notions of needles and threads, which have not been taken into account in any discussion of Loki. Why should we not even look for this kind of material?

How can we do it?

In order to find useful late material, we have to look for it – in dictionaries, folklore collections, archives, and so on. Because of the long-lasting negative attitude towards late evidence it is easy to find new and interesting material.

The problem is to determine if the material is of value for a certain interpretation. One cannot just assume that a certain piece of late evidence is valid for ancient times. That will always have to be demonstrated in some way or other. I will discuss some of those ways. De Vries was willing to accept folklore when it gave the same picture as the Old Norse sources because in that case it could support interpretations of the Old Norse material (de Vries 1931: 60 ff.). This may be so, but in my opinion *different* information is even more valuable because we are most in need of information that can give more parts of the image. Such information is more difficult to use, of course, but its potential is bigger. Schjødt (2000) points out a criterion that seems fruitful: If individual pieces of information that we do not trust one by one, together form a *pattern* that corresponds to something we know from reliable sources, then we may believe in the information. Schjødt discusses the legendary sagas but the reasoning should be universally valid. But in 19th and 20th century traditions, most of the potentially valuable material does not belong to such patterns. Therefore, what we need most is criteria for validating isolated evidence. I will mention some ways to do this; first some ways to infer from late evidence alone:

- *It explains the evidence.* This may seem like a problematic criterion but in some cases is not, for instance in *qndurr* in *Qndurdís* and *Qndurgoð*. The meaning ‘ski’ is accepted because it fits perfectly; it explains all the occurrences in a consistent and plausible way.

- *Occurrences geographically far apart*, for example: The word *gand-* may mean ‘staff, pole’ in Iceland as well as in Swedish Ostrobothnia in Finland but not in the areas between. This common meaning can hardly be borrowed in recent times because there never was much contact between Iceland and the Gulf of Bothnia. Therefore the *gand-* meaning ‘staff, pole’ probably is a common heritage, i.e. from Proto-Nordic times or earlier – even if it is not attested in Old Scandinavian manuscripts (Heide 2006a: 124).

- *Widespread motifs.* In other cases the widespreadness of a motif can tell us that it is ancient. One example of this is the notion that the soul or spirit is the same as a person’s breath (Heide 2006b). We have no evidence telling us that in the Viking Age there was a notion of a “breath soul”. But still we can be quite sure that it was there because there is abundant evidence of the connection between soul and breath in late traditions and languages from northern Europe, the Classical world and most of the rest of the world. The derivation of the soul from breath seems to be nearly universal. In that case it is farfetched to claim that this notion is borrowed from somewhere in recent times.

- *Differing forms of a word*, for example: A word **alfskot* is not attested in Old Norse manuscripts but in all probability it existed, because the modern Norwegian dialect forms of this word differ so much: *alvskot*, *algskot*, *ælmskot*, *ølskot* etc. (ibid: 229).

- *Cultural fossils* may be utilized with the help of etymology. Place names are the best known example. For instance, farm names like *Ullevi* and *Torshov* are petrified fragments

from pre-Christian times, handed down to us through the centuries and still telling us about religious conditions back then (cf. Olsen 1915). In the same way names of plants, birds, insects, stars, stellar constellations etc., may be cultural fossils from ancient times. One example is terms like Norwegian *soluly*, Swedish *solvarg*, English *sundog*, Norwegian *(sol)gil*, Icelandic *gill / gýll, úlfur*, etc., which refer to parhelia or mock suns to the left and right of the sun under certain atmospheric conditions. These terms seem to be reflections of the same ancient traditions as we see in *Grímnismál*'s account (st. 39) of the wolves trying to swallow the sun (Heide 2006a: 206 ff., 220 f.).

- *Motif cannot be derived from Christianity*. One example of this is dialect-Swedish month names like *jultungel* and *dis(tings)tungel* (Dalarna), which seem to be relics of the pre-Christian calendar and give us information of that (Nordberg 2006: 15 ff.). This we can know because they cannot be derived from the Christian calendar.

- *“Freezer” in neighbouring culture*, for example: Scandinavian names of gods are recorded in the 18th century evidence for Saami religion, e.g. *Hovrengaellies* (“*Horagalles*”) from **Þórkall*. This may give information of the Scandinavian gods.

- *Motif is not “tradition dominant”*. If a motif appears to be dominant in a certain tradition, there is a good chance that it has spread to more characters and narratives than were attributed to it in earlier times (Eskeröd 1947: 79 ff.). If, on the other hand, the tradition only contains scattered information about a motif, the chance is high that that information is a relic of something old. It is the *“lectio difficilior of the tradition”*, so to speak.

In most cases, however, one will combine late and early evidence in a way that seeks to anchor the late evidence in the past. For instance, the name *Nál* of Loki's mother indicates that notions of needles and thread and motherhood existed at least as early as in the 13th century; probably earlier. Another example is the ‘staff’ etymology of *gand-*, which may be anchored by place-names containing the element *gand-*. They are strikingly associated with staff-shaped fjords and lakes, and of course their shape was the same in the past. In most cases the “anchor” will be evidence from early written evidence and archaeological finds but it may be other things, like topography in this case. *Distinctiveness* is a criterion for making such connections: The more distinctive a motif is, the less likely is it that it is found in separate areas or periods without connection. One can also use late evidence as an “idea bank” in the interpretation of the oldest written evidence. Once one has seen a certain pattern in the richer late evidence, one may discover it even in the scantier, early evidence; details that have escaped one's notice may get a new meaning and fit into a pattern that one has seen in the late evidence (e.g. yawning in Old Norse evidence, see Heide 2006b; cf. Schjødt 2000: 38).

With the help of criteria like these it is possible to extract probable data about pre-Christian times from late evidence. But still, of course, such data are less reliable regarding pre-Christian times than a clear statement from e.g. an Eddic poem. Therefore, many pieces of evidence of this type are needed to support each other, preferably in combination with early, more reliable evidence. Because of this one should seek to scan through large amounts of data when utilizing late evidence. But then success seems possible. If a pattern that one sees is confirmed again and again, even by unreliable evidence, one might be on to something.

The culture-etymological approach

Olrik's generation produced many works that made extensive use of late evidence. Some of them are influential today, but most of them are not. This may be because the scholars were led astray by the late evidence. But it may also be because the late material was not used in the best way. It was not common to seek to validate late information with the help of criteria like those listed above. But more importantly, one did not demand that all the information of a

phenomenon be seen in relation to each other. This is not customary today, either, but in my opinion this demand is essential.

As an illustration, I will take *gandr*, or *gand-(ur)*, which was the topic of my PhD dissertation, and which is found in Old Norse sources as well as modern Norwegian, Faroese and Icelandic traditions, and in the evidence for Saami religion. It struck me how much the results on *gand-* differed and how this seemed to result from the scholars studying different parts of the evidence. Because of this I decided to study all the forms of *gand-* in relation to each other (cf. Rooth 1961: 8), as they all ought to be connected in some way. There ought to be a link between the variants, close or distant, because they all contain the word *gand-*, which can hardly have arisen by mutation.

In this perspective the variants of *gand-* may be compared to the branches of a tree, or the preserved manuscripts of a textual critic, or the ramifications of languages in a language family, or the ramifications of a word in etymology. Some traits probably are “snagged on” the *gand-* tradition secondarily but still there must be a reason why just that trait got snagged on *gand-* in particular rather than some other phenomenon. We can assume that the early *gand-* tradition had similar traits, making it natural to associate the “new” trait with *gand-* in particular. Accordingly, even corruptions have some information value. Therefore I tried to find a model that could explain the total evidence of *gand-*, the relationship between the different forms. This meant an essential cluster of notions from which the variants may be understood as representations or derivations, similar to the archetype in text criticism or the reconstructed forms marked with *asterisks in etymology.

As an illustration I will take the excerpt from my dissertation that I presented in Durham (Heide 2006b). The main meaning of *gandr* in the medieval evidence is ‘soul or spirit sent forth (in shape)’. But in 19th century Shetlandic, *gander* has meanings that appear to deviate completely: ‘strong gust of wind’, ‘sudden powerlessness’, and ‘nausea, vomiting’. I suggested that these meanings are derived from a cluster of notions that can be reconstructed as follows:

Spirit = breath = air in motion, wind.

Spirits (= breath) can leave and enter body through respiratory passages / throat.

Entering spirit replaces body’s own spirit => powerlessness.

Spirit entering down throat forces out stomach content; = vomiting.

This is all logical if one conceives of a person’s spirit as the same as the person’s breath, and this conception can be supported by a lot of material from Old Norse evidence as well as Northern European folklore and Eurasian comparative material.

This approach is not using late evidence in the interpretation of Old Norse evidence. One should rather conceive of all the evidence, including the Old Norse evidence, as reflections of an original or essential cluster of notions which is the objective of the reconstruction. Therefore, this may be called a culture-etymological approach. One should only try to reconstruct notions not narratives so this is not the same as the historic-geographic method of classic folkloristics.

The outlined approach does not imply a claim that “all evidence really is ancient” or that “all evidence is equally valuable”. It just recognizes late attestations and late forms as adequate input in calculations, and demands that all forms are accounted for, placed in relation to the rest of the material. Some forms may be connected more closely to the essential cluster of notions, others may be identified as digressions or corrupted variants – just like some of the word forms, manuscripts and languages in etymology, textual criticism or language history are more distant from the origin than others. But they, too, have to be accounted for and placed in relation to the others as part of the total reconstruction.

In the mentioned disciplines, this goes without saying. It should not be the other way around in the reconstruction of pre-Christian Scandinavian religion and culture. We should

base our interpretations upon the total evidence for the phenomena we are studying, also the late examples. This not only will give us more evidence – like the Shetlandic forms of *gand-*. It may also make it easier for us to break out of the limitations of our presuppositions and our 21st century western middle class backgrounds. We should not allow ourselves simply to ignore the evidence that appears not to fit in.

A cluster of notions reconstructed in this way cannot be placed very accurately in time or space. It is hypothetical and it is not always certain that it ever existed. This may seem like a serious objection to the approach but the same is usually the case with the reconstructions of etymology and textual criticism, too. (For example, the *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* that we read is reconstructed on the basis of late manuscripts.) If it is acceptable there, it should be acceptable here. A hypothetical “archetype” may be methodologically necessary and the best we can aim at. But of course it is important to be aware of the status of our results. It is also important to be aware that this kind of reconstruction only gives one part of the image. Still, that part can be interesting.

I use the comparisons with etymology and textual criticism to illustrate a way of thinking and as examples: It is not impossible to reconstruct something from a remote past on the basis of material that is far later and in addition is scattered geographically and chronologically. But of course there are significant differences. What one seeks to reconstruct in those disciplines is more focused than what can be reconstructed with a culture-etymological approach. It is a specific word(form) or text rather than a loose cluster of notions. Moreover, religious or cultural reconstructions cannot be based upon sound-laws and common errors, although sound-law reasoning can be useful in such studies. Instead, association and common sense will have to do, alongside with the criterion that the model of understanding that explains most of the evidence should be preferred. This may sound flimsy but the semantic half of etymological reasoning is in exactly the same situation. (The change in the *meanings* of word forms is as arbitrary as that of cultural change.) However, the decisive criterion is the inter-subjective judgement of the scholarly community. Can a culture-etymological approach produce interpretations that many competent scholars find interesting and plausible?

The utilization of late evidence is not something that has been tried once and for all and proven impossible. There are better ways to use it and there is a lot of material that has yet to be discovered. I would like to invite those of you who recognize the potential of late evidence to join me in the forming of a network that can develop and stimulate the utilization of such evidence. The time and place for a meeting will be announced at the conference.

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A Short Report from the Project on *Codex Upsaliensis* of *Snorra Edda*

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In my capacity as one of the group of researchers at present working on the *Uppsala-Edda*, *Codex Upsaliensis*, MS DG 11 4to in The University Library in Uppsala, I am now quite convinced that when we talk about *The Prose Edda*, we are actually dealing with more than one mediaeval edition or version of the *Edda*. It is common to talk about MSS Gks. 2367 4to (*Codex Regius*, referred to as R), AM 242 fol. (*Codex Wormianus*, referred to as W) and Utrecht MS nr. 1374 (*Codex Trajectinus*) as one version (referred to as the RTW version); and DG 11 (from Uppsala) as another, although, as many scholars have earlier pointed out, it is probable that the *Codex Wormianus* should also be treated as a special edition. Indeed, the same may be said about certain other mediaeval mss. not discussed in this short article.

My main question today is that of whether these two main versions of the *Edda*, that is to say the RTW version and the U version really have the same origin or whether they can even be treated as copies of the same manuscript, as some have suggested.

The key point here is that, as Anthony Faulkes has earlier stated, “The version in the Uppsala manuscript differs from the others in all parts of the *Edda*, but particularly in *Skáldskaparmál*, where various passages and verses are absent, the material is very differently ordered and the whole structure of the work is different” (Faulkes 1998:xii). These differences suggest that there is good reason to consider the U as being quite unique and thus worth close investigation.

The relationship between the U and the RTW versions has been long discussed from various different viewpoints. Unfortunately most of these discussions start and finish with the question of which of the versions is closest to Snorri Sturluson’s original work. In short, there are two main research viewpoints here, one (let us call it the German school, from Mogk to Müller) suggesting that the Uppsala *Edda* is a near copy of Snorri’s draft of the work, while the other group (Finnur Jónsson, Sigurður Nordal and many others) claims that U is a tasteless cut version of the genius’s masterpiece. As Anne Holtsmark put it (Holtsmark 1950:vii) “Teksten er atskillig kortere enn den i RWT, sannsynligvis er den dradd sammen av den som skrev U eller dens nærmeste forelegg”. Faulkes (2005:xxviii) had a similar opinion arguing: “It has been subject to extensive verbal shortening, with the result that in many places the text hardly makes sense. Various passages that are in the other manuscripts are lacking, and much of the material that is included is in a different order.” Since Faulkes is nowadays seen as a leading figure in research into *The Prose Edda*, his words carry a lot of weight. There is however, a third view, namely that in the thirteenth century, the *Edda* was regarded as a work in progress. In this connection, we can quote Sverrir Tómasson’s statement that:

[...] sökum þess hve frávikin milli einstakra handrita eru sums staðar mikil, má einnig gera ráð fyrir að þegar á 13. öld hafi handbókin *Edda* verið til í mörgum gerðum; texti þeirra handrita sem við eigum nú af bókinni sé að vísu upphafleg smíð Snorra, en hafi verið aukinn með athugasgreinum annarra fræðimanna á 13. öld, eins og reyndar er algengt um verk klassískra höfundna og fræðimanna alls staðar annars staðar í Evrópu (Sverrir Tómasson 1992:534).

Elsewhere, Sverrir has reflected that:

[...] en af athugunum fræðimanna er ljóst, að textahefð verksins virðist vera af tveim rótum runnin og vandséð hvort rekja megi þær til eins sameiginlegs upphafs, verks Snorra Sturlusonar eða hvort það verk hefur frá öndverðu verið ein heild. Niðurskipan efnis í höfuðhandritunum er

mismunandi og gæti verið vísbending um að ritstjórar í byrjun 14. aldar hafi sett verkið saman eftir tveimur eða fleiri handritum (1996:3).

Faulkes' (and Holtsmark's) approach when considering the possible cuts found in the U manuscript centres on the basic assumption that once upon a time there was only one original *Edda*, and that this *Edda* was then copied, distorted and miscopied, resulting in (at least) two different versions, a theory that fits well into the classical approach adopted with regard to the discussion of the Icelandic Sagas. In other words, in the beginning there was a more or less perfect original which was later copied and recopied, leading eventually to the shape of the extant texts we know today.

All of the opinions noted above encourage us to do our very best to get as definite an answer as possible to the question of whether the two main extant versions of Snorri's *Prose Edda* can actually be traced back to the same textual source. My intention here is to try and present some new arguments that have relevance to this question.

As early as 1992, François-Xavier Dillman (in "Textafræði og goðafræði: Um þörfina á betri útgáfu á *Snorra-Eddu*") pointed out that U obviously contains the original version of the Njörðr-Skaði myth, and that in this case, the U text can certainly not be explained as a correction of the RTW text. It must thus go back to another original. In *Scripta Islandica*, 59/2008, Lasse Mårtensson and the present author wrote another article on the suspensions pointing out that in the cases of some of the quotations from *The Poetic Edda* (especially from *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál/Grímnismál*) and from Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Sexstefja*, it again seems clear that the scribe of U must be copying written sources different from those which were behind the original of the RTW version. Maja Bäckvall's studies of other Eddic quotations in *Gylfaginning* (Bäckvall 2008), point in the same direction. The time seems right to take another close look at the overall discrepancies between the two main versions of the *Prose Edda*. In the following, I will only present the results of a close study of the vocabulary used in the U and R manuscripts, more precisely that used in *Gylfaginning* and the main myths.

Sigurður Nordal, in his introduction to *Egils saga* published in *Íslenzk fornrit*, II (1933), after having pointed out that a close examination of the differences between the text of the saga contained in *Möðruvallabók* (M) and in the fragment usually called the "*þeta-fragment*" of *Egils saga* reveals that the younger text (M) was some 5–10% shorter, states that "Snorra-Edda hefur, svo sem kunnugt er, sætt svipaðri meðferð í Uppsalaabók, þó að styttingin sé þar gerð af miklu minni varfærni og smekk, enda myndi enginn kannast við stíl Snorra í þeirri mynd." Here Nordal is referring to his own research published in a book on Snorri Sturluson written several years earlier (1920). D. O. Zetterholm in his study, *Studier i en Snorre-text* (1949:73 ff.) examines the texts usually mentioned as shortenings, comparable to *Edda* (all in all parallels found in nine so-called "kings' sagas" and sagas of Icelanders.¹ From his own studies of the two versions of "För Þórs til Útgarðaloka" in the *Prose Edda*, Zetterholm drew the conclusion that U was a shortened version, while R represented an expanded text.

Both Nordal and Zetterholm, like the other scholars noted above, based their conclusions on close comparisons of the texts studies of limited sections of the *Edda*. Since it is obvious that the differences vary quite a bit, I have limited myself to comparing digitalized texts of the whole of the extant *Gylfaginning* as it is in the Uppsala version and the actual texts in Regius (mostly in *Gylfaginning*, but some in *Skáldskaparmál*), along with the texts of the myths concerning the dwarfs' blacksmith work and the Andvari-gold in *Skáldskaparmál*. Instead of comparing the average differences of the whole, I have compared the manuscripts piece by

¹ In this connection scholars tend to ignore that they really are comparing an apple to an orange. *Edda* represents a totally different *genre* than do the sagas.

piece, isolating the myths and the longer epic tales on one hand, and the informative texts about the gods and the cosmos on the other. As Table 1 reveals, the so called U shortenings of the text vary quite a bit.

Table 1: The length of seven individual episodes counted in words²

	Contents	Main characteristics	1–4	DG 11 Words	Reg Words	DG % of R
01	The main creation myths	Very similar originals, but if the same then a very conscious redaction in U	2	1693	2562	66%
02	Loki's offspring	Same original.	1	1153	1158	99,5%
03	Þórr and Hrungrnir	Almost exactly the same.	1	1063	1109	95,8%
04	Útgarda-Loki	Too different to make the idea of a common original convincing. Maybe different oral versions?	3	2066	3594	57%
05	Freyr and Gerðr	U does not know of <i>Skírnismál</i> .	4	150	454	33%
06	The mead of poetry	Far too different to have been copied from the same original.	4	392	924	42%
07	Iðunn and Þjazi	Far too different to have been copied from the same original.	4	452	996	45%

I have limited myself here to just seven episodes of some 16 that I have been working on, in order to show some of the most important features. My own conclusions are given on a four-point scale (1-4), where 1 means “almost certainly the same original” and 4 “hardly possible to imagine the use of the same original”. As one can see in the column farthest to right, wording of the episodes in U vary in length from being 33% of the length in the Regius-version, to 100%. This, of course, does not prove that the U-version can not be the end result of a completely thoughtless (or to use Finnur Jónsson’s favorite word, *vilkárlig*) shortening carried out by a tasteless scribe or editor (as Nordal suggests), although (as an old teacher) I must note that the perfect handwriting of the U scribe certainly displays little signs of insanity or deliberate attempts to destroy the texts.

In order to get deeper into the problem of comparing the two versions, I developed a method that turned out to be of great help. In order to compare the two texts, I first of all lemmatized them, thus ignoring whether a word appeared just once and in only one grammatical form or many times and in different tenses or cases. I then threw out the “system-words”, that is to say the prepositions, conjunctions, many pronouns, and so on, reckoning that these are the kind of words we add most deliberately when telling or retelling a story. The remaining “content words” were then compared word by word. The picture that came out of this (shown in Table 2) seems to provide concrete support for the “feeling” that arose from the comparison given in Table 1.

Table 2 Content words in seven episodes in Regius and Upsaliensis

² I owe my thanks to Eysteinn Björnsson, who most kindly allowed me to use his web-edition of Gylfaginning (<http://www3.hi.is/~eybjorn/gg/index.html>) the texts from Skáldskaparmál I have digitalized myself. The episodes in Table 1 and 2 can be found in 1931 and 1977 years’ editions as follows: *Episode 01* 1977:3.20–8.2; 1931:8.17–19.12 – *Episode 02* 1977:16.7–19.4; 1931:34.6–38.6 – *Episode 03* 1977:38.10–41.3; 1931:100.18–104.15 – *Episode 04* 1977:23.26–29.18; 1931:47.20–61.4 – *Episode 05* 1977:20.14–20.24; 1931:40.15–41.30 – *Episode 06* 1977:36.2037.22; 1931:82.2–85.12 – *Episode 07* 1977:35.12–36.17; 1931:78.1–82.1

	Episode	R	U	R not U	U not R	U as % of R
01	The main creation myths	480	362	150	30	75%
02	Loki's offspring	325	325	–	–	100%
03	Þórr and Hrungrnir	257	254	10	7	99%
04	Útgarda-Loki	480	376	147	43	78%
05	Freyr and Gerðr	108	49	65	6	45%
06	The mead of poetry	251	137	126	12	55%
07	Iðunn and Þjazi	248	156	117	25	63%

The most tempting conclusions to draw from this are that when we are facing almost exactly the same content words in both versions, the original *source* is likely to be the same. At the same time, it seems clear that the suggestion that the text of DG 11 is an abbreviation of an earlier original that was more or less the same as the original of the RTW version is at least in some parts out of question. The explanations of the backgrounds of the different versions are clearly far more complicated. One of our main tasks in the coming years is going to be that of coming closer to the real process that lies behind these manuscripts of the *Prose Edda*.

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Law recital according to Old Icelandic law: Written evidence of oral transmission?

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In pre-literate Scandinavia, law must have been an important body of oral lore, shared and developed by acknowledged experts who deliberately passed it on to their successors.

Just how fixed or how flexible the transmission of law may have been is a perennial question. Similarities in written law – within Scandinavia and even beyond – may suggest an unbroken chain of transmission over many centuries (see Amira 1960:222 for an example of verbal similarities in Scandinavian, Frisian and Langobardian law). Often, however, it is difficult to determine whether similarities arise from common origin, parallel development or borrowing. Or whether possible borrowing could represent one Germanic tradition following another or both borrowing from the same Latin sources. Similarly, differences between recorded legal traditions may reflect independent development over a long period or more recent legal creation – again including borrowings from written sources.

Because the answer is probably “All of the above”, these are questions of proportion, answered in widely different ways by individual scholars and generations of scholars. The current generation is torn between a resurgent interest in oral culture and a critical aversion to conjectures not directly supported by the sources at hand.

Whatever the proportions, recorded Scandinavian law surely contains some traditional matter of very old origin, reflecting painstaking efforts by generations of aspiring young men to acquire the legal wisdom of their elders. While the form of that wisdom and the mechanism of its transmission belongs largely to the realm of conjecture, one particular mechanism, known from the written sources, may have been crucial for passing down the legal knowledge later codified, i.e. the official *law recital* by the *lawspeaker* at the *assembly*.

Law recital: the explicit rules

For Viking Age Scandinavians the regional or provincial assembly (including the general assembly – *alþing* – of an entire island: Gotland, Man, Iceland) was a key social institution. The region sharing an assembly also shared a legal tradition, with the assembly serving as the venue to clarify and standardise its law.

The lawspeaker was an official of the province or region, the leader of its assembly and responsible for its law. Written provincial laws make no mention of a lawspeaker in Denmark, while in 13th century Norway and to some extent Sweden the office is under royal control. It is tempting, however, to assume that before the development of the three centralised kingdoms the office of lawspeaker had been a common Scandinavian tradition, his function more like what we know from Gotland and especially Iceland, perhaps (at least in Norway and Sweden) including public law recital.

Law recital as practiced in Iceland is described in the older (ca. 1250) of the two main manuscripts of the law collection *Grágás*:

It is also prescribed that a Lawspeaker is required to recite all the sections of the law over three summers and the assembly procedure every summer. (Grágás 1:187) [...] It is also prescribed that the Lawspeaker shall recite all the sections so extensively that no one knows them much more extensively. And if his knowledge does not stretch so far, then before reciting each section he is to arrange a meeting [...]with five or more legal experts, those from whom he can learn most [...] (Grágás 1:188) All men with seats on the Law Council are also required to be always present at the reciting whenever the Lawspeaker wishes to recite the laws, whether that is at

Lögberg or in the Law Council or in the church if the weather out of doors is unpleasant. [...] the Lawspeaker [...] is also to recite the assembly procedure every summer and all the other sections so that they are recited every three summers if the majority wish to hear them. Assembly procedure is always to be recited on the first Friday of the assembly if men have time to hear it. (Grágás 1:193)

In the same manuscript a stray provision is inserted at the end of the Christian Laws Section:

All the laws are to be recited over three summers. [...] No new law is to have effect for more than three summers and it is to be announced at Lögberg the first summer [...] All new laws become void if they are not included in the recital every third summer. (Grágás 1:51)

This provision assumes a law recital not only regular but so keenly observed that it would be immediately noticed if a given piece of legislation had gone unrecited for three consecutive years. Although it is hard to imagine such a rule being very effective in practice, this does not lessen its value as evidence of the reality of law recital: whoever framed the rule was in no doubt that law would be regularly recited in the foreseeable future.

Law recital is also implicitly assumed in a number of expressions in the written law such as “here” i.e. at the general assembly, or “today/tomorrow” i.e. the same day or following day, counting from the day the assembly procedure was supposed to be recited. Such expressions are not used consistently, however, and the lawspeaker himself is always referred to in the third person,¹ also in the chapters which use “today/tomorrow” (e.g. Grágás 1:54). All the same, the written law seems to contain remnants of text that was written either to be delivered as law recital or to imitate the recital word for word. In either case it serves as evidence that law recital actually took place.

One possible assumption is that laws were written to imitate the recital as closely as possible because that was how people always tried to learn them. Each legal provision, then, was felt to exist in one precise verbal form, much like modern statute law, with the lawspeaker’s recital its correct manifestation. In such case the law would not be unlike church hymns where terms like “we” (the congregation), “here” (in church) and “now” (during service) belong to the text in any circumstances, whether it is being sung in church or, for instance, being copied in a solitary monastic cell. Considering how often the same substantial rules appear in very different verbal form in the two preserved *Grágás* versions, I consider it rather unlikely that verbal fidelity had been much more highly valued at an earlier stage of transmission.

The other possibility, that those clauses were originally penned to be recited, would put them in a class with a rather stern letter received by the Icelandic aristocracy from their outraged archbishop, probably in 1180 (DI 1:262–264). The letter was written in Norway, certainly in Latin but preserved in a copy of a contemporary Icelandic translation. The translator uses the terms “here” and “this country” to mean Iceland, obviously not following the Latin but because it was in Iceland that the letter was going to be presented to the recipients – perhaps by reading aloud at the general assembly. A similar concern might have directed the pen of some legal codifiers.

How late?

The above provisions on law recital were, when copied in the preserved manuscript, clearly not active law. The phrasing is anything but confident: “if his knowledge does not stretch so far”; “or in the church if the weather out of doors is unpleasant”; “if the majority wish to hear

¹ Danish provincial law occasionally speaks in the first person, which is sometimes interpreted as evidence of law recital in Denmark as well.

them”; “if men have time to hear it”. What in fact replaced the law recital is described in between the provisions already cited:

It is also prescribed that in this country what is found in books is to be law. And if books differ, then what is found in the books which the bishops own is to be accepted. If their books also differ, then that one is to prevail which says it at greater length [...] (Grágás 1:190; cf. Foote 1984)

When this provision was drafted, law was subject to written transmission which already has resulted in a bewildering variety of legal texts – a stage reached, perhaps, around 1200. By then the codification of Icelandic law had gone through several stages, one of them well documented in Ari fróði’s *Íslendingabók*. According to his contemporary (1133 or earlier) account a decision had been adopted in 1117:

[...] that our laws should be written in a book at Hafliði Másson’s in the coming winter, according to what Bergþórr [the lawspeaker] and other wise men who were selected for it said was law and after consultation between them. They were to introduce all such new laws as seemed to them better than the old laws. They were to announce [*segja upp*] them next summer in the Law Council and keep all those which the majority did not oppose. And the outcome was that the Treatment of Homicide and much else in the laws were written and read out [*sagt upp*] by clergy in the Law Council the following summer. (cited in Grágás 1:4, Introduction)

Before this official decision to codify Icelandic law, some legal matter had presumably been written down, on private or ecclesiastical initiative, suggesting the feasibility of a larger-scale codification.

The codification effort of 1117–1118 was not continued, and failed to produce the intended official law code. Instead it ushered in a period of unco-ordinated – even competitive – compilation of different legal texts, the resulting mess eventually accepted by the already cited provision on “what is found in books”. During that period, law recital appears to have ceased because written law made it redundant.

The question remains, however, as to whether law recital in its final stage was done from memory or from a written text.² In his account just cited Ari uses the term for “recite” (*segja upp*) when describing the reading aloud by clergy of proposed legislation drafted by committee during the preceding winter. *If* the lawspeaker was, at some stage, supposed to recite the law from a book, and *if* the preserved provisions on law recital were drafted at that stage, we could not expect them to sound any different from what they do. The wording in Old Icelandic does not distinguish between recital from memory and recital from a written copy.

If law recital was, at a certain stage, intended to entail the reading out of a written text, how, then, did written law make it redundant? Looking at the sheer volume of the preserved *Grágás* text, the answer is obvious. Written law simply outgrew the stamina of the lawspeaker and the patience of his intended audience. Not only did it grow in magnitude but also, as witnessed by the two preserved versions, in variety. Given the lawspeaker’s duty to recite “all the sections so extensively that no one knows them much more extensively” his “five or more legal experts” would be able to refer him to an ever increasing variety of legal texts each of which contained some extra material and not necessarily in agreement as to what belonged to each section.

How early?

If law recital in Iceland came to an end sometime during the 12th century, when did it begin?

² Or a bit of both, if the lawspeaker’s memory was supported by written notes as suggested by Karlsson 2007: 222–234; an illiterate lawspeaker might even have had an assistant (*a suffleur* of sorts) managing his notes.

In one sense, law had always been recited. The functioning of assemblies, courts and the like might entail the reciting of procedural rules – similar to the lawspeaker’s annual reciting of the assembly procedure. When people needed to change, fix or clarify the law, one or more versions would be stated and the accepted law publicly recited – just like the written law at the Icelandic general assembly in 1118. But this question specifically concerns law recital in the narrow sense of *repeated official recital by the lawspeaker of (ideally) the entire body of accepted law*.

There is no direct evidence of such procedure prior to the 12th century. On the other hand, there is precious little evidence for almost anything occurring before the appearance of written sources, which, of course, does not mean that nothing happened in prehistory. Assuming, for the sake of caution, nothing not directly supported by the sources, could mean dating most developments as late as possible, which would obviously distort our entire take on the past.

One potential reason to assume the practice of reiterative law recital to be old is that it would have been more useful in a preliterate society (counting Scandinavian society as preliterate for the present purposes because runes seem not to have been an option for the preservation of law prior to the adoption of the Latin alphabet). On the other hand, there have been illiterate societies all over the world managing their legal traditions without this particular device. I would suggest that the idea was much more likely to occur to people who knew how the church used its fixed texts, not only in rituals but, for instance, proclaiming the charter of the church or reading the story of its patron saint.

Another argument for an early origin of law recital is the assumption that without it there would have been no lawspeaker. In Iceland there is every reason to accept the tradition, related by Ari, that the office of lawspeaker is as old as the general assembly, ca. 930. However, the lawspeaker had other important functions to which law recital could be a later addition. Even if the term “lawspeaker” (cf. German “Gesetzsprecher”) may suggest the particular function of law recital it is an accident of translation. In Old Norse the term *lōgsögumaðr* relates to his central duty of *segja lōg (mōnnum)*: ‘tell (people) what is the law’, further defined as his duty to respond to questions about valid law.

A final argument for the assumption of law recital as an early practice at the Icelandic general assembly is the evidence for law recital in continental Scandinavia, at least in Norway and Sweden.³ Here as in Iceland the main evidence is in 13th century manuscripts, or even later ones, perhaps reflecting 12th century practice. If the practice is common to the three countries, however, it points to a common inheritance which would date it prior to the settlement of Iceland, i.e. not later than the 9th century. Alternatively, if it was an innovation which spread from one country to others, Iceland would have been more likely to copy the mainland (Norway) than vice versa, dating the innovation to ca. 900 at the latest.

Norwegian and Swedish provincial law is much less explicit about law recital than the Icelandic provisions cited above. It is, in fact, largely confined to the indirect evidence of vocabulary.⁴

The lawspeaker is there called *lōgmaðr/laghmaþer* rather than *lōgsögumaðr*, but the difference is irrelevant as his office or province is known as *lōgsaga/laghsagha*, corresponding to Icelandic *lōgsögumaðr*. As in Iceland, the lawspeaker’s central duty (most clearly reflected in narrative sources) is to know the law and pronounce in legal disputes. His existence is thus no evidence of law recital.

³ I have earlier (Kjartansson 1989) discussed the Icelandic evidence for law recital and been justly criticised (most recently by Karlsson 2004:53) for disregarding the evidence from mainland Scandinavia.

⁴ See Fritzner for definitions and examples of Icelandic and Norwegian terms and Fornsvensk lexikalisk databas for Swedish ones.

Then there are examples of the law referring to itself as “recital”: Norw. *uppsaga/logtala*, Sw. *laghsagha*. In Sweden the *Östgötalagen* concludes with the words: “Now your recital is finished and brought to the end.”⁵ In Norway one part of the older *Frostabingslög* begins with a phrase which similarly seems to refer to the law (or that particular part of it) as “recital”.⁶ This may be compared to a clause in *Grágás* (found in both manuscripts in this case) which contains the following reference to law recital:

When men are to publish assault or injury, then it is lawful to do so on the same day as the action, during the following night, and during the two days and two nights thereafter. Then the publishing has been done before the third sunrise, as the law recital’s phrase has it – if what it says there is rightly understood. (*Grágás* 1:143)

Here, the “law recital” (*uppsaga*) is a given text, written or remembered, containing the exact phrase “before the third sunrise” which the author⁷ is trying to clarify.

The three cases, from Sweden, Norway and Iceland, all imply law being recited. But there is no indication if it had been recited, or was supposed to be recited, as a part of the repeated and comprehensive recital of the entire body of law. The reference could just as well be to a one-off recital, such as Ari describes in the Icelandic Law Council in 1118. In the Swedish and Norwegian cases, as possibly in the Icelandic one, it is a question of recital from a written book, with no indication if the law in question had been recited from memory at an earlier stage.

Finally there is the Norwegian term *logtala*, apparently meaning ‘recital’. It occurs in a variant reading where the bishop is supposed to come to the assembly and listen to the *logtala* instead of the *logbók* (‘law book’) of the main manuscript (*Norges gamle Love* 1:378). Here, finally, we have a recital which is definitely reiterative, the same old law being read out at the assembly every year. But the rule is contained in the ecclesiastical part of the law and its intent is to enable the bishop to control provincial law provisions on church matters. Such law, originally adopted at the initiative of the church, surely existed in writing from the beginning and is unlikely to have ever been recited from memory.

While there can be few rock-solid conclusions here, my suggestion is that law recital – the repeated official recital of the entire body of recognised law – was an isolated Icelandic experiment, commencing perhaps either shortly before or shortly after the codification effort of 1117–1118 and probably reflecting the same motivation as that effort to develop and standardise the country’s law.

Fixed or flexible?

My doubts about the reiterative law recital as a transmission mechanism of oral law should not be taken to imply that no oral law was ever transmitted. Private tutoring of aspiring lawyers by acknowledged experts, together with the “in-service education” of experts conferring with each other, would in any case be more effective to ensure the preservation of legal knowledge than recital at the assembly.

How fixed or how flexible was the oral transmission of law? And how accurately did the original codification of law reflect an earlier oral tradition? The answers – if we only knew them – must have depended on social preferences rather than the arrangement of transmission.

⁵ “Nu ær laghsagha i þur lyktaþ ok ut saghþ.” *Östgötalagen*, final chapter.

⁶ “Þat er uppsaga laga vártra í lögum manna at engi skal [...]” (*Norges gamle Love* 1:217). The phrase seems corrupt, perhaps conflated from two variants, but the meaning of *uppsaga* is reasonably clear.

⁷ A legal expert rather than the legislature itself; see, however, Finsen (1883:684) for a contrary view. Finsen accepts the possibility of the text being written though disputing Maurer’s earlier suggestion as to the identity of the text.

If the literate 12th century experts contributing to the codification of Icelandic law “probably [...] felt [...] free to vary and extend the wording in response to the casuistical queries that might occur to them or be put to them by other people” (Grágás 1:11, Introduction), surely the preliterate expert felt no less free, whether he was the lawspeaker in his official capacity or the lawyer training his apprentice.

People are perfectly capable of learning entire volumes of even complicated prose by heart. But it is literate culture that prompts them to do so, whether it is Avicenna reciting the Koran from memory at the age of ten, or a modern actor learning his part in play after play, or the opera singer able at any time to perform any of dozens of memorised roles. For such learning the written text is not only an indispensable tool for student and teacher alike; it is also the model which in the first place suggests that even a prolonged stream of prose ought to exist in a permanent form. While preliterate culture may operate with any amount of poetry, more or less permanently memorised, and any number of fixed phrases, we should not expect it to aspire to the word-for-word fixation of long pieces of prose. Nor should we expect it to adopt a mechanism, like the official law recital, to transmit such fixed prose. Not unless the sources definitely point in the opposite direction which they, in the present case, do not.

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The Construction of Memory in Medieval Icelandic Literature

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In recent decades there has been increased focus on memory studies in the humanities. In Old Norse studies, the concept of memory is often used in research literature. Often, however, the concept is used contextually, thus being meaningful for the immediate topic under discussion, whereas it is relatively rare that the concept is qualified theoretically. Works by J. Glauser (e.g. Glauser 2000 and 2007), though, are examples in saga studies of a more theoretical approach to the concept of memory. Inspired by these examples, I will examine how memory studies, especially notions of ‘cultural memory’, as first introduced by J. Assmann (e.g. Assmann 2005), can possibly provide us with a useful theoretical framework for understanding medieval Icelandic literature dealing with the past. In so doing, I will be concerned with the representation of the past in medieval literature, focusing on selected references to the settlement of Iceland. The relation between literature and memory, especially the notion of ‘memory in literature’ (see e.g. Erll and Nünning 2006) will be dealt with, as will as well the ‘founding function’ and the ‘mythic status’ of the literature about the settlement.

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Hjarta sjónir. Ekphrasis and medium in Líknarbraut

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The skaldic poems on Christian subjects from thirteenth and fourteenth century Iceland offer fascinating source material for the study of mediality in medieval societies. Of course, earlier skaldic poetry is also transmitted to us via writing, whether in runic or Latin script, and we need to keep in mind that all that skaldic poetry we have which is dated later than c.1000 was also composed not in an environment of pristine primary orality, but rather in one in which written and oral cultures co-existed and writing was increasingly taking over important functions (the writing down of the laws in the winter of 1117–18, as reported in *Íslendingabók* ch. 10, is the classic index of this). However, the significant social relationships and mythic patterns encoded in the traditional skaldic practice of performance before a listening audience probably ensured that poetry composed early in the literate period was not much affected by the advent of writing.

At some point this situation changes. To take an example from the very end of the period, *Kátrínardrápa*, usually dated to the second half of the fourteenth century, is full of references to books and writing. Its highly self-referential last stanza exhorts: *Líttu, maðr, á letrið þetta* ‘Look, man, at this writing’, before going on to compare a punning reference to the poet’s name to a *læst brief* (‘closed letter’, a calque on *littera clausa*, a private, sealed letter), as a figure for the obscurity of the wordplay. *Kátrínardrápa*, then, has what we might call a ‘medial self-consciousness’ (*Medienwissen*). It is highly aware of its own status as written text – but in the late fourteenth century, this is perhaps not surprising. More interesting would be an earlier example, one in which a nascent medial self-consciousness can be observed arising out of the media change (*Medienwechsel*) associated with the arrival of writing.¹ In this earlier phase we can speak of processes of ‘interference’ between written and embodied media. Taking ‘medium’ in a broad sense as that which makes perceptible (Sieber 2004), ‘interference’ between different media could be said to make perception perceptible, to draw attention to the process of perceiving, and in so doing, to make a self-reflective *Medienwissen* possible. George Tate (1978:35) has observed the tendency of the *Líknarbraut* poet to experiment with the *drápa* form. In what follows I will show that this poem, long recognised as occupying a key position in the development of Christian skaldic poetry (Schottmann 1973:82), is also innovative in other ways, which bear witness to its medial self-reflexivity.

1. Frames

One obvious locus of medial interference in Old Icelandic textuality is saga prosimetrum. Performances of skaldic verses are part of the narrative in many *Íslendinga sögur*, and also appear (mixed with other modes of verse citation) in genres such as the *konungasögur*. The way in which stanzas are cited as part of the prose narrative means that the saga’s reader or hearer experiences not a poem as such, but a performance of a poem. The provision of a frame focuses our gaze on what is inside it, heightening the contrast between what is inside (a – fictional – poetic performance) and what is outside (written prose).² I will return to a particularly telling example of saga prose as frame at the end of this paper. The Christian long poems, on the other hand, are for the most part not transmitted in narrative settings, but rather as self-contained textual entities. Here we search in vain for the ‘meta-level’ of a fictional performance situation, with its more or less explicit commentary on the mediality of the poetic text. But a frame is present – it is just in a different location, within the poem. The introductory and

¹ For the terminology used here, see Kiening (2007:305–15).

² For further discussion of framing in saga prosimetrum, see Heslop (in press).

concluding verses (*upphaf* and *slæmr*), the *stef* and the poet's parenthetical comments, are places where the three (or four)-way relationship poet-dedicatee-subject-audience is defined, where the title and sometimes even, as in *Kátrínardrápa*, the author's name are given. Perhaps paradoxically, this self-enclosing framing does not work to close the text off. Rather it is on this 'meta-level' that various kinds of reference outside or across the frame – deixis, for example (cf. Hausendorf 2003), or intertextuality (especially common in the Christian skaldic corpus, cf. Attwood 1996) become possible.

Liknarbraut 'Way of Grace', the poem I will be discussing in this paper, is not among the much-anthologised skaldic classics. The most recent and useful edition, from which the following introductory comments and all my quotations and translations from the poem are drawn, is George Tate's for the new *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* project (Clunies Ross *et al.* 2007). *Liknarbraut* is transmitted complete in the collection of poetry on Christian subjects in ms. B of *Snorra Edda* (AM 757a 4to, c. 1400, probably from northern Iceland), where it comes between *Leiðarvísan* and *Harmsól*. Unlike *Harmsól*, *Liknarbraut* is anonymous, though its title is medieval, appearing both in the right margin of the ms. at the beginning of the poem and in the penultimate stanza. It consists of 52 *dróttkvætt* stanzas with a single *stef*. The *stef* occurs in the first part of the poem only (sts. 10–29), which depicts key events of salvific history: the incarnation, passion, harrowing of hell, resurrection, and last judgement. The second, *stef*-less part (sts. 30–46) is devoted to an *adoratio crucis* 'Adoration of the Cross' and draws extensively on various Latin and Old Icelandic texts about the cross from the liturgy, hymns, and exegetical and homiletic literature; Tate suggests that its 'close connection to Good Friday liturgy suggests that it may have functioned [...] as a verse sermon' (Clunies Ross *et al.* 2007:229). Features such as its formally correct but infrequent kennings, (a single occurrence of) full rhyme of *æ* and *æ*, borrowings from poems in the reasonably well-established twelfth-century group (*Geisli*, *Harmsól*, *Leiðarvísan*, *Plácitusdrápa*), lendings to the fourteenth-century Guðmundr poetry, and finally a general similarity to Franciscan passion poetry (first suggested by Holtsmark 1965) lead Tate to date *Liknarbraut* to the late thirteenth century.³

The poem begins with a nine-stanza *upphaf*, which invokes complex processes of circulation and mediation between three actors: the skald, speaking in the first person; God, apostrophised in the second person in almost every stanza; and a third-person collective, in one instance (st. 8) particularised as the skald's *bræðr ok systir* 'brothers and sisters'. God is, as conventional in Christian poetry, the source of poetic inspiration. He gives *orðgnótt* 'word-abundance' (1), *munshöfn* 'mouth-content' (2), *gipt saðrar gæzku* 'gift of true grace' (3), *albjart ástarljós* 'wholly radiant light of love' (4), and *himneskt sáð* 'heavenly seed' (5), and he also receives *hugðubæinir* 'loving prayers' (3), *mín mál* 'my utterances' (8), *þessi blíðr hróðr* 'this joyful encomium' (9). The skald processes God's gift of inspiration into poetry, though his subordinate position is emphasised: he merely supplies *lyndis lád* 'mind's land' for God's seed (5), and his *blindi míns móðs munar* 'blindness of my despondent mind' must be driven out by God's light (4). The *bræðr ok systir*, finally, are 'summoned to' the poem (*kveð ek bæði bræðr ok systir at kvæði*, 8) and asked to help the skald with their prayers. In st. 6, a third-person group, who may or may not be the same as the *bræðr ok systir* (they are denoted by a warrior-kennung, but this is of course no barrier to their being clerics) are said to benefit from the *sannr ávöxtr* 'true fruit' (i.e. the poem) for their souls' salvation.

³ Proposed datings in the literature, as is often the case for Christian skaldic poetry, vary considerably: Clunies Ross (2009:66) appears to prefer a relatively early date, c. 1260; Tate: 'late C13th' (Clunies Ross *et al.* 2007:228); Schottmann: 'wohl um 1300 entstanden[...]' (1973:82); Holtsmark: 'vi gjør neppe galt i å sette L[iknarbraut] [...] etter 1300' (1965:col. 554). In light of the evidence available this range is not surprising (and could perhaps even be widened).

The relations between skald, dedicatee, and audience are worth pausing over here. God is not only both dedicatee and subject (as usual for a skaldic praise poem, with some exceptions), he has also taken over the Odinic role of supplying inspiration. The gift-exchange that traditional skaldic poetry proclaims as its pragmatic context is also active here, but it is marked by collapses and doublings. God supplies not only material for composition, as earthly princes do (*Áleifs hefni, fenguð yrkisefni* ‘Avenger of Óláfr, you furnished matter for verse’, Arnórr tells Magnús góði in *Hrynhenda* 14) but also the essence of the poem itself – which the skald offers promptly back to him as *hróðr* ‘praise(-poem)’. The role of the third-person audience is also quite different to that of the traditional skaldic audience-within-the-poem (essentially, to listen quietly and be impressed). The audience of *Liknarbraut* is expected to actively participate both in the poetic process, by helping the skald with their prayers (st. 8), and in the gift-exchange, as by means of the poem (*af mínum munni* ‘from my mouth’, st. 6) they obtain benefit for their souls. There is no trace of such traditional topoi as the call for a hearing, and in general the *upphaf* is, apart from the two references to the mouth cited above, dominated by the sense of sight, and metaphors of light and blindness, rather than hearing. The abstraction of *kveð ek [...] at kvæði* is surely no accident. God, the poem’s addressee, is not physically present, and the poem takes place in an imagined, visionary space. The task of the audience, as we shall see, is precisely that of envisioning.

2. *Líta seggja sveitir*

The first section of *Liknarbraut*, as already mentioned, narrates the important events of Christ’s life, interspersed with the *stef*-stanza with its reference to *krossmark ins hæsta Krists* ‘the cross-sign of the most high Christ’, which the skald offers to Christ (*ek vilda bjóða hátt stef*, st. 13) ‘as if present’, as Tate observes (Clunies Ross *et al.* 2007:244). The passion description has several traits which could indicate the Franciscan influence suggested by Holtsmark. The descriptions of the nails (st. 16) and wounds (st. 20) evoke the stigmata, key to Franciscan spirituality,⁴ and the normative response to these events is represented as imaginative sympathy leading to compassion (*Hvat megi heldr of græta hvern mann, er þat kannar* ‘What could be more able to make weep each man who ponders it’, st. 19). This imaginative sympathy is aroused in literally textbook fashion by the use of *enargeia*, vividly sensual description. Quintilian writes that *enargeia* is ‘a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking [*dicere*] about something as exhibiting [*ostendere*] it. Emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself.’ (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* [*The orator’s education*] VI.2:29, cf. VI.2.29: Quintilian 2002:60-61). Pseudo-Longinus agrees: ‘Another thing which is extremely productive of grandeur, magnificence and urgency, my young friend, is visualization (*phantasia*) [...] the situation in which enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker see what he is saying and bring it *visually* before his audience.’ (Pseudo-Longinus, *Peri hupsous* [*On the sublime*] 15.1: Russell and Winterbottom 1989:159) At first the senses of hearing (*Glymr varð hár af hömrum heyrðr* ‘High clanging was heard from hammers’, st. 16), and touch (*Víst bar víf it hæsta vátar kiðr af gráti* ‘Certainly the highest woman [Mary] bore cheeks wet from weeping’, st. 18) are appealed to, but the climax comes in the appeal to sight in sts. 25–8, the middle stanzas of the poem.

These stanzas set themselves apart in several ways. In them, the tense of narration switches from the preterite, used consistently until this point, to a mixture of the future (hardly surprising, seeing as future events are being described) and, more significantly, the present. Their

⁴ Caution is necessary here: Anne Derbes warns that ‘the emphasis on the *imitatio crucis* was not confined to the Franciscans. The origins of this sensibility predate Francis by decades, perhaps by more than a century. A growing empathy for Christ’s suffering during the passion emerged as early as the late eleventh century and gained momentum in the twelfth’. (1996:17).

idiom is strikingly visual. Not only are they full of iconographic details familiar from the visual arts (though the same could be said of the stanzas on the crucifixion, Mary's weeping, etc.), but their rhetoric is one of seeing, so much so that it seems justified to regard these stanzas as an ekphrastic interlude. Christ is represented as Pantocrator in st. 25 (he *geypnir styrkliga sína skepnu alla saman* 'holds in his hand mightily his creation all at once'), the general resurrection is depicted in st. 26 (*hverr meiðr hringmóts skal skunda hvatliga ór hauðri* 'each tree of the sword-meeting [BATTLE > WARRIOR] shall hasten quickly from out of the ground') and in st. 27, the cross and the *arma Christi*, or instruments of the passion, appear (*kross sýndr þjóðum með blóði ok saumi* 'the cross will be shown to the people with blood and nails', *viðir Mistar sjá á móti sér svipur ok spjót* 'trees of Mist [WARRIORS] see before them the whips and spear'). In st. 27, the climax of the ekphrasis, verbs of seeing cluster: *sýndr*, *sjá* and the direct statement in the first line of 27b: *Líta seggja sveitir* 'Hosts of men look'.

Ekphrasis is presently the focus of intense scholarly interest, both within⁵ and without⁶ Old Norse studies. Most interest in the Old Norse field has focused on the 'shield poem' genre and associated poems, usually thought to be early, which depict scenes from Old Norse myth and legend, though Margaret Clunies Ross proposes a Christian ekphrasis tradition related to the *titulus* (2007) and recently suggested (2009) that the two surviving verses of a *Máriuflokkr* 'Poem about Mary' transmitted in Codex Wormianus could be a *pietà*. Ancient ekphraseis almost always describe fictional objects (Laird 1996:96; famous examples include the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad*, and the paintings of the Trojan war in the Temple of Juno at Carthage in Book 1 of the *Aeneid*), not ones which are present before the audience's eyes, and in fact the thing described need not be an object at all. Most discussions of the skaldic shield poems, however, assume that real, present objects are being described (as Edith Marold trenchantly observes, 'sehr wenige Forscher haben zu der Annahme gefunden, daß die Schildbeschreibung eine Fiktion sein könnte' (1976:452)) and elements in some poems, such as their use of deixis, could suggest this. In accordance with this tradition, I will therefore present a work of art which could fit the bill for the ekphrastic interlude in *Liknarbraut*, although I am agnostic as to whether it was necessarily present at the moment of composition, or, *a fortiori*, that of reception (estranged, thanks to written transmission, from any proposed origin of the poem in a real visual experience).

⁵ A roundtable discussion of ekphrasis held at the 13th Saga Conference in Durham in 2006 has recently been printed in the 2007 issue of the journal *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*; cf. also Clunies Ross 2006 and 2009.

⁶ There is a vast bibliography here: cf. e.g. the classic article of Fowler (1991), the complementary collections edited by Goldhill and Osborne (1994) and Elsner (1996), a recent special issue of the journal *Classical Philology* (Bartsch and Elsner 2007), and in German Wandhoff 2003.

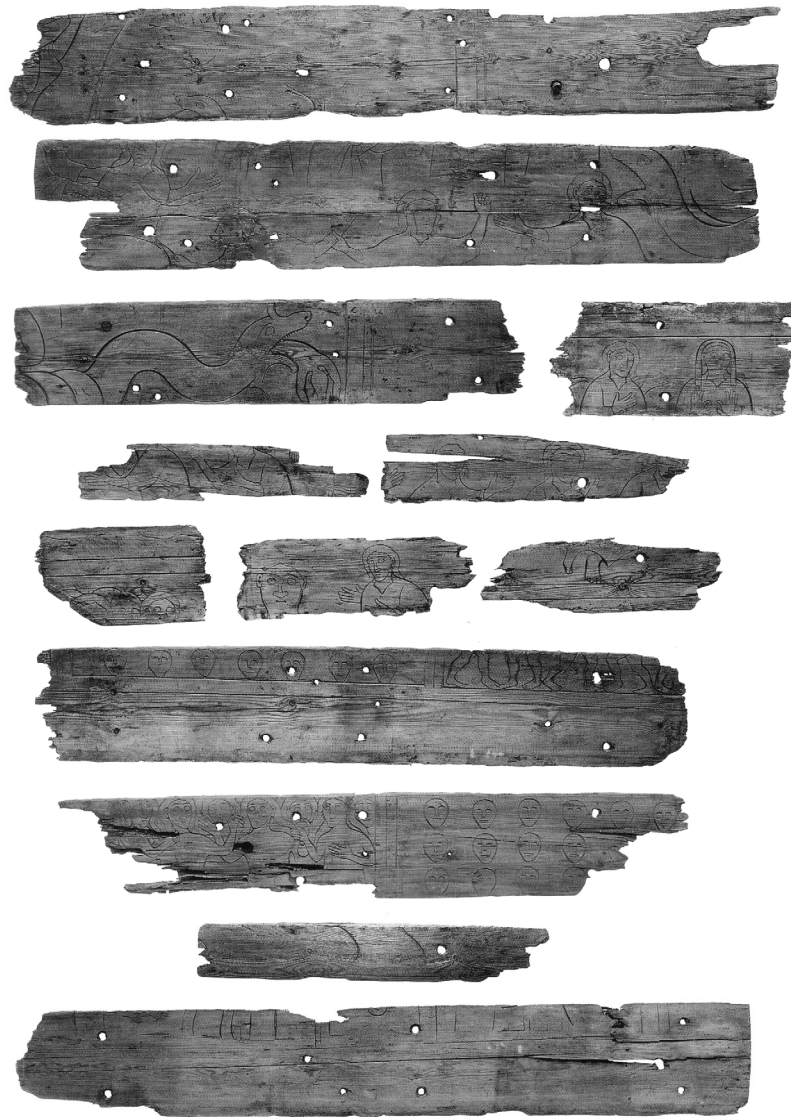


Fig. 1. Panels from Bjarnastaðarhlíð (from Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir 2000:275).

This object is the carved wainscoting depicting the last judgement taken from the farm Bjarnastaðarhlíð to the National Museum of Iceland in 1924 (see Fig. 1).

The panels are now thought to have originally been made for the cathedral at Hólar (the only building big enough to accommodate a work measuring at least 7.2 m wide x. 2.8 m high) and to date from the mid-twelfth century (Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir 2000:274–77). Only thirteen fragments have survived, but Selma Jónsdóttir (1959) was able to demonstrate from them that the Hólar panels are an example of the Byzantine style of last judgement. The classic Western example of this iconographic tradition is the late twelfth-century mosaic from the west wall of the basilica at Torcello in the Venetian lagoon (see Fig. 2). Selma presents a number of other examples in various media (painting, fresco, ivory relief, manuscript illumination) dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries.

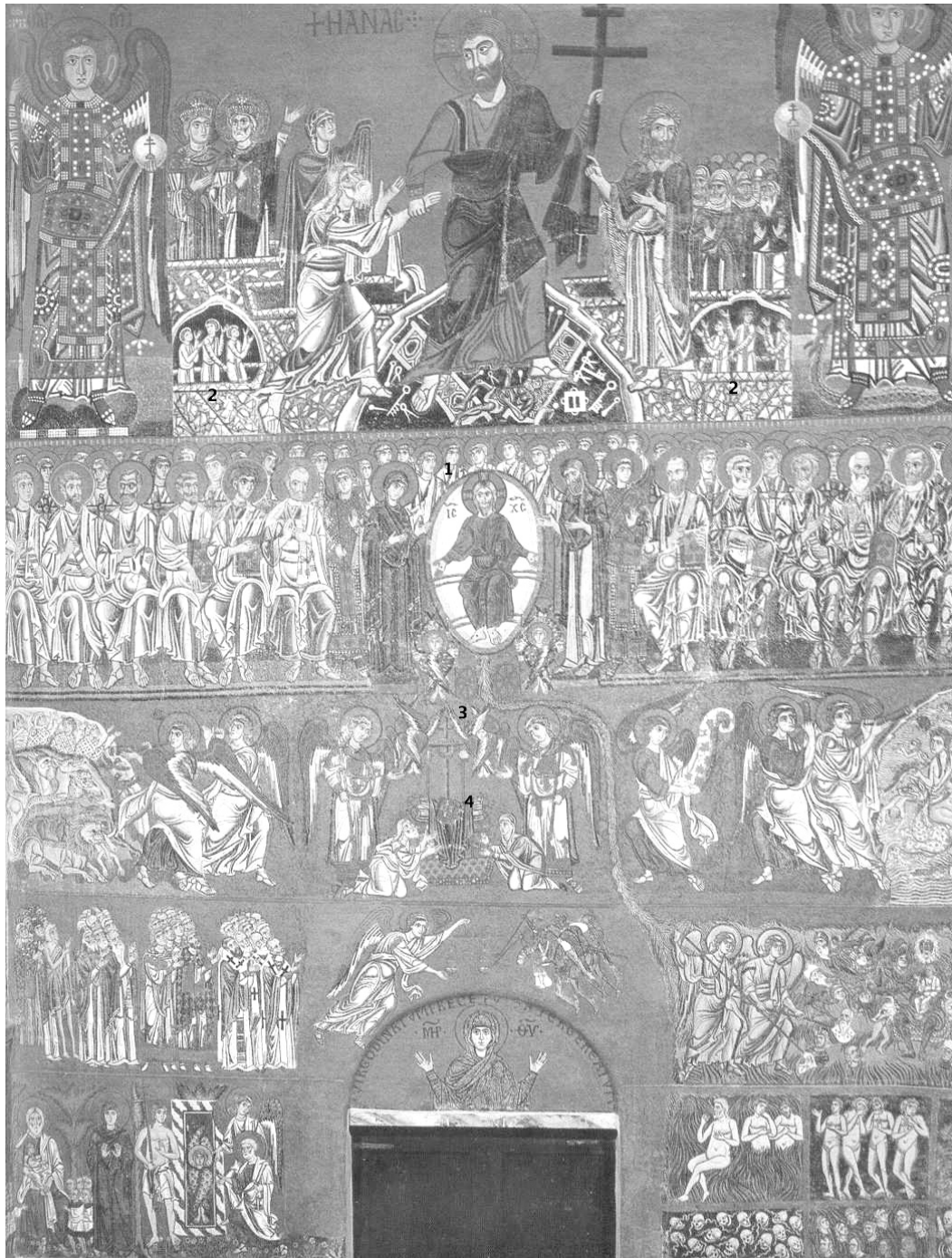


Figure 2. Mosaic from the basilica of Torcello (from campus.belmont.edu/honors/byzitaly/Torcello.html). Cf. esp. 1. Christ as Pantocrator, 2. the dead rising from their graves, 3. the cross and 4. the arma Christi (lying on the cloth on the throne).

If we compare the Torcello image to the description in sts. 25–27, we see that the images described in the poem (Christ as Pantocrator, the dead rising from their graves, the cross and the *arma Christi*) are all present, lying on the central axis of the mosaic approximately from top to bottom. These elements appear in almost the same arrangement (only the location of the dead rising from their graves varies) in all the examples of last judgements analysed by Selma Jónsdóttir, so if she is right in her claim that the Hólar panel is also an example of this type it seems reasonable to suppose that they were also present there.⁷

⁷ Hörður Ágústsson's reconstruction of the Hólar panel (Hörður Ágústsson 1989: Fig. 24), while usefully indicating where the surviving fragments would fit, omits the uppermost, fifth, field (an Anastasis) containing the

If this identification is correct, it may suggest avenues for further research into *Liknarbraut*'s possible connections with Hólar. In the present context I am more interested in how the ekphrasis functions in the rhetoric of the poem; that is, in asking, in Simon Goldhill's words, 'what is [this] ekphrasis for?' (Goldhill 2007:1). I would make two observations here. The first, which I will return to in the last part of this paper, is the vertiginous uncertainty about what exactly is being pointed at in sts. 25–8: the stanzas depict an intradiegetic act of looking (resurrected mankind witnessing the last judgement), which may or may not mirror an actual act of looking being engaged in by the poem's audience (the congregation at Hólar contemplating the last judgement panel), and which is also meant to correspond to an image in their imaginations. This uncertainty is typical of ekphrasis, especially antique ekphrasis, whose deictic force 'signal[s] a space for a further and different play of fictions' (Bartsch and Elsner 2007:iv). The second is Goldhill's contention that 'ekphrasis is designed to *produce a viewing subject*' (2007, 2, his emph.). His argument how and why this is done is rather rarified, perhaps thanks to his recalcitrant material (a collection of 36 Greek epigrams about a small sculpture of a cow), but in *Liknarbraut* the production of a viewing subject is quite overt:

*Kross mun á þingi þessu
þjóðum sýndr með blóði
– uggs fyllaz þá allir
aumir menn – ok saumi.
Líta seggja sveitir,
svípur ok spjót á móti
sér ok sjá með dreyra
sjálfs Krists viðir Mistar (27)*

At this assembly the Cross will be shown to the people with blood and nails; all wretched men will then be filled with terror.

Hosts of men look, and the trees of Mist [WARRIORS] see before them the whips and spear with the blood of Christ himself.

The switch into the present tense, while it certainly serves the end of vividness (cf. Poole 1991:24–56) and has been seen as typical of Old Norse ekphrasis (Clunies Ross 2007), further blurs the boundaries between the viewers depicted in the poem and the poem's readers or hearers, who, like the *aumir menn*, *seggja sveitir* and *viðir Mistar* here, are referred to in the present tense and by collective *heiti* or warrior-kennings in the *upphaf* and *stef*. The present-tense verb *líta* then refers not only to the intradiegetic witnesses of the last judgement, but also to the audience now (who for the believer, of course, are one and the same, just at different points in eschatological time), looking with their *hjarta sjónir* 'heart's eyes' (46) and enacting the imaginative identification which is the poem's aim. The intercalary clause in ll. 3–4, echoed by similar clauses in sts. 26 (*kemr ótti þá* 'fear comes then') and 28 (*gipt þrýtrat þá* 'grace will not fail then'), then supplies an exemplary affective content for their visualisation. Ekphrasis reveals itself here as a powerful tool for awakening compunction and faith in the audience, the skald's part in the circulation of intellectual and spiritual gifts invoked in the *upphaf*.

dead rising from their tombs; nor does Selma Jónsdóttir mention the Anastasis in her detailed description of the mosaic, whose fields she describes as 'four in number' (1959:16). This may be why the risen dead are missing from the reconstructions of the Hólar panel, but there seems to be no good reason for this: the Anastasis in Torcello was clumsily restored in the nineteenth century, but the fifth field is part of the original twelfth-century composition (cf. Demus 1944), and so could also have been part of the Icelandic carver's model.

The second half of *Líknarbraut* consists of a series of figures of the cross (sts. 31–7), a list of its virtues and powers (sts. 38–41), and Christ’s reproaches from the cross (sts. 43–45). There is no space here to discuss the fascinating issues of intertextuality (relationship to liturgical and other texts) and performance (the Good Friday liturgy as a possible performance context) that Tate raises in his commentary on these stanzas. It is worth briefly noting, however, that the rhetorical and affective strategies identified in the first part of the poem continue to dominate here. The (largely traditional) figures – key, blossom, ship, ladder, bridge, scales, altar – are presented in a series of narrative vignettes in a mixture of past and present tense, and references to visualisation are conspicuously absent, perhaps due to their intellectual rather than emotional appeal. But the rhetoric of visualisation and visibility returns with a vengeance in the following stanzas, especially (but not only, cf. st. 39, 42) in Christ’s reproaches, where he speaks directly to *maðr hverr á hauðri* ‘each man on earth’ (43), commanding them to look upon his suffering (sts. 43, 44), and the final stanza before the *slæmr* hammers the point home:

*Leiðum hörð á hauðri
hjarta várs með tárur,
systkin mín, fyr sjónir
siðgætis meinlæti. (46)*

My brothers and sisters, let us bring the hard torments of the faith-guardian [= God (= Christ)] on earth before our heart’s eyes with tears.

3. The *Medienwissen* of ekphrasis

Líknarbraut concludes with the conventional gestures the twelfth-century group of poems had established for the genre of Christian *drápur*: a prayer and, in the penultimate stanza, an act of self-naming. The skald also asks God, the poem’s dedicatee, for a reward, *gjöld með leigum fyrir óðgerð mína* ‘recompense with interest for my poetry-making’ (49), very much (with the exception of the rather baffling *með leigum*) in the traditional manner. But this request is immediately qualified: the poet has already received other good things (*gæði*) from God, more than he can repay. As in the *upphaf*, the skaldic *quid pro quo* is complicated for the Christian poet, here by his awareness that Christ has already bought his salvation *pretio magno* ‘with a great price’ (1 Cor. 6:20).

Can we draw any preliminary conclusions about media change and medial self-consciousness in skaldic textuality based on this analysis of *Líknarbraut*? Lines of questioning which go to medieval Icelandic realia (do sts. 25–8 really describe the Hólar last judgement panels? could the poem have been performed in front of this image? could this have happened during Good Friday celebrations of which *Líknarbraut* formed a part?) are both fascinating and frustrating. What we undeniably can see are the changes in the fictive performance situation that the text itself posits. It constructs an audience within the text, one which actively participates, via prayer and imaginative visualisation, in a shared emotional experience. The performance takes place in an imagined space – one in which the skald addresses God, and Christ addresses the audience – filled with vividly evoked images, and the *gæði* the skald hopes to obtain are spiritual benefits rather than gold rings. The visual dominates the aural. Not only is the audience repeatedly encouraged to visualise the events described, but God’s words are *bjartari ok fegri gulli ok gimsteinum ór völlum* ‘brighter and fairer than gold and gems from the fields’ (7), and most of the verbs describing the skald’s performance are abstract (*færa, stofna, bjóða, inna, framm bera*) with only *kveð* (8, in the odd construction *kveð ek at kvæði*) referring specifically to speaking. The subject-matter obviously

has some bearing on this, determining, for example, the poem's relentless focus on compunction as the emotional payload of the poem's *enargeia*. But the emphasis on imaginative visualisation is surely also connected to the liberation, effected by writing, of the poem from any particular performance context. And while the preponderance of light imagery certainly has much to do with Christian ideals of *claritas*, describing God's words as *bjartari ok fegri gulli ok gimsteinum* indicates that text is conceived of in visual – that is, written – terms.

The following brief passage from *Orkneyinga saga* ch. 85, discussed by Russell Poole in the ekphrasis roundtable in 2006, suggests that the tensions between visual and linguistic art-forms were quite differently located in the oral context:

Þat var einn dag um jólin, at menn hugðu at tjöldum. Þá mælti jarl við Odda in litla: 'Gerðu visu um athöfn þess manns, er þar er á tjaldinu, ok haf eigi síðarr lokit þinni visu en ek minni. Haf ok eigi þau orð í þinni visu, er ek hefi í minni visu.'

One day during Yule-tide, people were seeing to the wall-hangings. The Earl spoke to Oddi inn litli. 'Make a verse about the behaviour of the man who is there on the hanging, and have your verse completed no later than I have mine. Also, don't have the words in your verse that I have in my verse' (cited from Poole 2007:245).

The possibility of endless verbal variation in the description of one and the same object which lies at the heart of skaldic poetics is neatly encapsulated in the last line of this quotation. This, I would suggest, was the ruling contrast between verbal and visual modes of representation in the oral world in which the skaldic poetic came into being. In the increasingly literate world of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, ekphrasis offered the skalds a chance to stage the act of looking within the poetic text and so to dramatise the exemplary work of envisioning, carried out within the poem by an intradiegetic audience, and taken up by the *hjarta sjónir* of the text's readers.

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The Herjólfur Legend from Härjedalen and Its Resemblances to the Stories of *Landnámabók*

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Introduction

Landnámabók is a well-known work in the Old Icelandic literature. It contains hundreds of short stories describing the first settlers in Iceland were, the places they settled and built upon, and who their descendants were.

Less well known is a similar story of how the province of Härjedalen in present-day Sweden was settled by a man called Herjólfur hornbrjótr. This story is found in the Norwegian manuscript AM 114 a qv., which is dated to c. 1315–25 and now preserved at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen.

In recent research it has been argued that the Herjólfur story is a learned product, formed after and dependent upon *Landnámabók*. I would like to scrutinize the arguments for this opinion and see if they really are valid.

The stories of *Landnámabók*

To exemplify what *Landnámabók* is about, I would like to summarize one of its stories, told in chapter 344 in the *Sturlubók* version of *Landnámabók*. Here we meet a man called Ketill hœingr, who lived in Namdalen in Norway in the time of King Haraldr hárfagri. He was the son of Þorkell, Earl (*jarl*) of Namdalen. We are told that he called together his retinue in order to help his relative Þóroldfr Kveld-Úlfsson, whom King Haraldr wanted dead. This attempt failed and Þóroldfr was executed. After Ketill had taken his revenge, by killing the men who had slain Þóroldfr, he had to flee together with his family. He then came to Iceland and colonized land there. He lived at Hov. His first son was Hrafn, who first told the law in Iceland. His other son was Helgi, who married Valdís Jólgeirsdóttir and had children. We then hear about their descendants and of other children of Ketill and their descendants in several generations.

Unfortunately, the oldest version of *Landnámabók* has not survived. It was probably edited in Iceland as early as c. 1100 or in the early 12th century. What we do have are versions from the 13th and early 14th century as well as a couple from later time. These versions are expanded in relation to their originals and contain material borrowed from sagas and other literary sources. The oldest version of *Landnámabók*, however, cannot possibly have been based on literary sources, since such sources simply were not at hand in Iceland before c. 1100 – the editing of *Landnámabók* was in fact one of the very earliest literary achievements in Iceland. Instead, the oldest *Landnámabók* must have been based on oral tradition – on legends. In light of the large number of freestanding stories included in *Landnámabók* and the enormous amount of topographical and prosopographical details, there must have been a great number of local informants, living in all regions of Iceland, who transmitted these legends. By whom and for what purpose all this material was collected and compiled in the earliest version of *Landnámabók* is another question, which, on the whole, is shrouded in mystery (Benediktsson 1969 and 1978; Rafnsson 1974; Meulengracht Sørensen 1993: 82–6).

The Herjólfur story

The manuscript AM 114 a qv. consists of several texts of diverse nature (Table 1). The first text, where the Herjólfur story is included, is a compilation of different sources concerning the

border between Norway and Sweden (NgL 2, pp. 487–91). This compilation can be divided into several sections, going back to different sources. I will follow the division made by Nils-Erik Eriksson (1984). He divides the compilation into seven main sections lettered A–G (Table 2). The Herjólfur story is found in section E, which reads as follows:

Sua bar Þórdr í Trosavík vitni ok XII ellimenn með honum at Noregs menn bygdu fyrstunni Heriárdal með þeim atburð at maðr het Heriulfuer hornbriotr; hann var merkismaðr Halfdanar konongs suarta; hann varð firir konongs reidi ok flyði austr í Svíaríki till Anundar konongs; var þar væl með honum tekin en þó missfæll honum sua at hann lagdezt með frenkono konongs þeirri, er Hælgá het, ok flyði aftr vestr í Noregs kon[on]gs ríki í dall, þan er þa var alauðr, er nu er kalladr Heriárdall. Þá settuzst þar Hælgá ok bygd gerdu þar sem nu heita Sliarosvellir. Þeirra son var Hakon valr; hans son Frode; hans son Herlaugr hornstigi; hans son Þorer droge; hans son Þorbiorn makarkalfuer; hans son Þorbiorn gamle; son hans Dagr; hans son Liotr, er fyrst let gera kirkiu í Heriárdall; hans son Þorallde; hans son Rafn; hans [son] Eilifur tæppimadr; hans son Biorn; hans son Þórdr; hans son Hafþorer; hans son Asulfuer. (NgL 2, p. 490.)

Scholarly comments

The text about Herjólfur hornbrjótr has been discussed by Sveinbjörn Rafnsson in his dissertation *Studier i Landnámabók*, published in 1974. He concludes that this text is clearly dependent upon *Landnámabók* ('klart beroende av Landnama'). One of his arguments for this conclusion is that Herjólfur hornbrjótr is also mentioned in *Landnámabók*. Another of his arguments is that there are, according to him, several learned constructions ('[å]tskilliga lärda knepigheter') in the text that are similar to what he finds in *Landnámabók*. He exemplifies these learned constructions by mentioning 1) the combining of the name *Herjólfur* with the place-name *Herjardalr* (*Härjedalen*) which gives the latter an etymology, and 2) the emphasizing of Herjólfur's link to King Hálfðan svartí, which gives the *landnámsmaðr* Herjólfur a relation to the Norwegian royal family (Rafnsson 1974, pp. 196–7, fn. 2).

Nils-Erik Eriksson has also commented on the text about Herjólfur. In his article published in the Norwegian *Historisk tidsskrift* in 1984 he draws the same conclusion as Rafnsson, namely that the text is dependent upon *Landnámabók*: 'Texten i avnitt E är sprungen ur samma politiska och litterära miljö som skapat Landnámabók.' He repeats the arguments of Rafnsson and he emphasizes that both the Herjólfur story and the stories in *Landnámabók* follow a pattern, which can be formalized in four points: 1) the *landnámsmaðr*, the settler, is mentioned by name, 2) he is introduced with rank, kinship, descent etc., 3) his *landnám*, the land which he settled or colonized, is described, and 4) finally, his descendants are mentioned by name (N.-E. Eriksson 1984, p. 403).

These statements by Rafnsson and Eriksson have, to my knowledge, gone unchallenged in later research despite the fact that they can be seen as controversial. For two distinguished scholars belonging to an older generation, Nils Ahnlund and Knut Liestøl, it was quite obvious that the text describing how Härjedalen was settled went back to local traditions (Ahnlund 1924, p. 120; 1926, p. 353; 1948, pp. 43–57; Liestøl 1929, p. 24). Ahnlund and Liestøl have simply taken this for granted, and it is easy to see why when we read the introductory lines of section E, quoted above: 'Sua bar Þórdr í Trosavík [i.e., Trasviken in Hede parish in northern Härjedalen] vitni ok xii ellimenn með honum at Noregs menn bygdu fyrstunni Heriárdal með þeim atburð at [...]' Ahnlund (1948, p. 44) pointed out that the fact that twelve *ellimenn* 'elderly men' confirmed Þórdr's oral testimony may indicate the story was a hereditary legend, a common property for many settlement districts in Härjedalen.

In order to evaluate these different opinions, it is necessary to look closer at the manuscript AM 114 a qv. and the compilation of sources concerning the border therein.

Table 1. Texts included in AM 114 a qv.

Page(s)	Text
1	— (Originally a blank page, intended as a cover)
2–5	The compilation of sources concerning the border between Norway and Sweden (see Table 2)
6–17	A copy of the polemical pamphlet <i>A Speech against the Bishops</i> from the time of King Sverrir, c. 1200 (Holtsmark 1931, pp. 1–20)
18a ^{1–13}	An arithmetical passage in Latin (facsimile in Holtsmark 1931, pl. XIV, 4)
18a ^{14–30}	An account of the border between Norway and Russia (NgL 2, pp. 152–3)
18b–20	<i>Homilia</i> on the <i>Imbrudagar</i>

Table 2. The compilation of sources concerning the Norwegian-Swedish border in AM 114 a qv. (sections lettered according to N.-E. Eriksson 1984).

Section	Contents
A	An adapted text containing testimonies concerning the border between Götaland and Norway, probably excerpted from several written sources (NgL 2, pp. 487–8 ²)
B	A compilation of several testimonies concerning the border between Norway and Götaland (NgL 2, pp. 488 ³ –9 ¹¹)
C	Excerpts from a Norwegian <i>vitebrev</i> (‘letter of witness’) drawn up at a thing assembly (<i>alþing</i>) in Sveg in Härjedalen between 1267 and 1282, dealing with the border between Norway and Sweden, primarily alongside Härjedalen (NgL 2, pp. 489 ¹² –90 ⁵ ; cf. Holm 2003, pp. 151–60)
D	An account of the border between Norway and Sweden alongside Jämtland and Härjedalen, after an anonymous source (NgL 2, p. 490 ^{6–17})
E	The story of how Härjedalen was settled by Herjólfur hornbrjótr (NgL 2, p. 490 ^{18–29})
F	An excerpt from the list of the borders of Jämtland recorded in the medieval law book of Jämtland; this law book (now lost) was probably an adjusted version of the national Norwegian legal codex of King Magnús lagabætir from 1274 (NgL 2, pp. 490 ³⁰ –1 ¹⁶ ; cf. Holm 2003, pp. 160–8)
G	Excerpts from a treaty drawn up between c. 1260 and 1283, ratifying a number of boundary markers along the Swedish-Norwegian border, primarily alongside Värmland and Dalecarlia (NgL 2, p. 491 ^{17–34})

Textual context

The compilation of sources concerning the Norwegian-Swedish border in AM 114 a qv., where the Herjólfur story is included, has served as a handy overview of valuable information about the border, excerpted from different sources of different ages. Its scribe uses, as shown by Anne Holtsmark (1933, pp. 30–5), a handwriting and an orthography typical for scribes working at the royal Norwegian council in Oslo around 1315–25. The royal Norwegian council is obviously the milieu where all the texts in the manuscript were written. However, we do not know for sure if the extant version of the compilation is the original version or just a copy of a now lost original. The compilation cannot therefore be dated more closely than to c. 1275–1325.¹

The original sources excerpted in the compilation were at that time preserved all across Norway. The law book of Jämtland, for example, from which an excerpt of a border description is taken in section F in the compilation, was preserved in Jämtland (Holm 2003, pp. 160–2). The letter drawn up in Sveg between 1267 and 1282, from which excerpts are taken in section C, must have been preserved in Härjedalen – probably in Sveg – since it concerned a local dispute (Holm 2003, pp. 151–5). Other sources, which are excerpted in sections A, B and G, must have been preserved further to the south in the Norwegian kingdom since they concern the southern part of the borderline (cf. Table 2).

¹ C. 1275 is the earliest possible date due to the dates of the sources excerpted in sections C, F and G of the compilation. Cf. Table 2.

To put together this compilation of geographically very widespread sources must have implied quite a large undertaking. The more precise background to why this undertaking was done at that time – some time between c. 1275 and c. 1325 – is not known.

Even if we do not know the exact background to the production of the compilation, we can at least state that the compiler had considered Þórðr's testimony, confirmed by oath, to have sufficient value to be included along with the different accounts of the Swedish border. The value lay in that Þórðr claimed that Norwegians had settled Härjedalen. This is underlined by the compiler in the introductory lines in section E, where he states that the testimony of Þórðr shows 'at Noregs menn bygdu fyrstunni Heriardal'. Obviously, the reason he chose to include Þórðr's story was that the information in it could be used for political purposes. It could be used for claiming that the province of Härjedalen always had belonged to Norway. I will return to this political aspect later on.

The oral background

There is no reason to doubt what the compiler explicitly states in the introduction of section E, namely that the text about Herjólfur hornbrjótr really is based on testimonies by Þórðr in Traskviken and twelve elderly men in the province of Härjedalen. The compiler was faithful to his sources. This can be seen, for instance, in section F, where he accurately quotes an account of the Swedish border also known from another source (JHD 2, no. 159; cf. Holm 2003, pp. 160–4). How, then, do Rafnsson and Eriksson explain that the text, based on testimonies by farmers in Härjedalen, could be a learned product, formed after and dependent upon *Landnámabók*? Actually, they do not explain this, and that is a weakness in their treatments of the Herjólfur story. In my opinion, their conclusions are wrong. We have no information of *Landnámabók* ever being read by others than Icelanders (and some Icelandic immigrants living in Norway) during the Middle Ages, and even if it were, it is unreasonable to think that farmers of Härjedalen had read it and then formulated a story in the same pattern as the stories in *Landnámabók*. Instead, the resemblances between the Herjólfur story and the stories in *Landnámabók* are much easier explained by being exponents of a similar oral narrative tradition spread in the Norse world.

It is understandable that popular traditions shew similar features over great geographical distances. Brynjulf Alver has pointed out that in our old, oral society there was always great competition among the legends kept alive. If a legend was going to survive in this competition, it had to be conventionalized and schematized until it received such a form that the tellers wanted to tell it and the listeners wanted to listen to it (Alver 1962, p. 111). In my opinion, in the story of how Härjedalen was first settled and in *Landnámabók*'s stories we see examples of legends that have yielded to standardizing rules in the Norse oral, narrative tradition in a similar way.

Concerning the combining of the name *Herjólfur* with the place-name *Herjardalr* in the story, I would say that this is not a learned construction, as Rafnsson and Eriksson presume, but instead a common feature found in popular stories in Scandinavia. Per Vikstrand (2008) has observed that in popular stories explaining place-names, it is very common that a place-name is explained from the name of a fictitious figure that is assumed to have had a connection with the place in its establishing phase.²

² Another example of such a popular story, recorded before c. 1325 in the same region, is the story about 'Blafinnugs tiorn', 'Blafinnugs tiorn', 'Blafinz tiorn', a small lake that served as a boundary marker between Jämtland (Norway) and Ångermanland (Sweden) in the 13th century. This story explains the place-name of the lake from the name of a fictitious Sámi, *Blá-Finnr*, who is said to have been drowned in the lake by the first Christian, Árne illi from Hällesjö. The story was recorded in the above-mentioned border description in the medieval law book of Jämtland, excerpted in section F of the compilation (cf. Table 2). On the oral background of

What about Herjólfur hornbrjótr then? How do we explain that he is mentioned both in the story of how Härjedalen was settled and in *Landnámabók*? In the *Melabók* version of *Landnámabók* Herjólfur is said to have been the father of Þórolfr and the grandfather of Þrasi Þórolfsson, who travelled from Hordaland in Norway to Iceland and settled there:

Madr het Þrasi Þórolfs son Heriolfs sonar horna briotz. Hann for af Horda landi til Islandz ok nam land [...] (*Landnámabók*, ed. F. Jónsson, 1900, p. 235.)

In the *Hauksbók* version of *Landnámabók* it is also said that his son Þórolfr and another son, Óláfr, were kings in Oppland in Norway:

Þórolfr svn Heriolfs horna briotz ok Olafr broðir hans varv konvngar at Vpplondvm [...] Þrasi var svn Þórolfs. Hann for af Horðalandi til Islandz ok nam land [...] (*Landnámabók*, ed. F. Jónsson, 1900, p. 103.)

The most likely explanation to why Herjólfur occurs in several stories, and to why his family in one case is connected with Härjedalen, and in another with Oppland, is obviously that he for a long time had been so well-known in legends that in these stories he was associated with (alleged) events he initially had nothing to do with.

We then may ask ourselves: Why did people in Iceland and Härjedalen in the Early Middle Ages keep such settlement stories in mind? Why were these stories important? I do not believe it is a coincidence that we find this type of story in Iceland and in Härjedalen. At that time Iceland and Härjedalen had one thing in common besides being part of the Norse world: they had both been colonized by farmers in the Viking period and were, thus, relatively young societies.³ Obviously farmers living in such colonization areas had reason to keep in mind stories about the origin of their settlements and then pass them on to the next generation. We also find examples of this in the colonization areas of Swedish Lapland, where peasants in the early 20th century often knew the names of the first settlers from some 150 years ago and could tell stories about them (see, e.g., Pettersson 1946, pp. 194–5). An example recorded in a 17th century court record from Jämtland, the province north of Härjedalen, can be quoted. In this example an old man, testifying in a trial, tells the story of how Stugun – an isolated village of medieval origin surrounded by huge forests – was settled six generations back in time:

Hemming Bengtsson i Stugun om sine åttatijo år förhördes, och berättade effter gammal hertselse, man effter man sållunda, nembligen att tvenne pijgor skolle suttit der på plattzen i een stugu, som wore barnfödde i Gewågs by, och een man wid nambn Pähl befriat sigh med den ena, och aflade tillhopa tree sönnner, Ifvar, Oloff och Bengt som begynte oppbruka iorden. Hustru Brita ähr kommen aff Ifwars ätt och barn, såsom först, Ifwar Pählsson 2) Erich Ifwarson 3) Iwar Ersson och 4) Erich Ifwarson som var hustru Britas fader [...] (Court record of Ragunda 1687, quoted after K. G. Eriksson 1998.)

Clearly history was important for all these descendants of the first settlers, probably because it gave them an identity in areas where their way of life was still quite new.

this story, see Holm 2003, pp. 164–6.

³ Of course, people had lived in Härjedalen since the Stone Age, but the historical villages and farms in Härjedalen cannot be traced further back in time than the Viking Age or the Early Middle Ages. Hence, in Härjedalen there are no settlement names typical for the Iron Age (e.g., *hem-*, *hov-*, *sta(d)-*, *vi-* and *vin-* names, as well as theoforic names). Brink 1990; Brink & al. 1994, pp. 137, 140–1. The oldest traces of farming (fossil fields in Tordalshögen and Annflon, Sveg parish, and Hedningsgårdet, Tännäs parish) in Härjedalen are dated to c. 900–1200. Norrman & Robertson-Åkerlund 1979; Hansson 1997, p. 130.

Both in the stories of *Landnámabók* – such as the story of Ketill hœingr, quoted above – and in the Herjólfur legend great attention is paid to the honourable deeds of the first settlers. Ketill hœingr was the earl's son who stood up against King Haraldr hárfagri, while Herjólfur hornbrjótr was the *merkismaðr* of King Hálfðan svartí who won the heart of a member of the Swedish royal family. Such ingredients in the stories were important, if not necessary, for keeping the stories alive in oral tradition (cf. above). But these ingredients, together with the genealogies in the stories, were probably also important because they lent lustre to the descendants of the settlers (cf. Mundal 2001, p. 62). If there were deeds worth telling about any descendant of a later generation, these were included too, as when we hear that Ketill's son Hrafn first told the law in Iceland, and that Herjólfur's descendant in the ninth generation, Ljótr, first had a church built in Härjedalen.

I have drawn the conclusion that the story of how Härjedalen was settled, found in AM 114 a qv., has its origin in the popular culture of the peasants of Härjedalen and is unaffected by literary learning. In Härjedalen this story had been retold and memorized again and again, by one generation after the other. By describing the kinship with the first settler and the honourable biography of this settler, the narrator was able 1) to bridge the distance between the past and the present, demonstrating the rightness of the story, and 2) to lend lustre to his own family. Although it is not explicitly stated in the text, the narrator witnessing in this case, Þórðr from Trasviken, must be assumed to be the son of Ásúlfr Hafþórisson, the last descendant mentioned in the legend – otherwise the genealogy does not make sense.

The recording

Details concerning the testimonies sworn by Þórðr in Trasviken and the twelve elderly men are not known. In the preserved compilation it is not said on what occasion these testimonies were given and recorded. It is not even clear whether the testimonies were originally recorded in a letter, although this seems probable. All such information has been excluded by the compiler and this is not only the case in section E, where the Herjólfur legend is quoted, but in all the other sections of the compilation as well. In no case does the compiler mention, for example, the date of a certain source he is quoting, though at least the letter excerpted in section C and the treaty excerpted in section G must have been dated in the original.

As I pointed out earlier, it must have been quite a large undertaking to collect information from the geographically widespread sources on which the compilation is based. This work also must have involved local officials in the border provinces of the Norwegian kingdom, officials who possessed knowledge of local sources of interest in the matter. Maybe the person who made the compiler aware of the letter concerning the Norwegian-Swedish border, which was drawn up in Sveg in Härjedalen between 1267 and 1282, also knew of a living tradition in Härjedalen, one that described how this province at the border had been settled from Norway by Herjólfur hornbrjótr. Perhaps this led to the recording of Þórðr's story in a now lost letter. In that case section E in the compilation is excerpted from this supposed letter. The compiler has chosen to quote Þórðr's sworn and confirmed story seemingly literally and has only added a minimum of background information in the introductory lines.

One reason to why Þórðr in Trasviken and nobody else was appointed the main witness may have been that he was considered to possess extraordinary knowledge acquired by memorization. He may have been what we, using a contemporary term, could call a *minningarmaðr*, a person who enjoyed a certain authority in this basically oral society by being old and well informed (cf. Brink 2005, p. 94). Also the twelve *ellimenn* 'elderly men', who testified with him, must have possessed some kind of authority.

Historicity

Þórðr and the twelve men testifying must have been convinced that the Herjólfur legend was true – otherwise they would not have sworn to it. Those who recorded the testimonies concerning the Herjólfur legend, including the compiler, must also have been convinced of its veracity. And the story certainly appears to be trustworthy, as Þórðr was able to account for a lineage of 15 generations descending from Herjólfur hornbrjótr and his mistress Helga. Þórðr was also able to give the correct name of a Norwegian king ruling about 15 generations ago at this time, namely Hálfðan svarti in the 9th century, the father of King Haraldr hárfagri.

But to what extent can we trust this legend, recorded c. 1325 at the latest? We know through modern research that a characteristic of oral tradition is that it is variable. After some 150–200 years, historical legends have often changed so much that rather little of the facts told in the legends are in accordance with the real events that once took place. We know this from studies where the contents of historical legends have been checked against good historical sources such as court records (cf., e.g., Nordbø 1928; Hodne 1973). There are various reasons for this. Those telling a legend and those who retell it afterwards always possess a living tradition of such matters as the legend is dealing with. From this tradition they pick out details and motifs which fill out the legend. As Alver (1962, p. 111) has pointed out, this process probably often occurs subconsciously. A historical legend then often tends to, so to say, be improved over the course of time and become more and more unhistorical. Ahnlund once expressed this in the following way: ‘Folksäggen övar enligt all erfarenhet ingen som helst kritik, när den verkställer sina kombinationer’ (Ahnlund 1948, p. 58). Against this background we cannot expect the Herjólfur legend to be a reliable historical source.

I have already mentioned that the similarity between the names *Herjólfur* and *Herjardalur* is typical for unhistorical popular stories explaining place-names (cf. Ahnlund 1948, p. 54). But there are other features of the legend that seem to be unhistorical as well, for instance the statement that Herjólfur and Helga, as the first settlers of Härjedalen, had settled down and cleared land at a place ‘sem nu heita Sliarósvellir’. *Sliarósvellir*, the meadows at the river Slyan’s outlet into the river Härjån, near the south-western border of Härjedalen, would have been a rather dismal place to start a farm, at least if the intention was to clear land and grow cereals (cf. Andersson 1987, p. 22). This place lies at the bottom of a valley, at high altitude, where the risk of severe frost was much greater than, for example, close to the place where the church was built in Lillhärjedalen. However, the area around Slyan’s outlet, with its lush grass vegetation, was excellent for haymaking and grazing.

Why does the legend tell us that this was the place where Herjólfur cleared land and settled? I suspect, as Ahnlund (1948, pp. 53–4, 57) also did, that the legend has been fixed to this place, because there is a large mound that is strikingly similar to a burial mound (see picture in Hemmendorff 2002, p. 135). The mound is actually a natural formation, formed by erosion, but the farmers in Härjedalen have in all times considered it to be a real burial mound. In the records from the Swedish inquiries into the ancient monuments, made in the 1680s, this mound holds a prominent place and it even has a name: *Kungshögen* ‘the king’s mound’ (Rannsakningar efter antikviteter 1, p. 243).

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Sörla saga sterka and Rafn's edition

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Sörla saga sterka is a young *fornaldarsaga* which exists in thirty-two paper manuscripts dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. After a short definition of the *fornaldarsögur*, the content and different versions of *Sörla saga sterka* will be presented. *Sörla saga sterka* exists in two versions, a shorter – edited by Rafn on the basis of Rask 32 – and a longer – edited by Biörner on the basis of Stock. papp. fol. nr 56. Other manuscripts seem to follow a mixed version. The manuscripts which were accessible to Rafn when he prepared his edition will be described, and the possible reasons for Rafn's choice of the base text follow. In the end the consequences of this choice will be highlighted.

Fornaldarsögur norðurlanda

The *Fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* are sagas that are set in the Northern countries (other than Iceland) in the period before Iceland's settlement. Their main features include quests, bridal quests, fights of all sorts, viking raids, revenge, and supernatural figures and objects.

The term *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* was coined by Rafn in his three-volume edition from 1829–30, and literary means stories of ancient times (*fornöld*) of the northern lands (*norðurlönd*). Today scholars emphasise the difference between the *fornaldarsögur* as a corpus and as a genre. As a corpus, the term refers clearly to the thirty-one stories in Rafn's edition, but as a genre, the term is less clearly defined.

Fornaldarsögur as a genre are defined in two different ways: Firstly, as a genre that differs from other genres, and secondly, as a genre with subgroups that differ from each other. As a genre, the difference between them and the *Íslendingasögur* is the setting of time and place, and the difference between them and the *konungasögur* is the occupation of the main hero and the time setting. Doubtless, scholars would also add the difference in the degree of historicity and the sense of reality as a dividing factor.

There is a long tradition of distinguishing three subgenres within the *fornaldarsögur*. Reuschel (1933) identified a heroic, a viking and a popular circle. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1959) and Schier (1970) divide the sagas into a heroic, a viking and an adventure tradition. Jónas Kristjánsson (1988) characterises them as heroic tales, viking tales and romances. Hermann Pálsson (1985), however, distinguishes only between two groups, hero legends and adventure tales/viking romances. Common to these groupings is that there are the heroic stories on one end of the spectrum, and the adventure stories, or popular romances, on the other. The heroic stories are in the tragic mode, with the hero dying at the conclusion of the saga, whereas the adventure stories have a happy ending. Viking stories seem to be situated between the two other subgenres, and are, depending on the scholar, either characterised by having a tragic ending (cf. Reuschel 1933) or by having a happy ending (cf. Pálsson 1985). Furthermore, some of these subgroups share features with other saga-genres, e.g. the bridal quest is a common feature of the *riddarasögur* (cf. Kalinke 1990). This shows that the subgenres are more like general traits in the stories, rather than fixed groups with strict boundaries, as Reuschel (1933) and O'Connor (2006) have argued.

The distinction between *fornaldarsögur* and other genres has also sparked discussion, and some texts seem to belong to more than one genre. *Yngvars saga víðförla*, for example, is sometimes considered a *fornaldarsaga* (cf. Pálsson 1985:38), and sometimes not: Einar Ól. Sveinsson categorises the story as only “beslægtede med f[ornaldarsögur]” (Sveinsson 1959:501). Sveinsson also regards a few other *þættir*, published in Guðni Jónsson's and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's edition (1943–44), and in Guðni Jónsson's edition (1950¹, 1954–59²),

as related to the *fornaldarsögur*. These are, like *Yngvars saga víðförla*, very similar to the *fornaldarsögur*, but are set in a historic past after Iceland's settlement instead of the ahistoric time before ca. 870¹. Sveinsson seems to use the criteria of the ahistoric past as relevant for a distinction between *fornaldarsögur* and other genres, whereas Pálsson does not. Pálsson counts the sagas set in the historic past as exceptions within the group of *fornaldarsögur*, but for him there is no doubt about *Yngvars saga víðförla* being a true *fornaldarsaga*. This discussion shows again the difficulty of defining *fornaldarsögur* and their subgenres and distinguishing them from other literary genres.

Sörli saga sterka

Sörli saga sterka is considered to be one of the younger *fornaldarsögur*, dating from the fifteenth century (cf. Pálsson 1988 or Simek/Pálsson 2007). The story is transmitted in thirty-two manuscripts, all of which are post-medieval, and is also found in eight sets of *rímur*, one of them from medieval times (cf. Driscoll/Hufnagel). Rafn claims in his edition (1829–30:3:11) that although there are textual differences, they are so minor that one cannot talk of more than one version.

Sörli, son of King Erlingur in Uppland, sets out on a Viking voyage at the age of fifteen. On his way home after a successful season of raiding, he becomes stranded in *Bláland*, where he kills *blámenn*. Sörli fights a troll woman, *Mána*, whose life he spares in change for her loyalty, an armour that no weapon can destroy, and a sword that can cut stone as well as steel. Later, Sörli and his father and brother help King Haraldur of Norway against berserks who want to marry Haraldur's daughter. Sörli kills the berserks, but refuses the hand of King Haraldur's daughter as reward. He sets out on a Viking voyage again and encounters King Hálfðan Brönufóstri, whom Sörli kills and whose beautiful dragon-headed ship and all other belongings he takes. Sörli's father predicts revenge from King Hálfðan Brönufóstri's sons Sigmundur and Högni, and Sörli sets out to offer them wergild. At the same time Hálfðan's sons are whetted to avenge their father by their sister Marcibil, and the younger son, Högni, sails to Uppland to kill Sörli. However, Högni and Sörli do not encounter each other on their journeys.

Högni meets only Sörli's father and King Haraldur of Norway, who came for support; he kills them both and tries to plunder Ingibjörg's, Sörli's sister, bower, but is prevented from doing so by a magic fog that the foster-mother of Ingibjörg conjured. He sees Ingibjörg and falls in love with her, but does not try to abduct the princess for fear of the magical powers of her foster-mother, and returns home instead. The story switches to Sörli, who meets King Hálfðan Brönufóstri's older son, Sigmundur, and offers wergild, which is refused. A fight between them results in Sörli's victory, and the few survivors of King Hálfðan's army barricade themselves in the town, where they are joined by Högni's brother-in-law. The fight resumes, and again Sörli is victorious – but only until Högni returns from his victory over Sörli's father. A duel between Högni and Sörli ends with a draw, and they become sworn brothers and marry each other's sisters.

Sörli saga sterka was first edited by Biörner in his magnificent “Nordiska Kämpa Dater” from 1737. Biörner based his edition on Stock. papp. fol. nr 56, which is a copy of Stock. papp. 8vo nr 7. Rafn used Rask 32 as the base text in his edition from 1829–30.

Biography of Carl Christian Rafn

¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson most probably refers to *Helga þáttur Þórissonar*, *Tóka þáttur Tókasonar* and *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*, all of which are set at King Ólafr Tryggvason's (995–1000) court in Norway. These *þættir* are indeed not necessarily regarded as *fornaldarsögur*.

Carl Christian Rafn was born on the 16th of January 1795 in Brahesborg on the island of Fyn, Denmark, and died on the 20th of October 1864 in Copenhagen, Denmark. His parents were tenants on a dairy farm. He went to grammar school in Odense, and in 1814 he began studying law at the University in Copenhagen, where he got his first degree in 1816. In 1818 he initiated the foundation of the National Library of Iceland (*Landsbókasafn*, then *stiftsbibliotek*), and in 1821 Rafn gave up his teaching position at the military school in Copenhagen to take up a new position at the Arnamagnæan Collection/University Library of Copenhagen, even though that post was unpaid. There he reviewed the Arnamagnæan Collection and gained invaluable insight into the collection and the manuscripts' contents.

One of Rafn's first publications was "Nordiske Kæmpe-Historier", a three-volume collection of Danish translations of *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* (in vol. 1 and 3) and *Þiðreks saga af Bern* (in vol. 2), published in 1821–26 by Popp in Copenhagen. He re-published most of these sagas and others of the same genre under the title "Nordiske fortids historier" in 1828–30, again by Popp in Copenhagen. He then published the stories of vol. 1 and 3 of "Nordiske Kæmpe-Historier" and more *fornaldarsögur* in normalized Old Norse under the title "Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda" in 1829–30, again in Copenhagen in three volumes.

Rafn's other well-known publications include "Jómsvíkinga saga" (1824), "Færeyinga saga" (1832), "Antiquitates Americanæ" (1837), "Antiquités Russes" (1850–52) and, together with Finn Magnusson, "Grønlands historiske Mindesmærker" (1838–45). He also published a multitude of articles concerning runes and historic monuments.

"Jómsvíkinga saga" was published as a test for the newly founded *Nordiske Oldskriftselskabet* with the aim to publish and translate Old Norse literature and to further the studies of Old Norse literature, history and culture, especially archaeology. The society was founded in 1825 by Rafn, Rasmus Rask and others, and came under the presidency of the monarch, King Frederik VI. Rafn was the first secretary of the society. (<http://www.oldskriftselskabet.dk>). "Jómsvíkinga saga" turned out to be very popular and had more than 1,000 subscribers in Iceland alone.

"Antiquitates Americanæ", published in 1837 in Copenhagen by Rafn and others, is called "Rafns berømteste Værk" (Grøndal 1869:30) and caused a great deal of attention to and interest for the North. Its contents are sagas, annals, geographical studies etc. that refer to North America. The texts are presented both in the original language and a Latin translation with some excerpts in English. "Antiquités Russes" followed a similar pattern, although focusing on the East.

During his life, Rafn was a member of a large number of societies and received many honorary degrees. He established connections with foreign scholars and antiquarians to further knowledge about the North, and published and translated many Old Norse texts. His scholarly work, though, is said to be lacking "Originalitet og Skarpsind" (Dansk biografisk Leksikon 1899:353), and the translations and editions are sometimes not considered careful enough. Nevertheless, his edition of the *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* has proved to have had a great deal of influence.

Manuscripts in Copenhagen

At the time when Rafn prepared his edition of "Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda", there were five manuscripts containing *Sörla saga sterka* in Copenhagen: AM 168 fol., AM 171 a fol., AM 560 d 4to, Rask 32, and NKS 1806 4to. Rafn was most likely also aware of other manuscripts in Iceland containing the saga, as there are manuscript catalogues of the National Library of Iceland, then *stiftsbibliotek*, in the collection of the *Nordiske Oldskriftselskabet*, of which he was the secretary. Furthermore, he was in contact with Icelandic scholars who might have given him information about manuscripts' contents.

- a) AM 168 fol. is a paper manuscript from the end of the seventeenth century. It comprises nineteen leaves: *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmunda berserkjabana* is on fols 1r–10v, and *Sörla saga sterka* on fols 11r–19v. This codex was once part of a larger codex, together with AM 101 fol. and AM 147 fol., but it was taken apart by Árni Magnússon. It once also contained a now lost text of *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* after fol. 10v.
- b) AM 171 a fol. is a paper manuscript from the second half of the seventeenth century and comprises eighteen leaves: *Sörla saga sterka* is on fols 1r–11r, a Faroese verse about *Sörla saga sterka* on fol. 11r, and *Sturlaug's saga starfsama* on fols 11v–18v.
- c) AM 560 d 4to is a paper manuscript, written on the farm Geirröðareyri in 1707. It comprises one hundred and twenty-two leaves: *Sörla saga sterka* is on fols 1r–18r, and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* on fols 19r–22v. The manuscript has several lacunae and was most probably part of a larger codex comprising AM 560 a–d 4to. These manuscripts contain *Íslendingasögur*, some of which are influenced by *riddara-* and *fornaldarsögur*.
- d) Rask 32 is a paper manuscript from the second half of the eighteenth century. It contains a collection of *fornaldar-* and *riddarasögur* on two hundred and twenty-two leaves. *Sörla saga sterka* is written on fols 8v–19r. Fol. 2 was written by the manuscript's owner Benedikt Bogason (1749–1819), a wealthy farmer from Staðarfell in western Iceland, who was interested in poetry, philosophy, theology and agriculture. His father, Bogi Benediksson, was the owner of the printing press at Hrapsey, which was run from 1773 to 1795. Fols 94v:25–100r and 175r–188v were written by Gísli Jónsson (1699–1781), priest in the Saurbær þing in western Iceland. His son, the priest Ólafur Gíslason (1727–1801, “Mála-Ólafur”), wrote fols 3r–94v:24, 100v–174v and 189r–222v. There is an older foliation on fols 13r (300) and 113r (400), and a note in the margin of fol. 154v (last leaf of a quire) states that *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekkum* is supposed to follow. This leads to the conclusion that the manuscript was once bound differently, containing other stories.
- e) NKS 1806 4to was written in the second half of the eighteenth century by the “younger Olavius”, Jón Ólafsson jun. (ca. 1738–75). The paper manuscript contains only *Sörla saga sterka* on twenty-four leaves.

Versions of *Sörla saga sterka* in the manuscripts

Rafn states in his edition (1829–30:3:11) that even though there are textual differences in the manuscripts, they hardly change the meaning of the story and are therefore of little interest or value and not extensive enough to justify speaking of different versions. Busch (2002:167), however, disagrees and distinguishes between a shorter and a longer version.

The five manuscripts that were in Copenhagen in Rafn's time can be divided into three groups. The first group comprises AM 560 4to, Rask 32 and NKS 1806 4to. The second group comprises only AM 168 fol., and the third group consists only of AM 171 fol. Börner's edition, a copy of which Rafn had, would constitute a fourth group.

Börner presents the longer version according to Stock. papp. fol. nr 56 in his edition from 1737 and follows his base text closely. Compared with the shorter version, this narrative is more detailed in battle scenes, and has some additional characters – mostly in combat scenes – as e.g. Tjörfi hinn finnski in the battle between King Haraldur of Norway, and Garðar and Tófi from Morland. This version sometimes gives more explanations, e.g. the reason why Mána's sister fought against her and what relationship King Sigurður of Denmark had with King Hálfðan Brönufóstri. Women are depicted slightly differently; less favourable, level-

headed or wisely counselling than women in other *fornaldarsögur*², for example Brana in *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*. Steinvör, King Haraldur's daughter, is fascinated by Sörli and cannot stop looking at him. Duke Casto tells Marcibil off when she, full of rage and sorrow, tries to egg him and her brother Högni on to avenge her father, King Hálfðan Brönufóstri. At the end of the story, Marcibil invokes her mother's anger in the grave, if she, the mother, knew that Högni made peace with Sörli instead of killing him to avenge that Sörli killed Högni's and Marcibil's father, King Hálfðan Brönufóstri. Högni offers Sörli peace on the condition that he acquires Sörli's beautiful sister, Ingibjörg, as a bride. The longer version thus has a stronger focus on the adventure tale and the bridal quest than the shorter version.

The version in AM 171 a fol. is even longer and more detailed than that in Biörner's edition and also differs greatly in wording. King Erlingur is a descendant of Óðinn, whereas Dagny, King Erlingur's wife, is "komin af Æsum". Although a few scenes are shorter than in Rask 32, there are usually longer fights with more characters. Some of the battle scenes have slightly different sequences and action. In the battle between King Haraldur of Norway, fought with the participation of Sörli and his family, against Garðar and Tófi from Morland, Loðinn is killed earlier and supplanted by Sámur. Furthermore, Tófi does not become a dragon. The furious Marcibil eggs Duke Casto and her brother Högni on to avenge her father, King Hálfðan Brönufóstri, before Sörli sets out to offer wergild for her father. Here, the climax is built up in a different and more dramatic way, as the audience knows earlier of the imminent danger than the hero. Some details explain later actions, e.g. King Hálfðan Brönufóstri's insults to Sörli when they meet give a strong reason for Sörli's anger. Women are again depicted meaner, weaker and less self-ruling or wise than in the shorter version. Marcibil threatens Duke Casto with sexual deprivation if he does not avenge her father. Ingibjörg leaves the decision as to whether she should accept Högni's offer of marriage to her brother and mother. This version has an even stronger focus on the adventure tale than the version in Biörner's edition.

AM 168 fol. is the shortest version of all. Fewer details are given, for example in AM 168 fol., fol. 13v it says:

ok hleypti með það í borgina. Kongr hélt nu eina ráðstefnu hvat til skilldi gjöra í slíkum vanda,

whereas the same section in Rask 32, fol. 11v reads:

ok hleypti konúgr undan með þetta lið í borgina, en þeir bræðr eltu flóttan allt at borgarportum, ok lauk svá striðinu. Haraldr konúgr hélt nú ráðstefnu við lið sitt, hvat til bragðs skyldi taka í þeim vanda ok nauðsynjum, er þeim voru nú at höndum komnar.

In this way, AM 168 fol. seems to be an extract of the version in Rask 32, although there are some differences in some details and sequences of the story. Some details agree with the longer version, e.g. Sörli and Sigvaldi chase and kill all of Tófi's and Garðar's army.

NKS 1806 4to is a copy of AM 560 d 4to, which has two lacunae. Rafn might have therefore excluded these manuscripts as possible base texts. His choice for a base manuscript for his edition of *Sörla saga sterka* was eventually Rask 32, cited as "Nr. 82b í 4blf. í Handrita-Viðbætirnnum (*Additamentis*) í háskólans bókasafni" (Rafn 1829–30:3:11). When comparing the *fornaldarsögur* that exist in more than one version and are printed in both Biörner's and Rafn's editions, it seems that Rafn prefers to edit a different version than Biörner, if possible. However, in this case it was by necessity, as there was no manuscript containing the longer version in Copenhagen. AM 171 a fol. seems to be too close to the longer version, and AM

²See also Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen and Agneta Ney (2003:10).

168 fol. seems to be an extract of the version in Rask 32, and AM 560 d 4to and NKS 1806 4to are defective. The choice to use Rask 32 as base text might have therefore been fairly easy for Rafn.

Consequences of Rafn's choice of base text

There are three subsequent editions of the *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda*, each one following Rafn's edition closely.

Valdimar Ásmundarson's three-volume edition (Reykjavík, 1885–91) is mainly based on Rafn's edition from 1829–30, but with a slightly different orthography and without a variant apparatus. *Sörla saga sterka*, which is printed in the third volume on pp. 309–43 without any information, seems to follow Rafn's edition without changes.

Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson also based their three-volume edition (Reykjavík, 1943–44) on Rafn's edition, but take into account more recent editions containing *fornaldarsögur* or their *vísur*. The editors added four other *fornaldarsögur*, normalised the spelling further and decided against a variant apparatus. *Sörla saga sterka*, contained in the third volume on pp. 191–228 is again printed following Rafn's edition with no more information than the shelf mark of the base text, Addit. 82 b 4to in the University Library (now Rask 32).

Guðni Jónsson was the sole editor of the most recent edition (Reykjavík, 1950¹ and 1954–59²) and followed his and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's edition closely, but changed the order of the stories sometimes and spread them over four volumes. There is no variant apparatus. *Sörla saga sterka* is in the third volume on pp. 367–410 without any information.

The editions from 1943–44 and 1954–59 in the Íslendingasaga-series proved to be very popular – not only amongst Iceland's population, but also amongst scholars. These editions are fairly cheap and readily available, and are, with their normalised texts, not cluttered by variant apparatus or notes, and thus easily accessible and readable.

Biörner's and Rafn's editions are impossible or nearly impossible to purchase and not available in every library, and the manuscripts containing *Sörla saga sterka* are even more difficult to access. There is no modern-standard, critical edition of the saga yet. Therefore, very often it is only the later editions without a variant apparatus that are available to the scholar, and when only consulting these editions, the scholar will miss a lot of valuable information. When the scholar does not know of the other versions of *Sörla saga sterka*, especially the longer versions, he or she might get a different impression of *Sörla saga sterka* from the work as it is contained in the manuscripts.

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Odin – an immigrant in Scandinavia?

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Introduction

The origins of the god Odin and his cult in Scandinavia has captured the interest of scholarship for almost two hundred years. Many different interpretations have been proposed on more or less convincing grounds. My paper aims at reconsidering the main lines of interpretation and critically review the arguments brought forward (the use of two forms Wodan and Woden is no slip of the pen, see Hultgård 2007).

The issue includes a complex of problems, the most significant being the following ones:

- The geographical aspect. The identification of an area of origin for the cult of Odin (within or outside the Germanic speaking world) and the way it spread further.

- The genesis of the Odin figure proper as we know it from Viking age and medieval sources.

- A common Germanic god who preserved a continuity in character or underwent a thoroughgoing transformation.

We may roughly distinguish two main lines of interpretation:

A. The first one considers Odin as a deity having arrived to Scandinavia from the south in a relatively late period. His rise to pre-eminence was a gradual one. This line of interpretation was dominant in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but has been revived in recent times.

B. The second line of interpretation regards Odin as an ancient deity common to all Germanic peoples. He had a prominent position from the very beginning and his character remained essentially the same through the centuries.

Odin as an incomer to Scandinavia

The first line of interpretation (A) is found in several variants depending on three different factors and the way they are combined:

- the geographic area where the origins of the god are sought.
- the circumstances under which the cult of the god emerged and the way it was diffused.
- what parts of the character of the god were changed during the spread of his cult.

A. 1° Several scholars place the origins of the Odin cult in the lower Rhine area from where it spread to the north. Some of them also emphasize the connection with the Gallo-Roman cult of Mercury.

In the first half of the 20th century the most prominent representative of that line of interpretation was Karl Helm. He stated that the notice of Tacitus in his *Germania* that the Germanic tribes worship Mercury as the foremost god (*deorum maxime Mercurium colunt*) referred to western Germania, more specifically the lower Rhine area where the cult of Wodan existed already in the first century C.E. Helm suggested that Herules returning home to Scandinavia brought with them the cult of the god in the 5th century. The Odin cult was thought to have spread over the entire area of Germanic speaking peoples in varying ways but usually linked to movements of warlike elite groups. Alois Closs (1934) thus referred to – I quote – “eine kriegerische Kulturbewegung” which brought the worship of Odin to Scandinavia.

In more recent research the idea that the worship of Odin emerged in the lower Rhine area has been revived by Michael Enright (1996), Richard North (1997) and Ludwig Rübekil (2002 and 2003).

According to Enright the cult typical of Woden emerged in that area under Celtic influence as a warband religion inspired by the leader of the Batavians, Civilis. The success of this

new form of religion depended largely on the prestige conveyed by the cult of a prominent Germanic warlord.

North suggests that the Germanic cult of Odin originated as a worship of Mercury in Roman Gallia. Through warfare and trade the cult spread over the Rhine into northern Germania and along the coasts of the North Sea. By the end of the 5th century it had reached England and southern Scandinavia and the god was worshipped with his Germanic name Woden.

Rübekeil maintains that the form of the god's name as reflected by Scandinavian tradition is the original one: proto-Germanic **Wōðinaz* > *Óðinn*. Germanic tribes settled along the lower Rhine were, according to Rübekeil, impressed by the sacrificial cult of Celtic prophetic priests. These priests were called by a term cognate with Latin *vates*, Celtic **uatis* > Old Irish *fáith*. The basic word underlying *Óðinn* is **wōði* which is a Germanic reflection of Celtic **uatis*. The Germanic tribes began to address their worship to the same god to whom the Celtic priests dedicated their sacrifices but applied the name of the *vates* to the god. It was a Germanic reception on a superficial ritual level of the cult of the Celtic god Lug.

2° Other scholars point instead at a more southern and southeastern provenance of the cult of Odin. From these areas, the central and eastern parts of the Roman empire, as well as the territories north of the Black Sea, cultural influences that partly can be attested by archaeological evidence, reached Scandinavia and brought with them also the worship of Odin. This interpretation includes the assumption that the runic script was part of the same cultural process, it is suggested that the runes came to Scandinavia through the intermediary of the Goths when settled in southeastern Europe and this would explain the close connection of Odin with the runes.

A number of scholars have followed this line of interpretation. In the beginning of the 20th century two Scandinavian scholars made influential contributions to the problem of the origins of the Odin cult. Bernard Salin assumed more than one cultural wave reaching Scandinavia from the south and southeast. One of the later brought the belief in Odin and the other *æsir* and at the same time also the runes. He seems to have been the first one to interpret the iconography of the C-bracteates as representing the god Odin. Sune Ambrosiani referred also to the bracteates and their Roman models suggesting that the cult of Odin was nothing else than the cult of the Roman emperor transposed to a Scandinavian setting where it had blended with a native worship of an animal deity. Elias Wessén (1924) emphasized the role of the Goths in southern Russia in transmitting the Odin cult together with the runes to Scandinavia.

A Roman influence through Mithriacism on the development of the Odin figure has also been suggested by some scholars. Hilda Ellis Davidson (1964) suggests that Odin developed from an earlier Germanic war god: "In *Tiwaz* we have an early Germanic war god, an ancestor of Odin" (p. 60) but sees also a connection with the Roman Mithras (Ellis Davidsson 1978; Kaliff & Sundqvist 2004)

We may classify the view of Lotte Motz as a third variant of the 'immigration' theory. The Odin figure has emerged after the image of an ecstatic visionary and magician with 'shamanistic' features. Eastern tribes penetrating into the territory of Germanic peoples brought with them this image of an itinerant 'shaman' deity who probably also borrowed traits taken from the worship of a native Germanic god. At a later stage, according to Motz, Odin was then transformed into a mounted warrior god and magician.

Odin as an ancient and prominent god of all Germanic peoples

B. Looking at the second main line of interpretation, *i.e.* the assumption that Odin represents a very ancient god among all the Germanic peoples is intimately bound up with the Indo-European question.

Here we are faced with two different types of interpretations (1° and 2°). One combines the myth of the war between the *æsir* and the *vanir* with archaeological evidence. The other is based on the comparative study of Indo-European mythologies and deities.

1° The myth of the war between the *æsir* and the *vanir* (*Völuspá*; Snorri's Edda) as well as the story of the immigration of the *æsir* into Scandinavia (Snorri's Edda; *Ynglingasaga*) is considered to reflect a pre-historic immigration wave into Scandinavia by a warlike people speaking an Indo-European language and worshipping the gods who later became known as the *æsir*. The conflict between the peaceful native population and their deities, the *vanir*, and the Indo-European intruders ended with a fusion of the two population groups in which the Indo-European element became dominant. This event is thought to correspond in archaeological terms to the arrival of the 'Battle Axe' culture around 2000 B.C.E.

This interpretation has long been a favourite theme in the history of ancient Scandinavian religion. As representatives we may mention Philipsson (1953), Henrik Schück, Eugen Mogk. In the broader perspective of Indo-European studies the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas has elaborated the sharp contrast between the peaceful agriculturalists of Old Europe, who mainly worshipped mother goddesses, and the warlike patriarchal Indo-Europeans who coming from the plains of southern Russia and Kazakhstan penetrated much of Europe. Being worshippers of male sky gods they adhered to a different type of religion (e. g. Gimbutas 1988).

A. 2° Without involving themselves in the complicated interpretation of the archaeological evidence for Indo-European origins and diffusion, other scholars prefer to concentrate on the comparative study of Indo-European mythologies. They deny any historical reality behind the myth of the war between the *æsir* and the *vanir* and the euhemeristic migration stories in medieval Old Norse literature.

In the first half of the 20th century scholars like Hermann Güntert made broad comparisons covering the entire field of Indo-European languages and cultures. Güntert (1923:151–153) emphasized the similarities between Odin and the Indic god Varuna and concluded that both reflect the Indo-European type of a "binding world ruler and king of the gods". Having a common background these two gods acquired new features as time passed on, however. Odin was no doubt a god common to all Germanic groups but he attained his supremacy gradually his worship spreading from certain important cult centres.

In the first place we have the French comparatist Georges Dumézil whose three-functional system is too well known to be presented here in detail. As to the divine world it implies that the main deities of the early Indo-Europeans can be classified in a tripartite system. The common characteristics found between the Indo-European deities of the same functional category are according to Dumézil best explained as based on inherited tradition. The first function is shared between two deities representing different aspects of the sovereignty. Odin who together with Týr belongs to the first function stands for the religious-magical aspect, and Týr for the judicial one. Odin/Woden as head of the Germanic pantheon constitutes thus for Dumézil a very ancient feature.

Many scholars have accepted the tripartite system as elaborated by Dumézil but others use the comparative Indo-European approach without building on Dumézil's theory. Jan de Vries (1956–57 §406) points to striking affinities in character between the Indic god Rudra and Odin and to a certain extent also between the Greek Hermes and Odin. De Vries speaks of Odin as a "high god" and seems implicitly to accept Dumézil's classification of the Indo-European deities when referring to Odin as "die dunkle Seite des Hochgottes" (§410; cp. also §412). Also taking the precise similarities between Lug and Odin into account (de Vries 1961) we may state that for de Vries Odin represents from the very beginning a prominent deity part of the Indo-European legacy (§412).

Jaan Puhvel refers likewise to the Indic Rudra as a counterpart to the Celtic Esus-Lugus and to the Germanic Odin but comes to a different conclusion than Jan de Vries. For Puhvel

Odin seems to be “in origin the semidemonic patron of the warriors”. In warlike Celtic and Germanic society “a homologue of Rudra ascended to the pinnacle of the pantheon” assimilating or supplanting whatever pristine god may have kept company there” (1987:201). While admitting that Odin was an ancient god among Germanic peoples Puhvel appears nevertheless to assume a gradual elevation of the Odin figure to the chief god of the pantheon. The roots of Odin in the religious and social context of the Männerbünde means for Kershaw (2000) that the god has an Indo-European background.

In his reconstruction of an Indo-European family of deities Peter Jackson (2002) proceeds independently of Dumézil and suggests that Odin belongs with the proto-Indo-European god who is reflected in the Indic Varuna and the Greek Ouranos.

The validity of the arguments

The first of the two main lines of interpretation (A) includes different types of argumentation. Since the opinion of Karl Helm influenced much of the subsequent discussion on the origins of the Odin cult (most recently North 1997) it is appropriate to start with the reasons he adduced to support his view. Helm chose to interpret the notice of Tacitus on the worship of the Germanic Mercury (see above) as referring only to western Germania more specifically the lower Rhine area. There but not elsewhere, according to Helm, was Wodan worshipped as the chief deity in the 1st century C. E.

Admittedly most of the information on Germanic culture and religion that reached the Romans came from (or passed through) the Rhineland area but this fact in no way excludes the possibility that other Germanic (including Scandinavian) tribes also worshipped Odin in the same early period.

More weight should be put on Helm’s second main argument. In the entire source material from Scandinavia (archeological findings, rock carvings, bracteates, early runic inscriptions) there is no evidence of a cult of Woden/Odin. If the bracteates depict the god – an assumption of which Helm is skeptical – we don’t reach any farther back in time as the early 6th century.

However, the lack of references to Woden/Odin in Scandinavian sources prior to the 5th and 6th centuries is not a convincing argument in view of the almost total absence of written sources and the uncertainty of identifying deities known from the Viking period in the rock carvings and other early iconographic material. I agree with Helm that the presence of the Woden/Odin figure on the rock carvings cannot be demonstrated. On the other hand there is no convincing evidence to prove his absence either.

Among modern proponents of the Rhineland hypothesis North (1997) follows the reasoning of Helm but Enright (1996) sees the typical Woden/Odin cult (not necessarily the origin of the god, however) as intimately bound up with the emergence of the Celtic-Germanic warband (or *comitatus*) institution. Focus is on the Rhineland area with its mixture of Gaulish and Germanic elements. He elaborates an extensive parallelism between Sertorius, leader of the Celtiberians in their wars against Rome, and the chieftain of the Batavians, Civilis, who took Sertorius as a model for his political agenda. Both men developed a similar religious propaganda which in the case of Civilis shaped the typical image of Woden/Odin. The Scandinavian Odin’s involvement with warfare and prophecy, his attributes such as the one-eyedness and the spear, correspond in a surprising manner with what is known about Civilis and the rising phenomenon of the warband. This correspondence shows according to Enright that the god and his cult ultimately received its characteristics from the Gallo-Roman and Germanic worship of Mercury in the form it was propagated by Civilis.

The principal objection to this hypothesis is that the similarities adduced do not compel us to accept the conclusion reached by Enright. The similarities may be explained differently and gods are not necessarily shaped by specific political and cultural circumstances. Thus, an al-

ternative explanation would be that Woden/Odin already possessed the characteristics that suited a warlord and his warband and therefore became their particular deity.

Rübekeil's theory rests on a linguistic argument which is combined with the particular ethnic and cultural situation prevailing in the Rhineland area where Celtic and Germanic groups were in close contact. His linguistic reasoning is complicated and presupposes some stages that cannot be directly attested. The assumption that the Germanic groups called the god they took over from Celtic Rhineland tribes after the name of the priests that served him is too speculative and is clearly inspired from the linguistic argument. If this does not hold good, the theory as a whole cannot stand.

For those who favour a more southern and southeastern origin of the Odin cult (A. 2°) the main argument is the cultural impact of the Roman empire and the influences that reached Scandinavia from southeastern Europe. One must ask why precisely Odin among all the deities was imported. His connection with the runes is the only plausible argument for this exception and is also put forward by the adherents of a southeastern origin of Odin. Again there is a presupposition that appears to be doubtful: the runes were invented among the Goths in southern Russia on the base of the Greek script (e.g. Wessén 1924:26). Not to speak of the idea that a core of historical truth underlies the euhemeristic story of Odin and his followers migrating into Scandinavia from Asia Minor (Salin and others). This idea still influenced much of the early 20th century scholarship.

As to the second main line of interpretation (B.) comparisons with other Indo-European gods serve the purpose of demonstrating the presence of Odin among all Germanic peoples already from the settlement of Indo-European speaking groups in northern Europe. The point is that the study of the 'homologues' of Odin in Indo-European mythologies show him to be part of an ancient religious legacy. This in turn implies some sort of a common Indo-European pantheon which must be put far back in time. Here we are confronted with the main difficulty that faces the proponents of an Indo-European heritage. Could myths and images of deities be preserved in oral tradition throughout two or three millennia and still be recognized as deriving from a common source? We would be on safer ground when using the comparative etymological-onomastic approach which does not yield much result for the Odin figure except for some of his *heiti*.

The attempt to link the origin of Odin and the *æsir* with the appearance of the Corded Ware/Battle Axe culture in Scandinavia is based on uncertain parameters. It is assumed that this culture a) was brought to northern Europe by invading population groups and b) that these invaders were Indo-Europeans bringing a new form of religion with them. Both suppositions are far from certain. To identify ethnic and language groups solely on archaeological grounds is hazardous and there is evidence to suggest that the Battle Axe culture to a large extent had a local origin.

Conclusions

The present survey and discussion has demonstrated the difficulties in ascertaining the hypothesis of Odin being a late incomer in Scandinavia. Conversely we have no clear evidence to show the presence of his cult before the middle of the first millennium C. E. To judge from the information given by Roman writers the god was worshipped by Germanic tribes on the continent as one of the main deities already in the 1st century C.E. (cf. also Simek 2003:110–111). In my view there is nothing to suggest that Woden/Odin was not worshipped in Scandinavia during the same period (cf. also Hultgård 2007 and Schjødt 2008:451).

We have to assume a continuity in the cult of this god in Scandinavia and the Germanic continent from a very early time as long as there is no conclusive evidence for the opposite.

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Saga-intertekstualitet i Einar Már Guðmundssons *Fodspor på himlen*

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Romanerne: *Fótspor á himnum* 1997, på dansk *Fodspor på himlen* 1999 (herefter FPH), *Draumar á jörðu* 2000, på dansk *Drømme på jorden* 2001 (herefter DPJ) og *Nafnlausir vegir* 2002, på dansk *Navnløse veje* 2003 (NV) der er udgivet under et som *Fodspor på himlen*-trilogien, udgør en epoke i Einar Már Guðmundssons forfatterskab.

De tre romaner har som udgangspunkt Olaf og Gudny og deres børns videre skæbne, og vi får også som i en rigtig saga Olafs og Gudnys slægtshistorier¹ helt tilbage til Gudnys tipoldemor. De tre bøgers handlingsgang ligger kronologisk i forlængelse af hverandre, personer og topografi går igen – men man kan godt læse hver roman som en selvstændig historie. Samtidig udgør de tre romaner sammen med *Universets engle*, (1993, dansk 1995) der delvist er personfællesskab med, en samlet afdeling i forfatterskabet.² Nævnes skal det at Paul fra UE, der også nævnes i novellesamlingen *Måske er posten sulten* er Olafs søn og således barnebarn af Olaf Vragar og Gudny.

I det følgende fokuseres på dialogen med sagaerne i *Fodspor på himlen*, dog inddrages DPJ og NV når det er relevant.

Som i Einar Már Guðmundssons øvrige romaner benyttes Reykjavik-kronotopen,³ men tidsmæssigt er vi tilbage i tiden fra første tredjedel af det tyvende århundrede. Det er et billede af et historisk Reykjavik, hvor store dele af de nu byggede kvarterer⁴ ikke er kommet til. Slægtshistorien spejler således den større fortælling: byens og nationens.

FPH rummer et persongalleri så stort som i en saga,⁵ og også slægtstavlerne bagerst i bogen medgiver romaner sagapræg.⁶ Vi møder her ”billeder af mennesker, som ingen kendte andetsteds fra, personer fra ubetydelige steder.”⁷ Parateksten som motto: Digtet af Jóhannes úr Kötlum (1899–1972),⁸ forudgriber og anslår tonen til samme tema: At give de fattige, de små og de mange stemme.⁹

Fodspor på himlen rummer ifølge anmelderne stærke referencer til sagaerne.¹⁰ Søren Vinterberg definerer¹¹ FPH som en 1930er-saga, hvor ”sagatonen ikke er til at tage fejl af: Opregningen af slægten og dens gøremål, inklusive den respektfulde omtale af personer, som straks igen er ude af sagaen. De gammeltestamentlige telefonbogsopremsninger er forbundet med bevidstheden om, at hver liv har sin værdighed og er omtale værd” og ”Det er svært at give udtryk af en stor slægts- og kollektivromans personer, fromme slidere og fyrige elskere,

¹ Slægtstavle findes bagerst s. 213 i FPH som det også er sædvane med slægtstavler i flere af de trykte sagaer.

² Jf. Jón Yngvi Jóhannsson 2006, s. 609 ser fra *Universets engle* og frem et nyt kapitel i EMGs forfatterskab, baseret på beretninger fra egen slægt og personfællesskab – også med personer fra novellesamlingen *Måske er posten sulten* (2001, dansk 2002)

³ ”In these family sagas he continues to use the history of Reykjavik as a basis” (Ástráður Eysteinnsson og Úlfhildur Dagsdóttir 2006, s. 460).

⁴ Eksempelvis Grafarvogur og Grafarholt.

⁵ I *Laksdøla saga* nævnes eksempelvis 350–400 navngivne personer (Bredsdorff (1971) 1995, s. 39).

⁶ EMG lægger ikke skjul på at romanen bygger på hans egen slægts historie, hvad dedikationen: *Til minde om min bedstemoder, Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, f.04.11.1882 – 25.06.1965* vidner om. På samme måde er *Universets engle* dedikeret til broderen Pálmi.

⁷ Brostrøm citerer Laxness, 1999, s. 437, for at vise sammenhæng mellem sagafortællerne og EMG.

⁸ Se også *Íslensk bókmenntasaga IV*, 2006, Silja Aðalsteinsdóttir s. 365.

⁹ I modsætning til historiens fokus på de magtfulde, de få og de store.

¹⁰ Erik Skyum-Nielsen 2005, s. 54 påviser med udgangspunkt i romanen en række centrale saga-lån: ”Nye og gamle fortælleformer i moderne vestnordisk prosa i postkolonialt perspektiv.”

¹¹ ”Kæmpeliv i Nord” *Politiken*, 23.04 1999.

seje små koner og kæmper.” Vinterberg fremhæver ligeledes den sproglige enkelhed og pointerer at romanen, som sagaen, er ”fuld af skarpskåren komik og værdighed.” Foreningen af realisme og poesi i det Nordatlantiske, er en linie som Vinterberg finder ”går via Laxness direkte tilbage til Gunløg, Gunnar og Njál.”¹² Bent Vinn Nielsen¹³ fremhæver mere generelt at fortællestilen ”er umiskendeligt islandsk” og refererer til Laxness og Gudbergur Bergsson, der har samme legende forhold til tiden, og uanstrengt springer mellem fortid og nutid. Ifølge Vinn Nielsen er det fremherskende hvordan slægten og enkeltskæbnerne i romanen, nok beskrives som almindelige mennesker og samfundsborgere, men aldrig bliver ydmyge af sind. Personerne er som sagapersonerne stolte og lader sig ikke knægte af ”skæbnens ugunst.” Vinn Nielsen definerer ”Gudmundssons almue som vild og blodig,” hvilket man også med rette kan sige om de kompromiløse karakterer fra sagaerne.

Et andet karakteristika romanen har til fælles med sagaerne er personpræsentationerne, der foregår efter samme mønster. Når nye personer præsenteres i sagaen, sker det i reglen i begyndelsen af et kapitel, og i sammenhæng med genealogi og tilknytning til gård, egn og social status (Meulengracht Sørensen 2006, s. 228). Derefter følger en – mere eller mindre knap – karakteristik, af ydre, færdigheder og karakter. I disse oplysninger ligger gemt kimen til og et forudgreb om, hvilke forventninger man kan have til denne person. Meulengracht Sørensen slår fast, at man kan stole på denne karakteristik, den er autoritativ, og de sparsomme oplysninger vi får, kommer senere til at betyde noget væsentligt i forhold til personens rolle i plottet (Ibid, s. 228). Personens væsentlighed i fortællingen er proportional med de ord der bruges på beskrivelsen, centrale personer får således flere ord med på vejen i præsentationen, medens de mindre væsentlige knap får et navn. Den første person vi præsenteres for i FPH, er (farmor) Gudny, først som lille munter pige der ser et varselssyn om fattigdom; senere træder de to aspekter: fattigdom og lyst sind momentvis frem hele vejen gennem romanen. Senere fremhæves Gudnys smukke hår og hendes pleje af det flere gange; smukt langt hår er et skønhedsideal velkendt fra sagaerne.

I afsnit 2 træder Sigrun¹⁴ frem som et citeret vidne og vi får Gudnys genealogi¹⁵ og føde- og opvækststed på plads. I andet kapitel præsenteres Olaf. Hans fortælling begynder retrospektivt, idet der startes med hans gravsted – uden afmærkning. Netop oplysningen om denne manglende afmærkning er central, for Olaf fik et eftermæle, om end han ikke umiddelbart huskes for noget positivt ”Den måde, han var på over for mor, og alt hvad vi måtte lide på grund af hans opførsel, det bliver aldrig tilgivet.” s. 13. Allerede i afsnit 2 får han dog en forsonlig præsentation af slægt og fødested, og opvæksten ved og forbindelsen til havet understreges. Gudny og Olaf, de to mest centrale personer møder vi altså som de første i romanen. De repræsenterer også kontraster idet beskrivelsen af dem viser hvordan deres sind og forhold til verden er præget af en henholdsvis mørk og lys grundstemning.

Harald, oldefaderen, beskrives med slægt, bopæl og social status af husmand i tredje kapitel, afsnit 1. Oldemoderen præsenteres med genealogi og fødested, i afsnit 2 og også det faktum at hun er stor og arbejdsduelig fremhæves i den sparsomme karakteristik. Onkel Halli præsenteres i indledningen til afsnit 2. i femte kapitel. Og sådan bliver det ved fremad i bogen: personer præsenteres efter samme struktur, som den der bruges i sagaerne.

¹² Påpegningen af sagaparallellerne fortsættes i Vinterbergs anmeldelse af DPJ i Politiken 30.10. 2001 ”Mesterlig nutidssaga” og i anmeldelsen af NV, med den prægnante titel ”Underklassens islændingesaga” *Politiken*, 4.11 2003

¹³ ”Stjerneruser og himmelgarn” *Information*, 23.04. 1999.

¹⁴ S. 73 afsløres at Sigrun er opkaldt på sagamaner efter farmoderen Sigrun.

¹⁵ ”Når nye personer skal introduceres, gennemgås ikke sjældent deres slægtstavle i adskillige led” Erik Skyum Nielsen 2005, s. 54.

Vi møder også sagapræget i brugen af de mange indforståede lokale øge/tilnavne,¹⁶ i beskrivelsen af de almindelige, samt de mere excentriske personer: Almindeligst er kategorien erhvervsbetegnelse som tilnavn: *Vrager Olli* og *Bjössi-Blik* eller efter sport: *Bokse-grimur*, geografisk tilnavn: *Amerikaner Olli*, desuden, erhvervet er manden: *fattiginspektør Simon*. Modellen kælenavn efter udseende ses, idet Ragnar kaldes for *Big boy* og navneforkortelser: hypokorismer der signalerer familiær status: Som eks. *Valla (Valborg)*, *onkel Halli (Harald)* også kaldet *FlynderHalli* og *Gummi (Gudmund)* er almindelige.

Kompositorisk er FPH inddelt i 5 dele, med 26 kapitler, der igen er underinddelt i nummererede afsnit. Første afdeling af bogen er overvejende centreret om præsentationerne af Gudny og Olaf og deres slægter i fortiden. Længere fremme følger vi børnene – og specifikt de ældste børns videre skæbne. Samtidigt er fortid og nutid vævet sammen ved hjælp af en pause- og fragmentstruktur,¹⁷ der muliggør spring i tid, rum og personkonstellation. Let og elegant veksles mellem flash backs og flash forwards, ligesom der skiftes stil når der pendles mellem den store gennemgående fortælling og anekdoter, sagn og små sidehistorier.

Generelt indgår i FPH, (DPJ, samt i NV) en mosaik af genrer. I FPH, indgår en række referencer til folketro, eventyr, sagn og skrøner. Erik Skyum-Nielsen (1991, s. 33) mener at denne ”legende genrecollage” er med til at indsætte EMGs og Einar Kárasons romaner i en nordisk fantastisk tradition fra Halldór Laxness og William Heinesen, der kan ses ”som nordiske sidestykker til Latinamerikas magiske eller fantastiske realisme” (Ibid., s. 33).

Genrekonglomeratet udgør også en gammel manuskripttradition fra før en sådan benævnelse blev kendt. I ældre manuskripter er det ikke ualmindeligt at møde forskellige genrer i samme skrift, kogebøger og salmer, skrevet som prosa (for at spare pergament) følger uformidlet efter hverandre. Beretninger om historiske begivenheder findes side om side med fiktive fortællinger og der er tradition for ikke at gøre opmærksom på genreskift.¹⁸ I sagaerne er der også eksempler på indlejrede sidehistorier og i skjaldesagaerne digte, som vi også træffer på i FPH.

Herefter skal fremdrages et par eksempler på fortællinger i fortællingen, der er med til at fremhæve det mundtlige præg, idet det er fortællinger der bliver fortalt.¹⁹ Sidehistorierne har samme funktion som mundtligt overleverede vittigheder, anekdoter og vandrehistorier, der eksempelvis tilfører humor og giver plads til inddragelse af overnaturligt fantastiske aspekter.

Vi træffer **anekdoten** i fortællingen om hvordan Olaf i fuldskab sælger Kopavogur for en flaske sprit og ”som en middelalderlig ridder” tager ud for at kræve bydelen tilbage, her lå nemlig forfædrenes tørvegård.

Humoristisk er den eventyragtige beretning om de tre ugifte brødre, Halli opholder sig hos. Deres berøring med kvinder går kun så langt som til at anvende ordet kvinde som skældsord. s.136, og de mener at brænde sig på kvindetøj.

Poetisk er fortællingen om Ragnars og Annas forelskelse på Ingimundur og Lauras gård, der kan medregnes under forelskelsen og gårdens kronotop (FPH s. 115), og som også kan ses i UE. Der er paralleller til beskrivelsen af tiltrækningen mellem Gunløg og Helga i *Gunløg Ormstunges saga*. Intertekstualiteten ses også i beskrivelsen af Anna: ”Hun var en lysende

¹⁶ Ibid s. 54.

¹⁷ Ástráður Eysteinnsson og Úlfhildur Dagsdóttir (2006, s. 460) peger på en dynamisk postmoderne attitude i den narrativt fragmentariske form, der opstår når traditionel historiefortælling cuttes op i mindre enheder og mixes i en collage.

¹⁸ Skriveren Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877) kan ses som et mellemlid mellem sagaerne og EMGs prosa, idet han nedskriver anekdoter, sagn, sagaer og skrøner i en saganær stil. Jf. Magnús Hauksson: *Íslensk bókmenntasaga IV*, 2006, s. 317.

¹⁹ Jón Yngvi Jóhannsson (2006) mener EMG i FPH trilogien ”udforsker romanens grænser ved at blande folkelige fortællekunst sammen med erindringer og selvbiografiske træk” og at ”den nationale epik indlemmes i romanens polyfoni”.

skønhed, lyshåret med klare øjne” s. 115. Som et ekko af sagaernes antydningsskønhed (Erik Skyum-Nielsen 2005, s. 54) er det fint og diskret underdrevet hvordan: ”De fulgtes ad til dagens arbejde og satte sig ved aftenunderholdningen så tæt ved hinanden, som de kunne” s. 115. Fortællingen ender dog med, at de unge ikke får hinanden, da Ingimundur sender Anna bort. Gunløg får heller ikke Helga; omstændighederne omkring dette faktum er forskellige, men der synes at være parallelle træk i de to unge mænds psykologi, som bevirker udfaldet.

Det **overnaturlige** indgår som en naturlig del i de indlagte fortællinger, sagn og anekdoter.²⁰

Det gælder eksempelvis for den poetisk vemodige fortælling i fortællingen om Olafs farfar: Magnus der lever med sælkvinden Erla og får 4 børn med hende, denne historie bygger på et velkendt islandsk **folkesagn** ”Sælhammen.”²¹

Barok humor møder vi i den lille fortælling om Magnus der går igen i taxien s. 148, Ragnar ved, det er hans fars genfærd og bliver ikke skræmt.

Også **dramatiske og voldsomme dødsfald** indgår i fortællingerne. Eksempelvis den lille beretning om Bjarne på Grimsstadir der angribes af en tyr, stanges og dør, og som kontrasterer Olafs ret fredelige død på hospitalet.

Gudny og Olaf er væsentlige personer i romanerne og derfor er beskrivelsen af mødet mellem dem badet i et særligt magisk lys. Det første møde mellem Gudny og Olaf kan bedst betegnes med det tilfældige mødes kronotop, det kan også rubriceres under vejens kronotop og under kronotopen for dreng møder pige. Vi er også som tidligere nævnt under Reykjavik-kronotopen. Mødet mellem Gudny og Olaf beskrives således:

[...] i slutningen af århundredets første tiår kommer en ung pige gående, alene og forladt, men med kraftigt hår og optimistisk mine, gennem byens tilsølede gader[...]. Så pludselig kommer en ung fyr hen til hende[...]. De spadserer rundt i byen, og pludselig er min farmor ikke alene mere.” FPH s. 39.

Olaf citerer i den tidlige forelskelse kvad for Gudny, på en direkte pasticherende måde, der må betegnes som stilistisk intertekstualitet. Stroferne har mindelser om uddrag fra Højsangen, desuden kan der drages paralleller til de hyldestdigte Kormak digter til Stengerde, da han ser hende første gang i *Kormaks saga* (Meulengracht Sørensen 2006, s. 254, Bredsdorff 1971/1995, s. 58).

I FPH er der eksempler på forskellige former for ægteskaber, ligesom i sagaerne.²² Bredsdorff nævner hvordan *Njals saga* rummer flere forskellige typer af ægteskaber end andre sagaer, også det forhastede (Bredsdorff 1971/1995, s. 83) som man kan sige, vi møder her.

Gudny beskrives ærefuldt som den, der holder sammen på familien. Hun oplever modgang undervejs, men det er hos hende, sympatien er placeret. Til den religiøse Gudny knytter sig flere syner, varsler og drømme, der som anticiperende spor går som en rød tråd igennem romanen. Det gælder hendes syn om fattigdom og børn der må fjernes fra hjem og forældre. Og på den anden side er drømmene om Ragnars rejse til Spanien også kodede profetier. Allerede før Ragnars fødsel har Gudny drømt om hans rejse og deltagelse i krigen i Spanien:

Farmor drømte tit underlige drømme, mens hun ventede Ragnar. Nogle gange befandt hun sig i fremmede diamantminer, hvor soldater gik rundt gennem salene, eller hun kurede på enden ned i mørke kulminer. Hun forstod ikke, hun kunne være så vidtberejst, mens hun sov FPH s. 63.

²⁰ Vinn Nielsen 2001 fremhæver ud fra disse sidehistorier EMG som den største nordiske magiske realist.

²¹ *Islandske folkesagn og eventyr*, 1990. På dansk ved Peter Søby Kristensen, s.104.

²² I *Gisle Surssøns saga* er der eksempler på flere former for ægteskaber. Erik Skyum-Nielsen 1988, s. 114.

Drømmens funktion her kan ses som et forudgreb om, hvad der senere skal ske, vi får dog – i modsætning til sagaerne – allerede på samme side at vide hvad drømmen betyder og at den kommer til at gå i opfyldelse. Gudny drømmer om Ragnar, da han deltager i den spanske borgerkrig og man ingen efterretninger får om hans skæbne: ”Ragnar kom til hende i drømme. Han stod badet i et kraftigt lysskær og sagde sætninger på fremmede sprog. Nogle gange var der røde pletter i lysskæret” s. 210. Senere viser det sig at drømmen går i opfyldelse som i sagaerne. Ragnar bliver såret, overlever og vender hjem, hvorefter ”Hans moder så sine drømme gå i opfyldelse” s. 210.

Drømmene er med til at karakterisere Gudny, der har åndelige præferencer til drøm, vision, varsel og forbøn. Hun er synsk, hvilket det ikke er ualmindeligt, at især kvinder i sagaerne er.

Motivet med social deklassering, hvor personer opdrages i et andet miljø og under lavere forhold end dem, de er født til, udgør et velkendt sagamotiv (Meulengracht Sørensen 2006, s. 278). Af og til er den rette herkomst også skjult. Efter trængsler og modgang genetableres den sociale orden, og personen indtræder igen i den rette sociale sammenhæng. Det sker eksempelvis i *Gunløg Ormstunges saga*²³ hvor Helga den fagre lever sine første opvækstår i Thorgerd Egilsdatters varetægt, indtil hun 6 år gammel indsættes på sin rette plads som Thorstein og Jofrids datter. Et andet eksempel er fra *Laksdøla saga* hvor trælkvinden Melkorka afslører sin herkomst som irsk prinsesse. Senere rejser sønnen Olaf til Norge og til Irland, hvor han møder morfaderen kong Myrkjartan og behandles som en prins og et barnebarn.²⁴ Meulengracht Sørensen nævner som eksempel Sigurd Fafnersbane, der vokser op som forældreløs i lavere sociale kår end dem, han er født til, og som til sidst indsættes i den rette position, der svarer til hans høje æt.²⁵ Også i Áslaugs²⁶ historie fra *Ragnars saga* viser samme mønster sig. Som spæd gemmes Áslaug i en harpe, senere findes hun af fosterforældre, hos hvem hun vokser op, og i kraft af skønhed og klogskab genvindes den sociale position.

Dette motiv er gennemgående i FPH, hvor de ni børn sættes i pleje ude på landet, da forældrene ikke kan sørge for dem. Børnene er overladt til uvisse kår, der er ingen forældre eller myndighed, der har kontrol med om de behandles ordentligt.²⁷ Det er specifikt Sigruns, Ragnars og Hallis historier, vi følger. Som en anticipering husker vi Gudnys syn fra hun var lille pige. Hun så en sogneflytning af en hel familie, der flyttes og skilles på grund af fattigdom. Underforstået er det at en lille dreng dør, som følge af plejefaderens vold og at faderens klager over bonden blev overhørt (FPH s. 10). Slægtsfølelsen er stærk og det synes som det værste der kan overgå en familie er at blive skilt ad. Gudny fastholder ægteskabet med Olaf, selv efter at han slår hende og drikker hendes løn op.

Det store lyspunkt i romanen oplever man efter at et nulpunkt er nået: Familiens opløsning er total, alle er borte fra hjemmet, kun Gudny er tilbage efter Olafs død på Epidemihospitalet. Gradvist genetableres familien centreret omkring Gudnys lejlighed. Sæun kommer hjem for at blive konfirmeret, og de ældste brødre kommer til byen for at arbejde, alle bor de hos moderen. Først Halli og Ragnar, siden Ivar og Kåre, så følger Sæun og Gummi. De 3 yngste brødre: Finn, Olaf og Einar vedbliver med at være på gårde på landet nogen tid endnu (FPH s. 150). Vi ser, hvordan familien søger sammen og at børnene her kommer hjem og på rette plads i en genopretning af slægtspositionen. Selv om det her er en fattig slægt, udtrykkes der megen slægtsfølelse og samhørighed.

²³ *Gunløg Ormstunges saga* s. 161.

²⁴ *Laksdøla saga* s. 211.

²⁵ ”Skjult identitet” og ”alt kommer på rette plads” motivet er således langt ældre end fremstillingen i H.C Andersens ”Den grimme ælling” fra 1843, det udgør også et velkendt motiv i folkeeventyret.

²⁶ Også kaldet *Kraka*. Ifølge Meulengracht Sørensen 2006, s. 278.

²⁷ Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, s. 163–164 nævner hvordan de laveste i hierarkiet i sagaerne er de ætteløse. Eksempelvis trællene der lever udenfor deres slægts beskyttelse og hvor ætten i værste fald er ukendt.

Det synes som om et andet karakteristisk EMG fænomen også her gør sig gældende, nemlig at en forventningshorisont brydes.

Det er sært. Sigrun, der græd højt i bilen og drog af med sindet fuldt af skuffelse, fik sig et hjem på landet, hvorimod Ragnar, der tog imod det nye med forventning, rejste til et dødsrige og først steg op, idet han stak af. FPH s. 107

Gudny og Ragnar regner med, at han vil få det godt og få nogen skolegang, da han skal være hos en præst på den egn, Gudny stammer fra. Men sådan går det langt fra. Han sættes til hårdt fysisk arbejde og er for træt til at lære om aftenen. Sarkastisk beskrives præstens lunkenhed og underforstået er det hans griskhed efter at udnytte plejedrengenes arbejdskraft, der udgør den egentlige årsag til den manglende skolegang. Denne præst er i øvrigt gennemført beskrevet som en grisk og usympatisk person; ligesom i sagaerne understreges hans usympatiske væremåde af et passende udseende. Han er ”laskefed, med mundvige som smalle streger og oppustede kinder” (FPH s. 104) og dertil hovmodig. Anderledes går det med Sigrun, der savner sit hjem og sin familie og som ingen forventninger har til opholdet på landet. Da den værste hjemve har lagt sig, erfarer hun at parret, hun er kommet til, er forstående og kærlige. Gudny har tidligere i nostalgis skær beskrevet hvor dejligt der er ude på landet om sommeren og nu erfarer Sigrun at det passer. I modsætning til dette står Ragnars oplevelser, han får en kraftig lektion i social uretfærdighed og opnår mistillid til landlivet. Han lærer kun en ting af sine ophold på landet, og det er ikke at lade sig udnytte og knægte af dem der er stærkere.

Hallis ophold hos de tre kvindeforskrækkede brødre i Kambar afstedkommer, ret forudsigeligt, at han aldrig selv gifter sig, men bor hos sin mor til hendes død, hvor han er 55. Som et paradoks spår spåkonen Nanna ham, at han vil blive omgivet af kvinder og den spådom går på en lidt anden måde i opfyldelse, da han testamenterer lejligheden til voldsramte kvinder.

Vi ser i FPH hvordan personer med ansvarsfølelse over for slægtens mindre heldigt stillede medlemmer fremstilles positivt. Det er således af stor betydning hvem man er i slægt med, ligesom i sagaerne.

De som på nogen måde har råd og overskud til slægtsfølelse eller hjælper dårligere stillede, beskrives i sympatiske vendinger.²⁸ Det gælder eksempelvis Magnus, Olafs bror, der ser Olafs drikkeri, og holder op med at drikke, hvorefter han hjælper og retter op på broderens svigt over for børnene. s.135. Senere anbefaler Magnus, der er en del af Djævleslænget: de hårdeste havnearbejdere, den generte Halli, så han får job. Det ses hvordan der er held ved at have indflydelsesrige slægtninge, når job skal søges som havnearbejdere. Magnus sørger også for at de tre brødre Ragnar, Halli og Kåre bliver udvalgt til arbejde, da det er småt med det og ”senere belønnede Kåre Magnus for hans tjeneste ved at invitere ham med til bokseturneringer.” s. 152. Brødrene gør gengæld. Dog får Ragnar ikke arbejde dagen efter, fordi han har brugt arbejdstiden på at agitere. Her går det også ud over brødrene Ivar og Kåre, der heller ikke tilbydes at komme igen næste dag. s.154. Slægtsforbindelser kan således være en fordel men kan i andre tilfælde hæmme den enkeltes muligheder. Der er her referencer til NS, hvor det er centralt, at hvad der vedrører en af sønnerne uvilkårligt falder tilbage på de øvrige.

Brødrene Halli og Ragnar er forskellige som nat og dag, som Egil og broren Thorolf i Egils saga var det. Efter at drengene er blevet voksne fremgår det at Halli er genert og utilpas i byen, medens Ragnar derimod er udadventt, veltalende og veltilpas i byen. Halli er halvt så stor som sine brødre s. 150. Kontrasten mellem de to meget forskellige brødre bliver ekstra

²⁸ I sagauniverset medfører slægtskab forpligtelser og rettigheder. Jf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, s. 167.

tydelig, da de begge bor hos moderen. Halli arbejder trofast det samme sted i mange år, medens Ragnar ofte skifter job.

Ragnar figuren har paralleller til Gunnar fra Hlidarende, fra *Njals saga*. Selve navneligheden består i 6 bogstaver, 2 stavelser. – endelsen -nar er ens i begge navne. Ragnar beskrives som en idrætsmand og en kæmpe, ligesom forbilledet Gunnar, om hvem der i *Njals saga* står: ”Han var en Mand af høj Vækst og stor Styrke og uden Lige i Vaabenfærdighed. Han kunde, naar han vilde, haandtere Sværd og Spyd med Kejten ligesaa godt som med højre Haand [...].I fuld Hærklædning sprang han højere end sin egen Højde og ikke lavere baglæns end fremad [...]” *Njals saga* s. 55. Gunnar er en sagaperson, der i forhold til de almindeligvis knappe personkarakteristikker ofres en længere beskrivelse på og hans mor og slægtsforhold på den side præsenteres før faderen. Ragnars størrelse understreges af at ingen almindelig uniform passer ham, da han skal bruge en sådan til kampen i den spanske borgerkrig. FPH s. 63.

Ragnars fortælling udgør en parallel til sagaudviklingshistorierne parallelt med eksempelvis Egil, eller Grettir, hvor vi følger Ragnar²⁹ fra ung utilpasset lømmel til voksen helt.

Ragnar er som ung dreng hidsig og rastløs, han er som Egil tidlig udviklet og ligner som 10 årig en dreng på 14.

Alle ved at Ragnar var høj af vækst, men han var ikke alene høj, han var også stærk, og han var tidligt udviklet. Ragnar har lige rundet de ti, da han sidder i bilen og ligner en prins i en fornem karet, men han ser ud til at være fire år ældre FPH s. 102.

Han kan arbejde som en voksen mand og det udnyttes. Beskrivelse og fremhævelse gennem sammenligning med andre børn, der er velkendt fra sagaerne, er brugt her.

Mellem Gudny og Ragnar er der stærke bånd, det ses i hendes drømme om ham medens han er i fare i Spanien. Senere sidder de ofte i samtale og drikker kaffe. I flere sagaer indgår venskaber mellem mødre og sønner.

Ragnars ven Grimur, er en slagsbroder og i beskrivelsen af ham i slagsmål er der tydelige referencer til beskrivelserne af Egils stridslyst som dreng i *Egils saga*. Direkte intertekstualitet findes ”Folk sammenlignede Grimur med Egil Skallagrimsson.” s. 113. Grimur kan ikke blive viking, men passionen for kamp og tummel kanaliseres ud i at han bliver bokser og får tilnavnet ”Bokse-Grimur.”

Vikingetidens kampe og hestekampe udmyntes her i boksning, hammerkast, hækkeløb og længdespring for Kåres vedkommende, og senere bliver det til et vertikalt slag mellem kommunisterne på den ene side og politiet på den anden side, efter byrådets planer om at nedsætte timelønnen for de hårdest arbejdende arbejdsmænd. Ragnar går nærmest bersærk. En anden af Ragnars venner: Olli, afvæbner under et sammenstød 6 politimænd, man må uvilkårligt tænke på eksempelvis Gunnars i kamp fra NS.³⁰ Her er der mange sårede på begge sider, hvor der i sagaerne er mange faldne efter et slag. Heldigvis er kampen en styrkeprøve, men ikke med faldne. Olli appellerer generelt til ”brydeglade politibetjente.”

Som frivillige i den spanske borgerkrig oplever Ragnar og Olli slag og krigsførelse for alvor i Spanien. Først opleves rejsen og krigen som eventyr, men til slut fremgår det at Ragnar oplever lede ved krigen og kampene. I denne beskrivelse er EMG sarkastisk i tråd med Laxness i *Gerpla*. Dog er der specifik litterær intertekstualitet til Thormod Kolbrunsskjald,³¹ hvor Ragnar som en sand helt hjælper de andre sårede og bærer sine lidelser stoisk, da han

²⁹ Ragnar deler navn med helten Ragnar Lodbrog, Meulengracht-Sørensen 2006, s. 279 opridsrer en række sagaer og digte som beretter hans historie, der også findes hos Saxo og i senmiddelalderens folkeviser.

³⁰ *Njals saga* s. 111, og s. 116, hvor Gunnar i den sidste kamp sårer 16 mand, heraf flere dødeligt, og dræber to.

³¹ *Sagaen om fostbrødrene* s. 114

såres og ironisk nok mister – heldigvis kun én finger. Efter hjemkomsten bliver træfningerne og hændelserne i Spanien, fangenskab og den vanskelige hjemrejse som i en ægte saga transformeret³² til eventyrlige beretninger, der fortælles igen og igen.

Beretningerne om Olli har karakter af skrøner og her er det sted i romanen, hvor der er flest overdrivelser; dette tilfører Olli et eventyrligt skær. Han har også som en farverig person flere tilnavne.

Ollis rejser ud i verden. Han snyder sig som Egil med. Senere oplever han eventyr og bliver afholdt i det fremmede, her så meget at et par i USA vil adoptere ham. Der er referencer til *Njals saga*, hvor det indirekte fremgik at dronning Gunhild gerne ville have beholdt Hrut.³³ Olli beslutter, som Hrut, at vende tilbage til Island og den kvinde der venter der.³⁴ Olli kommer forandret hjem, hvor slægten der nærmest regner ham for død, overraskes over hans ankomst. s.122. Senere får Olli arbejde på maskinfabrikken Odin, og næsten selvfølgelig har han magiske evner. Maskiner fordobler deres afkast og vi må tænke på momentvis magisk heldige sagapersoner, som Ravnkel Frøjs gode, der eksempelvis får lam der næsten fødes med to hoveder.³⁵

Olli lider momentvist af udlængsel og drager så til søs, vi husker Gunløg Ormstunge og andre sagahelte, der også har udlængsel. Han er en kvindebedærer, og gifter sig tre gange³⁶ med piger der hedder Unnar. Dog er det kun en af dem, der kaldes for ”Unnar den fagre” s.159. Fra *Njals saga* kendes historien om Unn, der var gift med Hrut og blev skilt, og det bliver Olli og Unn ligeledes her. Også i *Laxdøla saga* indgår en landnamskvinde ved navn Unn (Jf. Bredsdorff 1971/1995, s. 53). Unnar i FPH beskrives som smuk: høj og slank, hvilket er parallelt med sagaernes skønhedsideal.

Det klassiske trekantmotiv kendt fra flere sagaer, eksempelvis LS og GOS, findes i FPH, hvor Olli tager af sted til den spanske borgerkrig og forlader den gravide Unn. Efter krigens slutning vender han omsider hjem og finder Unn med et nyt barn på armen og en ny mand.

Da Olli vendte hjem fra krigen, havde han en datter på ét år, men ingen kone. Unnar den fagre havde opgivet at vente og havde ladet en anden mand flytte ind.

”Jeg regnede ikke med, at du ville komme tilbage,” sagde hun med gråden stående i halsen, da Olli dukkede op i døren med en fornøjet mine, som om han var taget af sted i går eller lige var smuttet ned i en kiosk for at købe tændstikker FPH s. 203.

I sagaerne følges erfaringen med at den ventende har giftet sig med en anden af jalousi og drab. Her sker en intervention i forhold til det klassiske forlæg, der behandles med humoristisk distance. Olli trækker på skulderen og accepterer tingenes tilstand uden at hævne sig på den nye mand.

Rækken af direkte og indirekte intertekstuelle referencer der er opridset her, viser forbindelsen og dialogen mellem *Fodspor på himlen* og sagaerne. Sagaparalleliteten kommer til udtryk i slægtsmotivet og i personpræsentationerne, hvor samme struktur som i sagaernes benyttes og igennem interventioner af klassiske sagamotiver.

Desuden i det store persongalleri, ved direkte allusioner, ved personer der følges fra vugge til grav og fremstilles som moderne helte, også genmosaik er et sagaparallelt træk.

Litteratur

³²Amerikaner Olli og Bokse Olli.

³³*Njals saga* s. 35.

³⁴Hruts fæstemø Unn, venter ham på Island, ligesom Unnar venter her. Ibid s. 33.

³⁵”Man kunne således sige, at det var lige ved, der var to hoveder på hvert dyr” *Ravnkel Frøjs godes saga* s. 33.

³⁶En parallel til Gudrun der gifter sig 4 gange i *Laxdøla saga*.

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Die deutschsprachigen Fassungen und Verarbeitungen der *Jómsvíkinga saga* von den 1920er bis zu den 1940er Jahren

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Die deutschsprachige Rezeption der *Jómsvíkinga saga*, im 19. Jahrhundert einsetzend im Umfeld der pommerschen Geschichtsforschung,¹ verlagerte sich zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts hin zur Romantisierung und Mystifizierung mit einem Höhepunkt in den 1930er Jahren, der sich in zahlreichen Verdeutschungen unterschiedlichster Originaltreue, aber auch regelrechter Nutzenanwendung niederschlug.² Dominierte im ersteren Falle durchaus der Unterhaltungswert einer Wikingergeschichte mit prägnanten Charakteren und Höhepunkten, so bediente sich im letzteren die Germanenideologie der Saga als Beleg für eine Tradition von Männerbundtum und Gefolgschaft. Die folgende Untersuchung widmet sich insbesondere der Methodik zur Vereinnahmung der *J. s.* im ideologischen und propagandistischen Kontext.

Deutschsprachige Übersetzungen

Die Grundlage der Übersetzungen stellen die schwedischen und dänischen Editionen des 19. Jahrhunderts dar, wiewohl offensichtlich auch im Rahmen der *Altnordischen Saga-Bibliothek* ein Textband mit den reihenüblichen deutschen Kommentaren und Übersetzungshilfen vorgesehen war, der von Carl af Petersens, dem früheren Herausgeber der Versionen AM 510, 4^{to} (1879) und AM 291, 4^{to} (1882), besorgt werden sollte,³ jedoch nie zustande kam.

Auf Deutsch erschienen zunächst drei Übersetzungen im 19. Jahrhundert: 1827 von Ludwig Giesebrecht höchst textgetreu⁴ und 1875 von Anton Edmund Wollheim mit glättendem Satzbau⁵ – beide mit kleinen Auslassungsfehlern⁶ – nach SKB 7, 4^{to} (1824) und 1892 von Ferdinand Khull in frei formulierendem und dabei kürzendem Umgang mit AM 510, 4^{to} (1879).⁷

¹ Z. B. Giesebrecht 1840 bzw. 1843 und Klempin 1847, dabei anknüpfend an übersetzte dänische Vorstudien, namentlich Vedel Simonsen 1827.

² Als wertvolle Grundlage diente die von Julia Zernack zusammengestellte Bibliographie deutschsprachiger Sagaübersetzungen (Zernack 1997). Zur notwendigen Abgrenzung wurde lediglich Literatur einbezogen, welche die *J. s.* unabhängig vom Umfang als eigenständigen Text führt, sich also nicht mit einer Inhaltsangabe oder einer reinen Referenz begnügt.

³ Vgl. Briefe Hugo Gerings an Eugen Mogk vom 23. 5. und 15. 8. 1890, wiedergegeben bei Fix 2004, S. 315 und 324. Die Handschriftenfrage wurde in diesem frühen Planungsstadium noch nicht erörtert.

⁴ Dies geht so weit, daß *frændi* grundsätzlich archaisierend mit „Freund“ wiedergegeben wird, dazu einmal mit „Vetter“ (Giesebrecht 1827, S. 101) – eigentlich „Onkel“, etymologisch jedoch korrekt als „Vaterbruder“. Auffällige Übersetzungsfehler sind „dreihundert Mann (S. 106) für *tvö hundruð manna* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 18), „was Rechtes an Hülfe“ (S. 120) für *lítinn styrk* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 32) und „es wog jedes Korn einen Pfeil“ (S. 132) für *vá eyri eitt kornit* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 44).

⁵ Es werden Sätze teilweise anders verbunden, hierbei wird die Syntax gelegentlich vereinfacht und zudem ausschließlich Präteritum verwendet. Gleichzeitig werden jedoch zahlreiche erläuternde Zusätze und Fußnoten mit Originaltext geboten. Falsch übersetzt sind: *ok er nú hálfu ákafari, geingr nú aldri af þeim* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 7) – „und war nun doppelt so eifrig auf den Schiffen, die er nicht verließ“ (Wollheim 1875, S. 157); *bakaz* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 9) – „hockte sich nieder“ (S. 157); *Þeir snúa skipum sínum* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 11) – „Sie banden ihre Schiffe fest“ (S. 158); *járnhurðir* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 14) – „Eichenpforten“ (S. 159). Diese Übersetzung, die lediglich den Teil bis zur Gründung der Jomsburg durch Pálna-Tóki abdeckt, befindet sich zwar in einer Anthologie, ist aber dennoch originär, weshalb ich sie an dieser Stelle aufführen möchte.

⁶ Fehlstellen: Giesebrecht 1827, S. 106: *Haraldr jarl qvez vera óhræddr fyrir Veseta ok sonum hans* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 18), S. 121: *i Noregi* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 33), S. 133: *Þá deyr Þorleifr* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 45); Wollheim 1875, S. 155: *oc dreymir hana* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 3) und *ok þickir nú frægr maðr* (SKB 7, 4^{to} [1824], S. 4).

⁷ Es fehlen zudem sämtliche *lausavísur*. Khulls darüber hinaus von Satzumstellungen geprägte Textbehandlung macht es unmöglich, in diesem Rahmen detailliert auf Abweichungen und zweifelhafte Umformulierungen ein-

Walter Baetkes Übersetzung der *J. s.* nach SKB 7, 4^{to} (1875) schließlich, 1924 im Band 19 der Reihe *Thule* vorgelegt, erschien, nebst einer Übertragung der *Jómsvíkinga drápa* von Felix Niedner, in einem Band zusammen mit solchen der *Orkneyinga saga* und der *Knýtlinga saga*. Die Absicht, isländische Darstellungen von Geschehnissen außerhalb Islands und Norwegens zu vereinen, führt hierbei zu dem herausgeberisch interessanten Nebeneffekt, eine Quelle mitsamt ihrer – wenngleich sehr knappen – Auswertung vorzustellen; zugleich ergeht früh ein Hinweis⁸ auf die fragwürdige Historizität der *J. s.*, deren Text im *Thule*-Band auf die *Knýtlinga saga* folgt.

Der Anspruch, bei den Übersetzungen „möglichste Treue an[zustreben]“, trifft allerdings nur teilweise zu: Baetke entfernt sich nicht unnötig vom Sagatext, ist jedoch uneinheitlich hinsichtlich der bei der *Thule*-Reihe immer wieder kritisierten Behandlung von Eigennamen,¹⁰ ignoriert die üblichen Tempussprünge des Originals und erzählt fast durchgehend im Präteritum. Ärgerlich sind Verständnis- und Auslassungsfehler: In der Seeschlacht im Hjørungavágr läßt Baetke gegen Þorkell háfi „Yriarskeggi den Andern“¹¹ antreten und gegen Sigurðr kápa „Arnmod und seinen Sohn Arni und Finn [sic!]“¹². Im weiteren Verlauf scheint Baetke bei der Berichtigung der kontextuell fehlplazierten Episode von Búis Verlust seiner Hände die Übersicht verloren zu haben – die Passage *ok hleypr síðan fyrir borð með kisturnar*¹³ fehlt schlichtweg.

Sowohl Baetke wie auch Giesebrecht geben lediglich den mit Tóki beginnenden zweiten Teil der *J. s.* wieder; Khull fügt in einem Anhang die Vorgeschichten über die dänischen Könige anhand der lateinischen Version von Arngrímur Jónsson (Edition 1877) sowie eine Aufstellung der textlichen Unterschiede zur Redaktion AM 510, 4^{to}, die erst bei Tóki einsetzt, bei.

Baetkes Übersetzung steht nicht allein für sich selbst, und in geringerem Umfang trifft dies ebenso auf jene Giesebrechts und Khulls zu,¹⁴ weshalb sie mit besprochen wurden – sie alle lieferten die Grundlage für zahlreiche Anthologien, Zitatmaterial für Abhandlungen und Ausgangspunkt für Nacherzählungen im hier behandelten Zeitraum.

Deutschsprachige Nacherzählungen und Bearbeitungen

zugehen. Klare Übersetzungsfehler sind: „Die Väter nahmen“ (Khull 1892, S. 19) für *Þeir feðgar toku* (AM 512, 4^{to} [1879], S. 38) und „hundertundvierzig“ (S. 19) für *.c.* (AM 512, 4^{to} [1879], S. 39).

⁸ Baetke 1924, S. 10.

⁹ Baetke 1924, S. 454.

¹⁰ *Strút-Haraldr*: Stutz-Harald (durchaus elegant, aber kommentarlos); *Gautland*: Gautland (mit Erläuterung in Fußnote); *Bretland*: Wales; *Sigurðr kápa*: Sigurd Mantel (Baetke 1924, S. 406, 395, 397, 407). Giesebrecht 1827 tappt hier mehr als einmal in die Falsche-Freunde-Falle: Gotland, Brittenland, Sigurdr Kappe (S. 91, 93, 104). Wollheim 1875 behält Bretland wie auch Borgundarhólm [sic!] erklärend bei (S. 155 und 157), schreibt dafür abwechselnd Got- und Gautland (S. 155) und schiebt einmalig einen Pseudo-Dativ ein: Birne Brezki (S. 158), der später stets Biörn [sic!] Brezki heißt und zuvor Björn von Bretland genannt wurde. Khull 1892 bewahrt zwar Bretland (S. 7), verfährt aber sonst oft chaotisch, z. B.: Bjorn [sic!] der Bretische (S. 7)/der Bretländer (S. 13)/Breski (S. 22); Borgundar-Holm/Borgundarholm (S. 11); Wendenland (S. 14)/Windland (S. 22); Haward der Hauende (S. 27)/Höggwandi (S. 35).

¹¹ Baetke 1924, S. 423; SKB 7, 4^{to} (1875), S. 27: *moti Þorkatli broður hans. Yriarskegi annar Sigurðr steiklingr af Hálóga lanndi Þorir hiqrtr* – Giesebrecht 1827, S. 124, korrekt: „Yriarskeggi, zum anderen [...]“

¹² Baetke 1924, S. 423; SKB 7, 4^{to} (1875), S. 27: *moti Sigurði kapu þeir feðgar Arnmodr ok Arni ok Fiðr* – Giesebrecht 1827, S. 125, korrekt: „Arnmodr und Arni und Fidr, Vater und Söhne“.

¹³ SKB 7, 4^{to} (1875), S. 30, vgl. Baetke 1924, S. 428–429. Giesebrecht 1827, S. 130–131, korrigiert die Plazierung (nicht jedoch die Redundanz) und weist in einer Fußnote darauf hin, was Baetke unterläßt.

¹⁴ In den Nacherzählungen ist dies teilweise indirekt erkennbar: Beispielsweise findet sich Baetkes Verständnisfehler der Schlachtaufstellung bei Ball [1941], S. 44, wieder; Kath [1941] orientiert sich sowohl an Baetke wie an Khull. Vorlage für Lawrenz [1938?] war nicht nur – wie angegeben – Giesebrecht 1827, sondern zusätzlich – für den Abschnitt bis zu Pálna-Tókis Tod – Vedel Simonsen 1827 (speziell S. 74–86, 91–98, 110–114, 127–130, 138–151), der sich in weiten Teilen auf Saxo stützt.

Die *J. s.* ist keine der klassischen Isländersagas; ihr gesamter Inhalt, ihr Schauplatz, ihre Protagonisten entsprechen wenig den auch bei deutschsprachigen Lesern populären Geschichten von isländischen „Bauern und Helden“, die sich vorwiegend gegenseitig befehlen, viel dichten, aber stets bodenständig bleiben. Genau dies vereint, eine Geschichte von Berufswikinger in einer mystischen Burg, ergibt jedoch eine ideale Vorlage für literarische Betätigungen, die von geglätteten Nacherzählungen für eine jugendliche Leserschaft bis hin zu frei Erfundenem rund um die von der Saga, einem „Quellborn germanischer Ehre und heidnischer Treue“,¹⁵ gelieferten Motive reichen, zumal „sie zum Teil auf deutschem Boden spielt“.¹⁶ Zu derartiger Einvernahme trägt die Wahl suggestiver Bezeichnungen wie „Polen“ und „Pommern“ noch bei.¹⁷ Deutlich sichtbar sind völkische Einflüsse, deren Ausrichtung in den erzählerischen Werken variiert, u. a. rassenspflegerisch, lebensreformistisch, antislawisch, antirömisch. Einige kurze Einzelbetrachtungen sind daher naheliegend.

Auf den Identifikationsfaktor baut Werner Heider auf, dessen Erzählung voller geflügelter Helme¹⁸ am weitesten vom Original entfernt ist. Sein Protagonist ist ein Sachse, also ein „Deutscher“, der an der Seite Pálna-Tóki die Jomswikinger mitbegründet. Gleichzeitig wird ein pathetischer Kontrast zu den Slawen, die „[i]n die harte Rede der Nordleute zischel[n]“,¹⁹ hergestellt, was zusammen mit dem Motiv der Blutsbrüderschaft zwischen einem wendischen „edlen Wilden“ und Pálna-Tóki eine geradezu Karl-May-hafte Stimmung erzeugt.

Das mit 1923 bereits relativ früh erschienene „Zeitbild“ von Elisabeth Hersen zeichnet sich durch ein impliziertes Frauenbild der Jomswikinger als Zentralthema aus: Dessen Antipoden sind Sigvaldi, der Pálna-Tóki ein altersbedingtes Desinteresse unterstellt, und Björn inn brezki als „geschworene[r] Frauenhasser“²⁰, der dies sogar seinem Erbbierschwur hinzufügt.²¹ Das Eigentümliche dabei ist der erfundene Beschluß, Frauenerlaubnisse als Belohnung für „eine Tat ‚verwegener Art‘“ zu verleihen²² – als offensichtliches Prestigesymbol nach „sexuelle[r] Kampfauslese“.²³ Hersen gibt sich merklich Mühe, weiblichen Einfluß als zersetzend zu kennzeichnen; romantisch wird so weniger der liebestolle Vagn, sondern der misogynie, nostalgierende Männerbündler Björn.

Bei Gerhard Ramlow eröffnet sich eine ungewöhnliche Diskrepanz zwischen Ductus und Absicht: Seine ausschmückende Nacherzählung entbehrt des schwülstigen Pathos, wie er den übrigen hier besprochenen meist zu eigen ist, und überrascht dagegen stellenweise mit sagatypischem, trockenem Humor und natürlichem Benehmen.²⁴ Erst das Nachwort verfällt in den üblichen Sprachstil und benennt das Anliegen des Buches, bei der Selbstfindung, in der „sich heute das deutsche Volk zu seinem blutmäßigen Schicksal bekennt“,²⁵ mithelfen zu wollen – die unterhaltsame Unaufdringlichkeit auch des sonstigen Buchinhalts jedenfalls wirkt eingänglicher als die ideologische Schwere anderer Werke.

¹⁵ Ball [1941], S. 6.

¹⁶ Jantzen 1928, S. 486, vgl. auch Fischer 1934, S. 575.

¹⁷ Vgl. z. B. Ball [1941], passim, und Ramlow 1936, passim.

¹⁸ Vgl. Heider [1937] S. 14, 21 und 80.

¹⁹ Heider [1937], S. 32, vgl. auch S. 61 und 99.

²⁰ Hersen [1923], S. 49.

²¹ Vgl. Hersen [1923], S. 141.

²² Vgl. Hersen [1923], S. 29.

²³ Hermand 1995, S. 80 (vgl. auch S. 290), vgl. ebenso Bruns 2001, S. 80. Die ansonsten unauffällige Nacherzählung von Lydia Kath scheint dies direkt von Hersen übernommen zu haben, vgl. Kath [1941], S. 33.

²⁴ Vgl. Ramlow 1936, S. 125 und 141–142. Schlichtheit gilt wiederum für Genzmer 1944, der im wesentlichen Baetke 1924 mit kleinen, erklärenden Erweiterungen wiedergibt. Ich führe Ramlow und Genzmer in diesem Kapitel wegen ihrer Vollständigkeit mit auf, obwohl sie die *J. s.* in Textsammlungen einbeziehen.

²⁵ Ramlow 1936, S. 314.

Kurt Herwarth Ball²⁶ bringt den germanischgläubigen, antiklerikalen Aspekt ins Spiel: Für ihn zeichnen sich die Jomswikinger – und ebenso die norwegischen Jarle! – dadurch aus, „noch nicht unter Kreuz und Krummstab gezwungen“²⁷ worden zu sein. Überdies sei durch die gewaltsame Christianisierung seitens des Frankenkönigs Karl die „lebendige Urkraft“ der Wikinger, die „bis in das Herz des Mittelmeeres hinein [...] nordischen Raum [schufen]“,²⁸ vertrieben worden, wie Ball einen sich im Weltschmerz ergehenden Vagn sinnieren läßt. Balls Nacherzählung überschreitet eindeutig die Schwelle von der Unterhaltungsliteratur mit Untertönen hin zu ideologischer Benutzung eines altnordischen Stoffes, wie sie im folgenden Abschnitt besprochen wird.

Thematische und ideologische Einbindungen

Die Rezeption der *J. s.* nimmt teils einen propagandistischen Ansatz, der auf den Vorherrschaftsanspruch Deutschlands und die Kriegerherrlichkeit der Deutschen abhebt, überwiegend jedoch einen ideologischen, nämlich die Belegführung der germanischen Arteigenheit von Gefolgschaft und Männer(kampf)bund.²⁹

Die Indienstellung der „Seegermanen“³⁰ und mit ihnen der Jomswikinger für die Kriegsmarine geschieht bereits kaiserzeitlich mit Heims 1904 und setzt sich fort bis zu Busch/Ramlow 1940, Seeherrschaft als Bedingung zur Weltherrschaft postulierend mit historischen Wurzeln in den überlegenen germanischen Seefahrern der Wikingerzeit.³¹ Zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges setzt sich das Vorwort zu Neckel 1915 vehement der Verkenning des deutschen, also germanischen Charakters entgegen;³² der „germanische Trotz“ zum einen, eine „doppelte Ethik“ zum Wert des Lebens für Frieden und Krieg zum anderen³³ sei der Weg nicht nur zum Verständnis des Heldentodes der Jomswikinger, sondern vor allem zur rechten Einstellung des deutschen Soldaten zum Töten und Sterben.³⁴

Die ideologische Einbindung der *J. s.* vollzieht sich in erster Linie durch manipulative Präsentation des Sagatextes. Eine Gesamtbetrachtung der hier untersuchten Literatur zeigt, daß gewisse Schlüsselstellen (Burg, Gesetze, Trunkenheit & Gelübde, Seeschlacht, Zauberei, Hinrichtung) und Aspekte (Gefolgschaft, Heidentum) höchst unterschiedlich prioritiert werden. Dies ist gleichwohl keine Frage der prinzipiellen Vollständigkeit: Lawrenz [1938?] wie Fahnenmann [1937] komprimieren die gesamte Saga für den Schulgebrauch zur Herausstellung des Heldenhaften und geben gezielt Raum für Pálna-Tóki und das Kollektiv, aus dem einzig Vagn herausragen darf. Im Vergleich von 24 Titeln, die sich der *J. s.* in ihrer Argumentation

²⁶ Ball hatte 1933 die Leitung der antisemitischen Zeitschrift „Hammer“ übernommen; im Vorwort zu den „Jomswikingern“ findet sich denn auch ein Verweis auf den Zeitzeugen al-Tartushi als einen „Sklavenhändler“, den „spanische[n] Jude[n] Ibrahim ibn Jacob“ (Ball [1941], S. 6).

²⁷ Ball [1941], S. 6, vgl. auch S. 39 und 54.

²⁸ Ball [1941], S. 55.

²⁹ Von der hier eingesehenen Literatur kann lediglich Fischer 1934 als reines Lesebuch gelten; als auffällig sachlich erweist sich Genzmer 1944. Ansonsten können die Grenzen zwischen Unterhaltung und Propaganda durchaus fließend sein, zumal in den maritimen Sammlungen.

³⁰ Busch/Ramlow 1940, S. 17–25 passim.

³¹ Vgl. Heims 1904, S. V; Busch/Docter 1935, S. 8; Busch/Ramlow 1940, S. 14; „morsch gewordene Welten [wurden] zertrümmert“ (Plabmann 1929, S. 3; ähnlich Vogel 1942, S. 152).

³² Vgl. dazu ausführlich Zernack 1994, S. 210–213. – Die Neuausgabe verzichtet auf diese Apologien, läßt allerdings auch die Rechtfertigung für Hákons Brutalität und den Respekt Besiegten gegenüber fort (vgl. Neckel 1940, S. 50, und Neckel 1915, S. 72–73).

³³ Neckel 1915, S. 23 und 14.

³⁴ So läßt sich Hákon als hingebungsvoller Landesvater interpretieren: „Man muß das Menschenopfer verstehen aus der Haltung der Mutter, die ihren Sohn ‚dem Vaterland opfert‘, indem sie ihn auffordert, sich freiwillig zum Kriegsdienst zu melden, und nicht aus der Menschenschlächtereie menschenfressender Barbaren.“ (Bohne 1937, S. 34.)

bedienen,³⁵ läßt sich feststellen, daß generell die Darstellungstiefe schwankt: Der Wortlaut der Gesetze, der Verlauf der Seeschlacht und die Aburteilungszene werden vorwiegend detailliert geschildert, wohingegen die Umstände des fatalen Gelübdes mehrheitlich nur kurz erwähnt werden. Die Mittel sind – mitunter plumpe – Umdichtungen und – wesentlich subtiler – das gezielte Auslassen von Sagageschehen als ein weniger pointierendes als selektierendes Prinzip, das heißt das gezielte Unterdrücken von kleinen, aber wichtigen Umständen, sowohl in der Handlung selbst als auch in der Ein- und Hinführung. Die schwerwiegendsten Manipulationen betreffen den Grund der Fahrt nach Norwegen und die Wende in der Seeschlacht.

Einige Autoren sind bestrebt, eine Formulierung zu finden, nach welcher die Jomswikinger *nicht* Opfer mangelnder Selbstkontrolle werden. So wird eine fixe Idee Sigvaldis zur Eroberung Norwegens erfunden, um Sveinns List erzählerisch zu umgehen³⁶ oder die gesamte Episode einfach verschwiegen.³⁷ Alternativ wird eine ursächliche, unprovizierte Heimtücke Sveinns suggeriert oder zumindest die Katerstimmung am Folgetage ausgelassen.³⁸ Wenn gleich eine Situation ausgenutzt wurde, der Gegner sich also unehrenhaft verhielt,³⁹ sollen demnach doch stets die Gebote der eigenen Ehre und die unbedingte Erfüllung des Gelübdes selbstverständlich sein. Gleichzeitig wird spätestens hier in unterstreichender Wortwahl auf die Disqualifizierung Sigvaldis hingearbeitet. Indem seine Führerqualität angezweifelt wird, indem sich in seinen „übermütigen Schwur“ seine Mannen „verketteten“ und „wohl oder übel“ losziehen,⁴⁰ wird eine latente Vakanz angedeutet, und nicht zufällig wird Vagns Gelübde mitunter auf den kriegerischen Aspekt, die Tötung Þorkell leiras, reduziert⁴¹ – ohne Erwähnung Ingibjörgs und somit ohne Einlassung auf den Sittenverfall bei den „weiberlose[n] Schwertbrüder[n]“⁴².

Der Wendepunkt der Schlacht im Hjörungavágr wird mehrfach auf ein heftiges, aber letztlich natürliches Unwetter vereinfacht oder gekürzt,⁴³ wodurch die Flucht Sigvaldis eindeutige Feigheit darstellt. Eine Umdeutung als geglückter Rückzug trotz Hákons Götterbeschwörung indes ermöglicht den Trotz der Gefangenen aus einer völlig neuen Perspektive: Hauptsache, „der Führer ist gerettet“.⁴⁴ Seine tatsächliche Tötung⁴⁵ wiederum ist konsequent für einen klaren Übergang zum einem neuen Führer, denn ein „junger Bursch, Vagn, übernahm den Oberbefehl“.⁴⁶

Diese beiden Änderungen sind bezeichnend für die kontextuelle Einordnung der *J.-s.*-Exzerpte und -Paraphrasen: Gefolgschaft und Kriegerehre. Die Freude über den entron-

³⁵ Ohne die reinen Nacherzählungen von Ball, Heider, Hersen und Kath.

³⁶ „Die Jomswikinger [...] saßen [...] in ihrer Halle beim Trunke. [...] Sigvaldi schwor, er werde niemals die Norweger über seinen kleinen Staat, der sich selbst Gesetze gegeben hatte, herrschen lassen. Er wolle selbst einmal über Norwegen regieren oder im Kampfe fallen. [...] Kurze Zeit darauf hatten die Jomswikinger ihrem Erbfeind [Hákon ...] eine Seeschlacht zu liefern.“ (Wagenführ 1935, S. 16.)

³⁷ „Die Jomswikinger unternehmen nach Palnatokis Tode einen Kriegszug gegen den Jarl Hakon von Norwegen; in der Hjörungabucht [...] treffen die Flotten aufeinander.“ (Dauch 1940, S. 176.)

³⁸ „Svend [...], dem die Macht des Bundes schon lange ein Dorn im Auge war.“ (Fahnemann [1937], S. 8; vgl. Wikingerfahrten, S. 9.) – „[Svend hatte] ein großes Gelage auf Seeland hergerichtet, zu dem er auch den Bund der Jomswikinger eingeladen hatte. [...] Nun nahm das Gelage ein Ende, und die Jomswikinger machten sich sofort von dem Gelage auf, und danach fuhren sie aus [...]“ (Wüllenweber 1938, S. 26–27.)

³⁹ Auf einem anderen Blatte steht, daß – abgesehen von der tatsächlichen Konstellation – pragmatische List und Ausnutzung von Situationen vielmehr eine sagatypische Tugend ist.

⁴⁰ Naumann 1939, S. 107.

⁴¹ Vgl. Fahnemann [1937], S. 10 und 14; Wikingerfahrten [1937], S. 9 und 11.

⁴² Strasser 1938, S. 110, und Strasser 1943, S. 81.

⁴³ Vgl. Wagenführ 1935, S. 17; Wüllenweber 1938, S. 29; Fahnemann [1937], S. 13 (nach Stoßgebet Hákons); Wikingerfahrten [1937], S. 10.

⁴⁴ Busch/Docter 1935, S. 187 (vgl. auch S. 185–187), und Busch/Ramlow 1940, S. 83 (vgl. auch S. 80–83). Zur Abänderung gehört, daß Sigvaldi unbehelligt von Vagn entkommt.

⁴⁵ Vgl. Wikingerfahrten [1937], S. 10.

⁴⁶ Wagenführ 1935, S. 17.

nenen Führer bleibt ein Einzelfall, der Tenor ist vielmehr: „Heldentum des Führers [ist] nichts, wenn es sich nicht mit Sorge für Leben und Rettung seiner Leute verbindet.“⁴⁷ Björn inn brezki, der seinen Mann aus dem Tumult nach Pálna-Tóki's Tötungsbekanntnis rettet, wäre ein geeignetes Beispiel gewesen, doch er wird höchstens als ergrauter Nebendarsteller in der Schlußszene zugelassen. Dafür wird Vagn als Lichtgestalt im Sinne des Gemeinschaftsgeistes einer Gefolgschaft herausgestellt, gegebenfalls durch Überdramatisierung der Situation der Gefangenen vor Hákon.⁴⁸

Hier liegt, neben der Auflistung der Gesetze, der Schlüssel zur Verwertung der *J. s.*: Pálna-Tóki verbleibt der mystische Gründungsvater⁴⁹ der Burg und des Männerbundes, gerne verglichen mit einem „Ritterordensbund unter einem Hochmeister“,⁵⁰ doch letztlich ist dieser Urzustand „vom völkischen Standpunkt aus gesehen etwas Ungesundes“.⁵¹ Vagn steht für die Verjüngung und immerwährende notwendige Erneuerung⁵² der Männer(kampf)bünde als Ergänzung der Sippenbünde,⁵³ aber auch vor allem „Hochschule [...] germanischer Jungmannen- und Kriegererziehung“.⁵⁴ Die Qualifikation des Knaben geschieht bereits innerhalb der Sippe; Vagn zeigt früh seine Unbändigkeit,⁵⁵ und auch die „brutalen Beweise kriegerischer Gesinnung und Tüchtigkeit, die Svend seinem Vater lieferte, zwangen diesen also anzuerkennen, daß Svend von rechter Kriegerart sei“.⁵⁶ Die Todesverachtung der Jomswikingen, die als Ausdruck des gefolgschaftlichen Zusammenhaltes im Geiste der gemeinsamen Idee so betont wird, bedingt nicht nur die Hingabe zum Führer, sondern auch die entsprechende Haltung des Führers selbst – eine Widmung eingedenk des Hitlerjungen Quex und Horst Wessels an jeden Pimpf, der „schon Gefolgschaftsführer [ist] oder es gern werden [möchte]“⁵⁷ und die Einrahmung in einschlägige Hitler-Zitate⁵⁸ schließlich ist die Kulmination der Instrumentalisierung der *J. s.*⁵⁹

Nachbemerkung

Die Botschaft, welche die ideologische Literatur anhand der *J. s.* zu vermitteln sucht, ist nicht nur „germanisches Heldentum“ schlechthin, das sich ebenso durch die *Íslendingasögur* illustrieren läßt, sondern auch ein bestimmtes Verständnis von Gefolgschaft und Führer: Zu-

⁴⁷ Naumann 1939, S. 88.

⁴⁸ „Nach heldenmütiger Verteidigung unterlagen schließlich auch Vagn und seine Mannschaft dem starken Gegner. Alle anderen Gefangenen sollten hingerichtet werden. Vagn allein durfte frei abziehen. Doch der Wikingen lehnte das Angebot ab: er wolle sich das Leben nur schenken lassen, wenn auch seine Mannen befreit würden.“ (Vogel 1942, S. 149.) Fahnmann [1937] läßt alle vor Vagn, so unausgesprochen auch Sveinn Búason, hingerichtet werden (vgl. S. 14, ebenso Wikingerfahrten [1937], S. 11).

⁴⁹ Lawrenz [1938?] interpoliert die Episoden von Apfelschuß und Skilaufen nach Saxo, vgl. S. 5–6.

⁵⁰ Naumann 1939, S. 112, nämlich dem Deutschen Orden (vgl. Strasser 1943, S. 86).

⁵¹ Ott 1940, S. 120.

⁵² „Wir mögen oft – und im völkischen Sinne durchaus mit Recht – die frühe Lebensverschwendung beklagen, die dem Mann hier bevorsteht, aber wir müssen uns sagen: zeugt er nicht leiblich, weil er zu früh stirbt, so zeugt er doch hundertfältig im Geiste.“ (Naumann 1939, S. 30.) Der Normalfall ist eine permanente Fluktuation von Jünglingen aus den Sippenverbänden, die „als stahlharte, wetterfeste Männer wieder aus der Kameradschaft ausscheiden“ (Vogel 1942, S. 61), wie sie durch Vagns Verbindung mit Ingibjörg illustriert wird.

⁵³ Als „artgemäße Zuchtform, die sich ein wehrhaftes Freibauerntum geschaffen hat“ (Wüllenweber 1938, S. 5).

⁵⁴ Wüllenweber 1938, S. 6. Eine „vornehme Abkunft“ sicherte unter anderem „die rassische Auslese als Vorbedingung jeder Leistung“ (S. 19).

⁵⁵ Vgl. Wüllenweber 1937, S. 10, und Wüllenweber 1935, S. 119.

⁵⁶ Wüllenweber 1937, S. 129; Pálna-Tóki's Hintergedanken werden so ignoriert.

⁵⁷ Wagenführ 1935, S. 9.

⁵⁸ „Die Welt ist nicht da für feige Völker.“ – „Die Ehre ist genau so wenig ein leerer Wahn, wie es die Treue ist. [...]“ (Dauch 1940, S. 164 und 180.)

⁵⁹ Die Anthologie Meyn 1938, die Vagns Aufnahme wiedergibt, ist in Zusammenarbeit mit der HJ herausgegeben.

nächst ist es ein elitistisches Bild einer Parallelgesellschaft zur Welt der Familien, erreichbar nur durch besondere Qualifikation und geprägt durch ständigen inneren Legitimierungsdruck. Hierzu tritt, bei aller Unterordnung, jedoch Gegenseitigkeit: Gefolgsleute wie Führer haben füreinander einzustehen. Die Mehrzahl der hier untersuchten Titel wurde zwischen 1934 und 1939, insbesondere 1937, (erstmalig) herausgegeben – jenen Jahren, in denen der Führerstaat mitsamt seinen Organisationen sich für viele zu bewähren schien.

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The Gosforth Fishing-Stone and *Hymiskviða*: An Example of Inter-Communicability between the Old English and Old Norse Speakers

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Introduction

When the scholars try visualizing the flag-ship monument of the Anglo-Scandinavian society in Danelaw during the Viking age, they would select either Hogbacks in Brompton, Yorkshire or the slimly designed cross in Gosforth, Cumbria. How much the difference of the two areas of production affected their artistic variations in the whole Danelaw artistry is not this paper's topic. How much the remains of each area can tell us about their days of Anglo-Scandinavian amalgamation is what this paper attempts to reveal. I should like to use the Fishing-Stone in Gosforth as a specimen in which the mutual communication between the Old English [hence OE] and the Old Norse [hence ON] speakers could be found through the comparing the pictorial narrative in Danelaw with the poetic narrative preserved in Iceland, i.e. *Hymiskviða*.

For whom was the Fishing Stone in Gosforth made in the first place? Was it for an individual converted pagan, or for the laymen as a whole in the parish? That the Fishing-Stone is not an individual monument is proposed by Richard N. Bailey in his exhaustive study on sculpture in Viking Age Danelaw. In his examination, Bailey considers that '[t]he dimensions of this carving suggest that it was not part of a cross or slab but originally formed a section of an architectural frieze or wall-panel' (Bailey 1980: 131). According to Bailey's interpretation, the stone consists of the upper and lower panels both of which symbolize the Christian struggle with the devilish enemy. The upper panel shows a hart keeping a serpent under control by blowing water through its nostrils at it, if it accords with Pliny's History. The iconographic significance of the upper panel harmonizes the fishing scene on the lower panel, in which an angler tries to catch a huge snake, namely Leviathan (*Job*XLI,1). Bailey concludes that the Gosforth church of the tenth century may have been decorated with a continuous line of such narrative sculpture of both Christian and pagan symbols in concord which enlightened the people in the parish with Christian doctrine (Bailey 1980: 131–32).

We may also assume that the Gosforth parish church belonged to the English ecclesiastical organisation. It is the place-name *Gosforth*, which is unequivocally an English name, that informs of the English characteristic of the parish. Rollarson, though with 'some rather disparate evidence', attempts to prove that the churches in Cumbria had long held the connection with the Northumbrian church since the eighth century: 'it would appear likely that all the lands west of the Pennines were also the part of Northumbria and that the western frontier extended to the coast' (Rollarson 2003: 28). We may well then be tempted to think between the lines that it is likely that the laymen in the Gosforth parish were OE speakers before the time of the Viking settlement.

With regard to the linguistic question, Fellows-Jensen finds that Gosforth is in the area 'where Scandinavian inflexions survive in place-names and which are most remote from, or inaccessible to, the influence of Standard English (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 412). It is very likely, therefore, that the Viking settlement affected the speech of the inhabitants of Gosforth area. The Fishing-Stone must have been appreciated by the parish laymen who spoke either OE or ON, or both, or at least an OE dialect peculiar to this region.

As Bailey concludes, the picture on the Fishing-Stone can be interpreted in both pagan and Christian ways: Þór's fishing expedition to catch the *miðgarðsormr*, and the hart of the sym-

bol of Christ fighting against the devilish serpent (Bailey 1980: 131–32). It is true that the parish folk could interpret the picture in Christian ways since the church with the Northumbrian connection had taught the scripture, its anecdotes and symbolism to them. How were they, then, disposed to Scandinavian mythology unless they heard the narrative on the pagan god Þórr in expedition with Hymir the Giant? Today, we know the story thanks to Snorri’s prose version retelling the whole story in detail. Yet, the people in Cumbria may not, or cannot, have been able to read Snorri’s version for two reasons: Firstly, Snorri was not yet born at the time, and secondly, Snorri’s version is not exactly the same as the one on the Fishing Stone in Gosforth.

Two pieces of sculpture that can be interpreted as telling the story of Þór’s expedition to catch miðgarðsormr are left in Sweden and Denmark: The former in Altuna and the latter Thy. Significantly enough, in both pictures, Þór is depicted as the one whose foot being put out below the boat’s floor. In Snorri’s version, on the other hand, Þór is said to have ‘forced both of his feet against the boat and kicked the bottom (hljóp báðum fótum gögnum skipit ok spyrndi við grunnni)’ (Falkes 1988: 45)¹. Despite the difference in number of Þór’s feet, both the Scandinavian picture stones show that Þór’s foot crushes through the bottom of the boat, and, in this respect, accord with Snorri’s narrative.

In the Fishing-Stone in Gosforth, however, there is no trace of Þór’s foot under the boat, which suggests that the narrative version of which the Gosforth sculptor made use in his working was different from those for the Altuna and Thy sculptors. In fact, we have only another piece of narrative that tells the story of Þór’s attempt to catch the miðgarðsormr: Hymiskviða in so-called Elder Edda.² In this version Þór is not told to have pushed either his foot or feet through the bottom of the boat. In this sense, it is quite feasible that the Gosforth sculptor heard a narrative about Þór’s expedition in the same group as that of Hymiskviða. Whether the parish folk in Gosforth could not only hear Hymiskviða but also understand the contents of the verse is wholly hypothetical. Even if the examination of this possibility does not aspire to proof of this hypothesis, it should suggest intercommunicability between the speakers of OE and ON during the amalgamation process in the Viking Age England.

Þór’s Hunt in Hymiskviða

Terry Gunnell, in his introduction to Eddic Poetry, draws our attention not merely to the content and the metre of the poetic works but to the way of performance in recital of the Eddic Poems / Songs / Chants / Dramas (Gunnell 2005: 95–97). The metre of Hymiskviða is *fornyrðislag* and the content is how Þór brings Hymir’s cauldron to brew mead for Æsir. This song consists three parts: The first part tells the story of Týr coming home with Þór to see his mother, the second part deals with the contest between Hymir and Þór, and the third part describes how Þór breaks Hymir’s treasury cup bringing the cauldron after killing all the giants, the last of which ends with the narrator’s enquiry for another narrative story about Þór and his servants, Þjalfi and Röskva, and summoning the beginning of the brewery feast. The whole structure is, however, loose and not well fit. The extent form of the poem may not be the original. Furthermore, I should suggest that the part of Þór’s hunting with Hymir must have been engrafted in later version. We can never know whether the whole story of Hymiskviða

¹ While Falkes interprets the *bottom* as that of the sea, the picture stones in Altuna and Thy do not seem to indicate that Þór’s foot or feet reach(es) the sea-bed. I, therefore, would interpret that the sculptors of either stones, if they heard the Snorri’s version of the narrative, might have thought of the *grunni* as the ship-bottom. Still it needs further study.

² Terminus ante quem is suggested in *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, 277, while some assumption of later composition based on the fact that Snorri does not make use of Hymiskviða is mentioned in *KL*, s.v. *Gudediktning*.

was told in Scandinavianized Cumbria, but at least the story of Þór's rowing the boat with Hymir to catch miðgarðsormr is known in sundry lands of Scandinavian culture.

The examination of the possibility that the OE speakers in Cumbria could understand the meaning of Hymiskviða if they heard it allows us to enframe only the episode of Þór's launching the boat with Hymir, because the rest of the song is not surely known to the English people during the Viking period.

Old English version of Hymiskviða

The following hypothetical stanzas are the part of Hymiskviða which the OE speakers in Cumbria might feasibly have heard and understood. The possibility of mutual oral communication between the OE and ON speakers in Danelaw is persuasively argued by Matthew Townend in his monograph. I owe much to his theory in constructing my hypothesis in transliterating the ON text into OE.

The basis on which my transliteration from ON to OE was made is the theories of 'switching-code' and 'dialect congruity' (Townend 2002: 43–46). As is often stated, the 'lexical substitution of cognate' (Townend 2002: 108) is the very key to open the ears of both the OE and ON speakers. The text, and context, of this paper's material is what the laypeople in Cumbria, where the parish churches had been secured for hundreds of years, would have understood when they first heard the song about Þór's attempt of fishing miðgarðsormr. When newcomers came to their parish, they accepted them if the strangers wanted to join their community. The linguistic medium between the two peoples, thanks to the dialect congruity, must have been equipped with 'inherent learnability' (Townend 2002: 45–46). Both languages have cognate vocabularies as well as systematic sound correspondences. Nevertheless, in my argument, I will show some of the elements that may have caused slight misunderstandings and may have made either side of the speakers of the two languages aware of sets of pun causing ironical allusions in communication.

The episode of Þór's expedition starts from the 15th stanza and ends at the 27th. The 36th stanza has an interesting kenning for giants, and it might have caused a certain effect if the song had been sung among the Anglo-Saxons, though the limitation of the space in this paper allows me to examine the story only until the 25th.

Hypothetical *Hymiskviða* Heard by the Ears of the OE speakers

OE version

ON version

15.

hwa leton hie
heofude scortran
ac on seape
siððan bæron.
æt Sife wer,
ædre swefan geng
an mid ælle
oxum twæm Hymes

hvern láto þeir
hǫfði skemra
ok á seyði
síðan báro.
át Sifjar verr
áðr sofa gengi.
einn með ǫllo
øxn tvá Hymis

16.

þohte harum Hrunngnes spillere
weorðung [wraðu]Hlowriddan
well fullmicel:
'Munon æt apan oþrum we weorþan
wið waþmæt we þrie libban

þótti három Hrunngnis spialla
uerþr Hlórriþa
vel fullmikill:
'Munom at apni oþrom uerþa
við veipimat vér þrír lifa.'

17.

Wih-weorðung cwæð sic willan wæg rowan
gif beald eoten báte gefe.
[...]
[...]

Véorr kvazk vilja á vág roa,
ef ballr jǫtonn beitor gæfe.

18.
Hymir cwæð:
'Hweorf to hiord, gif hyge tryweþ
breotere / brytere beorg-Dana, báte gesecan!
þeos weneþ ic þat þe mynegeþ
egenu of oxan ead-fong wære'

Hymir kvaþ:
'Hverf til hjarþar, ef hug truer,
brjótr bergdana, beitor sókja!
þess vænter mik at þer myne
oġn af uxa auþfeng vesa.'

19.
Sven seoslig swaf to sceagan
þær se oxa allsweart forestod³
ofbreat *dior [þir?] þyrses rædbana
heah-tun ufan horna twegra.

Sveinn sýslega sveif til skógar,
þars uxe stóþ alsvartr fyrer:
braut af þjóre þurs ráþbane
heah-tun ufan horna twegra.

20.
Hymir cwæð:
'werk þyncað þin wirs micle,
ceolwalda, þanne *cusc sitst.'

Hymir kvaþ:
'Verk þykkja þin verre miklo,
kjóla valde, an kyrr siter.'

21.
Bæð hlynn-gat hæfera drihten
*ætren aþan ut-faran
ond se eoten self talde
lytel fus lengra rowan.

Baþ hlunngota hafra dróttenn
átrunn aþa útar fóra;
en sá jǫtonn sína talþe
lítla fýse lengra at roa.

22.
Drog mære Hymer modig hwalas
an on angle up sona twegen
and æfter in *skut Wodene sibling
Wih-ward wið wilas waþe gierwede sealf.

Dró márr Hymer móþogr hvale
einn á ǫngle upp senn tvaa;
en aþr í skut Óþne sífjapr
Véorr viþ vélar vaþe gærþe sér.

23.
Agnade on angel se þe ealdrum beorgare
wurmes anbana oxan heafode;
gan wið angel seo þe is goda fiond
ymbgyrd beniðan allra landa.

Egnde á ǫngol sás ǫldom bergr
orms einbane uxa hoþþe:
gein viþ ǫngli sús goþ fiá
ubgjærþ neþan allra landa.

24.
Drog deorlice dædranc Þurr
wurm attorfag up at borde
hamere cnuwode heah-fell *skare
ymblyt ufan wolfes hnit-broðor.

Dró djarflega dáþrskr Þórr
orm eitrfaan upp at borþe;
hamre kniþe hñfjall skarar
ofljótt ofan ulfs hnitbróþor.

25.
Hran-galle hlemmade, and hōlc þuton.
fōr seo fȳrn fōlde allu samēn:
[...]
sanc sealf siððan se fisc in mere.

Hreingōlkn hlumþo, en hōlkn þuto,
fōr en forna fōld oġl saman:
[...]
sōkþesk síþan sá fiskr í mar.

In this transliteration, the correspondence between the vowel systems of OE and ON is not always consistent. In fact in the last line of the 25th stanza, we can see how ON weak verb

³ As to the treatment of ON phrasal verbs with adverbial as transliteration into affixation, see Ito 1993.

sökkva in middle voice could have been understood by the OE speakers. There need to be two syllables in the first half of the long line in order to ‘switch the code of ON middle voice’ into an OE reflexive phrase. The problem is not only limited to the problem of the number of syllables, but a set of phonemically hypothetical vowels for OE transliteration cannot always be discovered by a simple search for cognate words in the phonological set of vowels in ON, even though the importance of the existence of cognate words in both languages is crucial. Nevertheless, at length hearing process could allow the audience to understand the narrative story that the singer/reciter chanted. It is not unthinkable to assume the existence of those people who could provide some comments on the text and taught some of the younger generations how to understand certain specific poetic devices such as kennings and alliteration during the recital.

The following section will examine how the mutual intelligibility may have occurred through this hypothetical transliteration.

Commentary

In the 15th stanza, we can easily find the different 3rd person plural pronouns in the two versions. Interestingly enough, the OE speakers eventually invited ON pronouns in the course of time. It is a natural process, for but for the pronoun, the first line may show how similar the two languages had been even before the amalgamation. Note the nasal sounds appear differently in each version. In OE it is the 3rd person plural preterite inflectional suffix of *laetan* that has a nasal sound, while in ON it is the indefinite pronominal adjective indicating accusative. We can see why much the English language eventually lost their inflectional suffixes.

line 6, *ædre* in OE is the cognate of ON *áðr*, but the meaning of the OE word is adverbial ‘immediately, at once’. In this context, however, either will fit, and the whole story will not be affected by the differences in meaning of both words, i. e. their mutual communication may have been thought established. Actually, in North dialect of OE, infinitive suffix *-n* had disappeared when the Scandinavian settlers started living in Danelaw. So the correspondent line would be more like ‘*ædre swefa geng*’ and it would sound more like the ON original.

In the 16th stanza, the cognate pair *spillere* and *spialla* may have been understood as almost the same meaning as ‘interlocutor’, though ON *spialla* may allude more intimate friendship. An example of more provoking interpretation is on the second line. ON *verþr* ‘food’ has its cognate *weorð* in OE, but the latter had become different in meaning, ‘worth’. OE *weorðung* ‘celebration, feast’ must have been more similar in meaning, but it would sound too much differently. OE *wraðu* ‘maintenance, support’ does not have long syllable, and it would not discord the tone as well as the intent of the poem.

There is one problem in the 16th stanza. It contains an ON idiomatic phrase, *verþa + infinitive*. OE does not seem to have such an expression so far. We need further investigation upon it.

In the 17th stanza, as for the first word of ON version, *Kommentar* provides with several etymological hypotheses, most of which elucidates, regardless the different nuances among the assumed etymologies, that the meaning of the word would be ‘the protector of the sanctuary’ (*Kommentar*: 301–02). It has its cognate word in OE: *wih*. Yet, in the Christian context for the Anglo-Saxons, the first element of the word ‘wih’ is ‘an idol’ (Bosworth-Toller), and the quick inference from it would have been a transliteration into ‘wih-weorðung’ bearing a meaning of ‘honour to idol’, while in the pagan context it would have borne the meaning of ‘glory of holiness’, which is close in meaning to ON *Véorr*. Nevertheless, the ON *Véorr* might have sounded like OE *Weorr*, which in turn would have signified as an adjective ‘bad, grievous’ (Bosworth-Toller). If a West-Saxon had heard this phrase, they would unequivocally have decided the new comers’ god as of evil nature.

The 18th stanza shows an interesting example of showing a prejudice of the locals towards the Danish people (*Kommentar*: 310). Þór is here regarded as the destroyer of the Mountain–Danes, which must signify the giants. It must be either the Norwegian poet / recitalist, as is said in *Kommentar*, or the English audience / interlocutor that composed this phrase. At least, when the people in Cumbria heard this phrase, they would not have been displeased if they had long been living with Norwegian settlers among them. Fellows-Jensen asserts that the Danish settlements into the west of the Pennines started at a comparatively early date, yet ‘the settlement of western and central Cumberland seems likely to have been basically the work of Norwegians (Fellow-Jensen 1985: 412). The fact that the extent text of Hymiskviða has a Norwegian taste does not discord with my hypothesis that the Gosforth parish-folk might have heard a narrative of Þór’s expedition very similar to the Hymiskviða version.

In the 18th stanza, I should put another comment on the usage of impersonal phrase using ON *væntar mik*. No equivalent phrase can be found even though OE has several impersonal phrases. I substitute it with *wenan* in the personal phrase. I also substitute ON *munu* with OE *mynegian*, even though the cognate of *munu* in OE is *munan*, for the difference in meaning is too large. On the other hand, ON infinitive *vesa* has its correspondence with OE subjunctive *wære*, because of its similarity in phonetic sound as well as its fitness in the subordinate clause with *mynegian*. Furthermore, ON *beitor*, pl. would be transliterated into OE *bát*, a feminine word, though it holds the meaning of ‘what can be bitten, food’. In this context, its meaning can be either a lunch for Þór on the sea, or the bait for fishing. After all, the modern English word *bait* derives from a Scandinavian loan word: we could simply borrow this ON word for it. It is not considerable that in this point of the story Hymir would expect that an ox’s head should be a bait for Þór’s fishing.

In the 19th stanza, OE *seoslig* has meanings of ‘afflicted, vexed’, not being the same as of ON *sýsliða* ‘busily, smartly, speedily’. Still it may be appropriate in the context, and the OE speakers might have understood in their ways.

Another crux is ON *þjórr*. In OE we find no cognate of it, and maybe OE *dior / deor* ‘animal’ will be a sufficient substitution. A Scottish word *tirr* is an ambiguous word with regard to its etymology, and I presume it may have derived from ON *þjórr*. According to *The Scottish National Dictionary*, *Tirr* v3, n3, adj. has its meanings as:

I. v. To snarl, to speak in an irritable, bad-tempered way.

II. 1. A passion, a fit of bad temper or rage, an excited angry condition; a quarrel. 2. An irritable, quarrelsome child.

III. adj. Bad-tempered, quarrelsome, of a passionate, irritable nature [...] . [Orig. somewhat uncertain, poss. different words having fallen together. For I. Sc. forms cf. Norw., Dan. *tirre*, to tease, irritate, *tirren*, *terren*, peevish, fractious [...].]

The characteristics of *þjórr* ‘a bull’ can be deduced as Scottish *tirr*, though without more solid evidence.

The 20th stanza is a syntactically debatable example, showing the genitive pronoun ‘stylistically’ separated from its object (*Kommentar*: 315). Whether this word order can be understood in OE context is to wait for further argument. There is a kenning of Þór which coincidentally the same as Ceolwald, son of Cuthwulf, an ancestor of West-Saxon kings.

Another crux exists in the 21st stanza. ON *hlunngota* would sound like OE *hlynn-gat*. ON *hlunnr* + *goti* ‘Rolling + Horse’ is a famous kenning. Yet in OE *gat* would have sounded to mean ‘goat’ or ‘she-goat’, while *hæferu drihten* would have almost the same meaning as that in ON. Whether the OE speakers would have misunderstood or not is a question, and, fur-

thermore, *how* they misunderstood is another one. ‘The lord of he-goat requests a “rolling-she-goat” to go out *átrunn* of a monkey’ does not make sense, or does it? ON *átrunn* does not have an exact equivalent in OE, but it would sound like OE *ætren* ‘poisonous’.

The 22nd stanza is the most crucial one. It tells us that Hýmír drew two whales. In the Fishing-Stone, there seems to be three huge fish under the boat, and the two of them are trying to bite the bait of the ox’s head. The sculptor of the stone must have known the number of the whales that should be caught by one of the sailors on the boat he carved.



The ON adverb *senn* is transliterated into OE *sona*, only the consonants of which correspond to the original. Nevertheless, the ‘switching-code’ can be applied when the mutual communication progresses.

Another example of such ‘code-switching’ function can be observed in the first line of the 24th stanza. ON *djarflega* would have its etymological cognate in OE as *pearflice*. However, the meaning of the latter, ‘necessarily, usefully, profitably’, is again so different from that of ON, and it would be out of context if the OE speakers heard that way. OE *deorlice* would be more appropriate in both meanings and phonetic correspondence. Those people might have used their linguistic instinct not always systematically but in more pragmatic ways.

ON *skörr* in the third line of the stanza does not seem to have its cognate in English. Besides, it is a part of a kenning ‘a high-mountain of hair = head’, and the audience must know the expression. Unfortunately, the English people have not appeared to borrow the kenning phrase, but the word itself seems to be imported into Cumbrian and Scottish dialects, though the meaning of ‘cliff, ridge; a bare place on the side of a steep hill’ has been rather prevailing (Jamieson: ‘Scar, Skair, Scaur’). We cannot tell whether the OE speakers could understand the meaning of this kenning, but at any rate, the story is easy to follow.

The last line of the 24th stanza includes a difficult word *ymblyt*. Clark Hall defines its meanings as ‘circle, circuit, circumference’, but Bosworth-Toller gives up its definition. In my transliteration, it is based on its etymological correspondences and the meaning of the ON

ofljótt has been defined as ‘grimmig, graus’ by Sijmons and Gehring, ‘stygg’ by Heggstad, ‘very hideous’ by Cleasby-Vigfússon, and translated as ‘widerwärtig’ by *Kommentar*. However, the content of this passage refers to Þór’s attempt to hit the head of miðgarðsormr with his hammer, but he actually missed, and the serpent sank into the sea rather than floated in death. I would rather take the word literally ‘too shiny for its venomous gloss (*eitrfaan*, l.2) to hit the very head of the *ormr*, and my OE transliteration may convey that meaning.

The 25th stanza is most difficult and full of cruces. ON *gölkn* has been argued by the scholars but its etymology is uncertain. We must content with its obscure meaning as ‘a monster’. Interestingly, ON *hrein* ‘lava’ would have sounded like OE *hran* ‘whale’ in the English context where no volcanic activities had been found. Intriguing enough, but perhaps merely a result of stylistic coincidence, the head of the miðgarðsormr on the Fishing-Stone in Gosforth appears to be rather whale-like, or at least it resembles his fellow monster fish on the panel.

Conclusion

This paper aims to experiment on how much the 21st century scholars could reconstruct the situation in Gosforth when the OE speakers would see and hear the recital of a song about Scandinavian pagan god Þór rowing out to sea in order to catch his rival, miðgarðsormr. When we see both OE and ON texts side by side, it is obvious that the two languages were in so similar outlook. When we hear the sound, though only theoretically reconstructed as it may be, the similarity must be more striking. As Gunnell puts it, if we could see the performance of the recitalist who, undoubtedly, does not merely sing the poem but also displays the story with his body movements, then we should have been able to recognize how much the words could have been corroborated by human performance.

As is stated above, the mutual intelligibility does not work if there is one way of interpretation between the two languages, no matter how linguistically close they may be. The mutual communication between two peoples living together with different background requires not only dialect congruity but sympathetic human congruity, in which a certain aspect of religious differences can be an obstacle. In the case of Gosforth parish church, the remnants of the famous cross, the hog-backs and the Fishing-Stone all visualize the collaboration of the two religions, two peoples and two languages. If this paper can add something in our appreciation of their collaboration, it also owes it to their efforts in producing their devotional monument in their home parish.

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Aldeigjuborg of the sagas in the light of archaeological data¹

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Adolf Friðriksson terms the method of using sagas and early historical writings in Icelandic archaeology as ‘literary analogy’. He claims that by the application of literary analogy ‘finds are given function, age and meaning’, and notes that ‘the reliability of the conclusion of an archaeological inquiry is dependent on the current views of the historicity of the sources it uses’ (Adolf Friðriksson 1994: 14).

In case of Russian studies, sagas are much less reliable as a historical source (Jackson 2005). Old Rus had never been in the focal point for saga authors – sagas dealt with different material and had other interests. Nuggets of information preserved in the sagas still need careful examination and comparison with various source material. Among other things, literary data have to be coordinated with methods and results of archaeological investigations. Archaeology might prove the veracity of certain facts mentioned in the sagas. Thus, the issue presented here puts Adolf Friðriksson’s premises, so to say, upside down: what will be discussed below might be termed as ‘archaeological analogy’.

Old Norse-Icelandic narrative sources have preserved twelve toponyms that are considered by medieval authors, as well as by modern publishers and researchers, to have been the names of Old Russian towns (Jackson 2003). One of them is *Aldeigja / Aldeigjuborg*. This name is, as a rule, understood as a designation of Ladoga (Old Ladoga), a settlement in the lower reaches of the Volkhov River, on the route ‘from the Varangians to the Greeks’ described by the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. *Aldeigja / Aldeigjuborg* is mentioned about forty times in skaldic poetry and sagas, while it does not occur in runic inscriptions and geographical treatises. The events described in the sagas and connected with *Aldeigjuborg* (Ladoga) can be dated to the Viking age, i.e. up till the middle of the eleventh century, when Haraldr Sigurðarson left Rus.

I

Going from Novgorod to Sweden, a medieval traveller would naturally sail along the Volkhov River down to Old Ladoga, then into Lake Ladoga, and therefrom along the Neva River into the Gulf of Finland. This is a manifest communication route, and that is why its details are seldom referred to in the sagas. Still, *Aldeigjuborg* (Old Ladoga) is sometimes mentioned as a transitional station, a kind of gateway, on the water route from Scandinavia to Old Rus and back. The travellers are said to make a halt there and to change their ships.

Um várit snimma byrja þeir ferð sína Einarr þambarskelfir ok Kálfr Árnason ok höfðu mikla sveit manna ok it bezta mannval, er til var í Þrændalögum. Þeir fóru um várit austr um Kjöl til Jamtlands, þá til Helsingjalsands ok kómu fram í Svíþjóð, réðu þar til skipa, fóru um sumarit austr í Garáríki, kómu um haustit í Aldiigjuborg. Gerðu þeir þá sendimenn upp til Hólmgarðs á fund Jarizleifs konungs [...] Váru þeim grið seld til þeirar ferðar (Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla* 2: 414–415).

Early in the spring Einar Thambarskelfir and Kálfr Árnason set out with a large company of men picked from the best in all the Trondheim districts. They proceeded to Jamtaland in spring, across the Keel, from there to Helsingjaland, and arrived in Sweden. There they procured ships

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and in summer sailed east to Gartharíki, arriving in fall at Aldeigjuborg. From there they sent messengers to Hólmgarth and King Jarizleif [...] They were given safe-conduct for the journey (Hollander: 537, with my emendations).

Magnús Ólafsson byrjaði ferð sína eptir jólin austan af Hólmgarði ofan til Aldeigjuborgar. Taka þeir at búa skip sín, er ísa leysti um várit (Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla* 3: 3).

King Magnús Ólafsson started on his journey from the east after Yule, first from Hólmgarth to Aldeigjuborg. He and his men began to get their ships ready when ice broke up in spring (Hollander: 538, with my emendations).

Þeir Kalfr dvalþuz i Hólmgarðe þar til er leið iol. Foro þá ofan til Aldeigioborgar oc ofluðu ser þar skipa; foro þegar austan er isa leyste um varit (Orkneyinga saga: 57).

Kalf and his men stayed in Hólmgarth till the end of Yule. They went then down to Aldeigjuborg and got themselves there ships; they sailed from the east as soon as ice broke up in spring.

Enn at vári byrjaði hann (Haraldr Sigurðarson. – *T.J.*) ferð sína ór Hólmgarði ok fór um várit til Aldeigjuborgar, fekk sér þar skip ok sigldi austan um sumarit, snøri fyrst til Svíþjóðar ok lagði til Sigtúna (Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla* 3: 91).

In the spring following he journeyed from Hólmgarth to Aldeigjuborg. There he got himself ships and in summer sailed from the east, turning first to Sweden, and anchored in Sigtúna (Hollander: 538, with my emendations).

In her lecture at the Institute of material culture in April 1941, Elena Rydzevskaja, a Russian scholar studying sagas as a source for Russian history, put forward an assumption proceeding from the sagas that the vessels sailing in the Baltic and in the Volkhov River should have been of different types, and that, correspondingly, there should have been craftspeople in Ladoga occupied in ship repair and ship equipment. She also expressed hope that further archaeological excavations in Ladoga might bring to light some traces of local crafts, remains of workshops, etc. (Rydzevskaja 1945). And in fact, as early as in 1958, at the horizon E₁ which dates to 870s–890s, there was revealed a complex connected with iron and bronze working that was thought to have been a smithy. A craftsman working there produced, among other things, rivets, most likely, to repair northern ships coming to Ladoga (Davidan 1986). Moreover, fragments of ships are found in Ladoga excavations beginning with the earliest layers, as well as iron boat rivets of the type known from excavations in Scandinavia (Ibidem). Pirjo Uino is right in stressing (with reference to excavations of 1970s in the Varjazhskaja street in Ladoga – cf. Petrenko 1985) that ‘local boat-building and the repairing of cargo vessels are indicated by finds of boat and ship parts, which were secondarily used in the structures of the houses and the wooden streets’ (Uino 1988: 217). Ship-building, or ship-repairing, was one of the functions of a Scandinavian manufacturing complex of the mid-eighth century revealed in 1973–75 (Rjabinin 1980). Thus, we can see that predicting archaeological finds on the basis of saga data can sometimes bring its fruit.

II

On the other hand, archaeological material is able to verify those saga stories that seem unlikely at first sight. An example of this kind would be the description of Earl Eiríkr Hakonarson’s attack on *Aldeigjuborg*. Both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* refer in their narration

of this event to *Bandadrápa* composed by Eyólfur dáðaskáld, the skald of Earl Eiríkr, ca. 1010, i.e. two centuries earlier than the two compendia, and Snorri even quotes the following stanza:

Oddhríðar fór eyða
(óx hrið at þat) síðan
logfágandi (logðis)
land Valdamars brandi;
Aldeigju brauzt, ægir
(oss numnask skil) gumna;
sú varð hildr með hǫlðum
hǫrð, komt austr í Garða
(Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning. B: 191–2).

The author of *Fagrskinna* does not cite the corresponding strophe, but, like the skald, speaks about the destruction of *Aldeigjuborg* ('Hann braut Aldeigjuborg' – *Fagrskinna*: 165), while Snorri adds to it the burning down of the entire town ('braut og brenndi borgina alla' – (Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla* 1: 338–339). The latter supplement is thus likely to be Snorri's own invention, though in fact wooden towns were destroyed in the Early Middle Ages through fires. According to the relative chronology in the saga of Óláfr Tryggvason in *Heimskringla* this enterprise of Earl Eiríkr took place in approximately 997. Still, in 1941 Elena Rydzevskaja had to stress in her lecture the absence of any archaeological traces of fire in the earthwork fortress area in Ladoga that could have been a result of Earl Eiríkr's assault of 997 (Rydzevskaja 1945: 55). By the 1980s, however, archaeologists had accumulated certain data that could back up Snorri's narration. Excavations in the Varangian street (on the left bank of the River Ladozhka) revealed the fact that all constructions of the second main layer (horizon II), as well as many constructions of the third one (horizon III, both dated dendrochronologically within the tenth century), bear marked traces of fire destruction (Petrenko 1985: 91, 92, 115). The same data have been obtained in the earthwork fortress area in Ladoga, where a badly preserved 'level XI', after 980, displays traces of destruction in the fire that could have been the result of Earl Eiríkr's attack on Ladoga (Machinskij, Machinskaja, Kuz'min 1986; for the discussion of this new, based on dendrochronology, stratigraphic scale of Old Ladoga, which includes eleven layers from mid-eighth through the tenth centuries, cf. Kuz'min 2000).

III

Finally, 'archaeological analogy' turns out to be of use in toponymic studies, which might be exemplified by the examination of the origin of the Russian town-name *Ladoga* (*Ладозга*) and its connection with the Old Norse-Icelandic *Aldeigja*. The fact that *Aldeigja* is mentioned in skaldic poetry (in the *Bandadrápa* by Eyólfur dáðaskáld, as mentioned above) points at this form as the original one for this name. The compound *Aldeigjuborg* that occurs in the sagas (the earliest mention is in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrason, ca. 1190) was built with the help of the geographical term *borg* ('town, fortification') that served for the formation of town-names of Western Europe, and was not typical for the town-names of Old Rus. The reason for this lies in the fact that the Scandinavians moved along the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks' stage by stage. Thus, Ladoga, located at the gateway of this route, was, according to archaeological materials, opened up by the Scandinavians as early as in the middle of the eighth century, while at the remaining part of this route their archaeological traces go back to the second half of the ninth century only. Those Scandinavians who settled in Ladoga, and who are likely to have constituted there 'a relatively independent political organization' (Lebedev 1975: 41), created, on the local basis (to be discussed further), the name

Aldeigja, and then transformed it into *Aldeigjuborg*, in accordance with the well familiar to them toponymic pattern *X-borg*.

Scholars are unanimous in recognizing the genetic relation of the place-names *Aldeigja* and *Ladoga*. However, their origin and correlation have been interpreted in different ways. The town-name has been explained as having originated on the basis (i) of the name of Lake Ladoga (Finnish **aaldokas, aallokas* ‘wavy’ < *aalto* ‘wave’) (Munch 1874: 260; Thomsen 1879: 84; Vasmer 1955: 448), (ii) as well as of the name of the river *Ladoga* modern *Ladozhka* (Finnish **Alode-joki* < *alode, aloe* ‘low lands’, and *jok(k)i* ‘river’) (Mikkola 1906: 10–11; Brim 1931: 222–223; Rydzevskaja 1945: 64–65; Rospond 1972: 53; Popov 1981: 55–56, 90–91; Neroznak 1983: 101–102; Schramm 1982), (iii) and even of the name of the river Volkhov, or the Lower Volkhov (Finnish *Olhava*) (Schramm 1986: 369–370. Having changed his mind, Gottfried Schramm did not take into consideration an important toponymic regularity which results in the fact that if a town grows at the mouth of a small river falling into a bigger one it usually gets its name not from the main river, but from its tributary).

It may be considered practically proved by now that the first to arise was the river name, then that of the town, and lastly, the name of the lake. The prevalent opinion today is that the name comes from the Baltic-Finnish languages. Most likely, the original hydronym was the Finnish **Alode-jogi (joki)* ‘Low river’. According to A.I. Popov, the succession was as follows: 1) ‘the Baltic-Finnish, or the Saami, original’ 2) ‘the Russian transmission of this name (my italics. – T. J.), with further association with a trade center, namely the town of Ladoga’, 3) the transition of the name from the town to the lake (Popov 1981: 55–56, 90–91). The Old Norse-Icelandic place-name *Aldeigja (Aldeigjuborg)* is, as a rule, mentioned by scholars as a parallel to the Old Russian name *Ladoga* (Ibidem; Neroznak 1983). However, as J.J. Mikkola was quite right to show, the original combination of sounds could be only **al**, but not **la**, since only the latter could have arisen from the former, but not vice versa (Mikkola 1906). Correspondingly, we may assert that the likely development is from the Finnish river name **Alode-jogi* to the Scandinavian name *Aldeigja* (first for the river, and then for the settlement), and only then (with a metathesis **ald** > **lad**) to the Old Russian *Ladoga*.

The origin of the Old Russian name *Ladoga* not directly from the substrate **Alode-jogi*, but via the intermediate Scandinavian *Aldeigja*, has to be explained. Not so long ago, Gottfried Schramm could only put forward an assumption that, if the Slavic name had originated from the Scandinavian one, the Slavs had to have reached Ladoga some decades later than the Scandinavians (Schramm 1986: 369). Today we have plausible arguments in support of this supposition. As the latest analysis of archaeological materials from Ladoga has shown, the first settlers in Ladoga were in fact the Scandinavians in 750s, while the first Slavs reached this region not earlier than the 760s (Kuz'min 2000).

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The Sea-Kings of *Litla Skálda*

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It is of interest, though not of immediately obvious significance, that ‘the little treatise on poetic language known as *Den lille Skálda*’ (Faulkes 1998: xiv)¹ makes reference on seven separate occasions to *sækonungar* ‘sea-kings’ in connection with its summaries of kenning-types for ships (not surprisingly), dwarves and giants (more surprisingly), battle, shields, armour, striking weapons and the sea. In this, it contrasts with *Skáldskaparmál* in Snorri’s *Edda* which includes *sækonungar* among the determinants for sea- and ship-kennings, but not for the broader range of referents (Faulkes 1998: 36, 74). The difference is illustrated in the way in which the two texts summarise battle-kennings:

Orrostu má kalla namni nøkkurs háreystis skarksamligs, glaum eða hljóm, kenna við herklæði eða vápn eða hlífar, ok því meirr, at þá skal kenna við Óðin eða sækonunga, ef vill. [*LS*: 255]

Hvernig skal kenna orrostu? Svá at kalla veðr vápna eða hlífa eða Óðins eða valkyrju eða herkonunga eða gny eða glym. [Faulkes 1998: 66]

Its interest in sea-kings is not the only way in which it differs from Snorri’s work yet, with the notable exception of Guðrún Nordal (2001: passim), *LS* has received little scholarly attention. The purpose of this paper is to bring out its characteristics as an independent analysis of skaldic diction and possibly to speculate on its origins and function, and relationship to Snorri’s work.

Litla Skálda

This text, here called *Litla Skálda* following Nordal, is a short compendium of poetic language found in two manuscripts that also contain ‘independent redactions’ (Nordal 2001: 224–5) of *Skáldskaparmál* and related texts. The provenance and date of *LS* are uncertain, though the earlier manuscript AM 748 Ib 4to is dated to the first quarter of the 14th century and is therefore contemporaneous with the earliest manuscripts of Snorri’s *Edda* (Nordal 2001: 215). Nevertheless, *LS* is usually thought to postdate, indeed to derive from or be a supplement to, Snorri’s *Edda* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: lix; Faulkes 1998: xlvii; Nordal 2001: 288). However, Faulkes elsewhere (1998: xiii–xiv) admits the possibility that it might have been a source for Snorri, and there are a number of reasons to think that it derives from the kind of material used by Snorri, rather than from the *Edda* itself.

LS occupies only four-and-a-half pages in Finnur’s edition and closely parallels *Skáldskaparmál* in being an analytical account of poetic diction, though clearly it is much shorter than Snorri’s work. Although Finnur Jónsson (1931: lviii–ix) called it ‘usystematisk’ and ‘ikke meget logisk’, it seems to me to be organised into a reasonably coherent list of kenning-referents, with the occasional interruption of other types of material (in square brackets below):²

1. poetry, ships and drink
2. dwarves, giants and stones
3. [brief comment on kennings]

¹ This is abbreviated *LS* and cited from the edition by Finnur Jónsson 1931: 255–9.

² For a rather different analysis of the structure of *LS*, see Nordal 2001: 226–7.

4. battle, and defensive and offensive weapons
5. blood and the sea
6. snakes
7. gold
8. arms (i.e. the human limb)
9. (drinking) horns
10. ice
11. dogs and other destructive things
12. night, snow and winter
13. wolves and carrion birds
14. men
15. women
16. body parts (hair, skull, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, breast, teeth, tongue, heart, *hnetr*)
17. the world and the heavens
18. the sun [and the moon's companions Bil and Hjúki]
19. [*Grímnismál* sts 40–41]
20. kennings formed from parts of Ymir's body
21. [the story of the magic quern Grótti/Gróttá]

Coherence is provided partly by the structure of each section and partly by links between topics. For each referent, *LS* lists one or more base words and one or more appropriate determinants. What is either a base word or a determinant for one referent can become the next referent to be listed, and this gives the text some cohesion, for example in the opening section:

Skáldskapr er kallaðr **skip** dverga ok jötna ok Óðins ok fundr þeira ok drykkr þeira ok er rétt at kenna svá, ef vill, bæði skip ok drykk sem annars staðar í skáldskap ok eigna þeim, en **skip** má kalla dýra heitum ok fugla ok hesta ok kenna við sjó ok alt reiði skips, en kalla hesta-heitum einum, ef við sækonunga eru kendir. [*LS*: 255]

This opening statement allows for the incorporation of kennings into other kennings, but otherwise the text shows no interest in embedded or extended kennings.

While the approach and structure of *LS* are reminiscent of *Skáldskaparmál*, the most important difference is that the kennings are explained but not exemplified. The only poetic quotations in the whole text are two Eddic stanzas from *Grímnismál*, which lead into (and could be said to exemplify) the kennings in the following sentence. Also, while *Skáldskaparmál* lists both *heiti* and kennings, *LS* is almost exclusively about the latter. While it does throughout recognise the role of *heiti* in providing variation in kenning-types (as exemplified in the quotation above), there are only three examples of *X heitir Y* which are not followed by one or more determinants:

Hnetr heitir fylvingar [...] Sægr heitir sár, en simul stöng [...] [*LS*: 258–9]

and all of these are more than a little obscure.

Also unlike *Skáldskaparmál*, there is very little retelling of Norse myth and legend, yet such narratives are alluded to throughout.³ Thus, the section on kennings for poetry presupposes myths of the origin of poetry (as can be seen in the quotation above). Óðinn is mentioned, often parallel with the *sækonungar*, as a determinant in kennings for poetry (1), battle (4), shields (4), armour (4), striking weapons (4), carrion birds (13) and men (14). The section

³ The mythological and legendary references more extensive than is suggested by Nordal 2001: 227, 312.

on stones (2) mentions Hamðir and Sqrli, that on snakes (6) mentions the Miðgarðsormr, and that on gold (7) mentions King Fróði, Fenja and Menja, King Kraki [sic], Fyrisvellir, Grani, Sif, Mardöll, giants, and Draupnir. The section on women (15) says that *Regin heita goð heiðin, bǫnd ok rogn*, but does not go into any further detail, except to note that divine terms can be used as base words in woman-kennings. The section on the cosmos (17) mentions the four dwarves Norðri, Suðri, Austri and Vestri, and section (18) mentions the moon's companions Bil and Hjúki. The stories are assumed to be known and are therefore not related, with the exception of a brief account of the magic ring Draupnir:

Hringr hét Draupnir, hina níundu hverja nótt draup af honum hringr jafnhöfugr honum, því er gull sveiti hans. [LS: 256]

The other exception is that the brief reference to Fróði, Fenja and Menja in the section on gold-kennings is picked up again at the very end of the text, in a short narrative about the magic quern Grótti. I shall return to this passage later.

Guðrún Nordal has argued (2001: 225–9) that *LS*, together with a short account of the Fenrisúlfr and the redaction of *Skáldskaparmál* that follow it in its two manuscripts, represents a ‘new work on skaldic diction’. While this may be true of this particular conglomeration of texts in these two manuscripts, it still leaves open the possibility that the individual texts had separate origins. Indeed Nordal’s comment (2001: 225) that *LS* ‘was [...] written with deference to Snorri’s *Skáldskaparmál* [and] associated with it at [an] early stage’ implies this possibility of separate origins. The overall structure of *LS* is identical neither to the redaction of *Skáldskaparmál* which follows it in the manuscripts, nor to that in the Codex Regius (Clunies Ross 1987: 90; Faulkes 1998: xlix–l; Nordal 2001: 216–21, 224–7), and there are a number of ways in which its analysis of poetic language differs from that of *Skáldskaparmál* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: lix).

Nordal went on to analyse kennings for gold and for body-parts to demonstrate later developments in skaldic poetry. Thus, *LS* reveals not only the ‘growing interest in and demand for body-kennings in the late thirteenth century’, but indeed the ‘constantly developing ideas at work in skaldic verse-making in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, whereas Snorri [...] presents a conservative view of the practice of earlier poets’ (Nordal 2001: 239). However, she did not consider *LS* closely in her study of gold-kennings. Nordal’s book is primarily about the poetry of the 13th and 14th centuries and *LS* fits into this context by virtue of its preservation in two early 14th-century manuscripts. But a closer look at some of the kennings shows that there is also overlap with the poetical practice of the 12th century, a time of great innovation and transition in skaldic verse-making and analysis, yet also a century whose poets are not so extensively treated in Snorri’s ‘conservative view’. The following examples arise from my work on the 12th-century poetry of Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson, jarl of Orkney (a poet not cited by Snorri), and are illustrative rather than exhaustive.⁴

Feeders of ravens

Rognvaldr’s *lausavísa* 6 has a warrior-kennung *bræðir bengagls* ‘feeder of the wound-gosling [raven/eagle]’.⁵ Both parts of this belong to well-known types: the warrior as a feeder of one of the beasts of battle (Meissner 1921: 283–308) and a carrion bird as one of those beasts (Meissner 1921: 119–23). Both kenning-types are explained contiguously in *LS*:

⁴ All references to Rognvaldr’s *lausavísur* are from my forthcoming edition in Gade 2009, where further references and more detail on the interpretations can be found.

⁵ *Háttalykill* 37a (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: IB 505–6) has a warrior-kennung *bǫðvar hauka beiti-Nirðir* ‘feeding-Njörðrs of the hawks of battle’.

Haukar ok hrafnar eru hræfuglar ok svá ernir. Rétt er aðra fugla at nefna til ok eigna Óðni eða kenna við orrostu eða hræ eða blóð. Hvern karlmann má kalla feiti eða bræði hræfugla [...] [LS: 257]

Skáldskaparmál has a similar account of kennings for the raven and the eagle:

Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn orn eða hrafn [...] [Faulkes 1998: 90]

but the other part of the kenning is missing. The word *bræðir* does not occur anywhere in *Skáldskaparmál*, nor does it specifically mention any agent-nouns meaning something like ‘feeder’ in relation to warrior-kennings. Moreover, according to *Skáldskaparmál*, *bengagl* ‘wound-gosling’ would not be a possible kenning for ‘carrion bird’, since the base word must be a bird that is grammatically masculine, while *gagl* is neuter. *Skáldskaparmál* does cite a verse (Faulkes 1998: 66, from Þorbjörn hornklofi’s *Glymdrápa*) which uses the kenning *bengogl* ‘wound-goslings’, but there it is used in the sense of ‘arrows’.

At the same time, kennings for ‘carrion bird’ with *gagl* as the base-word are found in both *Háttalykill* 20a (*hjaldröggl* ‘battle-goslings’, Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: BI 496) and *Háttatal* 62 (*undgagl* ‘wound-gosling’, Faulkes 2007: 27). Thus Rognvaldr’s verse accords with the practice of *Háttatal* and the theory of *LS*, rather than with the theory of *Skáldskaparmál*. This pattern can be seen in other examples.

Women, gold and silver

Another of Rognvaldr’s *lausavísur* (17) has the woman-kenning *hlaðnipt alindriptar* ‘headband-Nipt [norn] of forearm-snow [gold]’, i.e. ‘the norn of the golden headband’. Paul Bibire (1988: 233) translated this kenning as ‘broider-sister of the ell-drift’ and glossed it ‘the ‘snow-drift of the forearm’ is silver’. Woman-kennings are normally constructed with a word or kenning for ‘gold’ rather than ‘silver’ as the determinant (Meissner 1921: 413–4), as can be seen in another of Rognvaldr’s *lausavísur* (4). *Alindript* ‘forearm-snow’ is taken by all previous commentators to mean ‘silver’, presumably because snow-drifts suggest silver rather than gold. Certainly *Skáldskaparmál* distinguishes clearly between red gold and white silver:

Gull er kallat í kenningum eldr handar eða liðs eða leggjar þvíat þat er rautt, en silfr snær eða svell eða héla þvíat þat er hvítt. [Faulkes 1998: 61]

However, *LS* allows for the possibility of constructing gold-kennings with a base-word meaning ‘snow’ or ‘ice’:

enda má gull kenna til snæs ok íss ok kenna þá til handar. [LS: 256]

There are similar kennings in both *Háttalykill* and *Háttatal*. *Háttalykill* 4b has *alnar dript* ‘snow-drift of the fore-arm’ (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: BI 489), which Meissner (1921: 224) translates as ‘Silber’, but since the stanza is about Gunnarr Gjúkason and the Niflung treasure, ‘gold’ is surely more appropriate. *Háttatal* 43 has *Grotta glaðdript* ‘joyful snow-drift of Grotti’ (Faulkes 2007: 21). Meissner (1921: 224) translates this too as ‘Silber’, but the construction with Grotti again makes a gold-kenning more probable (Faulkes 2007: 114).⁶

Rognvaldr’s woman-kenning must therefore be understood to include a kenning for gold, as was traditional, but the gold-kenning he uses is not traditional. Again, this non-traditional

⁶ The parallels in *LS* and Rognvaldr’s poetry provide a more likely explanation for this kenning than Nordal’s attempt (2001: 294) to link it with Freyja’s tears.

kenning is consistent with the practice of *Háttatal* and the theory of *LS*, rather than with the theory of *Skáldskaparmál*.

Whales of the heath

Rögnvaldr's joint composition with Hallr Þórarinnsson breiðmaga, *Háttalykill*, twice has a kenning for 'snake, serpent' in which the base-word is a sea-creature and the determinant some aspect of dry land (2b: *heiðar hvalr* 'whale of the heath'; 4a: *urðar lax* 'salmon of the stone-heap', Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: BI 488–9). This kenning-type is explained in *LS*, which cites both elements of *heiðar hvalr*:

Orma er rétt at kalla fiska heitum ok **hvala**, ef þeir eru kendir við nøkkut láð, við hraun, gras eða grjót, gljúfr eða **heiðar**. [*LS*: 256]

Meissner (1921: 112–13) lists a few examples of this type of kenning, all from later poetry. Thus, *heiðar hvalr* is found in *Merlínusspá*, while *fróns lax* and *heiðar lax* can be found in *Harmsól* and in a verse in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, respectively. However, there is no equivalent of this type of kenning in *Skáldskaparmál*, though its reverse, the kenning-type 'land of whales [sea]', is recorded there (Faulkes 1998: 63, 75).

Doors of battle

Háttalykill 3a (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: BI 488) uses both a simplex and a kenning in which a shield is likened to a door: (*gunnar*) *gátt* 'door (of battle)'. Both the kenning-type and the word *gátt* appear in *LS*:

Skjöld má kalla [...] vegg eða garð, bálk ok brík, hurð ok gátt, þili ok grind, hleða ok segl, tjöld ok refil, ok eigna jafnan orrostu eða Óðni eða sækonungum. [*LS*: 255]

There is no equivalent of this kenning-type in *Skáldskaparmál*, nor does the word *gátt* appear there in any other context. *Gátt* 'door-opening' does appear in *Háttatal* 89, though not in a shield-kenning, but in a context where the poet requires a series of words ending in *-átt* (Faulkes 2007: 36). Meissner (1921: 167) has two other examples of this type of shield-kenning, one from a *lausavísa* by Kormákr and one from the 'uægte vers' of *Njáls saga*.

Fróði's meal

The core of the Grotti myth is the magic hand-quern that grinds gold, so that its product can be called 'Fróði's meal'. Rögnvaldr uses the kenning *Fróða meldr* for 'gold' in his *lausavísa* 15. This kenning is explained in *LS*:

Gull er korn eða meldr Fróða konungs, en verk ambátta hans tveggja, Fenju ok Menju [...] [*LS*: 256]

While the basic kenning-type is widespread, the use of the word *melldr* is not. It does occur in *Háttatal* 43 (*Fenju meldr*, Faulkes 2007: 21). *Skáldskaparmál* has a different base-word, (*Fróða*) *mjöl*, in its prose explanation of the kenning (Faulkes 1998: 51).⁷ *Melldr* does occur twice in its quotation of *Grottasöngur* (Faulkes 1998: 53, 57), though here in the meaning 'action of grinding', rather than 'what is ground, flour'.⁸ It is used in this way in a gold-kenning

⁷ Also in the *Uppsala-Edda*, which has a much shorter version of the story (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 136n, see also 120n.), discussed below.

⁸ An addition in another ms. of *Skáldskaparmál* (i.e. B that also contains *LS*) lists as gold-kennings both *Fróða*

(*Fenju meldr*) in a stanza by Einarr Skúlason, quoted immediately after *Grottasöngur* in *Skáldskaparmál* (Faulkes 1998: 57).

Þógnvaldr's kenning only makes sense if *melldr* is given the same sense as *mjöl*, since part of the point of the story is that Fróði did not do any grinding. This meaning is also suggested by the parallelism with *korn* in the *LS* explanation. The kennings of *Háttatal* and Einarr Skúlason associate *melldr* with Fróði's slave Fenja, who did do the grinding, so that their meaning is ambiguous and in them *melldr* could be either 'act of grinding' or 'grain, corn, meal, flour', though the former seems more likely, since the story makes clear that the grinding is associated with the slaves while the end result, the gold, belongs to Fróði. This distinction is implicit in the addition to ms B (quoted in n. 9) and explicit in *LS*'s analysis of the kenning-type.

Litla Skálda and Snorri

These examples demonstrate, firstly, that *LS* has some interesting correspondences with 12th-century poetry, particularly that by Þógnvaldr, and, secondly, that many of these correspondences also have parallels in *Háttatal*. Snorri's poem is generally acknowledged to be indebted to *Háttalykill* (Faulkes 2007: xii–xxi), yet the examples listed above are not paralleled in *Skáldskaparmál*, indeed tend actively to contradict the theories of that text. It would seem that Snorri's own composition is grounded in the practice and the analysis of poetry from the generation before him, in the 12th century. But once he had composed *Háttatal*, generally thought to have been before the rest of the *Edda* (Faulkes 2007: vii), he drew back from the practice of his immediate predecessors and concentrated on establishing the 'conservative' canon that forms the basis of *Skáldskaparmál*. These are the *hofuðskáld* whose *forn heiti* he wishes to codify in order to teach them to young poets (Faulkes 1998: 5). Although he cites Einarr Skúlason 35 times and Markús Skeggjason seven times, there is a much narrower range of 12th-century poets cited than of those from earlier times (Nordal 2001: 77–8). The aim of *Skáldskaparmál* is thus clearly normative rather than inclusive – Snorri wishes to teach only certain kinds of poetic language, on the whole that of before the 12th century. Then, as Nordal has shown, the text of *Skáldskaparmál* becomes open for negotiation and rewriting in its subsequent manuscript reception.

The correspondences outlined above suggest that *LS* is analogous to the earlier stage in Snorri's understanding of poetical language, when he was less censorious of certain poetic developments of the 12th century. Thus *LS* is more likely to be derived from the kinds of materials he used, rather than having been written as a response to his analysis. This hypothesis is supported by a closer analysis of the text's approach to gold-kennings.

Gold

Guðrún Nordal has analysed the different manuscript versions of *Skáldskaparmál* to demonstrate how the full account of all possible stories associated with gold-kennings found in the Codex Regius is subjected to a gradual attrition and attenuation in subsequent manuscripts. She argues that this came about because of a decreasing interest in the Danish narratives which were the fashion in the 12th and early 13th centuries and an increasing interest in certain Norwegian material (Nordal 2001: 319–27). She does not, however, consider the evidence of *LS* in this particular context.

The gold-narratives in Codex Regius include five derived from pagan myth and five in which the gold 'originates [...] in the world of myth, but the stories are transferred into the domain of legends associated with Danish historical writing in the twelfth century' (Nordal

mjöl and *Fenju meldr ok Menju* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 120n.; Nordal 2001: 328).

2001: 321). It is particularly these latter that are subject to omission or revision in the other manuscripts, while the manuscripts that contain only *Skáldskaparmál* have a tendency to omit the gold-narratives entirely (Nordal 2001: 321–5). While *LS* does not have a full complement of allusions to gold-narratives, seven of Nordal’s ten categories are represented in some form (all quotations are from *LS*: 256):

1. The fire of Ægir: although Ægir is not mentioned by name, the idea of gold as the fire of a body of water is exemplified in:

Gull skal kenna [...] til sjóar ok til vatna allra, kalla eld ok sól ok tungl ok stjörnu ok kyndil ok kertil, dag ok leiptr, geisla ok blik ok alla birti [...]

2. The barr of Glásir: not recorded
3. The golden objects made by the dwarfs: haddr of Sif, Draupnir: haddr Sifjar [...] Draupnir
4. The tears of Freyja: tár Mardallar
5. The voice and words of giants: mál jötna
6. The compensation for the killing of Otr, and the myth of the Rhinegold, featuring Sigurðr Fáfnisbani: for the Rhinegold, see no. 1 above, for Sigurðr there is *byrðr Grana* and, indirectly, *Orma jörð er gull, rekkja þeira ok gata*.
7. Ragnarr loðbrók [...] : not recorded
8. The gold of Fróði:

Gull er korn eða melldr Fróða konungs, en verk ambátta hans tveggja, Fenju ok Menju...

9. The legend of Hrólfr kraki and Aðils: sáð Kraka konungs ok frá Fyrissvallar
10. The myth of Hølgj: not recorded

If Nordal is right in her analysis of the origins and fate of the interest in the different gold narratives, then this pattern suggests that *LS* reflects the earlier (12th and early 13th-century) stage when the full range of narratives were of interest.

Fróði’s meal again

An important aspect of Nordal’s argument is that certain ‘legends underpinning gold imagery’ are prominent in 12th-century culture and ‘survive in Snorri’s treatise, but are not referred to in later versions of the work and in *Litla Skálda*’ (2001: 311–12). The examples listed above show that in fact several (though not all) of these are referred to in *LS*. The fact that these are referred to only briefly or allusively is in keeping with the nature of this text and the section on gold-kennings is actually the longest in *LS*. The key legend is that of gold as Fróði’s meal which is not only alluded to in the section on gold-kennings, but is briefly narrated at the end of the text (*LS*: 259):

Kvern heitir Grótti, er átti Fróði konungr; hon mól hvetvetna þat er hann vildi, gull ok frið. Fenja ok Menja hétu ambáttir þær, er mólu. Þá tók Mýsingr sækonungr Gróttu [sic] ok lét mála hvítasalt á skip sín, þar til er þau sukku á Pétlandsfirði. Þar er svelgr síðan, er sær fellr í auga Gróttu. Þá gnýr sær, er hon gnýr, ok þá varð sjórinn saltr.

At this point the text seems more interested in the aetiological aspects of this narrative, its explanation of the why the sea is salt, rather than its connection with legends of gold, and this may reflect a particularly Orcadian take on the story (Jesch forthcoming). But what is more

important in this context is that *LS* is hereby shown to be closer to the versions of *Skáldskaparmál* that are in manuscripts of the whole of *Snorra Edda* and particularly Codex Regius, and quite unlike the versions (A and B) that are found in the same manuscripts as *LS* and which omit almost all of the material on gold (Nordal 2001: 322–6).

Here the case of Codex Uppsaliensis, which we are celebrating at this conference, is of interest. Like *LS*, it has a very short version of the narrative, with no quotation of the poem *Grottasöngur*, yet its narrative is quite different (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 136n., corrected with reference to Grape *et al.* 1977: 87):

her segir hvi gvll er kallat froþa miol Gvll er kallat miol froþa þviat froþi konungr keypti ambattirnar fenio ok menio. ok þa fanz kvernsteinn einn sva mikill. i danmorkv at engi feck dregit. En sv nattura fylgþi at allt miol þat er vndir var malit varþ at gvllit. Ambattirnar fengv dregit steininn. konvngur let þær mala gvll vm hrið. Þa gaf hann þeim eigi meira svefn en kveþa matti lioð eitt. Siþan molo þær her a hendr hanvm. Sa var havfþingi fyrir er mysingi het spekingr mikill.

Faulkes (1998: xlii) calls this a ‘summary’ of ch. 43 of *Skáldskaparmál*, but it lacks the linked story of why the sea is salt that both *LS* and other versions of *Skáldskaparmál* have. This is presumably to do with the fact that Codex Uppsaliensis rearranges the material to do with gold very substantially and that subject is its focus at this point. *LS*, on the other hand, seems to be more interested in stories to do with the sea, as its Grotti narrative follows on from topics related to the natural world and concludes with *Mýsingr* and why the sea is salt. Which brings us back to sea-kings.

Sea-kings

I highlighted above the particular interest in sea-kings shown in *LS*, where they appear as possible determinants for a wide range of kenning-types. *Skáldskaparmál* has a much narrower range of kennings which sea-kings can determine, as noted above, but they are present elsewhere in the text, as *Mýsingr* is mentioned in the Grotti-narrative, and the first of the *pulur* begins with a list of 75 sea-kings, including *Mýsingr* (Faulkes 1998: 52, 109–10). This list of sea-kings appears in all of the manuscripts that have *pulur*, and heads the lists in all except B, where the sea-kings are relegated to second place below kings (Clunies Ross 1987: 84).

Snorri himself explains what a sea-king is, in ch. 30 of *Ynglinga saga* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1979: I 60):

Í þann tíma herjuðu konungar mjök í Svíaveldi, bæði Danir ok Norðmenn. Váru margir sækonungar, þeir er réðu liði miklu ok áttu engi lönð. Þótti sá einn með fullu mega heita sækonungr, er hann svaf aldri undir sótkum ási ok drakk aldri at arinshorni.

This comment comes immediately after a reference to the death of *Hrólfr kraki*, thus associating sea-kings with a particular historical period. In the context of the study of poetry, these sea-kings can therefore also be associated with the poetry of an earlier period, the ‘conservative’ poetry that Snorri was keen to codify in *Skáldskaparmál*.

Elena Gurevich (1992: 51) has identified the *pulur* as ‘the first learned writing dealing with the way the poetic language was constructed’ and has demonstrated in detail the process by which ‘sequences of former *nomina propria*, place-names and mythological names [were] transferred from a number of unique beings and objects to those classes they belong to and thus turned into common nouns’ (1992: 35). Gurevich stresses the dynamic process of polysemy by which the *pula* is ‘not so much a catalogue of real skaldic lexical stock as a gen-

erator of poetic synonyms' (1992: 36) and she sees the *pula* as a learned activity which helped poets to understand and compose poetry and which could thus undermine the mythological origins of the names. Clearly, it is unlikely that every single name of a sea-king had a story or legend behind it, as Sophus Bugge once thought (1875: 210). Yet the case of Mýsingr shows that some certainly did.

It is fruitful to see the sea-kings of *LS* in the context of the sea-kings of the *pulur*. The two go hand in hand: the kenning-templates of *LS* indicate that sea-kings are required in a variety of kennings, while the *pulur* generate the actual names of sea-kings that can fill the slots. I would like to suggest that these two forms, the list of kenning-types (i.e. *LS*), and the *heiti* with which they can be filled (i.e. *pulur*), both represent early forms of analysis of skaldic poetry, and therefore the kind of material which formed the basis of *Skáldskaparmál*. But *LS* is not just a list of kenning-types: it demonstrates, very briefly, some of the ways in which this analysis could be expanded, by the quotation of examples, by commenting on the kenning-formation process, and by expanding some of the mythological names from the *pulur* with stories about them, where these were known, as in the case of Mýsingr. This kind of expansion is exactly what Snorri did at much greater length in *Skáldskaparmál*, and the dynamic process continued in the different manuscript versions of this text, as demonstrated by Nordal.

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Royal Women and the *Friðgerðarsaga* Episode

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Introduction

The *Friðgerðarsaga* in Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla* has been described by Lars Lönnroth as a narrative which 'centers upon some of the most fundamental problems of medieval government and kingship' (Lönnroth 1976:17). This episode, fundamental to Snorri's subtle portrayal of power politics, relates a dispute between the Swedish and Norwegian kings, Óláfr sænski Eiríksson and Óláfr digri Haraldsson, who are equally ambitious but unlike in character.¹ It involves several key participants: the two kings, the Icelander Hjalti Skeggjason, operating as an international diplomat, the Swedish *jarl* Rognvaldr, and three aristocratic women: Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir (the sister of Óláfr Tryggvason), Ingigerðr Óláfsdóttir and her half-sister Ástriðr Óláfsdóttir. Previous scholarship has illuminated the subtexts of *Friðgerðarsaga* in a political or ideological context; however, before the final culmination of the episode, the dramatic confrontation between Þorgnýr the *loqmaðr* and King Óláfr sænski at the Uppsala assembly, there is a long prelude with a relatively large involvement of women which merits further attention. This part of the story is characterised by delicate and covert efforts to settle the dispute, mainly conducted by Hjalti and Ingigerðr, but with significant contributions from Rognvaldr *jarl* and especially his wife Ingibjörg, who holds a personal grudge against Óláfr sænski. The aftermath of the dispute is dramatic as well; in some narrative traditions (i.e. versions of the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* by Snorri as well as the *Legendary Saga*), Ástriðr surreptitiously travels to Norway, meets King Óláfr and boldly offers herself to him in marriage.

In this paper, I shall not seek to examine how the narratives ethically value the actions of active female characters, nor is my goal to examine the historical veracity of the events; rather, I will explore how the texts convey and interpret the relationship between gender and power in this highest stratum of society. I will examine the considerable impact these three aristocratic women have on politics, what role they play and what tools are available for them to wield power. Sverre Bagge has argued that politics in *Heimskringla* are less governed by concepts of ideological struggle, e.g. the source and scope of the king's power or the role of the people in government, but more through the rational assessment of interests, e.g. the kingdom's or the king's own, and tracing how agents strive to protect and advance these interests (Bagge 1991: 108–9). This pragmatic and rational approach to gaining political support, focusing on power, not ethics, principles or doctrine, can be characterised as *Realpolitik*. This equally applies to royal women's involvement in politics; their success in wielding power in the *Friðgerðarsaga* is determined less by the woman's legitimate right to act because of aristocratic rank than the question of parallel or conflicting interests.

Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir

The *Friðgerðarsaga* episode in *Heimskringla* shows how delicate international negotiations between royal courts could be. The kings' quarrel is initiated by a dispute about which of the two had the right to claim taxes in a region on the border of the two kingdoms that was previously held by Sweden. The disagreement quickly escalates into full-blown antipathy towards Óláfr digri on Óláfr sænski's part. The dispute affects the Swedes in Vestra-Gautland firstly on a financial level because it makes trade with Norway difficult; secondly, it is a matter of

¹ For clarity, they shall be referred to below as Óláfr sænski and Óláfr digri.

international power politics. Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir, the wife of Rognvaldr Úlfsson, the *jarl* of Vestra-Gautland, is adamant that her husband should help Óláfr digri. Although it is a risk to oppose his own king, it would weaken Rognvaldr's position even more if he refused Óláfr digri's request for support as he would then be considered cowardly. Furthermore, Ingibjörg has a personal motive in working towards the downfall of Óláfr sænski, and she uses her influence to persuade her husband to form an alliance with Óláfr digri:

[Ingibjörg] gekk at með öllu kappi at veita Óláfi konungi. Hon var aftakamaðr mikill um þetta mál. Helt þar til hvárt tveggja, at frændsemi var mikil með þeim Óláfi konungi ok henni, ok þat annat, at henni mátti eigi fyrnask við Sviakonung þat, er hann hafði verit at falli Óláfs Tryggvasonar, bróður hennar, ok þóttisk fyrir þá sök eiga tiltölu at ráða fyrir Nóregi. Varð jarl af fortöllum hennar mjök snúinn til vináttu Óláfs konungs. (*Heimskringla II* 85)

Despite being married to a Swedish magnate, Ingibjörg has many reasons for supporting Óláfr digri instead of her husband's king: the narrator emphasises a desire to uphold her honour (by seeking revenge for her brother and preventing her husband from being accused of cowardice), family connections and finally an emotional investment in seeing her brother's enemy fare badly. These reasons, emotional rather than strategic, seem to be the cause of her determination, expressed in the same urgent words as the servant-woman's challenge to Hrafnkell in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*: 'Lætr griðkonan ganga af kappi' (*Hrafnkels saga* 127).

When the envoys of Óláfr digri, Björn stallari and Hjalti Skeggjason, arrive at Rognvaldr's court and address the dispute, Ingibjörg urges her husband to support Óláfr digri, regardless of the risks involved:

Skjótt mun ek birta minn hug, at ek vil, jarl, at þér leggið á allan hug at stoða orðsending Óláfs konungs, svá at þetta ørendi komisk fram við Sviakonung, hverngan veg sem hann vill svara. Þótt þar liggi við reiði Sviakonungs eða öll eign vár eða ríki, þá vil ek miklu heldr til þess hætta en hitt spyrisk, at þú leggisk undir höfuð orðsending Óláfs konungs fyrir hræzlu sakir fyrir Sviakonungi. Hefir þú til þess burði ok frændastyrk ok alla atferð at vera svá frjáls hér í Sviaveldi að mæla mál þitt, þat er vel samir ok öllum mun þykkja áheyriligt, hvárt sem á heyra margir eða fáir, ríkir eða óríkir, ok þótt konungr sjálfir heyri á. (*Hkr II* 90)

Ingibjörg points out the resources which Rognvaldr has at his disposal: the support of their kin and his official role as *jarl*, providing him with an arena in which to speak legitimately and persuade the Swedes to support him, as well as the political weight of a magnate. Although this monologue does not appear to be a *hvot* or incitement speech, involving accusations of effeminacy in the traditional sense, the husband's reply – 'Ekki er þat blint, hvers þú eggjar' – implies that there is just such a subtext in her words (*Hkr II* 90). Rognvaldr accedes to Ingibjörg's request but insists on being in control of the plan; he wants to deliberate and evolve a plan instead of taking rash measures. From the beginning, although he makes it look as if his wife is compelling him to it, the *jarl* does not oppose the plot against Óláfr sænski; he is likely to gain from the king's loss. Ingibjörg's role in this matter might function as a literary device, representing the voice of public (or narratorial) opinion, prompting Rognvaldr to act as well as give his reasons for doing so, but her grudge reminds the audience about Óláfr sænski's past dealings with the Norwegian people.

It is clear from Óláfr sænski's speech at the Swedish assembly that he regards Ingibjörg to bear considerable responsibility for what he claims is Rognvaldr's treasonous support of Óláfr digri: '[Óláfr sænski] segir, at allt slíkt hlaut hann af áeggjan Ingibjargar, konu sinnar' (*Hkr II* 115). Ingibjörg is thus twice explicitly said to have incited (*eggjað*) her husband to act; this suggests that her appeal was considered a formal speech act since it had become public knowledge. Although Rognvaldr decided on the details of the plan, his wife is depicted as

having achieved her own separate agenda in the matter; their interests ultimately coincide. It is not clear whether, by her participation in the strategising, the narrator regards Ingibjörg as being within her rights, either as an aristocratic woman, i.e. being of royal descent and the wife of a *jarl*, or simply as a woman, whose gender role it is to whet male kin to act. Considering that the narrator makes a substantial effort to give logical reasons and motivations for Ingibjörg's decision to encourage her husband to undermine his king, I suggest that, whether legitimate or not, her actions are viewed as justifiable; the question of legitimacy relies partly on the appropriateness of whetting as a culturally-determined speech act.

Having ensured her husband's support, Ingibjörg consequently helps Hjalti to gain an audience at the Swedish court by sending him with her token (*jarteikn*) as well as a bag of silver which he is to give to the king as tax in order to win him over. By this, she shows a great deal of shrewdness, identifying the financial interests that lie at the centre of the dispute and finding a way to capitalise on them to her party's advantage. It is not clear whether the silver comes out of her own funds or her husband's, but whichever the case, she seems to have the right to distribute it. Ingibjörg also works through other unofficial channels, sending word to the Swedish princess, Ingigerðr, asking her to help Hjalti.² This suggests that she has already recognised the possibility of a marriage between Ingigerðr and Óláfr digri and thus she succeeds in involving the princess as well as helping Hjalti get an ally at the Swedish court.

Ingibjörg remains a presence throughout the dispute and a pivotal member of the cast of participants although she does not play a leading role after her initial involvement. She uses a number of strategies in order to further her agenda: she persuades her husband to act by putting forward rational arguments as well as prompting him in what is most likely a formal incitement speech, she provides economic resources to enable Hjalti to gain the king's favour and she enlists Ingigerðr as an ally.

Ingigerðr Óláfsdóttir

Following Ingibjörg's initiative, princess Ingigerðr and Hjalti privately discuss the possibility of reconciling her father and Óláfr digri on numerous occasions. Although she is not optimistic that the king will be well-disposed towards the idea, she still makes an honest effort to appeal to his better judgement, suggesting that he abandon his aim to conquer barren Norway, reconcile with Óláfr digri and focus on regaining lands previously held in Russia. Hjalti had previously tried to persuade the king of the same, but neither of them gains anything by their attempts except to provoke Óláfr sænski's anger. However, Hjalti does not let this discourage him; he remains at the Swedish court and continues his talks with the princess.

Hjalti's next step is to test the waters carefully to see whether Ingigerðr is open to marriage with Óláfr; the princess blushes a little, considers the matter for a while and then replies 'óbrátt ok stilliliga', slowly and calmly, and with what is most likely false modesty:

Ekki hefi ek hugfest svör fyrir mér um þat, því at ek ætla, at ek myna eigi þurfa til at taka þeira svara, en ef Óláfr er svá at sér gorr um alla hluti sem þú segir frá honum, þá mynda ek eigi kunna æskja minn mann á annan veg, ef eigi er þat, at þér mynið heldr hóli gilt hafa í marga staði. (*Hkr II* 99–100)

It must have occurred to Ingigerðr at some point before this that through her advocacy she could acquire a king as a husband; otherwise she would hardly have helped Hjalti or made several attempts at persuading her father. After this suggestion of marriage, Björn stallari and

² In the *Legendary Saga*, Óláfr sænski consults Ingigerðr and asks her opinion on Hjalti's character and when they have agreed that he is 'vitr maðr oc væl um sec', Óláfr decides to allow Hjalti to address the princess (*Óláfs saga hins helga: die "Legendarische Saga" 96*).

Rognvaldr become involved in the matter once again; Ingigerðr states that her father is the only one who can give her away in marriage, but otherwise, Rognvaldr is the relative she looks to for trustworthy advice. She thus hints to Óláfr digri's envoys that she is open to circumventing her father's authority if Rognvaldr were to give her his support. Ingigerðr's motivation is clearly personal; her father does not seem to be making much of an effort to find her a noble suitor and she probably does not want to run the risk of marrying beneath her rank. As Jenny Jochens has pointed out, princesses were often married to lower-born men, as with Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir, a princess who marries a *jarl* (Jochens 1986:169–70). Thus, Ingigerðr is neither governed by a sense of duty nor obedience to her father; her loyalty is only to herself and her ambition of making a suitably royal match.

After it has been established that Ingigerðr is willing to use herself as a peace-offering in the proposed reconciliation between the two Scandinavian royal families, against the will of her father, Óláfr digri's allies proceed to solve the matter at the Swedish assembly, using the wise Þorgnýr *logmaðr*, the relative and foster-father of Rognvaldr, as their mouthpiece. Þorgnýr demands that the king follow the will of the Swedes and make peace with Óláfr digri under the threat of a revolt, and the dispute is settled with Óláfr sænski grudgingly submitting to these demands. However, nothing comes of the marriage between Ingigerðr and Óláfr digri because of her father's refusal to bow to the Swedish assembly's coercion; instead, he calls everything off and marries her to King Jarisleifr in Russia, a satisfactory outcome for Ingigerðr in terms of a suitable match (although perhaps not as good as marrying a future saint). Óláfr digri ultimately marries her illegitimate half-sister Ástriðr; the narrator of *Heimskringla* presents this as a great victory for the king as it is Rognvaldr who betroths Ástriðr to Óláfr digri without the consent of her father, much to his humiliation and anger.

In Snorri's carefully drawn portrayal of the *Friðgerðarsaga*, Ingigerðr is one of the main players. However, it complicates matters that her efforts to settle the dispute by becoming a 'peace-weaver' are not productive in the end; the princess does not have the efficacy to realise her plans. She makes a failed attempt to persuade her father to settle with Óláfr digri, and then tries with others to arrange to marry him with or without the king's consent, an agreement which the king accepts unwillingly under duress, and has no intention of fulfilling. However, Ingigerðr does wield some degree of power, although clearly not legitimately, when, after her betrothal, she succeeds in making her father promise to let her have one man of her choice to go with her to Russia. After he has agreed, she announces that she wishes this person to be Rognvaldr *jarl*, enabling him to escape from Sweden unscathed despite his involvement in the clandestine plot to marry Ástriðr to Óláfr digri, an act which Óláfr sænski considers treason. The king replies: 'Annan veg hefí ek hugat at launa Rognvaldi jarli dróttinsvikin, þau er hann fór til Nóregs með dóttur mína ok seldi hana þar til frillu þeim inum digra manni ok þeim, er hann vissi vörn óvin mestan' (*Hkr II* 147) but nevertheless, he keeps his promise to his daughter. Thus, although unsuccessful in her efforts to marry Óláfr digri, Ingigerðr's manoeuvring ultimately manages to secure her own interest, driving the king to find her a suitable husband and saves the skin of her ally.

With the exception of *Heimskringla*, all the historical sources which relate the events of the *Friðgerðarsaga* (*Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*, the *Legendary Saga*) give the father's irrational anger as an explanation for the end of Ingigerðr and Óláfr digri's royal engagement. In the *Legendary Saga*, Óláfr sænski is initially portrayed as a sensible man and when Hjalti initially suggests a peace-settlement with the union, the king decides that this is a good solution, consults the princess, who also approves, and betrothes her to Óláfr digri. His only provision is that Óláfr come to meet him, and show humility and willingness to reconcile. However, the abrupt end of their engagement occurs after a hunting trip, when Ingigerðr compares her father unfavourably to Óláfr digri after he had boasted of his hunting prowess. The king angrily replies that as a punishment, she will never have Óláfr, which, as Hans Schottmann points out, makes

much less sense psychologically than the *Heimskringla* version (Schottmann 1994:543). He argues that Snorri adds characters not present in any of his sources (i.e. Rognvaldr, Ingibjörg and Þórgnýr) and develops the Þórgnýr-episode in order to rationalise the king's anger and prepare the audience for his decision to break off the engagement. Otto von Friesen and most recently Theodore Andersson have argued that Snorri made use of oral sources for the Þórgnýr-episode, which is not unlikely in terms of the additional rudimentary facts, but as Schottmann compellingly argues, Snorri's sophisticated and carefully-constructed narrative is more convincing in literary terms than that of the other versions.³

Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir

Nothing comes of Óláfr digri's marriage to Ingigerðr but the king still manages to form a union, albeit less prestigious, with a member of the Swedish royal family, the illegitimate Ástríðr. The *Legendary Saga* includes an episode after Ingigerðr has been packed off to Russia, in which Ástríðr travels to Norway with her foster-father Egill, presumably without permission from her father, to meet Óláfr digri. The king has locked himself up in a loft, inconsolable at the loss of Ingigerðr. Ástríðr makes several attempts at persuading Óláfr to cheer up and resume his duties as king, telling him that this is the express wish of her sister Ingigerðr: '[hon] mællte, hærri, at þer skillduð higgia af harme oc glæðia vini yðra oc taka upp goða siðvæniu, sem yðr byriar. Gersc mikil briostaðr, sem kononge somer oc hans tign hœfver' (*“Legendarische Saga”* 102). On her second visit, Ástríðr gives Óláfr a shirt embroidered with gold, claiming that it is sent by Ingigerðr along with her offers of eternal friendship. On the third occasion, she proposes marriage:

En sva er mer boðet af Ingigjærði, at yðr skilldim ver i hværn stað virða um fram alla menn. En firir þa soc, at þu ert sva harmfængenn, þa er æ þess mæiri þorf, yðr at glæðia. Þo varð æigi su hamingia konongs vars, at sa radahagr skilldi fram koma, sem ætlaðr var, þa mætte enn nokcora bot a þui vinna, firir þui at æigi man æinmællt um vera, hvar ovirðing er mæiri, su er Olafir konongr gerðe yðr i brigðmælonom eða þesse, at hann skal ægi raða eða forsio firir hava firir vara hond. En hælldr en æigi faer þu glæði þina, þa man ec þat til læggia með umræðom Ingigjærðar, at fastna mik siolf yðr utan hans vilia ne rada. Oc er bætra, at biðia goðz raðs oc goðz konongs, en æiga ovirðilegan mann, þo at konongs namn bere. En þo at þat bere a, at hon se mestr skarungr, þa man þat vitra manna orð, at su er gofgazt, er þionar. (*LS* 102–4)

King Óláfr is here depicted as neglecting his duties because of his heartbreak at the loss of Ingigerðr.⁴ Ástríðr tries to get him to follow her advice by reminding him of the proper behaviour of a king and appealing to his love for her sister; the gold-embroidered shirt, ostensibly a gift from Ingigerðr, appears to be a courtly love trope.⁵ Ástríðr then makes her final speech, again claiming to be sent by Ingigerðr and although she acknowledges his sorrow, she reminds the king that by marrying her without her father's consent, Óláfr can avenge the humiliation of having lost out on her sister. Ástríðr declares that she will give her own hand in marriage, explaining that it is better to propose to a good husband and king than marry an unworthy one, even if he is royal. Finally, Ástríðr highlights her virtues of obedience, which

³ For discussion on whether Snorri invents the Þórgnýr-episode or makes use of oral sources, see Oscar Albert Johnsen (1916), Otto von Friesen (1962:205–270), Hans Schottmann (1994:539–53), and Theodore M. Andersson (2008:5–38).

⁴ For discussion on Óláfr's lovesickness, see Anne Heinrichs (1999:36–43).

⁵ The *LS* is dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century and is preserved in a Norwegian manuscript from the first half of the same century (Sverrir Tómasson 2006:451–2); Brother Robert is said to have translated Thomas' *Tristan* in 1226. It is thus possible that the author (or editor/scribe) of the *LS* was familiar with romance literature.

seem to make her an even more attractive match.⁶ After this speech, King Óláfr brightens up, marries Ástriðr and resumes his royal duties.

Two themes are noteworthy in Ástriðr's discourse: firstly, the repeated evocation of Ingigerðr and her blessing, which perhaps reveals her aim to associate the two sisters in a positive way in the king's mind, emotionally, as an object of his love, and politically, due to the fact that both sisters have sided with their father's opponents. Secondly, Ástriðr's proposal to Óláfr seems highly subversive; as Jochens has argued, the idea that women should even give their consent in marriage did not exist until the late twelfth or thirteenth century in Scandinavia but is applied anachronistically by authors to earlier periods (Jochens 1986:169–70). Perhaps Ástriðr's bold proposal to Óláfr is influenced by romance: Rosemary Power suggests that the unconventional idea of a woman initiating union, albeit sexual, with a man, is imported into Old Norse literature from Marie de France's *Le Lai de Lanval*, and the gift of the gold-embroidered shirt further supports this suggestion (Power 1985:160).

This extraordinary account does not appear in *Heimskringla*, where it is Rognvaldr who betrothes the princess to Óláfr digri after she has given her consent, but the episode is interpolated in some of the manuscripts of the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr*, an earlier work of Snorri. One of them is Bergsbók (Perg. fol. nr. 1, Royal Library, Stockholm), a large and impressive manuscript dated to ca. 1400, containing historical prose texts such as the sagas of the kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, as well as religious poetry and poems celebrating kings (Lindblad 1963:12). In the *Separate Saga*, there are many interpolations, especially concerning miracles and marvels, some of which do not appear in any other sources and have been attributed to the manuscript's editor (Lindblad 8). This manuscript adds details which give the scene a greater interest, e.g. noting that Ástriðr covers her face with a veil when she visited the king for the first and second time, and it depicts her as even bolder than in the *Legendary Saga*. Ástriðr confesses in this account that she travelled to Norway against the advice of everyone else, and acknowledges her persistence in her attempts to win the king over. On the third visit, she uncovers her face and proceeds with her final address, pointing out to the king that although she is not as well-born as Ingigerðr, he will be no worse off without her. Her final argument manages to arouse the king's interest:

enn þott adr se gior mikil mvnr þa mvn sv brat tignvzt sem þer gengr nęrst ok drotning er yfer ollv landi med þer. veit ek ath sva mvn þickia sem eingi kona mvni sva hafa til mannz melt sem ek ok villda ek ok sva því at ek ętla ath ek eigia þeim mvn til ędra mannz at męla sem ek legg meiri stvnd a enn adrar þicki mer ok meiri vegr at męla diarflęga til þess mannz er mer er ęfinleg giefa at en bida hins or stad er meir dregr til iafnnadar (*Den store saga om Olav den helige*, 769–70).

Ástriðr here declares that it is likely that no woman has ever spoken thus to a man; furthermore, although her rank does not equal his, this will be insignificant after their marriage, since the woman nearest to the king in status, i.e. his queen, is the noblest of all. She adds that she knows this is unusually ambitious but she would rather boldly address the man who will be her eternal good fortune than wait for a proposal from someone more equal in status.

The third version of this episode appears in AM 61 fol., dated to ca.1400, containing the sagas of kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr digri, and in Tómasskinna (GKS 1008 fol.), dated to the same period, containing *Thómas saga*, the story of the life of St Thomas à Becket, as well as the *Separate saga of St Óláfr* (Loth 1964:7). Tómasskinna thus has a distinct interest in saints. In this version, Ástriðr is less feisty and more humble than in Bergsbók; nevertheless she appears as strikingly forceful in her last, urgent request to the king to agree to their

⁶ Anne Heinrichs argues that obedience is a Christian virtue, and furthermore, that Ástriðr represents Christian values, while Ingigerðr stands for secular and political values (Heinrichs 1985:458).

union in order to prevent warfare and the deaths of many Christian men. The narrator juxtaposes Ástriðr's *spakligt* (wise) counsel and patient efforts to negotiate an agreement with what she describes as the king's *þra lyndi* (stubbornness) in his refusal to accept a less advantageous match than originally suggested (*Den store saga* 770–1).

These versions of Ástriðr's excursion to Norway agree with her image elsewhere in medieval sources as an assertive, intelligent, independent and eloquent woman, suggested by her subversive behaviour towards her husband in *Óttars þáttr svarta* (especially in the Bergsbók version) where she rewards the skald Óttar for the *mansöngur* he composed for her, and in chapter 1 of *Magnúss saga ins góða* in *Heimskringla*, where she persuades the Swedish assembly to support her stepson Magnús to the Norwegian throne. Snorri's reasons for omitting the episode in favour of involving Rognvaldr *jarl* are unclear but perhaps he either found the idea of Ástriðr proposing to the king outrageous and unlikely, or he decided to focus on the struggle between Óláfr digri, Rognvaldr and Óláfr sænski. If, as Bagge has suggested, the *Heimskringla* version of the episode is favourable towards Óláfr digri and aims at presenting his marriage to Ástriðr as a victory over Óláfr sænski, concealing the humiliation he suffers when the engagement to Ingigerðr is broken off, then reducing Ástriðr's role and increasing Óláfr digri's and Rognvaldr's seems to be a part of that strategy (Bagge 102–3).

Conclusion

In the *Friðgerðarsaga*'s many versions, royal and noble women are depicted as employing various tools, verbal and financial, to wield power according to their own agendas; individual authors arrange, develop and perhaps invent the details of this episode according to their own narrative aims. Royal women are in the unusual position of having access to material resources and, as wives and daughters, to members of the ruling class. Whether kings or noblemen, they are, in their struggle for power, primarily concerned with furthering their own interests; so too are the women, and these do not always match. By identifying these competing interests and negotiating the subtle currents of power, women are able to cooperate with the rulers, directly or through representatives, or to undermine them by surreptitiously working with the opposing party. The difference between the sisters' success in achieving their goal, marriage to Óláfr digri, depends on how strongly they are under their father's influence; Ástriðr's freedom of movement in some versions enables her to remove herself from his authority while Ingigerðr is unable to circumvent his power over her. Whether they fail or succeed in carrying out their own agendas, royal women in every version of the *Friðgerðarsaga* are active participants in international and domestic politics.

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Den höviske Bósi. *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* i genrernas gränsland

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Herrauðs ok Bósa saga är inte den första saga vi skulle tänka på som hövisk. Den räknas traditionellt, alltsedan C.C. Rafn inkluderade den i sin samling från 1829–30, till de så kallade *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda*. Primärt torde den kunna karakteriseras som en *quest*, alltså en typ av narrativ som är vanlig både i översatta *riddarasögur*, i *fornaldarsögur* och i de inhemska *riddarasögur* från Island. En traditionell definition av en fornaldarsaga är att den ska utspela sig i ett forntida Skandinavien och att innehållet ska framstå som fantastiskt med hjältar, hemska odjur och gärna en kvinna som målet för hjältens handling. I innehållet finns också mycket av detta i *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga*. Men det finns också mycket som ligger markant utanför definitionen och som snarare knyter verket både till de översatta *riddarasögur* och de inhemska *riddarasögur*. *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* kommer därmed i all sin atypiskhet att framstå som en god representant för utvecklingen av texter med ett fantastiskt innehåll, men också för bruket av texterna under den långa perioden från 1200-talets introduktion av europeiska verk till det sena 1400-talets tradering och kreativitet i isländska samlingshandskrifter, där både inhemska traditioner och europeiska trender gör sig gällande. Även om vi i dag rent generellt är tveksamma till en indelning i tre typer av sagor, framstår *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* särskilt som en hybrid mellan dem, och dessutom med drag som mer påminner om senare traditioner för det som karakteriseras som ”folksagor”. Det har framförts av Vésteinn Ólason att sagan är en parodi på dessa genrer och att tankarna leds till den europeiska renässansen (Vésteinn Ólason 1994). Sverrir Tómasson har dessutom pekat på möjlig kontakt med franska *fabliaux* (1989:218ff. och 1996:66ff.). Det är mycket i sagans framställning som knyter an till framväxten av en helt ny form för litteratur på kontinenten, representerad av författare som tydligare markerar sin närvaro i berättelsen, som t.ex. Cervantes och Rabelais. Vésteinn Ólason påpekar likheten med de två europeiska giganterna. Han placerar sagan i gränslandet mellan de tre genrerna:

The frame of reference of the saga is not only the *fornaldarsaga*, which is parodied, but also the chivalric romance and probably also its Icelandic imitations, the *Märchensagas*. (Vésteinn Ólason 1994:121)

Många av de iakttagelser som presenteras i det följande knyter an till de synpunkter som framförts av de nämnda forskarna, även när jag inte hänvisar explicit till deras framställningar. De frågor jag vill diskutera gör det emellertid nödvändigt att åter presentera de grundläggande tendenserna i verket. Det som står i centrum här blir sagans tydliga litterära karaktär; det rör sig entydigt om en skriftlig produkt tillkommen i en miljö där skriftkulturen har ett fast grepp, och där den som sammanställt verket explicit arbetar med litterära medel för att strukturera sin berättelse. I utforskningen av de processer som rör litterariseringen av norrön kultur och textualiseringen av denna kulturs narrativa traditioner ska *Herrauðs saga ok Bósa* därmed placeras i ett sent skede.

Herrauðs ok Bósa saga finns i två versioner. I det följande är det den äldre versionen som är i fokus. Denna föreligger i tre manuskript från senare delen av 1400-talet. De aktuella manuskripten är AM 586 4to, av utgivaren, Otto L. Jiriczek, betecknat som A och vanligtvis daterat till ca 1450–1500, AM 343 a 4to, Jiriczeks manuskript B, även det daterat till sent på 1400-talet, och AM 577 4to, som av Jiriczek benämns D och dateras till 1450–1500. Ytterligare ett tidigt manuskript, AM 510 4to, benämnt C av Jiriczek och daterat till ca 1550 ska

nämnas här. Dessutom finns sagan i ett flertal manuskript från 1600- och 1700-talet som inte kommer att vara aktuella för min diskussion. I min följande framställning kommer verket *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* att diskuteras närmare, dock hela tiden med sagans funktion i sin direkta kontext i de tre medeltida handskrifterna *in mente*. Centralt för mitt resonemang blir genomgående synen på det medeltida manuskriptet som kommunikativ handling. Handskriften AM 343 a 4to (B) innehåller följande texter:

Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns
Samsons saga fagra
Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar bersekjabana
Flóres konungs saga
Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs
Yngvars saga víðförla
Ketils saga hængs
Gríms saga loðinkinna
Órvar-Odds saga
Áns saga bogsveigis
Saulus saga ok Nikanors
Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar
Herrauðs ok Bósa saga
Vilmundar saga víðutan
Meistara Perus saga

Som framgår av denna sammanställning består manuskriptets samling av texter dels av det vi skulle karakterisera som *fornaldarsögur*, som t.ex. de fyra Hrafnistu-sögur, dels av *riddarasögur* som torde ha tillkommit direkt på folkspråket på Island. *Meistara Perus saga* faller delvis utanför dessa båda kategorier och har traditionellt betraktats som ett *exemplum*. Till jämförelse kan innehållet i de två andra 1400-talsmanuskripten ställas upp, först AM 586 4to:

AM 586 4to (A)
Af þrimr kumpánum
Af þrimr þjófum í Danmörk
Af brytja ok bónda
Af meistara Pero ok hans leikum
Af Vilhjálmi bastarði ok sonum hans
Frá ferðum Roðberts ok hans manna
Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans
Herrauðs ok Bósa saga
Vilmundar saga víðutan
Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar
Hrings saga ok Tryggva
Þórðar saga hreðu
Króka-Refs saga
Ásmundar saga kappabana

Handschriften inleds med ett antal *exempla* och texter som omhandlar ämnen som inte direkt har anknytning till det nordiska. Det är först med *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* som handlingen förläggs till Norden. De följande texterna i samlingen har en inriktning på nordiska förhållanden, möjligen med undantag för *Vilmundar saga víðutan* som ju emellertid är knuten till *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* genom släktskapet mellan Bósi och Vilmundr. Här skulle man alltså kun-

na argumentera att den som sammanställt handskriften har ställt verk med en europeisk eller mer exotisk geografisk placering mot verk som relaterar till en mer känd geografi.

Den tredje medeltida handskriften som innehåller *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* är annorlunda till sammansättningen, samtidigt som många av texterna är gemensamma:

AM 577 4to (D)
Egils saga einhenda
Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs
Herrauðs ok Bósa saga
Afbóndasyni nokkrum í kóngsgarði
Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns
Vilmundar saga viðutan
Flóres konungs saga og sona hans

Som framgår är det alltså genomgående samma textverk som samlas i de tre handskrifterna. Intressant är t.ex. att *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, vars huvudperson, Vilmundr, omnämns som sonson till Bósi, inte bara förekommer i alla tre manuskripten, men i två av dem är placerad som en direkt fortsättning på *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga*. Denna logiska följd för texterna i två av de tre medeltida manuskripten ska emellertid inte övertolkas; en närmare analys av de tre manuskriptens sammansättning och hur texterna i dem samspelar vore av nöden för att kunna dra mer bestämda slutsatser om sammanställarens intention. Redan i nuläget kan det konstateras att de som sammanställt de tre manuskripten inte nödvändigtvis har gjort en skillnad mellan *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda*, t.ex. de fyra textverken om släkten från Hrafnista i AM 343 a 4to eller *Ásmundar saga kappabana* i AM 586 4to, och de inhemska *riddarasögur*. Inte heller tycks det ha varit dem främmande att sammanställa dessa två typer av berättelser med det som vi vanligtvis benämner *exempla*, vilket framgår av att *Meistara Perus saga* inkluderats i AM 343 4to och att *Af meistara Pero ok hans leikum* ingår i AM 586 to.

Det finns ingen omfattande diskussion om tillkomsten av *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga*. Den traditionella dateringen är till slutet av 1300-talet, en datering som främst tycks grunda sig på att det äldsta textvittnet föreligger i en handskrift som tidigare har daterats till ca 1400. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen argumenterar för att sagan har tillkommit under påverkan från den tidiga italienska renässansen. Han vill datera verket till ett gott stycke in i 1400-talet, lite skämtsamt föreslår han 1474 som ett lämpligt år. Därmed vill han också flytta fram dateringen av de aktuella handskrifterna till helt i slutet av 1400-talet (Jørgensen 1997:103f.).

Ett drag i verket som ofta omtalas är sagans skildringar av erotiska scener. Dessa är väl i dag inte särskilt uppsiktsväckande och är inte heller helt enastående i den norröna litteraturen. Men de förknippas knappast med den höviska litteraturen, kanske med reservation för *Möttuls saga*. För tidigare generationer i forskningshistorien från 1800-talet och framåt har sagan emellertid betraktats som både fräck och av mindre intresse för studiet av sagalitteraturen. Det finns anledning att ifrågasätta båda dessa värderingar. De erotiska scenerna påminner om folksagornas omskrivningar för sexuella relationer. Bósi och de kvinnor han – med en modern omskrivning – sover med, i syfte att erhålla viktig information, omtalar den sexuella relationen i klassiska omskrivningar som ”hästen som leds till källan” eller ”hästen som ska ställas i spiltan”. Det hela utspelar sig utöver detta i läsarens eller åhörarens fantasi. När man har läst sagan i läsgrupp några gånger har man fått inblickar i hur texten fungerar och hur även en modern publik blir upprymd och lite röd om kinderna när fantasin sätts i rörelse. Så har sagan ju troligen också fungerat i en uppläsningssituation i 1400-talets Island. Men det bärande i *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* är ändå det uppdrag som Herrauðr och Bósi fått av Herrauðs far, kungen i Gautland, och de två därefter följande utfärderna för att erövra de två kvinnor som hjältarna slutligen gifter sig med. De erotiska scenerna fungerar här som i folksagan med sina

tre episoder som stegvis höjer spänningen fram till dess att hjältarna kan genomföra sitt uppdrag.

Den som komponerade sagan har tydligt arbetat inom en skriftlig, litterär tradition. Det blir därmed intressant att närmare diskutera hur beteckningen *saga* används i verket, dels om verket i sig själv, dels i referenser till andra berättelser. Om vi börjar med den första typen av omnämmanden är episoden där Bósis fostermor Busla sägs ha erbjudit Bósi att lära honom galdrar intressant:

Hún bauð Bósa at kenna honum galdra, en Bósi sagðizt eigi vilja, at þat væri skrifat í sögu hans, at hann ynni nökkurn hlut með sleitun, þann sem honum skyldi með kallmennzku telja. (Jiriczek 1893:6 f.)

Här låter alltså den som sammanställde sagan Bósi uttala sig om en skriven saga om honom själv. Sammanställaren av sagan leker alltså med sin egen roll som berättare. Hänvisningen till en tänkt, skriven saga om hjälten indikerar tydligt att sagans samtid här förhåller sig till en tradition för skrivna texter. Sammanställaren upprätthåller också sin roll som skrivande berättare när sagan avslutas¹ med orden:

ok lúkum vér hér nú sögu Bögu-Bósa. (Jiriczek 1893:63)

Därmed blir referenser inom verket till andra berättelser med benämningen *saga* intressanta. När sammanställaren placerar Herrauðr och Bósi i tiden för slaget på Brávellir sker det med en hänvisning till en annan berättelse:

[...] þá var settr tími til bardagans á Brávöllum, er mestr hefir verit á Norðrlöndum, sem segir í sögu Sigurðar hrings, föður Ragnars loðbrókar. (Jiriczek 1893:33)

Det är osäkert vilket verk som avses med **Sigurðar saga hrings*, men det kan exempelvis vara en kompilation av den typ som föreligger i *Heimskringla* eller i en norrön version av *Skjöldunga saga*. En liknande referens ges i anslutning till omnämmandet av slaget till **Haralds saga hilditanns*, en berättelse som inte entydigt kan identifieras i det bevarade sagamaterialet:

Í þessi orrostu fell Haraldr konungr ok með honum fimtán konungar annars C, sem segir í sögu hans. (Jiriczek 1893:34)

Sammantaget indikerar bruket av benämningen *saga* här att det för sammanställaren har hänvisat till en skriven berättelse. Den skriftbaserade sagan har varit självklar som referens och sannolikt har också fenomenet *saga* för samtiden varit textualiserat. En saga har därmed haft en given inledning, givna strukturer och ett tydligt slut. Inledningen i sagan:

Hringr hefir konungr heitit, er réð fyrir Eystra-Gautlandi [...], (Jiriczek 1893:3)

blir därmed väntad; med liknande fraser inleds ju de flesta bevarade sagor, oavsett vilken genre vi placerar dem i. Avslutningen, som citerats ovan och vars varianter diskuteras i det följande, kan också sägas motsvara vad vi skulle förvänta oss, och på många sätt påminner den dessutom om hur många av 1400-talets inhemska *riddarasögur* avslutas.

Här blir det emellertid relevant att se närmare på de olika versionerna av textverket. Inledning och avslutning utformas nämligen markant olika i de fyra versionerna A–D. I Jiriczeks

¹ Se emellertid nedan för en diskussion av de olika versionernas inledning respektive avslutning av sagan.

utgåva av *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* utelämnas en liten prolog som föreligger i versionerna A, B och D. Denna prolog återges endast i en fotnot, men är ytterst intressant för den som vill förstå verkets placering i traditionen.

Þessi saga heftz eigi af lokleysi þeirri, er kátir menn skrökva sér til skemtanar ok gamans með ófróðligum setningum, heldr sannar hún sik sjálf með réttum ættartölum ok fornum orðzkviðum, er menn hafa iðuliga af þeim hlutum er í þessu æfintýri eru skrifaðir. (Jiriczek 1893:3)

Det är märkligt att Jiriczek här har valt att placera prologen i en fotnot. Därmed avgör han ju, att den inte ursprungligen har utgjort en del av textverket. Med tanke på att de tre medeltida handskrifterna faktiskt innehåller prologen, torde det ur ett textkritiskt perspektiv vara svårt att hävda denna ståndpunkt.² Med detta sagt blir det intressant att diskutera prologens roll, och dess närmaste paralleller i sagalitteraturen.

Hela tonen i prologen är skämtsam. Den inledande meningen slår an med sin negation av *lokleysa* 'ändlost prat' som glada människor *skrökva* 'ljuger' eller 'diktar upp' med *ófróðligum setningum* 'okunniga meningar' som bara är till *skemtanar ok gamans* 'nöje och glädje'. Markeringen blir så överdriven att effekten – trots att den explicit ska ställa den följande texten i ett seriöst ljus – blir, att vi inte ska uppfatta sagan som allvarlig. Därefter gör den som sammanställde prologen en dygd av att styrka trovärdigheten genom att hänvisa till *ættartölum* 'genealogier' och *fornum orðzkviðum* 'gamla talesätt' som finns *iðuliga* 'rikligt' i detta *æfintýri*. Benämningen *æfintýri* tycks här få en dubbeltydighet; det kan antingen syfta på de korta berättelserna till moralisk uppbyggelse, dit t.ex. *Meistara Perus saga* räknas, eller till de äventyr som riddarna i *riddarasögur* ägnar sig åt. Tvetydigheten förstärker ytterligare den parodiska tonen i prologen.

Det som gäller för inledningen av textverket gäller även för avslutningen. Här är det delvis större avvikelser mellan de olika textvittnena. Jag väljer därför att citera Jiriczeks variantapparatur *in extenso*.

[ok lúkum] svó þessa sögu af Herrauð konungi ok Bögu-Bósa, er ruddi sér til ríkis ok konungr varð á Bjarmalandi b. *Nach* Bögu-Bósa *add.* AC: ok signi þá [h (hún? hér?) C] seta Busla alla [þá *add.* C] sem hér [hafa til hlýtt A, til hafa hlýtt C] lesit ok skrifat. [A *fügt noch hinzu*: eðr hér nökkut til fengit eðr gott at gjört A-M-E-N.]. (Jiriczek 1893:63)

De varianter av avslutningen som framkommer här leder först och främst tankarna till den typ av avslutningar som återfinns i de inhemska *riddarasögur* som exempelvis i *Vilmundar saga viðutan* eller *Vilhjálmssaga sjóðs*. Oavsett om avslutningen är ursprunglig i textverket (något som Jiriczek tycks anse när han placerar den i variantapparaten, och alltså inte behandlar avslutningen på linje med den utelämnade prologen) eller om den tillfogats i en senare fas i traderingen, placerar den *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* tydligt i samtidens textkultur, men kanske också i dess uppläsningssituation. Här liksom i liknande epiloger i andra verk från 1400-talets andra hälft tilltalas ett kollektiv, de som "til hafa hlýtt C] lesit ok skrifat", eller som i A även "hér nökkut til fengit eðr gott at gjört". Sammantaget tycks de här epilogerna antyda en uppläsningssituation, där uppläsaren avslutar sin framställning med en hälsning som omfattar dem som lyssnat, den som sammanställt texten och honom själv, den som läst. Vi skulle också gärna vilja veta mer om vad "nökkut til fengit eðr gott at gjört" har hänsyftat till; är det andra som kommenterat uppläsningen eller kanske rentav deltagit i framställningen t.ex. med tillrop eller uppträdanden?

² Sverrir Tómasson (1988:374) kommer till samma slutsats, att ingenting talar emot att se prologen som en del av verket redan från början.

Om sagan explicit framstår som del av en skriftkultur, bekräftas detta intryck om man ser närmare på hur berättaren står fram i texten. Sagans struktur kan kort indelas i en inledande del, där de två hjältarna presenteras och där konflikten med kung Hringr leder fram till den första färden för att hämta ett *gammsegg* 'gamägg'. Detta leder till att de två hjältarna befriar bjarmalandskungen Goðmundrs syster, Hleiðr, från det hedniska hov där hon hålls fången. Hon förs till Gautland för att bli Herraudrs hustru, varefter de två hjältarna sänds till striden på Brávellir. Nu kommer bjarmerna till Gautland. De dödar kung Hringr och för med sig Hleiðr hem till Bjarmaland. När Herraudr och Bósi återvänder från slaget får de besked om vad som skett och ger sig ut på en andra färd för att återhämta Hleiðr och ta hämnd. Detta lyckas, varefter Bósi inleder en tredje *quest* för att röva bort kungadottern Edda, även detta en lyckosamtur. När sagan betraktas med utgångspunkt i de tre färderna framstår berättaren sparsamt med egna kommentarer eller läsangivelser, men han gör sig konsekvent närvarande i samband med strukturella gränser. I det inledande partiet som leder fram till den första färden håller berättaren sig i bakgrunden, med undantag för den ovan nämnda kommentaren om Bósi och Busla. Det är först efter att det inledande uppdraget är genomfört att den första strukturella kommentaren förekommer. Det är när de två hjältarna återkommer från Brávellir:

þá höfðu orðit þau umskipti í Gautland, sem síðar mun sagt verða, á meðan þeir vóru á burtu. (Jiriczek 1893:34)

Berättaren anger härmed att han avser att bryta den kronologiska linjen i sin berättelse, och att han tänker återkomma till denna del av sin framställning. Direkt efter ovanstående kommentar fortsätter han:

Nú af því, at eigi má í senn segja meir en eitt, þá verðr nú þat at skýra, sem fyrr hefir til borit í sögunni, ok er þar nú til at taka fyst, [...]. (Jiriczek 1893:34)

Nu återvänder berättaren alltså till den tid då Hleiðr hade förts bort av hovgyðjan Kolfrosta. Han berättar hur bjarmerna börjar leta efter henne, hur de får reda på var hon befinner sig och hur de besegrar kung Hringr. När berättaren återvänder till sina två huvudpersoner sker det med orden:

Þar er nú til máls at taka. (Jiriczek 1893:37)

Detta är en fras som återfinns i många av de norröna sagatexterna. Hänvisningen till olika tidsskikt i berättelsen torde här snarast indikera att det rör sig om en fras som helt hör hemma i en skriftkultur.

När hjältarna utfört sin hämnd och återhämtat Hleiðr, beskriver berättelsen bjarmernas förberedelser för att förfölja dem, för att därefter återvända till sina huvudpersoner:

ok látum þá nú búazt, en víkjum sögunni aptr til þeirra kumpána [...]. (Jiriczek 1893:49)

Bósi för nu an i den tredje och sista färden för att röva bort kungadottern Edda. När denna uppgift är avslutad för berättaren sina läsare eller åhörare åter till bjarmerna där Hrærekr och Siggeir är klara med sina förberedelser:

Þat byrjazt nú, sem þeir bræðr höfðu fullbúit sitt lið. (Jiriczek 1893:55)

Om vi vänder oss till beskrivningen av de två kumpanerna finns det en intressant kontrast mellan dem som leder tankarna både till *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* och *Áns saga bogsveigis*, i det att de beskrivs som varandras motsatser. Hans-Peter Naumann och Vésteinn Ólason

argumenterar för att författaren har valt två hjältar till sin historia för att kunna kontrastera dem och därmed framhäva de höviska idealen (Naumann 1978:46; Vésteinn Ólason 1994:116). Framställningen av de två hjältarna ger dock enligt min mening inte stöd för att argumentera för underliggande höviska ideal i sagan; snarare framstår den som en parodi också på dessa ideal. Herrauðr framställs som en ljus och omtyckt person:

hann var mikill vexti ok friðr sýnum, sterkr at afli ok vel at íþróttum búinn, svó at fáir menn máttu við hann jafnast. Hann var vinsæll af öllum mönnum, en ekki hafði hann mikit ástriki af feðr sínum. (Jiriczek 1893:4)

Bósi skildras däremot som mörk och hotfull:

hann var mikill vexti ok sterkr at afli, dökkliðaðr ok ekki mjök friðr, ok líkr móður sinni at skaplyndi ok sköpun; kátr var hann ok keskimáll ok þráfýlginn því, sem hann tók upp, ok eigi mjök fyrirleitinn við hvern, sem hann átti. (Jiriczek 1893:6)

Här finner vi alltså en motsvarighet i de två brödraparen Þórúlfr och Skalla-Grímr respektive Þórúlfr och Egill i *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, men också i bröderna Þórir och Án i *Áns saga bogsveigis*. Det är då intressant att notera att den senare sagan har diskuterats som i någon mån byggd på den förra (Viðar Hreinsson 1990). Vésteinn Ólason påpekar att *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* skiljer sig från *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* och *Áns saga bogsveigis*, vilket gör att den sistnämnda inte uppvisar samma entydigt närvarande berättare i texten. Han konstaterar:

Áns saga is certainly anti-royalist with a vengeance, and in contrast to *Bósa saga* there is no trace of influence from the world of chivalry. An influence from the early *Egils saga Skalla-grímssonar*, is clearly felt, and thus the literary and ideological preconditions of an authorial presence are very different from those of *Bósa saga*. (Vésteinn Ólason 1994:128, fotnot 30)

När *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* trots detta tycks framställa sina två hjältar på ett liknande sätt som de två andra sagorna, kan detta tyda på att den som sammanställde denna saga har haft åtminstone en av dem som förebild. I mitt fortsatta arbete med *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* blir det därför nödvändigt att genomföra en parallell analys av skildringen av de fyra brödraparen; i handskriftskulturen har de tre verken levt i en gemensam tradering där gränser mellan genrer knappast har varit avgörande. I det följande begränsar jag emellertid min läsning till exemplen från *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga*.

De två kumpanernas agerande i förhållande till de två kvinnorna Hleiðr och Edda kan eventuellt ge en indikation om hur sagan förhåller sig till den höviska litteratur som åtminstone torde utgöra dess bakgrund. Här skildras hjältarnas agerande på ett sätt som i mycket motsvarar beskrivningen av dem som återges ovan. Herrauðr erbjuder Hleiðr att följa med till Gautland och gör klart att han inte tänker söka godkännande hos hennes släkt:

Eigi mun ek til þeirra giptingar leita, segir Herrauðr, ok vil ek hér engan undandrätt í hafa, því ek þikkjumzt í öngu þér varboðinn, ok skal leysa þik sem áðr. (Jiriczek 1893:32)

Här finns det en liten, men signifikant skillnad i version D (representerad av AM 577 4to) av sagan:

Eigi mun ek leita giptinga til frænda þinna, en öngvan vil ek undandrätt í þessu máli, en eigi skal nauðoka þik til kaupna nökkra, því ek þikkjumzt þér eigi varboðinn, ok skal leysa þik sem áðr. (Jiriczek 1893:32; min kursivering)

D-versionen understryker alltså ytterligare det höviska exemplet som Herrauðr ger. Det är också intressant att notera Hleiðrs svar:

Eigi veit ek þann mann, segir hún, at ek *vil heldr eiga* en þik, af þeim, sem ek hefi sét. (Jiriczek 1893:32; min kursivering)

I D-versionen svarar Hleiðr med “mundi heldr kjósa” för “heldr eiga” vilket väl än tydligare understryker att hon har möjlighet att välja, även i den situation hon befinner sig.

Bósi agerar emellertid annorlunda i sin första kontakt med Edda:

Þat er nú sem takazt vill, segir Bósi, ok gjör nú hvórt er þú vilt, at fara með mér viljug, eða geri ek skyndibrúðlaup til þín hér í skóginum. (Jiriczek 1893:53 f.)

Han betar sig inte på ett passande, höviskt sätt, utan far i stället med hot om att ta henne med våld. Det skildras hur han och Herrauðr dödar eunucken som vaktar Edda, på ett sätt som för tankarna till *1000 och en natt*, och därefter “setti Bósi konungsdóttur á handlegg sér” (Jiriczek 1893:54). Här måste vi fråga oss om skillnaden mellan de två huvudpersonerna är intentionell, alltså om den som sammanställt berättelsen medvetet har ställt upp dem som kontraster, den ljuse och vänlige Herrauðr som agerar höviskt i förhållande till Hleiðr ställs upp emot den mörke och mindre vänsälle Bósi och hans sätt mot Edda. I det senare fallet rör det sig ju explicit om att kvinnan bortförs med våld och under hot, medan det första väl ger ett gott exempel till efterlevnad. Här kan det vara värt att också återvända till Bósis tre erotiska eskapader; en av dem leder ju explicit till att bondflickan föder en frilloson, Svaði, som presenteras som far till Vilmundr viðutan, en hjälte som återkommer i den saga som följer efter *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* i handskrifterna AM 343 a 4to och AM 856 4to, *Vilmundar saga viðutan*. Bósi är alltså inte något gott exempel på en hövisk riddare och jag har svårt att hålla med Vésteinn Ólason när han konstaterar:

However, it is important to realize that Bósi’s vulgarity is superficial; he has in him the makings of a nobleman. (Vésteinn Ólason 1994:117)

Snarare framstår Bósi för mig som en uppkomling som får framgång trots sin vulgära framtoning, inte på grund av att han har en underliggande hövisk kapacitet. Här skiljer Bósi sig också markant från Rabelais eller Cervantes hjältar; de representerar ju trots allt ett slags adelskap även om just riddargenren parodieras. Den som sammanställde *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* parodierar därmed enligt min mening inte bara de aktuella genrerna men också den ideologi som ligger bakom den höviska litteraturen.

De ovan presenterade iakttagelserna talar inte för att placera *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* bland *fornaldarsögur*. Snarare är det många drag som pekar i riktning av de senare, inhemska *riddarasögur*. Med tanke på den diskussion som förts under senare år om medeltidens genrer, och för de isländska sagornas vidkommande om hybrider, torde emellertid en placering av *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* i den senare kategorin vara lika missledande. Kanske vill jag inte gå så långt som till att avföra *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga* från sagalitteraturen (se Jørgensen 1997:103), men det är definitivt dags att sluta se den som en *fornaldarsaga*. Det är tid att vi lämnar de låsta genrebegreppen och ser det enskilda verket som en kommunikativ handling. Ett nästa steg blir då att fokusera det individuella textvittnet och dess kontext i den textbärare där det föreligger; det torde framgå av ovanstående kortfattade framställning att de tre textvittnena, A,B och D, dels framstår med olika formuleringar i för vår förståelse viktiga sammanhang, dels fungerar i samspel med andra texter i de manuskript där de föreligger. En analys av de olika textvittnena i relation till kontexten i de manuskript där de föreligger tycks i dag vara en

mer relevant utmaning än att hålla fast det traditionella perspektivet på *verket* som en fast och oföränderlig enhet. I min framställning här har just *verket* varit i fokus, men i ett nästa steg ska perspektivet flyttas så att handskriftskontexten kommer i centrum.

Bósi framstår inte som någon hövisk hjälte i *Herrauðs ok Bósa saga*. Snarare är han att betrakta som en skämtsam kommentar till tidigare hjältar i den norröna litteraturen. Den fule, men kanske ändå exemplariske hjälten, i form av den isländske skalden Egill Skalla-Grímsson eller den från *fornaldarsögur* hämtade Án, får här en annan beskrivning. Bósi uppför sig inte kurteist, men kommer sig trots detta fram i världen, från att vara son till en bonde, blir han till slut kung i Bjarmaland. Signifikativt är nog därmed sättet författaren låter honom framstå när han vänder sig till bjarmena:

[...] beiddi Bósi sér þar viðtöku ok taldi þat til, at Edda ætti land alt eftir föður sinn, er nú var orðin eiginkona hans, ok segizt hann svó helzt mega bæta landmönnum þann mannskaða, sem þeir höfðu af honum fengit, at vera konungr yfir þeim ok styrkja þá með lögum ok réttarbótum, ok með því at þeir vóru höfðingjalausir, þá sá þeir öngvan sinn kost vænna, en taka hann sér til konungs [...]. (Jiriczek 1883:61)

Här är det uppkomlingen som gör sig bemärkt, den som slagit sig fram till sin position, faktiskt genom att vålla den tidigare kungens död. Man måste fråga sig hur en dansk kungamakt mot slutet av 1400-talet skulle ha uppfattat framställningen av kungen som uppkomling, som erbjuder sig att styra med ”lögum ok réttarbótum”; med tanke på 1400-talets politiska historia med flera tronpretendenter, kunde Bósi närmast kunna uppfattas som det rent motsatta av en hövisk kung, en usurpator av makten med stöd endast i rå styrka och pågångsmod.

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Biörner's edition of the *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*¹

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In the 19th c. Friðþjófr the Brave was one of the best known heroes of old times, not least thanks to Esaias Tegnér's romantic *Frithiofs saga* which was immensely popular not only in Sweden, but also in Germany, Britain and the United States. In contrast to the wide and enthusiastic reception the *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* received up to the beginning of the 20th c., little attention has been paid to the text in the last decades. In this paper I would like to show that interesting questions remain to be discussed when it comes to the relationship between the mss. and the early editions.

It is a commonplace that Tegnér became acquainted with the saga via Biörner's edition in *Nordiska Kämpa dater* (1737). Already before Biörner's *editio princeps* the *Friðþjófs saga* had been reproduced a number of times in Sweden. Despite the fact that Friðþjófr's adventures mainly take place in Norway, it was first and foremost the Swedish historical interest of the 17th c. that resulted in an intense production of copies. As far as I can see, Biörner's text has not been compared thoroughly with the Swedish mss. (and that includes his exemplar!) or with Tegnér's adaptation. In this context Biörner's Swedish and Latin translations of the saga are of particular interest. Also the translations have been paid little attention (the only detailed study I am aware of is an article by Hirvonen 1987). I have started studying Biörner's edition just recently and would like to present a few aspects which I intend to analyse more closely in the near future. Moreover I shall address questions about Biörner's Swedish rendering of the *Friðþjófs saga*.

Manuscripts and editions of the *Friðþjófs saga*

To start with, some remarks on the surviving mss. and the editions of the saga are called for. As is well known, two versions of the *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* exist, furthermore a rendering in *rímur*. Up to the end of the 19th c. the longer version of the *Friðþjófs saga* was considered the original text. First in 1886 it was realized that the opposite assumption is correct (Valdimar Ásmundarson 1886:V). While Kölbing and Calaminus ignored Valdimar Ásmundarson's edition and *formáli* (Kölbing 1887; Calaminus 1887), Falk confirmed his findings and expressed his disbelief in Calaminus' theories, among which especially the old idea that the saga was based on an archaic Norwegian local tradition, was met with strong opposition (cf. Calaminus 1887:51–62; Falk 1890:60). Nowadays it is undisputed that the *Friðþjófs saga* does not contain any historical nucleus. Already the shorter version was written in Iceland and is considered a *fornaldarsaga*, even if its language and style might seem simple and archaic compared to other texts of that genre (cf. Falk 1890:95–98; Wenz 1914:LXXXII–CIX, CXXXIII).

The shorter version has come down to us in three mss., while the *rímur* are transmitted in one ms. only (cf. Larsson 1893:XXVI–XXXII). It seems that both the shorter version of the saga and the *rímur* were used as a source for the longer version (cf. Wenz 1914:XXI–XXVI).

The longer version of the saga has undoubtedly been more popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, as the number of mss. indicate (for a description of the mss. see Larsson 1893:I–XXVI). The fact that the longer version is clearly influenced by the *riddarasögur* might have contributed to the popularity. The differences between the two versions cannot be discussed in

¹ I would like to thank Beatrice la Farge for helpful discussions and for generously lending me her private copy of Biörner's *Kämpa Dater*.

detail here, but it is worth mentioning that a strategy lay behind the changes in the younger version:

Andere Erweiterungen zeigen deutlich die Absicht des Überarbeiters, die Einzelabschnitte, in die die Saga zerfällt, möglichst in sich abzurunden und auszugestalten, die Hauptszenen durch Erweiterung der Motive wirksamer durchzuführen, vor allem die Redeszenen auszufüllen, den Bericht durch Zufügung naheliegender Einzelbestimmungen zu vervollständigen, schliesslich den Charakter einzelner Personen schärfer hervortreten zu lassen. (Wenz 1914:XLVI; for a discussion of the differences between the versions see XLIII–LXIII).

Of course it is not improbable at all that chance best explains why the longer version was copied extensively in Sweden: Ultimately, the Swedish mss. all derive from one Icelandic ms. (Holm papp. 17 4°) which ended up in Sweden somehow.

Swedish manuscripts of the Friðþjófs saga

Holm papp. 17 4°	1640–1671	Icelandic
Holm papp. 56 fol.	ca. 1685	copy of Holm papp. 17 4°; space for Swedish translation (not carried out)
Holm papp. 52 4°	ca. 1685	Swedish translation
UppsUB R 704 4°	ca. 1685	copy of Holm papp. 52 4° (containing corrections); Swedish translation of the first chapter
Holm papp. 30 4°	ca. 1685	copy of Holm papp. 56 fol.
Säfstaholmssaml (SRA) I Papp. 6	18 th c.	Swedish translation
Engestr B III, 1, 19	ca. 1820	excerpt; summarizing Swedish translation

The edition of Biörner's text is based on Holm papp. 56 fol. Apart from the first two leaves which were written by Helgi Ólafsson, the entire codex was written by Arngrímur Jónsson while he was working at Antikvitetskollegiet (1683–1691); in total the codex contains 13 sagas (cf. Gödel 1897–1900:111). It was meant to offer Swedish translations alongside the Old Norse texts, but the translation was not carried out and only the inner column has been filled. The text of the *Friðþjófs saga* in Holm papp. 56 fol. follows its exemplar, Holm papp. 17 4°, closely, and yet has its own chapter division and adds chapter titles (cf. Larsson, 1893:VII–VIII).

Biörner's Nordiska Kämpa Dater

Before discussing Biörner's edition and Swedish translation of the *Friðþjófs saga* some general remarks about the Nordiska Kämpa Dater need to be made. The work consists of 17 parts, of which the first are a preface and a genealogy of the kings of Sweden. What follows are 15 Old Norse texts accompanied by a Swedish and a Latin translation: *Norriges Upfindelse* (i.e. *Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum*), *Rimen om Karl och Grim* (*Rímur af Karl ok Grimi*), *Rolf Krakes Saga* (*Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappa hans*), *Fridthiofs Saga* (*Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*), *Alfs Saga* (*Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*), *Romunds Saga* (*Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*), *Halfdan Branans Fostersons Saga* (*Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*), *Sorles Saga* (*Sorla saga sterka*), *Halfdan Östenssons² Saga* (*Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*), *Samsons Saga* (*Samsons saga fagra*), *Wolsunga Saga* (*Völsunga saga*), *Ragnars Saga* (*Ragnars saga loðbrókar*), *Ans Saga* (*Ans saga bogsveigis*), *Norna Gestis och Helge Thoris Sons Saga* (*Nornagests þátr/Helga þátr Þorissonar*) and *Thorstens Saga* (*Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns*).

² In the edition the umlaute are printed with the superscript letter e. In my quotations I make use of the modern graphemes ä and ö. Also other special letter forms such as the tall s are not reproduced.

As will be discussed below, Biörner was mainly interested in the language of these texts. Apart from the linguistic side of the matter, there are other details which easily explain the fascination exerted by the *Friðþjófs saga*:

Neben der thematischen Verwandtschaft [sic] mit den schon lange bekannten Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar, Gautreks saga und Sturlaugs saga starfsama war für die schwedischen Gelehrten wahrscheinlich auch die sagenhafte Gestalt des Königs Hring, der über Svíþjóð geherrscht haben soll und aus einer Vielzahl anderer Überlieferungen schon bekannt war, ausschlaggebend. Weiterhin findet sich in der Friðþjófs saga frækna die Überlieferung eines Baldurkultes, die aus heutiger Sicht zwar anachronistisch und unrealistisch anmutet, zur damaligen Zeit aber neu und unbekannt war und die Sicht auf die heidnische Vorzeit beträchtlich zu erweitern schien. (Busch 2004:149)

While Biörner's edition was to become one of the major sources about king Hringr and Baldr eventually, it was not granted easy access to its envisaged audience at first: The publication of the Kämpa Dater caused serious disturbance among the Swedish nobles, which resulted in censorship. Biörner had the Kämpa Dater printed without having shown the preface to his superiors at Antikvitetsarkivet. The preface contained a quotation by the historian Caspar Sagittarius about the shortcomings of new nobility, a statement which could potentially be seen as a critical remark directed to the young Swedish noble dynasties (cf. Boëthius 1924:480). The distribution of the edition was brought to a halt, the quire in question was removed and replaced by leaves containing an unproblematic praise of old age (cf. Busch 2004:136–139). Not only did Biörner's edition cause discomposure, it was also criticized for being hardly scientific (cf. Boëthius 1924:481). Eric Julius Biörner (1696–1750), *kanslist* and, since 1719, *translator* at Antikvitetsarkivet, was a true Rudbeckian and initiated continuous discussions with colleagues (cf. Boëthius 1924:478–480). Contemporary sources clearly indicate that Biörner's quarrelsome disposition caused his opponents to launch rather severe attacks on his old-fashioned scientific writings: Gustav Benzelstierna (1687–1746), *ensor librorum*, once stated (with regard to the introduction to Biörner's *De ortographia*) that he would rather express his belief in Biörner's theories despite their improbability than be forced to read the introduction once more (cf. Boëthius 1924:481). Ironically, while Benzelstierna and other contemporaries aiming at a more critical way of dealing with Old Norse sources are almost forgotten nowadays, Biörner was to become one of the best known collectors of Old Norse sagas thanks to the vivid reception the Kämpa Dater.

Biörner's edition of the *Friðþjófs saga*

It has been noted that Biörner's reproduction of the Old Norse text follows his exemplar closely in all respects (cf. Larsson 1893:IX; Busch 2004:152). Generally speaking this observation is correct, yet there are some instances where Biörner modified the text.

In Holm papp. 56 fol. proper nouns, a number of other specific terms and some statements are underlined. In most cases Biörner highlights those terms and statements by italicizing them, which has been commented upon as follows: "Die in Papp. fol. nr 56. unterstrichenen Wörter und Wortpassagen entsprechen den kursiv gedruckten Stellen in BIÖRNER'S Ausgabe." (Busch 2004:152) In some cases, though, Biörner does not highlight exactly the same terms, while in others, he adds accentuations.

With regard to proper nouns, be it personal or place names, Biörner is more systematic than the writer of the exemplar. He aims at italicizing every proper noun when introducing it. Thus, *Sygna fylki* (BiöFriþ:1), *Framnesi* (BiöFriþ:2) and *Biorn and Asmunþur* (BiöFriþ:3) are italicized despite no underlining in the exemplar (cf. Holm 56, 179r, 180r).

In a number of cases Biörner chooses to highlight single expressions rather than entire phrases containing these expressions. Thus, *enn þess vil ek biþia yckur at þiþ hafit langvini þa sem ek hefi hapt* (Holm 56, 180r; *s p e c i a l l e t t e r f o r m s i n H o l m 56 a r e n o t r e p r o d u c e d*) is rendered as *enn þess vil ek biþia yckur, at þit hafit langvini þa sem ek hefe hapt* (BiöFriþ:3). In the Latin translation the highlighted passage is even longer than in the exemplar: *ideoque vos monitos volo, illos quam diutis sime amicos habeatis, quos ego habui* (BiöFriþ:3). In this particular case Biörner might have felt the need to highlight the Old Norse term, since he does not give a *verbum pro verbo* rendering in his Swedish text: *at j hafwen dem länge til wenner* (BiöFriþ:3). By highlighting one word only in the Old Norse text, that expression is given importance and is more likely to catch the reader's eye. In many cases the words highlighted independently of the exemplar can be considered key words in terms of expressing specific Norse concepts, such as *fostbræpur* (BiöFriþ:3; cf. Holm 56, 180r) or *at sækia veitslu* (BiöFriþ:4; cf. Holm 56, 180v).

On the whole, Biörner's edition of the Old Norse text is characterized by more highlighting than the exemplar. While in the exemplar the focus is on phrases and passages which are of importance with regard to the saga's plot, Biörner gives special emphasis to particular Old Norse terms. As we shall see when studying the Swedish translation, Biörner is eager to spread knowledge about Old Norse vocabulary and specific concepts expressed by it. To my mind the technique of highlighting serves exactly the same purpose: Personal and place names as well as key words are meant to attract the reader's attention.

Biörner's Swedish translation of the *Friðþjófs saga*

In his preface Biörner gives some insight into his way of translating. Ideally, a translation captures the *geist* of the original language, thus many of the existing translations of Old Norse expressions within dictionaries and saga editions are to be criticized:

[...] *Sagor äro så beskaffade / at deras / hälst Latinska / uttolkning / sällan uttrycker Götska språkets rätta snille och must / warande den sama mera smakande af en alt för fri och prålachtig utläggning / än nått och granlaga öfversättning / samt således mindre tjenlig för dem / som själfwa språket sig bemäktiga wilja.* (BiöFöre:5)

Biörner explicitly wants his audience to get to know the Old Norse language. Completely in line with the theories developed by Rudbeck and other Swedish historians in the 17th c., he is convinced that Swedish is particularly well-suited for translating Old Norse texts. The edition and the preface (and later writings) are meant to prove this to be true:

Til slika bewis komer och särdeles detta / at Swenskan än i dag hafwer fram för Danskan en ögonstickande större liket / med så wäl den gamla som nyare Isländskan / det jag med denna Sagoflocks öfversättning har nog samt allom å daga lagt. (BiöFöre:4)

Due to the close relationship between Icelandic and Swedish the use of Icelandic vocabulary is not considered problematic. Accordingly, the use of old Swedish words is conceived of as a possibility to establish a (natural) connection between the two languages. Biörner's Swedish translations abound with archaisms and Icelandisms (for an overview see Hirvonen 1987:110–121). As has been pointed out *alrea dy* (cf. Hirvonen 1987:107), it is clearly stated in the preface that the use of archaisms is programmatic (cf. Hirvonen 1987:107):

[...] *warande doch försäkrad / mig hafwa så ansat / ej allenast Swenska uttolkningen (skjönt jag däri fornälskarom til tjenst / efter Stiernhielms och Verelii berömliga sedwana / ofta inmängt en hoper gamla / doch mustiga ord och kårta talesätt / som ej utan widlöftigt ordaswef*

*låtít sig uttydas; och skjönt de i förstone kunna för hastiga läsare wara hinderliga/ doch / om de själfwa meningen någorlunda eftersinna / med förmodeligit gagn snart begripeliga) utan och den Latinska uttolknigen därjämte så inrättat / at / ehuru jag däri merendels **granneliga** följt **Götiska hufwudspråket** / ingen / utan den okunniga och afwundsjuka hopen / warder nekande / at eho detta språk ernar sig bemägtiga / han doch med detta arbetets hjälp / skjönt det såsom andras / äfwen granlagste människors / ej är utan fel / skall kunna mycket redigare / än härtills är skjett i sit upsåt fortfara. (BiöFöre:5–6)*

Biörner aims at finding readers who might face some difficulties, but are willing to spend time and energy in order to improve their command of Old Norse. His translations bear witness to this ideal: It is obvious that Biörner was hoping that his abundant use of Icelandisms would have an impact on the Swedish language and that words such as *andas* ('die', BiöFriþ:4 and more often), *rakna vid* ('regain consciousness', BiöFriþ:29) or *mannarön* ('dangerous situation', BiöFriþ:4) would become part of the Swedish lexicon. Based on dictionary entries, Hirvonen discusses which Old Norse words used by Verelius and Biörner have found their way into modern Swedish (cf. Hirvonen 1987:137–145). What I intend to study more closely in the near future is the use of Icelandisms and archaisms in the literary works derived from the *Kämpa Dater*.

As is expressed in the preface, Biörner is well aware of the fact that the general audience needs some help with Old Norse expressions. He offers this help by adding explanations – probably the most characteristic stylistic device made use of are word pairs, the first part of which is an Old Norse word which is explained by the second (Swedish) word: *Denna Ingeborg war **wen eller wacker tilandlete/och wetig til hug eller sinne** / samt **främst eller förnämst** af Kongsbarnen.* (BiöFriþ:1, my accentuation). Usually the words are combined by the conjunction *eller*, which is typical of interpreting/explanatory word pairs (cf. Hirvonen 1987:122). Hirvonen has analysed Biörner's use of such explanatory word pairs and has compared it to Olof Verelius' and Gustaf Bonde's use of the same construction. The result is unambiguous: While Bonde and Verelius hardly use explanatory word pairs, the construction appears extremely frequently in some of Biörner's translations, among them the *Fridthiofs Saga* (cf. Hirvonen 1987:122–124).

Particularly striking is the fact that the explanatory word pairs are used to introduce an Old Norse word. When the same word appears once more in the source text, only the Old Norse word is used in the 'Swedish' translation, cf. *Kong Bele feck nu **sot eller sjukdom** [...]. Denna **sot** mände leda mig til bana* (BiöFriþ:3, m.a.). This technique clearly serves Biörner's didactic purposes, thus the use of the construction should be considered more than just a manner.

From time to time explanations of customs are inserted in brackets: *Kongarna såto på deras faders hög (efter sedwana / til at där öfwerwäga stora rådslag / såsom under hans närwarelse) och helsade Fridthjofer dem wäl* (BiöFriþ:5). Moreover, in some cases the Old Norse expression is added in order to specify what exactly the translation is supposed to mean: *Fridthjofer sat nu wid taflspel (hnäfwä tafl)* (BiöFriþ:7). The explanations are another clear indication of the intended educational character of the edition.

There are additions, however, which illustrate that Biörner was not only preoccupied with the audience's knowledge gain, but also wanted his story to be coherent and comprehensible. This becomes clear from the episode in which Helgi and Hálfðan send Hildingr to Friðþjófr in order to ask him for support against King Hringr. Friðþjófr plays chess, when Hildingr arrives. Hildingr asks for his help and Friðþjófr's reaction is described as follows:

Friþþiofur svarar honum a ungvo ok mællti til Biarnar er hann teflþi við, bil er þar nu fos tbroðir ok muntu ey bregþa þvi, ok (BiöFriþ 7)

The translation differs from the Old Norse text:

*Fridthiofer swarade honom intet / och sade til Björn / den han täflade med : rum är där nu
imellan brickorna/ fosterbroder/ och månde du ej ändra det / men jag skall utvälja den röda /
och weta om han blir fri. (BiöFriþ:7)*

The deviating translation is easily explained: There is a line of text missing in the Old Norse version, a line already missing in Holm 56 fol. (cf. 181v) and in Holm papp. 17 4°, the Icelandic exemplar of Holm 56 fol. (cf. 357r–v). Biörner must have had access to a different ms. (of the longer version) and translated the passage in accordance with the – undeniably – better reading:

*fridþiofur suarar hanum onguo og mællti til biarnar er hann tefldi vid, bil er þarna fostbroder
og muntu ei bregda þui, helldur mun eg setia ad hinni rauðu toflunni og vita huort henni er for-
dad (Larsson 1893:5).*

Moreover, he offers some assistance to the readers trying to interpret Friðþjófr's ambiguous statements about the chess figures. Friðþjófr does not only refer to Ingibjörg when talking about the red chess piece (of course the original version in which the chess piece, the *tafla*, is correctly referred to by the feminine pronoun underlines the ambiguity in a more sophisticated way, but still Biörner's version works), he also goes on to declare war on Helgi and Hálfðan by use of yet another chess metaphor: *þa mun raþ at sitia fyrst at hnefanum [...]; då månde rådligast wara at draga först Kongsbrickan til strids [...]* (BiöFriþ:7; *hnefi* is the king). When Hildingr is asked to explain what Friðþjófr might have meant, he gives the following explanation: *enn þar er hann liest sitia mundi at fogru taflinu, þat mun koma til Yngibiargar systur yckar, giætit hennar vel sva vist.* The Swedish translation reads: *men när han låtsade sitja wid fagert tafl (eller talte om röda spelbrickan) det låter komma an på eder syster Ingeborg / be-waren hånne därföre wisseliga* (BiöFriþ:8). The explanation that the beautiful *tafla* (or rather *tafl* in this case) is identical with the red chess piece is added by Biörner. The technique is similar to that of the explanatory word pairs already discussed, but here it is not only a question of translating one Old Norse word. The word for chess piece has been introduced already, thus we can conclude that Biörner considered the passage to be particularly difficult (which it undoubtedly is) and deliberately added information when translating it.

Hopefully I have been able to give some insight into the techniques used by Biörner in order to spread knowledge about Old Norse language and culture. This was not necessarily the only aim, however. It seems to be generally agreed that the style of Biörner's translations is rather inferior. According to Malm they belong to a period in which a mimetic approach is applied:

[...] Biörners översättningar följer liksom 1600-talets originalen så nära att målspråket skruvas och tvingas. Versifikatoriska formalia följs noggrant, liksom ordstammar aktivt bibehålls, men översättningen blir tvungen och den poetiska valören obetydlig. Detta hänger förstås samman med bakomliggande avsikter att introducera (en uppfattning om) fornnordiskt språk, kultur och mentalitet i Sverige och en kraftig bild av originalens auktoritet. (Malm 1996:191).

Of course the observations are correct, but I am not entirely convinced that judgements of this kind do justice to a work like Biörner's. I do not intend to enter the minefield of discussing what can be considered poetic, yet I would like to suggest that Biörner tried to create a piece of art also in terms of style. At least one will have to admit that certain stylistic devices are used throughout the text, thus suggesting that a stylistic ideal was followed.

In cases where the Old Norse text contains word pairs bound together by *ok*, Biörner often uses word pairs with the conjunction *och*, for example when rendering *var hun þar uppfædd vel ok vanþlega* as *wart hon där wäl och granneliga uppfödd* (BiöFriþ:2) or *meþ ofsa ok ojafnapi* as *med högfärd och obillighet* (BiöFriþ:7). To my mind this clearly indicates that the overall frequent use of word pairs is also an expression of Biörner's interest in reflecting the style of the Old Norse source in his translation.

The same can be said of the attempt to imitate ACI-constructions, e.g. *De swarade / sig icke wilja lära det i unga åhren* as a rendering of *þeir kvaþust ecki vilia læra þat a unga all dri* (BiöFriþ:6). One might not regard this construction as particularly elegant or aesthetically appealing, but I doubt that Biörner chose this expression only to give a close translation of his source. On the contrary, it seems likely to me that he congratulated himself for finding ways of making his Swedish sound learned and archaic – which in his view certainly were positive attributes. And if Biörner felt enthusiasm for constructions induced by Latin and Old Norse, at least some of his contemporaries might have shared that sensation. In order to be able to discuss these questions on solid ground, it will be helpful to analyse whether or not the literary works based on Biörner's text adapt his stylistic devices.

To come to an end, I would like to discuss one stylistic trait which is abundantly used throughout Biörner's translation: There are innumerable instances of present participles. Interestingly, Biörner does not follow his exemplar in this respect (as mentioned above, the *Friðþjófs saga* is not strongly influenced by the courtly or the florid style), but renders finite verbs as participles: *þyckir þeim þa vænlegt um sina ferþ* vs. *tyckande de då wäl om sin färd* (BiöFriþ:14, m.a.); *logþu undir sig* vs. *luggande under sig* (BiöFriþ:31, m.a.); *Ok geck Friþþofur inn ok kvaþ visu* vs. *och geck Fridthjofur in / kwädande sådan wisa* (BiöFriþ:39, m.a.). Biörner does not even hesitate to make frequent use of the present participle of *vera*, a highly marked and artificial construction.³ So far I have not found a single example of this construction reflecting the source text. Typically, *Þeir bræpir foru suþur til Jadar ok funþu Hringkong i Soknarsundi, þvi hafþi Hringur kongur mest reyþst, at [...]* is rendered as *Bröderna foro nu söder til Jader/ och funno Kong Ring i Sognasundet/ warande Kong Ring däröfwer mäst wredet at [...]* (BiöFriþ:8, m.a.). The construction also appears in the preface: *Warande först til wetandes / at uphofsmann til detta Wärks tryckande / har warit [...]; Warande altså wår tids rätta Atle / som de gamla Yfwerboars wetenskaps himel / å kraftige arlar bärande [...]*. (BiöFöre:2, m.a.). Since the preface is written independently of a source, one may assume that Biörner is rather convinced of the elegance of the participle construction.

Sometimes the sense of the text is modified due to the use of a participle form. When Friðþjófr has been asked to go to the Orkneys to gather Helgi's and Hálfðan's tribute there, his men encourage him to make peace with Helgi:

Þeir spurþu Friþþiof hvort hann villdi ecki fara til Helga kongs ok sættast við hann, ok biþia af ser reiþi Balldurs, hann mællti, þat mun ek heitstreingia, at ek mun ei Helga Kong friþar biþia; eptir þat geck hann a Elliþa ok helldu þeir ut eptir firþinum Sogni. (BiöFriþ:12, m.a.)

The Swedish translation narrates this detail as follows:

Dessa sporde Fridthjof til / om icke han wille fara til Kong Helge och förlikas med honom / samt afbedja sig Balldurs wrede ? Han swarade: det löftet skall jag gjöra / at ej bidja fred af Kong Helge ; och efter detta geck han på skepet Ellida/ hållande vidare ut efter fjärden. (BiöFriþ:12, m.a.)

³ The use of this construction in Old Norse is discussed in detail in my forthcoming dissertation (Die Barlaams ok Josaphats saga – eine höfische Legende am norwegischen Königshof. Heidelberg. (Skandinavistische Arbeiten)).

In the translation it is Friðþjófr alone who sails out along the fjord. Of course it is hard to tell whether or not Biörner chose the participle construction for merely stylistic reasons. In order to give a well-founded judgement one would have to gather all the participle forms in all his translations, something I intend to do in the near future. At the moment it is nothing but a possible (yet in my view appealing) interpretation, when I suggest that in the quoted passage the participle was chosen both for stylistic and for narrative reasons: Friðþjófr appears as an even more active protagonist than in the Old Norse saga, and it is underlined that he takes his decision not to make peace with his opponents wholeheartedly, thus turning his action into an assertive statement.

Conclusion

This paper was mainly intended to illustrate that Biörner's Nordiska Kämpa Dater are well worth being studied more thoroughly than has been the case so far. I hope to have shown that Biörner had a keen interest in educating his fellow Swedes and to spread knowledge about the Old Norse language and the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Undoubtedly, Biörner was not a child of his times, but a true Rudbeckian who could have published a century earlier and go unnoticed. The impact of the Kämpa Dater on later writers, however, is reason enough to analyse his use of the Old Norse sources.

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Where Old West and Old East Norse literature meet. A project outline

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Project aims

Old East Norse text have been playing a minor role as a subject of international research, especially when compared to the lively scientific work that has been and is being done on Old West Norse topics. Fortunately, Old Swedish and Old Danish manuscripts and texts have come into focus in recent times, and some of the questions raised deal with comparative aspects and / or with the transmission of these texts.

In the project I am just starting to do research on, my aim is to put together the results of the different (historical and current) research fields. I am going to try to give a survey on how texts were materially transferred as well as in what ways the texts were changed or adapted when imported to the North-Eastern and -Western vernacular. This, I hope, will contribute to a broader perspective on the mechanisms of text transmission in the Nordic Middle Ages. I have not yet come very far, but I will at least try to outline my project task.

Firstly (and for this conference paper), I want to focus on texts that were transferred from North-West to the North-East. There are two examples I am going to refer to, but there are more.

Secondly, I am going to concentrate on texts coming from the South that were translated to both Old West and Old East Norse like Barlaam saga or Lucidarius, and I will try to find out which factors played a role in the different reception and adaptation of the texts.

As a third step, I would like to take a closer look at the relations between texts dealing with similar content but emerging in different forms in the various areas. Why, for example, would the Knittel verse be so popular in Sweden and almost not taken into account in the West when treating historical issues? Why did Icelanders and Norwegians prefer the genre of the saga, while Swedes and Danes wrote rimkrönikor?

In some cases, the answer could be trivial, but still I think it to be worthwhile to compare the ways of literary dealing with similar contents in different contexts. I have not yet decided on all the text genres I am going to take into account, but I think I will take into account literary genres as well as non-fictional texts. And I think I will not be able to avoid dealing with religious texts, although this is a very broad task, as the Christian culture is of such a great importance to the transmission of written knowledge.

Ways of transmission

On a basic level, the traditional way of communicating texts in the Middle Ages are well known: they were copied by the hands of scribes. But beyond this fact, questions arise, not only due to the destruction of text witnesses through the ages by a variety of factors. Fortunately, we do have information on how scribal work was organized in some of the scriptoria in Scandinavian cloisters (cf. the Vadstena project), but research in this field has not yet come to an end and is far from that.

Besides the inter-cloister transmission of texts, trade and private travels are other means of literary transport, although in a much minor range. Like cloisters and episcopal sites, towns and market places served as platforms for the exchange and distribution of information and knowledge, but the written word played no decisive role. Much more important were the political centres like the royal courts and, in Iceland, the sites of the höfðingjar as well as the

regular thing assemblies. Part of my project will be the tracing of these aspects of material transmission, that is the the transport and the distribution of manuscripts.

Northeastern and Northwestern texts. A comparison

The following table is to give a first idea of the texts in question. I am fully aware that this table does not take into account the time of emergence of the texts that varies highly, and that some of the texts are not to be compared directly, partly because their sources are different. Of course, the time of origin of the texts as well as the time of writing will influence both content and form. It might be interesting to see from a broader point of view what kind of content was transferred and why and which form the writers choose for their adaptations. The specific historical background is to be taken into consideration in all cases. The texts mentioned in the table are only examples and far from complete.

Table 1. Old West and Old East Norse parallel content.

Type of literature	Iceland	Norway	Sweden	Denmark
Heilagramannasögur	x	Barlaams saga ok Jósa- aphats	Fornsvenska riet	legenda-Hellige kvinder
Family sagas	x		Gutasaga	
Translated	ridda-Ívens saga		Herr Ivan	Ivan løveridder
rasögur	Flóres saga ok Blan- kiplúr		Flores och Blanzeflor	Flores og Blanseflor
	Karlamagnússaga		Hertig Fredrik af Normandi	Hertug Fredrik af Normandie
			Karl Magnus	Karl Magnus krønike
Sagas of antiquity	Þidreks saga af Bern Alexanders saga Trojumanna saga		Didrikssagan Konung Alexander Historia Trojana	
Annals / Chronicles	Annales Reseniani Annales vetustissimi Høyersannáll Annales regii Skálholtsannáll Annálabrot frá Skál- holti Lögmannsannáll Gottskálksannáll Flateyjarannáll		Erikskrönikan Engelbrektskrönikan Karlskrönikan Prosaiska krömikan Lilla rimkrönikan Sturekrönikan Gutakrönikan Vidhemsprästens an- teckningar	Roskildekröniken Jyske krønike
Aarbøger	Árbækur	Sjaellandske Aarbog Skaanske Aarbog Yngre Lundeaarbog Rydaarbogen		
National Laws	Grágás Járnsíða	Gulapingslög Frostapingslög Eiðsivapingslög Borgarþingslög Magnus lagabætirs landslov	Gutalagen Västgöotalagen Östgöotalagen Upplandslagen Dalalagen Södermannalagen Västmannalagen Hälsingelagen Tionhäradslagen Magnus Erikssons	Jyske Lov Skaanske Lov Valdemars sjællandske Lov Eriks sjællandske Lov

Town Laws		Magnus lagabætirs landslov	landslag Magnus Erikssons stadslag Björköarätten Söderköpingsrätten	Slesvigs bylov Flensborgs bylov Ribe bylov Roskilde Kobenhavns bylov Birke bylov
Medicine	AM 194 8vo		Harpestreng AM 87 8vo	
Fürstenspiegel		Konungs skuggsjá	Konunga styrelsen	
Religious writings prayers	Mariubœnir			
Instructive literature	Viðræða sálar ok líkams		Trätan mellan själ och kropp Själinnar tröst	Sjælens tröst

The following second table lists some of the texts that were transmitted both to Old West and to Old East Norse. I have not indicated where the texts came from.

Table 2. Texts transmitted to both Old West and Old East Norse.

Iceland	Norway	Sweden	Denmark
Elucidarius		Lucidarium	Lucidarius
	Barlaams saga ok Josaphats	Sagan av Barlaam och Josaphat	
Olafs saga helga		Historia Sancti Olai	
Ívens saga		Herra Ivan	Ivan løveridder
Stjórn		Pentateukparafrasen	
Karlamagnússaga		Karl Magnus	Karl Magnus krønike
Þiðreks saga af Bern		Didrikssagan	
Duggals leiðsla		Visio Tnugdali	(Visio Tnugdali)

Transmission patterns?

What would be the benefit of a combining investigation of all these very different texts that came into existence under different circumstances in different times and places and that were written for different audiences? In my opinion, it could help to improve our knowledge about mechanisms that determined the ways of adaptation and transfer of these texts.

I wonder if it will be possible to discern certain patterns of transmission. Is there a general way of transmission for a certain kind of text genre or does transmission sometimes happen in incidental ways? What individual ways of transmission are there? What aspects of transmission are crucial for the adaptation of texts?

Probably the ways of transferring texts are not unique compared to the ways common in the rest of Europe, but the adaptation itself of the texts certainly is.

Two examples: Ivan and Olaf

I will now shortly mention two texts that went from Norway eastwards. The way this happened was very different. The first text, *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion* by Chretien de Troyes was translated from Old French to Old Icelandic and to Old Swedish. An Old Danish version is extant, which is a translation from the Swedish. *Hærra Ivan* is part of the so-called *Eufemiavisor*; three verse novels that were produced on demand of Queen Eufemia, the German

wife of king Håkon Magnusson of Norway. Stefanie Würth (now Gropper) discussed in an article (Würth 2002:13), why Queen Eufemia would have Yvain translated into Old Swedish from the French, not from Old Icelandic: the West Norse saga form must have been quite unfamiliar to her as a German, and she used the opportunity of her daughter Ingeborgs engagement and wedding with duke Erik from Sweden to put the text into Old Swedish knittel. So, in this particular case, it was the personal background of the patron that determined the form and not the milieu in which the text was converted.

Like the Eufemia-texts, Ólafs saga helga was transferred from West to the East. But this time, it was not a German princess having the text converted in Norway, but a Swedish king, Karl Knutsson Bonde, who became king of Norway in 1449 and went there for the coronation ceremony. From Trondheim, he took a manuscript of Ólafs saga with him to Sweden and had the text translated into Old Swedish knittel. Rolf Pipping says about this adaptation: “Dikten är dessvärre särdeles tråkig och talanglöst skriven i schablonmässig stil.” (Pipping 1943:89). About the Old Swedish *Historia sancti Olai*, there has not been done much research (apart from Carlquist). Probably, Klemming’s commentary in his edition (Klemming 1881–82:522) as well as Pippings harsh judgement prevented scholars from dealing with this text. From my perspective, the literary quality of the text is irrelevant, as I am more interested in the fact that someone thought it to be necessary to produce an abridged and versified version of Ólafs saga. Of course, the transmission of the St:Olaf legends are a vast area of research, and for a more thorough investigation of the transmission there is more to it than this one example. Fortunately, there has been quite a number of scholars who have done research on these legends (though without special emphasis on the East Norse transmission), and so I will be able to benefit from their findings (cf. Helgonet 1997, Lidén 1999:55–65 and Mortensen/Mundal 2003:353–395).

Summary

The task of my project is the combined view of transmission of texts happening during the Nordic middle Ages both into Old East and Old West Norse. It is both questions of material transfer of manuscripts and the transformation of content that I am interested in. The range of texts is wide as I hope to be able to find patterns of transmission that are of more general importance. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to present more than a draft of my research plans yet, accompanied by two very small examples. Due to the great number of texts involved, I will not be able to investigate all text genres myself, but I think that this will at least give a picture of the work that is yet to be done in this field. As I still stand at the beginning of my research on these topics, I will be glad for any comment or critical view on my ideas and thoughts.

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Boleslaw The Brave, his father Mieszko, and Harald Fairhair – progenitors of royal dynasties described in texts bearing a political message: *Chronica Polonorum* and *Haraldar saga hárfagra*

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Chronica Polonorum written by Gallus Anonymus and Snorri Sturluson's *Haraldar saga hárfagra* have something in common. Both of them concern the history of the rulers, and not only present important events in the history of their kingdoms, but also convey a political message. Though the construction of the two texts is quite different, there are many similarities. Descriptions of the progenitors of the dynasties; the first, the strongest and the most important persons in the history of their countries, are constructed in the same way and use the same means to create their image. One can not only find it in the description of their appearance, but also in facts from their private life and their way of ruling.

The times of the reign of Mieszko and Boleslaw The Brave in Poland and Harald Fairhair in Norway were the times of change, the turning points in the history of both countries. The spouses of the rulers were portrayed as the initiators and intercessors of these changes in both texts. Harald, inspired by Gyda, decided to unite Norway, to rule it as a single, independent king and to establish legal order. Dobrawa, the Czech princess, requested of her husband, Mieszko, the adoption of Christianity and, through the act, the introduction of his kingdom to the Christian world.

Both Boleslaw and Harald greatly expanded the territories they inherited. They waged many wars and proved themselves to be great warriors and charismatic leaders commanding devoted armies. They were not only able to expand their power but also to unify conquered lands into homogenous kingdoms. At the end of their long reigns both rulers attempted to prevent future fighting for domination among their heirs by leaving dispositions in their last wills. Their plans failed. Both texts describe the reigns of the progenitors of the two royal dynasties as the golden ages for their countries, with the domestic situation deteriorating significantly after their death. Their legitimate successors were unable to maintain political authority and lost the power passed on to them. Boleslaw's and Harald's reigns so profoundly differed from those of their predecessors and successors that it was the reason, as the texts explain, why they were so popular and beloved by their subjects during their life and after their death.

Heads and tales: Mímir, Völsi, and the pursuit of prophecy

Merrill Kaplan

The prophetic head of Mímir is frequently assigned a Celtic genealogy, and the many wisdom-spouting heads of medieval Celtic literature make some such connection seem likely. However, there may be another useful parallel in *Völsa þáttr*. The manner of Óðinn's acquisition, preparation, and use of Mímir's severed head as described in *Ynglinga saga* resembles the housewife's treatment of the horse phallus in *Flateyjarbók's Völsa þáttr*. Both head and phallus are leftovers from an unrelated slaying or death: Mímir is beheaded by the dissatisfied Vanir after the first war, and the horse dies of apparently natural causes and is relieved of its member while being butchered. Both body parts are salvaged and smeared with herbs (*urtur* in *Ynglinga saga* and *laukar ok önnur grös* in *Völsa þáttr*) to prevent them from decaying (*funa* or *rotna*). Both Óðinn and the *húsfreyja* speak magic over them: he *kvað þar yfir galdra* and she pronounces *formálar* and *kveðr visu*. The effects are comparable: the head, as the object of the verb *magna*, is "increased" in some magical way while the phallus grows and is "strengthened" (*vex [...] ok styrknar*). Both are re-animated to a degree that, while limited, restores to each an essential function: Mímir's head can speak, and Völsi can stand on its own. Óðinn creates an object through which he can acquire information. To what end the housewife creates Völsi is not entirely clear; the ceremony is interrupted, and the reader never gets to see its intended results. However, the etymological links among *Völsi*, *völr* (staff), and *völva* (seeress, lit. staff-wielder) suggest that a Völsi-wielder might have access to prophecy. This paper argues that we should see the use of both Mímir's head and Völsi as representations of *seiðr* made to very different literary ends in their respective texts. In *Ynglinga saga*, Snorri is at pains to set Óðinn in a specific light. In *Völsa þáttr*, Jón Þórðarson reveals the ugliest underpinnings of *seiðr* in a tale about the Christian monopoly on revealed knowledge.

Sweden of the Sagas

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In this paper, I discuss the representation of Sweden and Swedes in the *Íslendingasögur*, with an emphasis on identifying patterns across the works, both in terms of narrative structure and content. The aim in doing so is to shed light on modes of representing non-Icelanders in the *Íslendingasögur*, as well as on medieval Icelandic conceptions of Sweden as a distinct region within Scandinavia. I also aim here to add to a longer-term project that examines the place of foreign visitors to Iceland in the saga corpus more generally.

As the scope of this paper is limited to Swedish characters, I am cautious about drawing broad conclusions about their representation – observations given here will need to be framed by a wider study, and one that reads for the characterisation of Swedes in the context both of other genres of saga literature and representations of characters from other regions beside Sweden. However, it is clear that some similarities exist in saga episodes involving Swedish characters: in four of the *Íslendingasögur*, Swedes are given roles as intruders or outsiders who threaten the community of the saga and whose deaths bring about a change in the fortunes of their killers.

A Norwegian in Sweden

At the beginning of *Svarfdæla saga*, the audience meets Þorsteinn Þorgnýrsson, the unpromising younger brother of Þórólfr. Þorsteinn is abrasive, very big, and loath to leave the comfort of the hall. He is so lazy and still that a pile of ashes gathers around him. People trip over his feet. While his older brother is bringing honour and wealth to the family, Þorsteinn attracts only the indignation of his father, to the point where Þorgnýr will not hear Þorsteinn referred to as his son. Eventually, after Þórólfr has had a turn at tripping over Þorsteinn, the brothers agree to go trading together. Þórólfr accepts Þorsteinn's proviso that Þorsteinn should always have the last say in any disagreements between them, and, much to their mother's surprise, there is a call made for the running of a bath: Þorsteinn is to be cleaned up.

Þorsteinn, though, is not particularly well-suited to trading. He is more concerned with adding to his bravery than his wealth, and, in pursuit of a fame that can only be won through the hardest of fights, he sets himself up against Ljótr. In the lead-up to the encounter, Þorsteinn declares his pleasure in the fact that by autumn he will either be dead or have killed Ljótr. He also tells Þórólfr that during the summer he should go trading – that he does not want any harm to come to his older brother. Þórólfr rejects the instruction, joins the expedition against Ljótr, and is killed.

This is the sequence of events that, by chapter six of the saga, has brought Þorsteinn to Sweden and to the hall of Earl Herrauðr. There, Þorsteinn breaks local custom by entering fully-armed. He declares who he is and asks for the use of the hall for a memorial service for Þórólfr. Herrauðr consents, and through his hospitality establishes a basis for Þorsteinn's later assistance to the hall. During the winter, Herrauðr and his followers become quiet and downcast. They are being hounded by Moldi, a half-berserk Viking who wants to marry the earl's daughter, Ingibjörg. Þorsteinn insults Moldi and accepts a challenge to a duel, the hall cheers up, and, with the help of Herrauðr – he knows about Moldi's sorcery and how to beat it – Þorsteinn kills the berserk. In doing so, he avenges Þórólfr (Moldi is Ljótr's brother) and rids the hall of a grave threat. He marries Ingibjörg and, after another winter in Sweden, returns to Norway.

The plot elements of this opening episode might be listed in this way: 1) a difficult young man, lazy and taciturn, is introduced; 2) he leaves home and, because of his bravery and strength, is more successful than anyone had expected; 3) because of his unrestrained personal ambition, he takes on the strongest opponent; 4) the subsequent fight results in a win but also personal loss; 5) he then travels to a hall (in Sweden) that is threatened by a hostile intruder; 6) he fights the intruder and is rewarded by his host. As we will see later, the series of events bears a number of similarities to other episodes in the *Íslendingasögur* that have a significant involvement by Swedish characters.

References to Sweden

Svarfdæla saga's extended setting of action in Sweden is unusual in the context of the *Íslendingasögur*, which make relatively few direct references to Sweden or to those of Swedish descent, by which I mean those specifically referred to as *sænskr*, *Svíar*, or as being from *Svíþjóð*. In this, I am following the sagas in their differentiation of *Svíþjóð* from other regions, such as Gautland and Jamtaland, that form provinces within Sweden today. The formation of a unified Sweden is felt to have come relatively late, a fact that the saga authors appears to recognise. In *Brennu-Njáls saga*, for instance, Atli, the son of Arnviðr jarl, is described as being from East Gautland, and Gunnar and Kolskeggr travel specifically to Smálönd; in *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*, Hörðr is off to Gautland to meet Haraldr jarl; and in the opening of *Droplaugarsona saga*, we find that Ketill is riding east not to Sweden but to Jamtaland.

The identification *austmaðr*, a term that is used to refer to Norwegian traders and sometimes as a nickname, is much more common. *Austmenn*, too, are more likely to be given significant roles in the events of the sagas: they become part of the feud narrative, take sides, and have an impact on the Icelandic characters. This is the case in, for instance, *Fljótsdæla saga*, in which the *Austmenn* have a prominent role throughout. The *kaupdrengr* Örn in *Hænsa-Þóris saga* is another example.

By contrast, of the references to Sweden that do occur in the *Íslendingasögur*, many are minor in terms of plot, character development, or theme. In *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*, we learn merely that Björn and Auðunn travel to Sweden before moving on to Denmark; in *Brennu-Njáls saga* that, by the time of his encounter with Hrútr, Atli has been outlawed in both Sweden and Norway, and that Þorkell hákr travels through Sweden on his way to and from his fights with the fantastic beings located still further east. *Droplaugarsona saga* mentions the return of Grímr and Ormar from their raiding in Sweden; in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, Arinbjörn cites the poet Bragi's conduct before the Swedish king Björn as an example for Egill to follow; in *Fóstbræðra saga*, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld rejects the opportunity of travelling to Sweden; and in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Björn travels to Sweden after he has been outlawed. While these references to Sweden may be significant to the saga characters and the audience of the saga, for the modern reader there is little indication of their narrative importance.

Icelanders in Sweden

More detailed narratives set in Sweden can be found in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* and *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*. In both, we find the poets enjoying the kind of welcome and hospitality that we often see granted to Icelanders during their travels in Norway. That is, these two sagas observe the conventional presentation of Icelanders abroad: straight away, they are recognised as important to the court and given opportunities to address it. Their skill is clear, and their leaving the court is seen as a loss. *Flóamanna saga*, too, places a reasonably detailed event in Sweden, Þorgils' fight with the sorcerer Randviðr. As with Þorsteinn's fight

with Moldi in *Svarfdæla saga*, Þorgils is in a position to prevent a marriage between the host's daughter, Sigríðr, and a suitor of whom the host is afraid. Þorgils volunteers to fight on the farmer's behalf, kills Randviðr, then two other Vikings, Snækollr and Snæbjörn, and the summer after sails to Iceland.

In both form and content, the events in *Flóamanna saga* bear a number of similarities to those in *Svarfdæla saga* that I describe above. During the journey in Sweden, the traveller arrives at a hall/farm that is beset by an intruder who threatens violence and who is capable of sorcery. In both instances, the intruder wants to marry the daughter of the owner of the hall/farm. The traveller offers to fight the intruder on the owner's behalf, and, despite the supernatural abilities of his opponent, wins the duel and relieves the hall/farm of its troubles. The traveller is rewarded with gifts, and shortly afterwards leaves.

A Swedish ghost in Iceland

A match with *Svarfdæla saga* is also found in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, when Grettir takes on the ghost of Glámr, described by the saga as a Swede who has recently come to Iceland. Grettir, like Þorsteinn, is slow to show his potential – “ekki bráðgörr, meðan hann var á barnsaldri” (36); “he was not accomplished while he was in his childhood years.” He is also quickly identified as a quarrelsome young man with whom it will be difficult to deal, and as immensely strong. Like his father, Grettir does not like farm work and seems ill-suited to routine life. And, as in *Svarfdæla saga*, father and son appear to dislike and provoke one another. The characters destined to take on the two sagas' Swedish intruders are alike.

An ironic comment by the author, “margir báðu hann vel fara en fáir aftur koma” (974) – “many wished Grettir well on his travels abroad but few wished him to return” – comes at the beginning of an adult career of excessive personal ambition and troublemaking. A pattern of behaviour soon emerges, one of taciturn laziness, disruptiveness, rudeness, followed by bursts of intense activity. The last of these behaviours means that Grettir can be of use to those around him, as is the case when he defeats Glámr as well as during a number of other incidents, such as his efforts during his voyage to Norway, his strength in acquiring fire for his shipmates, his fight with the berserk Snækollr, and his fight with a troll woman in Sandhaugar and her male friend.

And yet, like many of the ambitious characters in the *Íslendingasögur*, Grettir is seldom able to restrain himself when it would be best for the community or indeed himself if he did. As a result, Þórarinn hinn spaki worries about Grettir's suitability for important matters, a concern which his foster-son Barði confirms when Grettir confronts him near Þóreyjargnúpr:

Grettir svarar: “Bleyðask þykki mér þú, Barði,” sagði Grettir, “ef þú þorir eigi at berjask við mik.” “Kalla þú þat sem þú vill,” segir Barði, “en í öðrum stað vilda ek, at þú kæmir fram ójafnaði þínum en við mik; er þat eigi ólíkligt, því at nú gengr ór hófi offors þitt.” Gretti þótti illar spár hans, ok efar nú fyrir sér, hvárt hann skyldi ráða til einhvers þeira, ok sýnisk honum þat óforsjálígt, er þeir váru sex, en hann einn. (106)

Grettir answers: “You seem cowardly to me, Barði,” said Grettir, “if you dare not fight with me.” “You may call it what you like,” says Barði, “but I would prefer your overbearing nature to be fulfilled in other places than here with me. It is not unlikely, because your insolence now exceeds all moderation.” Grettir thought ill of his prophecy, and hesitates now about whether he ought to attack one of them, but this seemed unwise as they were six in number and he was alone.

At the heart of this confrontation is Grettir's socially disruptive desire to constantly challenge his own strength as well as that of others, a clear similarity with Þorsteinn in *Svarfdæla saga*.

Many, like Barði, recognise the compulsion and attempt to avoid becoming victims of it. Others seek to restrain Grettir, as is the case prior to the fight with Glámr – Grettir, like his counterpart in *Svarfdæla saga*, is only encouraged by the warnings he receives.

A key difference between *Grettis saga* and *Svarfdæla saga* lies in the extent of Glámr's, or the intruder's, back story. *Grettis saga* is careful to explain how it is that a poor farmer from Forsæludalr ends up with the services of an abrasive, heathen Swede. Such details help to ground the incidents to come in the everyday world of a farming community, and in this way serve to highlight the strangeness of foreign characters and the events they bring on. We read that Skafti the Lawspeaker sees Glámr as a solution to the haunting in the valley, and that, during the Assembly, Glámr agrees to work for Þórhallr so long as he is allowed to do as he pleases. In the following winter, he joins the household. Immediately, there is tension: Glámr is rude, faithless, and unpopular. Þórhallr's wife is more troubled by Glámr than others are, a fact that may be explained later by the ghost's harassment of her and Þórhallr's daughter: as in *Svarfdæla saga* and *Flóamanna saga*, the threat of violence appears to have a sexual element. Another feature in common with *Svarfdæla saga* is the concentration of the threat during the Yule festivities.

The solution to the problem seems at first to rest with Grettir's strength and courage, and indeed with his excessive ambition. Famously, he is able to rid the farm of Glámr, but in Glámr's final moments encounters a terrifying vision of his own future – Glámr's stare confirms that Grettir will always be on the edge of Icelandic society, an outlaw. Clearly, at this point the saga is making a much more complex use of the intruder figure than we see in *Svarfdæla saga*, as the episode has moved beyond its function of confirming Grettir's bravery and strength towards a questioning or at least broader thematising of it – his desire to test himself against the ghost has damaged him, and, despite the gratitude of the household, the social benefit may have come at too great a cost to the individual and the people with whom he will deal in the future. Grettir himself declares that the fight with Glámr has worsened his temperament, and that he now has more trouble restraining himself than he did before. In fact, excessive ambition has not solved the problem of Glámr; rather, it has established Grettir as a problem figure for the community, by no means as terrifying as Glámr but certainly as difficult to control.

The Swedish berserks

In *Eyrbyggja saga*, we again see foreign characters threatening the stability of the community. This time there are two, the Swedish berserks Leiknir and Halli, whom Vermundr has brought across from the Norwegian court of Earl Hákon. There, Vermundr was warned against taking berserks to Iceland, Earl Hákon pointing out that there could be little use for such types in a small farming community. Vermundr, though, is keen to gain ground in his relations with his brother, Styrr, and thinks the berserks will help. Before leaving Norway, Earl Hákon warns that the berserks must be treated with respect. Just as in *Grettis saga* when Þórhallr agrees to employ Glámr, *Eyrbyggja saga* creates a strong sense of mismatch and foreboding – Þórhallr is a relatively minor social figure who has to fetch his own horses, while Vermundr is a farmer ill-equipped to deal with fighters like these.

In Iceland, it is soon apparent that Vermundr is out of his depth. Halli wishes to marry, and Vermundr, unsure of how to respond, is forced to consult Styrr. Styrr agrees to take the berserks off Vermundr's hands, and is then faced with the same issue of marriage that has been troubling Vermundr: Halli expresses a wish to marry Styrr's daughter, Ásdís. Thus, in a familiar turn in episodes of this kind, the threat posed by the berserks comes to be focussed on the host's daughter. And, as is the case in *Svarfdæla saga*, the threat to the daughter will be taken away by her future husband. Snorri goði suggests that Styrr set the berserks a number of

difficult tasks, upon completion of which Halli expects to be given Ásdís in marriage. Exhausted by the tasks, the berserks are weak enough to be attacked by Styrr. Rather like Grettir and Glámr, the berserks exert their strength to the point where they become vulnerable.

In contrast, Snorri goði is never a victim of his strengths: his self-possession sets him apart from other characters and gives him a noticeable advantage in his dealings with them. He does not act rashly or hastily, and tends not to be physically violent himself, preferring to achieve his aims through others' acts of violence (see, for example, chs. 41–44). He is also a relatively silent character. The combined effect of these characteristics is that, for those around him, his precise position tends to be unclear and his actions difficult to predict. One early presumption about him (that he is poor) is seen to fail in an amusing way when Snorri outwits Börkr in order to make a profitable purchase of the land at Helgafell.

It appears that Snorri goði's characteristics also combine to make him unpopular, for at the close of the saga we are told that Snorri goði became more popular later in life (p. 180). Snorri is by no means a noble hero, and in this respect is contrasted to his more popular rival, Arnkell. And though he seems to share in the far-sightedness of characters like Njáll Þorgeirsson in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, it would be difficult to claim Snorri goði as one of the men of good will featured in other *Íslendingasögur*. His handling of the Swedish berserks, then, is as consistent an expression and development of his personality as is Grettir's fight with Glámr. While Grettir openly expresses a desire to fight Glámr, and appears to have no ulterior motive other than to beat a stronger opponent and thereby achieve greater fame and honour, Snorri is secretive about the full nature of his involvement, and benefits not so much from the act itself as its consequences: he has helped Styrr, Ásdís is free of Halli, and the region has been ridden of its dangerous new arrivals. While Grettir leaves Forsæludalur in a worse position than in which he arrived, Snorri goði has worked matters out well in advance and profits as a regional authority figure.

Patterns

In *Svarfdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Grettis saga*, hostile Swedish intruders threaten the safety and stability of a local community. A central character then enters, is told of the problem, and is asked to help or offers to help. In the lead-up to the confrontation, one of the non-fighting characters gives a warning or offers advice in dealing with the threat. A fight occurs and the intruder is killed. The killer is offered a reward, and in both *Svarfdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga* that is the reward of marriage to the woman whom the intruder had sought out.

An important point of differentiation is the way in which the confrontations are ultimately brought to a close. As, in these sagas, the intruder is being opposed by a major character, the confrontation is in keeping with that characters' development as well as function in advancing both plot and theme. Thus, Snorri goði's characterisation as an expert tactician is confirmed by an ability to outwit the berserks – he produces a social benefit to the region and he strengthens his own position. In contrast, Grettir is not tactical but instead seeks to take Glámr on in terms that Glámr himself understands well: a one-to-one a fight to the death. His mode of conflict is more likely to attract honour and popularity than is Snorri goði's, but it is also more dangerous and, in the end, more destructive. While Snorri goði and the berserks fight without ever meeting, Grettir comes so close to his enemy that he is bound by his influence for the rest of his life.

Implications

As I mentioned in my introduction, it is rather early in this project to speak conclusively about the implications of similarities that we find in the structure and content of episodes involving Swedes and Sweden. Certainly, we are left with as many questions as answers, and the next

stage in a study of this kind lies both with the representation of other non-Icelandic characters in the *Íslendingasögur* and further afield. The kings' sagas, for instance, offer a far more detailed and substantial representation of Swedish culture and society than we find in sagas based predominantly in Iceland.

Whether there is a connection between the ethical outlook implicit in these sagas and the Swedish identity of the characters who threaten the community is also far from clear. The fact that so few Swedish characters appear in the *Íslendingasögur* undercuts their representative value, especially as characters like Glámr and Halli are probably more readily identifiable as berserks, sorcerers, or ghosts than as Swedes – Sweden may well be a flag of convenience, so to speak, and stand mainly for the idea that the characters are from far away. Swedes, we know, tended to travel towards the east rather than the west, and Sweden was late in adopting Christianity. A geographical and historical context of that kind may well support the literary use of Sweden as a berserk- and sorcerer-producing region.

The two episodes set in Iceland appear to thematise ambition and restraint, and to share in a broader ethical concern, previously identified in a number of other sagas, about the balance of personal ambition and community well-being. Snorri goði, whose ambition is framed by tactical awareness and a strong sense of regional power, seems best able to judge a course of action that will both end the threat to the community and further his own desires. Grettir, on the other hand, driven by excessive personal ambition, goes too far in taking on Glámr. The Swedes, it appears, are to be handled with greater care than that.

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Sweden and the Swedes in English language surveys of the Viking period

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Introduction

The Vikings are a part of the 'mental furniture' of the average modern person's mind, even as far from their original homelands and centres of operations as Australia. The major football team in Australia's capital city, Canberra, is known as the 'Canberra Raiders', and a particularly ferocious and mean-looking horn-helmeted Viking forms a major element in the club's official insignia. A search for 'Viking' in the online version of the business telephone directory for Australia's largest city, Sydney, yields over forty entries. A few of the names, such as Viking Sauna and Husqvarna Viking Sales & Service, probably indicate a wish to draw attention to the Scandinavian associations of the company's products. Most, however, seem simply to reflect an association of Vikings with bold, vigorous masculine action and with the sea (or even just water). Thus one encounters Viking Car Spares & Accessories, Viking Cargo Logistics, Viking Diesel & Electrics, Viking Freight, Viking Marine, Viking Pools, Viking Pumps, Viking Scaffolding, Viking Sheet Metal & Engineering, Viking Tool & Die, and Viking Window Cleaning.

Many factors contribute to popular perceptions of the Vikings. The role of book length surveys of the Viking period intended for the general reader in creating these perceptions (and amending them where it seems necessary) is difficult to calculate, and may be less than the authors of such surveys clearly hope, but this does not seem to have deterred authors and publishers of such books in the last fifty years. The purpose of this paper is to look at an aspect of these books, their treatment of Viking Age Sweden and the Swedes, with a view to discovering the picture of these they present to non-specialist readers interested enough in the Viking phenomenon to read a book about it. It will endeavour to detect major elements in the treatment, and changes that have occurred over the years.

The books examined for this purpose are listed in the bibliography. They are limited to English language books that treat the Viking phenomenon comprehensively, and that are not restricted to specific aspects of it. For this reason they exclude books devoted solely to Viking activity in limited parts of their world, such as the British Isles or Russia; books on groups within Norse society, such as women, kings, or slaves; and studies focused on topics such as Viking Age religion, ships, or warfare. Books on restricted time spans within the Viking period are also excluded, as are those in which the Vikings are but one focus among several, such as the Time-Life publication *Fury of the Northmen* (Amsterdam, c.1988) that also includes treatment of Pre-Columbian Amerindian civilisations and Heian Japan. Books intended specifically for children and young people are also excluded from this examination. Were they included, the listing would be far longer than it is. The Vikings are a very popular subject in juvenile literature, presumably in part because of a hope that boys, notoriously of concern to educators as being generally more reluctant readers than girls, will enjoy reading about people who led adventurous lives, fought a lot, and were rather uncouth in their behaviour.

Excluding revised editions and reissues from the count, there are fifty-seven books listed. With only one exception, the authors, or their publishers, seem to have envisaged that some at least of the readership would be non-specialists. Even in the case of Peter Sawyer's *The Age of the Vikings*, a work which set out to challenge conventional scholarly wisdom, the dust jacket to the second edition quotes a reviewer from *The Economist* who states that Sawyer 'opens up the work of Scandinavian experts [...] which would, without his book, remain inac-

cessible not only to the general reader but also to most scholars'. The exception is a recent publication, *The Viking World*, edited by Stefan Brink and Neil Price. In the preface the editors state that unlike the general syntheses which 'appear with some regularity' the new work is intended for an academic audience (2008: xix). The observations to be made in this paper do not generally apply to this work of 717 pages, by some seventy different scholars.

The books listed are nevertheless very diverse. Many are large-format, lavishly illustrated works; a few, such as the book by Richards and the 1999 Haywood volume, are in a concise 'pocket book' format. Several are by distinguished historians, archaeologists and literary scholars in fields relevant to the Vikings, while others are by authors who have also written on very different topics. Dust jackets indicate that Allan has produced books on Americans in 1920s Paris and on Edgar Allan Poe, while Clements has published *Confucius: A Biography*. With only four exceptions, the works of du Chaillu (1889), Mawer (1913), Kendrick, and Olrik (both 1930), the books listed all date from 1960 or later. Before 1960 English language publishers apparently saw little market need for Viking books aimed at the general reader. Since then the stream of new publications has not run dry: excluding revisions and reissues seven books appeared in the 1960s, twelve in the 1970s, six in the 1980s, eleven in the 1990s, and seventeen have appeared to date in the 2000s.

Terminology

Eric Christiansen (2002: 1) has suggested that referring to all Scandinavians of the centuries around 1000 as Vikings is a little like using the term 'cowboy' to designate all citizens of the United States. The books dealt with here frequently observe that there is a case for employing 'Viking' only to refer to those who went on raids, but that the practice of using it far more generally for 'Viking Age' Scandinavians of all ages, most callings and both genders is very well established (e.g., Sawyer 1982: 1). Almost all fall in with the general practice. Among the books listed, only that of Oxenstierna does not contain 'Viking' or 'Vikings' in its title. Kirsten Wolf, uniquely, makes it her practice to use 'Viking' only of those 'who engaged in banditry, raiding, trading, or military or political action', and to employ 'Scandinavians' for those who remained at home (2004: 3). Her wide-ranging book is however entitled *Daily Life of the Vikings*. 'Viking' clearly is seen by publishers as a selling point.

Many of the books listed note that in the Viking Age (usually seen as extending from the late eighth century to the second half of the eleventh century) the boundaries of Sweden were not those of the modern nation of that name. Konstam's *Historical Atlas of the Viking Age* (2004: 8) shows the salmon pink of Viking Denmark extending well into what is now southern Sweden, the yellow of Viking Norway covering most of the territory of the present Norwegian nation, but the green of Viking Sweden confined largely to the southeast of present day Sweden, although it does extend to pockets of territory in modern Finland. More rarely consideration is given to the more basic issues of whether there was in a modern sense a Sweden in the Viking Age at all, and whether we can safely refer to Swedes rather than Svear, Gotar, Gotlanders, etc. 'They [the Vikings] came from the Norse lands that would one day be known as Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, but at the start of the Viking Age they did not think of themselves as Danes, Norwegians, or Swedes', observes Allan (2002: 10). Most authors do use 'Sweden' 'Swedish' and 'Swedes' freely, a mode of description which may indeed be questionable but which could be matched easily enough in the many modern accounts of the early Middle Ages in what are now England, Ireland, and France.

Sweden

One message emerges sharply and repeatedly from reading what Viking books for the general reader relate about Sweden. It is that Sweden is the part of Viking Scandinavia about which

we know least, the part that was the slowest to achieve unity, and the slowest to embrace the Christianity that tended to be associated with unification, integration into wider European culture, and the advent of recorded history. Writers display no doubt that Viking Age Sweden was part of the Viking homelands, and they freely use artefacts discovered in Sweden to illustrate and enhance their general observations about the Viking Age. In fact, Swedish artefacts, notably the runic inscriptions far more prevalent there than elsewhere and the picture stones from Gotland (an island not all writers regard as Swedish territory in the Viking Age) provide some of the more impressive illustrations that adorn many of the books. But there are frequent admissions that for much of the period we do not know what was happening in the territory now known as Sweden. It was, according to Colleen Batey and her colleagues, ‘always the wildest and most remote of the Scandinavian lands’ (1994: 206).

This situation provides something of a contrast with that of the centuries immediately preceding the Viking Age, a point some writers make. Kendrick suggests that pre-Viking developments give Sweden ‘title to claim herself the oldest state in Europe’ (1930: 70); Brøndsted describes pre-Viking Sweden as the ‘most advanced’ of the Scandinavian countries (1965: 22); and Magnus Magnusson claims that ‘Sweden had a Golden Age [...] before she had a Viking Age’ (1973: 13–14). But few books stress this aspect, and the few which attempt to outline the political or social developments of specific peoples in Scandinavia during the Viking period find themselves with limited material relating to the Swedes. Brøndsted (in the Skov translation) provides eleven pages on the ninth century Danes, eight on the Norwegians, and five and a half on the Swedes. His figures for the tenth century are nine each for the Danes and Norwegian, and two and a half for the Swedes, and in his chapter on the eleventh century ‘the Danes and the Norwegians’ receive ten pages, the Norwegians considered alone eight, and the Swedes only two. The decades after Brøndsted wrote did not produce a marked improvement in scholarly knowledge, judging from Christiansen’s consideration of the three peoples in his 2002 book: four pages are devoted to the Danes, nine to the Norwegians, and only one to the Swedes (117–132). A moderately diligent reader of surveys of the Viking Age is unlikely to miss the point that where the Viking Age is concerned it is the territories of present-day Sweden that are darkest for us today.

What evidence is available is of course put to use. What can be learnt from the *Vita Anskarii* is frequently paraphrased or summarised, along with Adam of Bremen’s rather lurid description of the pagan temple at Uppsala. Archaeological evidence from the Birka cemeteries, and more recently from the town itself, frequently receives considerable attention. The artefacts unearthed in or near the town suggest links with much of the known world, and on the basis of them a colourful picture of a flourishing cosmopolitan town is frequently drawn. Even writers whose style is generally magisterial allow themselves a rhetorical flourish when describing Birka:

This meadow-like area, now dotted with birch and juniper, was once a thriving market, thronged in the the summer months by traders from the whole of Scandinavia, from the realms of the Carolingians, from Russia, from Arab states of Asia and from Constantinople and other parts of the Eastern Empire. [...] Here was all the noise of workshops, animals and creaking carts, curses in twenty languages and prayers to a dozen gods. (Foote and Wilson 1970: 207)

There is of course some danger in believing that artefacts from far away lands were necessarily brought to Birka by inhabitants of those lands, or even by people who had themselves travelled to the locations where the items were manufactured.

The Swedes abroad

The Scandinavians of the Viking centuries have captured the modern imagination because they did not remain at home. If Scandinavian history in the years 800–1100 had been a story of a people who mainly looked inward, gradually unifying and converting to Christianity and fighting the occasional war among themselves or with their immediate neighbours, there almost certainly would be few books relating to them intended for the general reader in the English-speaking world. It is not surprising, therefore, that what attention the Swedes receive in the books under consideration largely relates to their adventures outside Scandinavia.

In book after book on the Vikings the point is made that the Swedes of the Viking Age directed their activities east, across the Baltic and into the lands that are now Russia and Ukraine, and along the great rivers, so that extensive contact was made with Islamic realms, particularly those in Central Asia, and with Constantinople. A contrast is drawn with the Norwegians and Danes, who are said to have gone west to the British Isles, the lands on the western European seaboard and in the western Mediterranean, and across the North Sea to Iceland, Greenland, and beyond. Some writers do take care to point out that the division was not absolute, and that the early eleventh century in particular saw significant Swedish participation in the Danish-led attacks on England, possibly as a result of a drying up of opportunities in the east (e.g., Sawyer 1971: 5–6). But the motif of an east-west, Swedes-others division of Viking activity emerges sharply. Michael Kirkby comments self-referentially on the phenomenon, when after two chapters entitled ‘Early Raids’ and ‘Colonization’ he begins one entitled ‘The Eastward Movement’ by observing

The comparted nature of the Viking movement is indicated by the fact that it has been possible for the last two chapters to be written with scarcely a mention of Sweden or eastern Europe and that during the course of the present one hardly any reference will be necessary to any point on the map west of longitude 15°. (1977: 104)

Only slightly less ubiquitous is the idea that the nature of the activity of the Swedish Viking in the east was different from that of their fellow-Scandinavians in the west. It is widely suggested that whereas the latter engaged in raiding and plunder, and later in conquest and the establishment of farms, the former were primarily traders. The picture is sometimes modified in various ways: it is observed that trading did also take place in the west; that Vikings in the east needed to fight at times, and were not averse to taking opportunities for raiding and plunder when they arose; and that circumstances in the Finnish and Slavic lands, which lacked monasteries and significant towns to pillage and organised states to blackmail, help explain the differences.

Nevertheless, the idea of the Swedes in the east as primarily traders has been persistent. In 1913 Mawer wrote that ‘The Swedes were for the most part interested only in Eastern Europe, and there by way of trade rather than battle [...]’ (9). Poertner in 1975 observed that ‘the Swedes in western Russia [...] were mostly traders interested in the turnover of goods, rather than pirates and brigands killing for booty’ (50); Wilson in 1989 proclaimed that ‘trade is practically the whole basis of the Viking activities in the East’ (101); and as recently as 2002 Konstam could write:

The Viking presence in Russia was completely different from that in the rest of Europe. They came as traders, then governed small townships, which in turn developed into city-states. Power was the by-product of trade. (170)

The quotation from Konstam serves as a reminder that even those who view the Swedes in the east as primarily traders acknowledge that they may also have had a role as leaders and state builders. This, of course, is at the core of the so-called Normanist controversy, which now has

an acrimonious history of over 250 years. Perhaps it is not surprising that books that often seem intended to celebrate the Viking achievement by indicating the breadth of their geographical reach and displaying the artefacts of Viking culture in strikingly artistic photographs should incline, often implicitly, to a Normanist view that argues Swedes did have a significant role to play in the formation of the early Russian state. But while Kendrick could write in 1930 that ‘The Swedes were the folk who achieved the mightiest and most remarkable triumph of viking history, namely the creation of an independent Swedish-Russian state’ (9–10) more recent writers virtually without exception present a more moderate view. A very common claim is that the debate has cooled, with the abandonment on both sides of more extreme claims, a process said to be aided by a political environment allowing less ideologically motivated access to increased archaeological evidence.

Archaeological finds, and in particular the discovery of vast quantities of Islamic dirhems in the soil of what is now Sweden, leave no doubt that Viking Age Sweden was influenced by its contacts with the east (From Viking to Crusader, 1992: 78), but there is little discussion of the social effects of such influence in the books under consideration, probably for want of firm evidence. The coin hoards, with the coins carefully cleaned so as to draw attention to the Kufic script, provide some striking photographs, and it is often stated that the inflow of silver which the coins indicate had a role in stimulating the economy of the entire Scandinavian region. There are some suggestions that Orthodox Christianity, stemming from Kiev and ultimately from Constantinople, may have had some influence in Sweden (e.g., Roesdahl 1991: 166), but none of the books seriously considers the possibility that Sweden could have been drawn permanently into an Orthodox Christian orbit. Arbman and his colleagues, who do raise the issue, quickly dismiss the possibility:

Byzantium was too far away to exert serious religious influence. The Roman Church prevailed in Scandinavia because the bishopric of Hamburg was close by. (1974: 140).

Changing perspectives

In Christiansen’s view ‘The map, and the story of Nordic immigration to the east is changing too fast for a survey to catch’ (2002: 217). However, the books considered here do not generally give an impression of such rapid development in regard to our understanding of Sweden and the Swedes abroad. Examined in chronological order they do indicate that more comprehensive archaeological evidence from within Sweden has become available over the years, notable in the case of Birka, and that the years since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 have brought more archaeological evidence from what were once its territories, along with a greater freedom to examine and study it. Holman detects in scholarship ‘a desire to move beyond the simplistic image of the Vikings as destructive raiders in the West and constructive traders in the East’ (2005: 12). But an attempt to highlight how Viking Age surveys considered here have changed over time (apart from becoming more sophisticated in terms of physical book production) would probably focus not on Sweden and the expeditions east but on such factors as enhanced attention to the role of the Sámi in Viking Age Scandinavia, and on more serious attempts to explore as a cultural phenomenon the modern fascination with the Vikings.

Role of the Swedish experience

Some surveys of the Viking Age have little to say about the Swedes abroad: *Viking Empires* by Forte, Oram, and Pedersen (2002) and *The World of the Vikings* by Hall (2007) are important recent examples. Much more commonly the expeditions to the east are given a chapter of

their own. But it is commonly just one chapter out of half a dozen or more recounting Viking exploits abroad, with far more attention devoted to the expeditions west, to Britain and Ireland, the Frankish realms, Iceland, Greenland, and Vinland. This of course reflects the fact that the perspective of the writers is frequently a British one, even if very few would be comfortable with Magnus Magnusson's observation that 'At 6 p.m. on Saturday 14 October 1066 the world changed. The Viking Age was effectively over' (1980: 313). It seems fair comment that in Viking books for the English-speaking general reader the activities of the Swedish Vikings receive less attention than their role in European history deserves.

Consideration of the expeditions east is included in the books partly because it would be difficult to argue that an overview of the Viking Age was complete without them. One might just possibly work on the premise that Vikings were people who went raiding in longships, and that this excluded most of the eastern activity, but such a view would also exclude much activity in Western Europe that most scholars would want to consider Viking, not to mention the fascinating voyages of exploration and settlement across the North Atlantic. However, the eastern expeditions have another important function in the surveys. They bring to the Viking story, which many of the books seem written to celebrate, an element of the exotic east, placing into the Viking story the misty beginnings of Russia and glimpses of Byzantium and Central Asia, of Kiev and Novgorod, Constantinople, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Samarqand. Thanks to them, the Viking world can be shown to stretch from the shores of Newfoundland almost to the borders of China. The opportunity to include with so much else some illustrations of exotic places and of artefacts from far off lands is understandably one that appeals to authors and their publishers, even if their attentions are focused far more on the greyer lands of western Europe.

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Celtic and Continental handicraft traditions; Template use on Gotlandic Picture Stones analysed by 3D- scanning

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The Gotland Picture-Stones belong to the most spectacular and informative artefacts of the Iron Age and Viking Age in Sweden. This treasure of images is generally considered to illustrate myths and cultural phenomena in the Icelandic sagas. In this study, a number of Viking Age Gotland picture stones have been documented and analysed by optical 3D-scanning, with regard to template use. The results will be discussed in the context of handicraft traditions.

Geometrical construction – Celtic Ornament

It has earlier been noticed that the interlace ornament on the Gotland picture stones might show a Celtic influence (Lindqvist 1941). Continental and Insular influences on Scandinavian art styles have been extensively discussed in earlier research (e.g. Åberg 1941, 1948; Nerman 1935, 1975; Holmqvist 1952, 1977; Eshleman 1983 and others), and will not be further discussed. Dr Uaininn O'Meadhra has pointed out to me, though, that Celtic interlace is applied on objects according to Geometrical principles, demanding a mathematical approach where intersection points are marked with a tool and the ornament lines adapted to these points. This method implies a certain level of intellectual insight into the principles of the ornament (cf O'Meadhra 1987). When this art was performed to its full extent, it was an expression not only for aesthetics but also expressed the striving for recreation of divine principles of harmony and Geometry, the actual base for Creation and a quest for spiritual truth and aesthetical perfection (Brown 2003:297).

The Loughcrew Slips is a find category that might have been a means for composition of art motifs according to Geometrical principles. Points have been marked by using compasses in order to show the principles for construction rather than the complete ornament. These finds have been dated to Early Iron Age and have been interpreted as remains of the trial pieces of a skilled craftsman. Probably, they have been used as a form of pattern book for a metal hand crafter or sculptor (O'Meadhra 1987:128, fig. 88).

In some degree, the interlace patterns well known from the picture stones also appear on motif-pieces of bone (e.g. O'Meadhra 1979, Pl.24. No 58). The distribution of motif-pieces indicates that they are of Irish origin and finds in other places suggest a connection with the Insular area. The aim with motif-pieces is to illustrate a design for complicated ornament in concrete form, in stead of working it out mathematically. In contrast to the Loughcrew slips, there are no grids or similar aids to achieve intricate patterns (O'Meadhra 1987:173f). Motif pieces are found in Scandinavia not earlier than c.1000 AD, in urban find contexts and even then rarely and of a simple design. As far as I know, none have been found on Gotland so far. The difference between the Loughcrew slips and the later motif-pieces is that the first mentioned illustrate principles of construction, whereas the latter show complete motifs.

In manuscripts, complicated patterns may be constructed by grid points and lines, connected by circle segments drawn by compasses (Henry 1965; Bain 1951; Blidmo 1976:67f and literature cited therein). Another characteristic feature is the transition of motifs in panels, which can be inserted as units into larger compositions.

Both geometrical principles and motif panels have been applied in a most sophisticated manner in the manuscript The Lindisfarne Gospel (Brown 2003). Actually, there are some

similarities between the Gotland picture stones and this manuscript. However, only the more simple variants of entrelac have been applied on picture stones. Several variants of entrelac appear within the same section of ornament, perhaps an analogy to the variation of knots found on e.g. the picture stones Ardre VIII and Alskog Tjängvide I (Fig. 2; Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009).

The similarities between picture stones and manuscripts reappear in insular stone sculpture, for example on Isle of Man and Lindisfarne. The recurrent variation in the entrelac is found on stone crosses on Isle of Man, e.g. The Thor Cross from Bride (Kermode 1907: Pl. 97a). On the same cross we also find the dog-like creature with hunched back and rolled up tail, very similar to the dog (?) on the picture stones Alskog Tjängvide I and Ardre VIII (Fig. 2). A stone cross from Ballaugh has an interesting shape, reminding of the so called mushroom-shaped picture stones (Kermode 1907:154, Pl.77A). On The Sigurd Stone in Halton, we find figural scenes in panels, e.g. a smithy and smithing tools (Kermode 1907:173, Fig.55). On Ardre VIII several scenes seem piled vertically on top of each other, as on a pillar. The panels with intertwined animal bodies have a certain likeness to manuscript art (Brown 2003 Pl.20).

Finally, the *name-stones* from Lindisfarne are worth considering as parallels to the Gotland picture stones. The name-stones are dated to the 7th and 8th centuries AD and are decorated with borders of entrelac. Furthermore, they have bilingual inscriptions in English and Latin written with Roman letters, runes and *half-uncial scripts*. The last mentioned script has evident parallels to The Lindisfarne Gospels (Brown 2003:227 Fig.91). Usually, reproductions illustrate the richly sculptured Insular stone crosses with deep cut plastic relief but these more plain name-stones have more in common with the Gotland picture stones.

Templates and pattern books – Continental tradition

In Roman handicraft too, Geometrical drawing techniques were used. These had roots in Architecture and were applied on floor mosaics. The mosaic patterns were primarily constructed by compasses and ruler according to Classical ideals, but also by templates (Arrhenius 1971; Blidmo 1976:56 and literature cited therein). However, the extensive use of art on every kind of object promoted the use of templates within Roman art (Wilson 1999). The Roman heritage lives on through the Late Antique period and into Merovingian and Carolingian art. In this context, the widespread use of templates and pattern books can be understood as an integrated part of Continental handicraft tradition.

Among the Anglo Saxon stone crosses, where the entrelac of the high-qualitative crosses has been constructed by a square grid, we also see instances of copying and template use (Adcock 1978:33). According to Richard Bailey, templates have been used so that figures could be mirrored, divided into sections, adapted in size or combined in various ways. The same human figure could be rendered with different attributes, which completely altered the meaning of the image. The same template appearing on different sites has been interpreted as a sign of a central workshop or an itinerant sculptor. In each case Bailey means that monuments sharing the same templates are contemporary within one generation (Bailey 1978:184f; 1980:240–253). On rune stones too, templates might have been used for some parts (O'Meadhra 1987; Herschend 1998:105f).

The consequence of use of pattern books is that iconographical motifs as well as formal elements can be transmitted from place to place and wander through studios and generations (Scheller 1963:3). Only a few have been preserved. There are two known finds from 3rd C AD Egypt but then there is a gap until 10th C AD, after which point they become more usual (Scheller 1995). The aim was to transmit motifs to those who had no access to the original. Therefore, it is more likely that an itinerant craftsman owned a pattern book than a sedentary one (Scheller 1995:41f). Collections of models do not presume intimate cooperation between

handcrafters. On the contrary, these models can be used freely. The compiler of the original has no control of how the ornaments come to use later. As a consequence, there may be large time gaps which of course effect the dating of the later objects. For example, a few elements of Ringerike style are to be found in Anglo Saxon manuscripts. Signe Horn Fuglesang means that this is more likely a result of motifs being combined in a pattern book than an instance of collaboration between Scandinavian handcrafters and English illuminators (Fuglesang 1978:212). Another example is a pattern book dated to 10th C AD, which include Late Antique and Carolingian art as well as Insular entrelac and a Merovingian animal motif (Scheller 1963:49). This means that if carvers of picture stones have had access to pattern books, it might prove extremely difficult to find the nearest source of inspiration.

3D-scanning of Gotland Picture Stones

The interpretation of the picture stones as pictorial counterparts to Icelandic sagas is most often dependent of the identification of animals and attributes. 3D-scanning may help to reveal details in the carvings which make these identifications more obvious – or change the meaning totally. The point of departure for present interpretations is the paintings made in the 1930s or even earlier (Lindqvist 1941-42). But the carved lines of the motives are very tiny and earlier interpretations can be very much debated. 3D-scanning is useful for the reading and interpretation of inscriptions and ornament on weathered stone surfaces and the visual impression of the 3D-image is not disturbed by colours. We can study the picture-stone as a new find, without prejudices about what we are going to see. Thus scholars can become more independent of tradition. Another application concerns dating, namely the inner relative chronology of motifs and inscriptions. Which was applied first? Is the runic inscription secondary to the pictures or is it integrated into the composition? Finally, local groups of handicraft traditions can be identified.

This study includes five picture stones of Sune Lindqvist's group D; Alskog Tjängvide I, Alskog K, Ardre VIII, Garde Bota and När Smis I. Sune Lindqvist dated these stones to the latter part of the 8th C AD, possibly into the 9th C AD (Lindqvist 1941:120f; Lamm 2006). Equipment used is a high resolution, non-touch optical 3D-scanner; ATOS II (GOM). The resolution used is 0,27mm between the measuring points. This study has been published elsewhere (Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009), therefore only the main results will be discussed and one example only is illustrated.

Since Lindqvist's chronology leaves a lacuna for the 10th C AD, several scholars have tried to revise it. Eshleman means that the picture stones of groups C and D are dependent of the Carolingian renaissance in 790–830 AD, and therefore cannot be earlier than that (Eshleman 1983). Lisbet Imer balanced the arguments for dating according to motifs, border ornament and runic inscriptions (Imer 2004). In contrast to the opinion of Nerman (1947) and Lindqvist (1942), Imer does not attach any great weight on the border ornament as a dating criteria. The only chronological stratification in the border ornaments is that they seem to increase in complexity (Imer 2004:100). There might be a problem of secondary runic inscriptions, because the runological datings are younger than indicated by the border ornaments (Sanness Johnsen 1968:80). This objection is valid, as is shown by the fact that on some rune stones, the runes clearly have been adapted to the ornament (e.g. Alskog Tjängvide). Understandably though, Imer still chooses to attach greater weight to the runological dating since there is no precise dating available of the separate style elements of the border ornament (Imer 2004:86, 94). According to Imer, Alskog Tjängvide I, Alskog K and Ardre VIII can be dated to 10th C AD. Garda Bote is dated to 9th C AD and När Smis I to c.750–900 AD (Imer 2004:104f, Tabel 17–18).

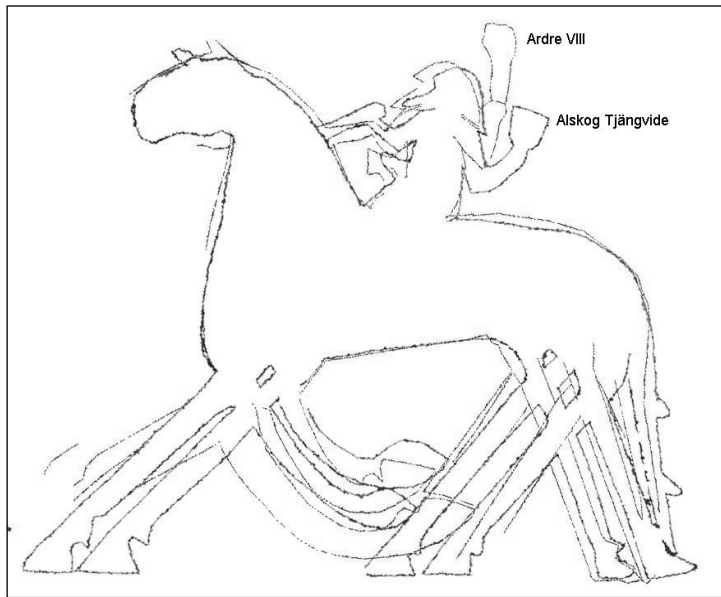


Fig. 1. Horses on Alskog Tjängvide and Ardre VIII. The outer contours of the main body coincide, but details vary.

Results make it evident that templates in scale 1:1 frequently have been used, but with varying skill or care. This cannot always be seen only by studying the painted motifs by the naked eye, but appears when the carving lines are studied in the 3D-images and the outer contours of separate motifs are superimposed. In this case, the criterion for motifs being applied by a template is that the outer contours and starting and crossing points of extremities coincide (Fig. 1). On the other hand, details inside the figure may vary. The stone surfaces are sometimes bulging and the template might have moved while drawing the contour, which has to be accounted for. In addition, weathering and wearing have contributed to the figures obscure appearance. With these disadvantages in mind, the figures still fit together to a surprisingly high degree.

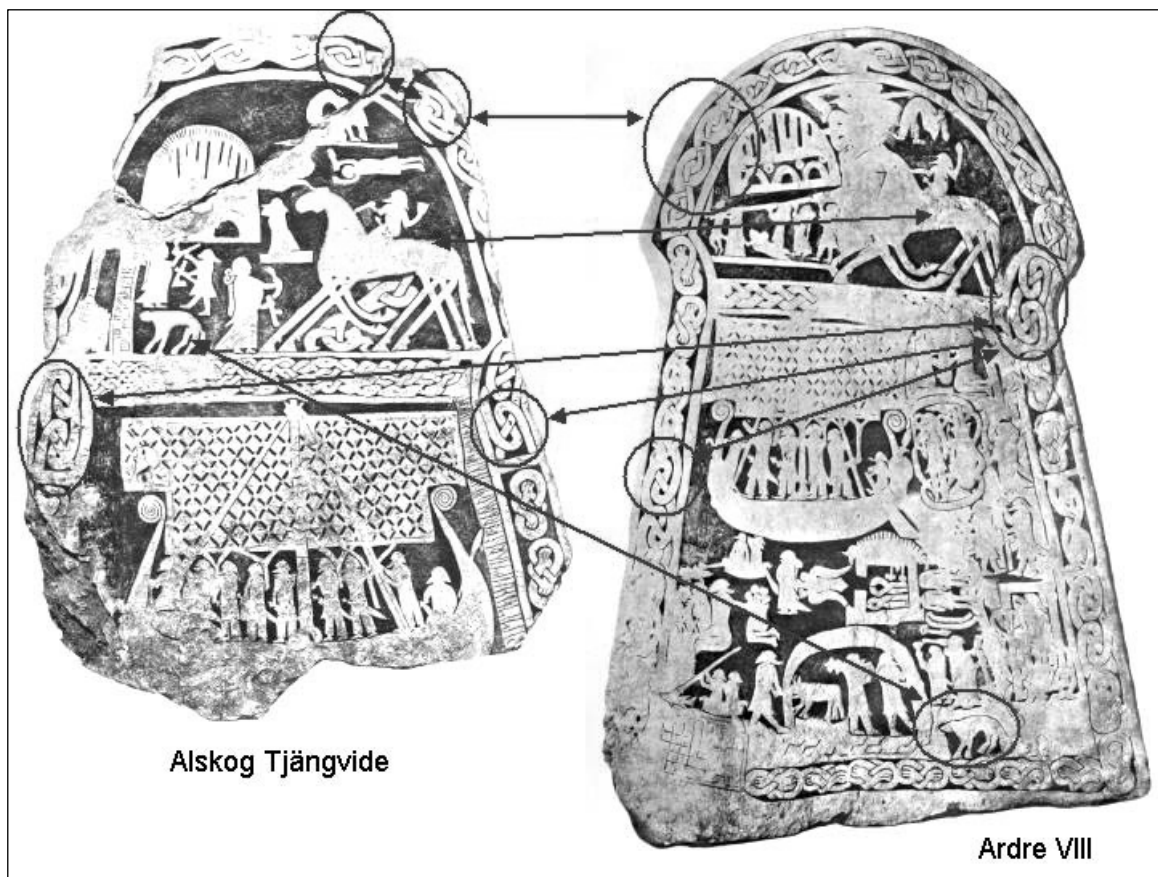


Fig. 2. Template relations on Alskog Tjängvide and Ardre VIII. Modified after Lindqvist 1941–42.

The picture stones Alskog Tjängvide and Ardre VIII have several templates in common (Fig. 2). Details in the carvings reveal that the templates have been used by two individuals, where the one is more careful than the other. It can be noticed that there is variation in attribute – the objects in the riders' hand are different. In my view, Ardre VIII shows a static relation to the motif. This can be seen on the horse, which does not really fit into the available space. The hinter legs have simply been cut off and made shorter (Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009:141, Bild 15). The horse probably would have been better adapted to the available space, had it been drawn by free hand. The knots in the border ornaments have been applied by templates too, not by construction with grid points. The templates have sometimes been superimposed in spite of lack of space, sometimes figures have been squeezed in instead of decreasing the size of the desired motifs. Another example of this is the border ornament on När Smiss I. On the same stone, the fighting opponents have been produced by mirroring the same warrior (Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009:146f, Bild 34–35).

Another example of template use is the procession on the picture stone from Garde Bote. At a first glance, there is no striking resemblance between the figures but a closer study reveals that they fit together at easily identifiable points. The single human figure in the upper part of the stone has been made with the same template, and has been adorned with a drinking horn as an attribute (Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009:145, Bild 30–33).

To conclude, templates have been saved and used on several stones, in order to repeat human figures in a procession (Garde Bote), to mirror figures (När Smiss I, Garde Bote) and to apply knots and interlace (Alskog Tjängvide, Ardre VIII, När Smiss). The figures have been adorned in various ways and it must be said that the templates have been used in a creative manner. There are some similarities to Insular manuscript art and stone sculpture but the mathematical principles of Celtic entrelac have not been applied. The use of templates for border ornaments may indicate an attempt to apply Insular (Celtic) ornament without mastering the underlying principles of construction. The templates are more “dumb” and associates to a Continental tradition of full-scale templates and pattern books.

Templates as signs of workshops

Template use may be a sign of the existence of a picture stone workshop, in the sense of a group of carvers sharing a set of motifs and tools. Whether an instance of template use should be interpreted as a sign of workshop also depends on *how* the templates have been used. If the templates have been produced in a tolerably resistant material, this may tell us that the producers had *expectations* to have use for them. Which indeed they had, regarding for example the above mentioned Ardre VIII and Alskog Tjängvide.

The subject matters of itinerant or sedentary craftsmen, their social status and the existence of guilds have been extensively discussed in Archaeology (cf O'Meadhra 1987:169 and literature cited therein). Templates show that design is an activity separated from production. In other contexts, this separation may indicate increasing specialization, professionalization and possibly mass production (cf Blidmo 1976). In the Viking Age, some organisational development appears to take place on Gotland and in Southern mainland Sweden, possibly caused by political circumstances. The singular and unique artifact types produced in the 8th and 9th C AD seem to be replaced by standardized products in the 10th C AD (Thunmark-Nylén 1995:118f; Callmer 1995:65f).

Do these changing circumstances have relevance for picture stones? The picture stones are local, immobile and they are monuments – neither utility goods nor jewelry. Picture stones have signs of co-operation between carvers, but I doubt that a very great demand would be the reason for this. What is actually a ‘great demand’ for picture stones? They cannot be com-

pared to e. g. jewelry production, where some types appear in a large number but in few variants only (Arrhenius 1973; Blidmo 1976:12). The Gotland picture stones are locally confined to the island Gotland, a fact that limits the scope for large organizations.

Anders Carlsson has suggested that monumental art may maintain archaic feature to a higher degree than small finds (Carlsson 1983). As seen above, this might also be a consequence of using pattern books – ornament may gain a long lifetime. Imer's dating of some of the picture stones to the 10th C AD has the consequence that motif-pieces might be brought into consideration when searching for models. In the 10th C AD, pattern books too might have been more widely used than before, depending on how we interpret the find situation. Thus, if picture stones have been decorated by means of templates in the 10th C AD, this is in accordance with a contemporary trend in society.

I suggest that the carvers were attracted by the Celtic entrelac, but in order to apply it they rather used full scale templates than geometrical principles of construction. The picture stones have elements similar to traits in manuscripts and grave monuments from Lindisfarne and on stone crosses in Northumbria and Isle of Man. Nevertheless, the connection is not necessarily particularly tight. The templates may well have been designed by copying from a pattern collection brought to Gotland. It would have been neat and nice to regard a geometrically designed interlace as a characteristic of direct Western Insular influence and the use of templates as a pure Southern and Continental influence. Regretfully, it is not that simple. Pattern collection may wander freely and loosen the personal connections. The compositions become divided into smaller units and later combined again into new constellations.

Summary

In this study, Gotland picture stones dated to c. 750–1000 AD have been analysed with an optical 3D-scanner with regard to template use. Results show that templates in scale 1:1 have been used to apply figural motifs and border ornament. The use of templates for knots and entrelac on the Gotland picture stones may indicate an attempt to apply Insular (Celtic) ornament without mastering the underlying principles. The templates are more "dumb" and rather associate to a Continental tradition of full-scale templates and pattern books. Template use might indicate the presence of a picture stone workshop in the sense of a group of stone masons sharing the same kit of motifs and tools. This tells us something about the social circumstances in which picture stones with Saga-like motifs were produced. Another consequence of template use is that ornament may have a long life time, which complicates dating. For interpretation of the motifs on the picture stones in a Saga-context, it has to be remembered that the motifs may seem clear enough in earlier publications, but attributes are difficult to identify on weathered picture stones and earlier interpretations can be debated. Varying attributes may completely change the meaning of the legendary sequences.

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Eksotiske vesener i islandsk ridderlitteratur – fremstilling og funksjon

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I en del av ridderlitteraturen nedskrevet på Island i det 14. og 15. århundret, reiser gjerne vestlige helter mot sør og øst i søken etter eventyr. Heltene er ofte vestlige, men kan også komme fra for eksempel Syria (Adonias i *Adonias saga*) eller Afrika (Blávus i *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, opptrer riktignok sammen med den franske Viktor). Felles for heltene er at de møter en rekke utfordringer de må overvinne for å underbygge sine helteposisjoner. Litteraturen er i første rekke underholdende. Den rike manuskriptproduksjonen antyder at sagaene har vært svært populære i senmiddelalderen på Island.¹ Med en så stor produksjon av underholdende ridderlitteratur i denne perioden, kan man tenke seg ulike formål liggende til grunn. Det underholdende, kanskje noe eventyraktige, ved sagaene, kan ha utgjort en overordnet funksjon. Hver enkelt saga/tekstverk bør derimot forstås som selvstendige enheter som realiseres gjennom tekstvitnene i bevarte manuskripter.

Møtet med eksotiske dyr og fantastiske skapninger (heretter: eksotiske vesener) utgjør i flere av tekstverkene en stor del av de utfordringer aktørene går gjennom. Det kan være møter med løver, draker, kameler og elefanter, eller det kan være møter med skapninger som har menneskehoder og dyrekropper, store hoder eller ett øye. Noen skapninger har egenskaper i å skifte skikkelse, for eksempel berserker som kan forvandle seg til løve eller drake. De var alle skapninger som tilhørte en fjern verden. Litterære beskrivelser av en rekke skapninger som låter fantasiaktig i våre ører var nedskrevet i autoritære verk/encyklopediske verk i middelalderen, og var antakeligvis en del av en virkelighetsoppfatning. Kjennskapet til – og derav benyttelsen av de eksotiske vesenene i ridderlitteraturen varierer. Variasjonene som kommer til syne i det islandske manuskriptet fra sent 1400-tall, Holm perg 7 fol, er i fokus for denne studien.²

De eksotiske vesenene som er fremstilt i Holm perg 7 fol gir flere fortolkningsmuligheter. Funksjonene de har hatt, kan forstås både ut fra et internt og et eksternt perspektiv. I et internt perspektiv fungerer vesenene som elementer i sagaens struktur og handling. Det eksterne perspektivet representerer en bevissthet som ligger til grunn for produksjonen. For å få innblikk i det eksterne perspektivet, må de interne funksjonene først gjøre redes for. Først og fremst har de funksjon som *handlingsmarkører* internt i sagaens forløp. Der ett eller flere eksotiske vesener opptrer – der skjer handling. Det ser ikke ut til at noen eksotiske vesener er

¹ Manuskriptproduksjonen på Island i det 14. og 15. århundret var svært rik. Fra denne perioden markerer det seg særlig stor nedskrivning av ridderlitteratur, dvs. oversatte *riddarasögur* og selvstendige islandske *riddarasögur* (*fornsögur suðrlanda*). Flere av de oversatte *riddarasögur* ser ut til å ha blitt oversatt på 1200-tallet. I denne perioden ble også en del islandske sagaer, hvilke i stor grad skiller seg fra kongesagaer og islendingesagaer, produsert: *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda*. Disse tre gruppene av sagaer oppviser en rekke likhetstrekk som gjør at man kan betrakte de forskjellige sagaene i et slags kontinuum. Det større forskningsprosjektet *Translation, Transmission and Transformation. Old Norse Romantic Fiction and Scandinavian Vernacular Literacy 1200–1500*, ved Universitetet i Oslo, diskuterer blant annet disse sjangerdefinisjonene. Som deltaker i dette prosjektet arbeider jeg i min avhandling først og fremst med de sene islandske riddersagaene. I min avhandling argumenterer jeg for at det, til tross for likhet i form i ridderlitteraturen, finnes store interne forskjeller mellom ulike tekstverks funksjoner. Jeg mener derfor at hvert tekstverk bør forstås som en selvstendig enhet, realisert med egne funksjoner som tekstvitne i manuskripter og derav også som del av et større manuskripts helhetlige funksjon.

² Holm perg 7 fol er et islandsk manuskript fra siste halvdel av 1400-tallet. (Sanders 2000) Manuskriptet er skrevet av fire ulike hender, og inneholder følgende tekstvitner: *Rémundar saga keisarasonar*, *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar*, *Sigurðar saga turnara*, *Beveris saga*, *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, *Hektors saga*, *Gibbons saga*, *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, *Sigurðar saga fótis*, *Partalopa saga*, *Adoniass saga* – i denne rekkefølgen.

satt inn i sagaene tilfeldig, eller uten et visst formål. De eksotiske vesenene har ofte, i tillegg til å være handlingsmarkører, også funksjoner som *sosiale markører* innad i sagaene. Slik representerer de et møte med en verden langt borte, det ville og usiviliserte, og skaper en kontrast til helten og heltens omgivelser.³

Internt i sagaenes strukturelle oppbygging kan de eksotiske vesenene også fungere som leseanvisninger for mottakeren. Ved at de eksotiske vesenene fremstilles som lærde og moralske referanser, skaper de fortolkningsrammer for leseren.

Bakenfor de funksjoner fremstillingen av eksotiske vesener har internt i sagaene finnes en eksternt bevissthet. De eksotiske vesenene blir også markører for et eksternt senderperspektiv. Handlingsmarkørene markerer en bevissthet om strukturell oppbygging av en historie, sosiale markører kan forstås som en skildring av en geografisk forestilling. Som lærde referanser fremstilles de eksotiske vesenene med beskrivelser som kan knyttes til en encyklopedisk tradisjon, en tradisjon som bygger på antikke forestillinger både hos grekere og romere,⁴ og først og fremst er gjort kjent på Island ved hjelp av Isidor av Sevilla (500–600-tall) og hans *Etymologia*.⁵ De skapningene som for oss virker eksotiske og virkelighetsfjerne, forklarte Isidor under samme kategorier som mennesker og dyr, og de gir inntrykk av å ha vært en del av en virkelighetsforståelse. Referanser til Isidor finnes i manuskriptet AM 194 8vo, fra 1387. I dette manuskriptet finnes et avsnitt om rise-raser, som er besynderlig likt Isidors kapittel om underlige skapninger, *portenta* (Kålund 1908:34–36).

I tillegg til at eksotiske vesener har vært tilknyttet en encyklopedisk tradisjon, har også en rekke eksotiske vesener tatt del i en rik tradisjon av verker som beskriver vesenenes allegoriske fortolkninger. Bestiarier representerer et høydepunkt i fremstillinger av dyrs allegoriske funksjoner. Her ble samlet illustrasjoner og beskrivelser av dyr ut fra deres moralske kvaliteter, samt hvordan de kan forstås allegorisk, i religiøse og moralske forestillinger. Bestiariene kunne blant annet være nyttig for moralsk og religiøs veiledning (Hassig 2000:xi, Hermannsson 1938:5). Både eksotiske dyr og fantastiske skapninger er fremstilt i den islandske *Physiologus*, i manuskripter fra omkring 1200.⁶ Visse eksotiske vesener som blir fremstilt i sagaene kan knyttes til allegoriske fortolkningsmuligheter, liknende for eksempel de som er fremstilt i *Physiologus*, og fungerer således som *moralske markører*.

I Holm perg 7 fol er det et spenn fra, på den ene siden, handlingsmarkerende skapninger til, på den andre siden, skapninger med tydelig tilknytning til encyklopediske verker og med moralske/allegoriske fortolkningsmuligheter. I det følgende vil jeg undersøke hvordan de ulike fremstillingene kan påvirke lesningen av manuskriptets tekstvitner og forståelsen av tekstvitnenes individuelle funksjon. Jeg vil derfor gi eksempler på hvordan fremstillingen av eksotiske vesener fungerer som ulike markører, først internt, og deretter vil jeg løfte fortolkningen til et eksternt perspektiv.

Handlingsmarkører

³ Flere har arbeidet med problemstillinger om eksotiske vesener i norrøn litteratur. Katja Schulz har skrevet om kjemper i eddadikt og sagalitteretur i: *Riesen: Von Wissenshütern und Wildnisbewohnern in Edda und Saga* (2004), Annette Lassen har gitt bokomtale av denne i *Collegium Medievale* 2005. Masteravhandlinger fra Universitetet i Oslo av Nordian Nifl Heim og Silvia Rasheva i 2005 tar for seg henholdsvis varulver og alver i norrøn litteratur.

⁴ John Block Friedman skriver i *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* om middelalderens frekvente fremstilling av eksotiske vesener som tydelig bygger på antikke forestillinger om hvilke vesener som finnes i Østen. Forestillinger om disse ble introdusert i vesten av blant annet Ktesias (gresk 400–300-tall f.Kr.), Megasthenes (gresk 300-tallet f.Kr.) og Plinius den eldre (romer død i 79 A.D.) (Friedman 2000: 5–25).

⁵ [Isidore]

⁶ Det er to fragmentariske manuskripter fra omkring 1200 som utgjør den islandske *Physiologus* (Hermannsson 1938: 7).

Alle eksotiske vesener heltene møter fungerer som handlingsmarkører. Ofte markerer vesenene handling mellom helt og eksotisk vesen. De kan også være handlingsmarkører for å drive handling videre. Eksempel på dette finnes i *Gibbons saga* der Gibbon ser en løve og en hjasse (et dyr med lange ører) i lek i en lysning.

Sia þeir fram vr skoginvm hvar hleypr ein leona suo fogr ok frid at alldri litv þeir vænna dyr Litlo sidar sa þeir fram koma einn hiasa med storum eyrum ok klifr vpp a leonit suo sem med nockurum leik en eftir lidna stvnd huerfa þav bædi aftr j morkina af þeirra avgsyn.⁷

De så at en løve, så fager og gild, at de aldri hadde sett vakrere dyr, kom løpende ut av skogen. Litt senere så de enn hjasse med store ører komme frem, og klatrer opp på løven, som en slags lek. Og etter en liten stund har gått, forsvant de begge tilbake inn i skogen, ut av deres øyesyn.

Gibbon følger etter dyrene, inn i skogen. Dette fører ham imidlertid til en annen lysning, der annen handling foregår – og løven og hjassen er borte.

I dette eksempelet anser jeg dyrene for bare å fungere som handlingsmarkører.

Sosiale markører

Andre eksotiske vesener fungerer i tillegg som interne sosiale markører. I første rekke blir vesenene fremstilt i motiver der sagaenes hovedpersoner møter en ukjent verden. Som sosiale markører representerer vesenene det ukjente fra en eksotisk verden. Eksotiske vesener med truende atferd, særlig grunnet størrelse, fremtredende utseende og overnaturlige egenskaper finnes i beskrivelser av berserker, jotner, riser, troll og blåmenn. Slike vesener blir ofte beskrevet om hverandre. Disse vesenene fungerer tydelig som interne sosiale markører. Beskrivelser av dem omhandler ofte størrelse, farge og stygghet og som sosiale markører skaper de dermed distinksjoner mellom en kjent verden og en eksotisk verden langt borte, i tillegg til en distinksjon mellom det kultiverte og det ikke-kultiverte. Draker er også et vesen som stadig opptrer i utfordrende motiver for heltene, og som skaper en kontrast til heltens egne dyr, for eksempel hesten.

Det finnes også eksotiske vesener som ikke er truende, men som bidrar til heltens vekst og fremgang. Dette gjelder i første hånd dverger, og i enkelte sagaer alver. Dvergene opptrer ofte som heltens hjelpere forut for de utfordringer de skal møte. De bidrar med gjenstander som innehar eksepsjonelle – gjerne overnaturlige – egenskaper, eller råd. Slike bidrag får heltene enten mot betaling, eller som takk for en tjeneste heltene har gjort dem.

Både dverger, draker eller berserker med ulike ytre egenskaper fungerer som interne sosiale markører da de markerer en distinksjon mellom heltene og den verden heltene møter, og opprettholder slik et spenningsforhold mellom de ulike aktørene. Skildringen av de eksotiske vesenenes annerledeshet er i første rekke med på å definere heltens tilhørighet, og deres kvaliteter fungerer derfor dels som kontrast til heltens egenskaper, dels som de hinder han må overvinne og dels som tilskudd for å styrke heltens uovervinnelighet.

I *Viktors saga ok Blávus* blir følgende beskrivelse gitt av berserker som Viktor og Blávus utfordrer til duell:

[...] þeir eru blaer berserker ok suo miklar hamhleypr at þeir bregdazt j ymissa kuikinnda liki. eru ymiszt j iordu edur /aa/. spyia þeir eitri j bardogum ok eingi jarn bita þa. er þat ok eingra menskra manna at eiga vid þa j orrustum.⁸

⁷ [Gibbons saga]: 80.

⁸ [Viktors saga ok Blávus]: 27–31.

[...] de er svarte berserkere og så kraftfulle hamskiftere, at de kan ikle seg ulike skapningers utseende, enten på jorden eller over. De spyr eter i kamper og ingen jern biter på dem. Ingen menneskelig mann kan slåss mot dem i kamp.

Dette er et eksempel på hvordan vesenene fungerer som interne sosiale markører. Berserkene uttrykker en klar distinksjon til heltene ved deres eksotiske egenskaper som gir uovervinnelige krefter. Møtet med berserkene virker styrkende på heltene, da de overvinner dem til tross for deres fryktinngytende fremferd.

Lærde referanser

De eksotiske vesenene kan ha tilhørighet i et større europeisk encyklopedisk perspektiv og utgjør slik lærde referanser som skaper nye fortolkningsrammer. De lærde referansene markeres på flere måter. De realiseres gjennom beskrivelser av ytre egenskaper som sammenfaller med for eksempel Isidors beskrivelser, slik som i *Ectors saga*:

[...] hann bijta einngi iarnn nema þau se miog uaunduth. e(dur) duerga smijde. þuij hann deyfir eggjar ij hueriu uopni. er hans yfirlith lijkari tröllzligum glyrnnum enn manligum asionum. hann hefir hrossa fetur ath hniam nedan galldra madur og seidskratti.⁹

[...] intet jern biter på ham, foruten de som er kunstferdig smidde eller dvergesmidde, fordi han kan døyve eggingen i hvert våpen. Hans skikkelse er likere trollslig utseende enn menneskelig. Han har hesteben fra knærne og ned, (han er) trollmann og seidmann.

Dette motsvarer en beskrivelse av Ippopedes i AM 194 8vo, en rise-rase fra Sithia som har hesteben (Kålund 1908:35).

En annen type av referanser til encyklopedisk litteratur uttrykkes ved at distinksjoner mellom beslektede dyr fremkommer i samme tekstvitne, som forskjellen mellom kamel og hyrela i *Ectors saga*. Hyrela er et foreløpig ukjent dyr for meg, men man kan ane dets likhet til kamelen ut fra forholdene den blir beskrevet i. Flere av Ectors riddere møter truende eksotiske vesener ridende på kameler.¹⁰ Ector selv møter en berserk ridende på et annet stort dyr. Denne berserken er nemlig så stor at ingen hest kan bære ham, knapt en kamel – berserken har derfor temmet seg en *hyrela*.¹¹ I *Ectors saga* ser det ut til at kamelen er utvalgt som de eksotiske vesenenes fremkomstmiddel, blant annet med hensikt å si noe om berserkenes størrelse. Kamelen er sterkere enn en hest. Den temmede *hyrelaen* fungerer som en forsterkning av utfordringene som sagaens hovedperson møter. Berserken som rir dette dyret er mye større enn alle berserker som er presentert tidligere i sagaen. Ector selv får æren av å overvinne denne.¹²

Det finnes også beskrivelser av eksotiske vesener som nærmest kan betraktes som etterlikninger av lærde referanser. Det forekommer fremstillinger av vesener med detaljerte beskrivelser av høyde eller ytre egenskaper som kan minne om for eksempel Isidors beskrivelser, men som tilsynelatende er egenkomponerte (eller av annen ukjent inspirasjonskilde).

⁹ [Ectors saga]: 99.

¹⁰ For eksempel [Ectors saga]: 94.

¹¹ [Ectors saga]: 153.

¹² Det er en lakune i begynnelsen av *Ectors saga* i Holm perg 7 fol. I andre tekstvitner blir Ector gitt en dromedar da han blir slått til ridder. Dromedaren er nært beslektet med kamelen, men det blir beskrevet blant annet hos Isidor at dromedaren er raskere enn kamelen. Kan hende blir Ector gitt nettopp en dromedar for å gi ham økt hastighet i forhold til de eksotiske vesenene som senere dukker opp i sagaen. I disse tekstvitnene av Ectors saga er distinksjonen av beslektede dyr mellom dromedar, kamel og hyrela. [Ectors saga]: 86.

[...] og er hann er buinn ser hann hvar fram kemur madur ef mann skal kalla og rijdr einum vfallda. s/aa/ uar bædi har og digur. hofudit þuijlic sem hraunklettur. augun huijt sem hiegeitlar. þarf þar ecki sogu ur ath gera. ath einga þottiz hann leidiligri skepnu hafa seth. hann hafdi kylfu ser ij hendi og fleina ij. gengr nu /aa/ mot honum og heilsar honum.¹³

[...] og da han var utstyrt ser han der hvor det kommer frem en mann, om mann kan kalles, som rir en kamel. Han var både høy og tykk. Hodet likner en bergknall, øynene hvite som flint. Det trengs ikke å lages en saga om det at ingen syntes å ha sett fælere skapning. Han hadde en klubbe i hånden og to spyd. Han går nå mot ham og hilser ham.

Moralske referanser

I middelalderens religiøse bevissthet spiller dyrene en vesentlig rolle som part av skaperverket, samtidig fungerer de i en symbolsk verden – en allegorisk fortolkningsfære. Motiver der dyr og skapninger fungerer som moralske referanser, bygger nødvendigvis til en viss grad også på kjennskap til en større litterær tradisjon. I denne sammenheng er som tidligere nevnt *Physiologus* og den bestiarske tradisjonen i sentrum, hvor dyr og skapninger gis en allegorisk tilhørighet som gjenspeiles i den kristne tro. Det finnes likevel grader av moralske referanser. Noen er direkte, det vil si at de fremstilte eksotiske vesenene direkte henspeler til allegoriske fortolkninger, i for eksempel *Physiologus*. Andre dyr og skapninger kan fremstå som indirekte moralske referanser. Disse er tydelige markører av for eksempel ondskap og bygger på en kristen fortolkningsfære, men kan ikke direkte knyttes til definerte allegoriske fortolkningsrammer.

Eksempler på sistnevnte, indirekte moralske referanser, finnes for eksempel i *Gibbons saga*:

en a tialldino hia honum sa þeir standa einn varg mikinn ok illilegann sem fiandan kolsuartan at lit.¹⁴

og på teppet ved siden av ham, så de at en stor ulv stod. Forferdelig som djevelen og kullsvart å se på.

Det er få direkte moralske referanser i Holm perg 7 fol, men følgende eksempel fra *Konráðs saga keisarasonar* viser hvordan et motiv delvis kan gjøre bruk av allegori for å understreke handlingen.

Ha<n> gat at líta huar dreki ogurligar ok suo mikill at hann þottisz ecki kuíkindi hafa sied jafnmikit þessh/aa/tar. hann hafdi mikla uængi. Konradr s/aa/ at hann hafdi vndir sier dyr íd oarga þat stod vp. hann þottizt þat hellzt af kenna at drekinn mundi flogit hafa med dyrit þuiat hann hafdi festar hremsur j bøgum dyrsins. enn hann hafdi halanum vafit wm mitt dyrit ok uilldi fluga medur þat edur draga upp j fiállit. [...]¹⁵

Han kom til å se hvor en fryktelig drake og så stor at han syntes ikke å ha sett en like stor skapning av det slaget. Den hadde store vinger. Konradr så at han hadde det uredde dyret (løven) som stod opp under seg. Han syntes det så ut til at draken hadde fløyet med dyret, fordi han hadde satt klørne sine i dyrets bog, og han hadde viklet halen sin rundt dyrets midje og ville fly med det, eller dra det opp i fjellet.

¹³ [Ectors saga]: 111.

¹⁴ [Gibbons saga]: 87.

¹⁵ [Konráðs saga keisarasonar]: 66–67.

I den islandske *Physiologus* står det skrevet i begynnelsen av beskrivelsen av panteren (løven) at draken er dette dyrets uvenn. Senere står det at Jesus Kristus er den sanne panter (Hermannsson: 19). Det er ikke nødvendig å forstå dyrene som allegorier for Kristus og Satan i dette motivet, men dyrenes allegoriske fortolkningsmuligheter fungerer som en leseanvisning for å understreke at løven er et godt dyr i denne sammenheng. Konraðr redder løven ut av drakens klør, og løven blir deretter Konraðrs følgesvenn. Spenningen mellom de to allegoriske dyrene løve og drake sammenfaller med spenningen i *Physiologus*.

Eksternt perspektiv

Tilsynelatende liknende vesener kan ha ulike funksjoner i de forskjellige tekstvitnene, for eksempel løven i Gibbons saga og løven i Konraðs saga keisarasonar. Sorteringen mellom handlingsmarkører, sosiale markører, lærde og moralske referanser kan løftes til et eksternt perspektiv. Der løven og hjassen i *Gibbons saga* fungerer som handlingsmarkører, fungerer de også i et eksternt perspektiv, hvor de viser en bevissthet i oppbyggingen av en historie. Strukturen veksler mellom handling og pause, de eksotiske vesenene blir et slags pauseinnslag som forflytter handlingen videre.

Berserkene i *Viktors saga ok Blávus* har spesielle ytre egenskaper. I tillegg til å formidle den sosiale avstanden mellom helten og motstanderen, gis berserkene egenskaper som til dels kan bunne i en faktisk virkelighetforståelse. Vesener som kan skifte skikkelser kunne finnes i en ukjent verden. Berserkene i *Viktors saga ok Blávus* gir uttrykk for en bevissthet om en eksotisk verden, uten å henspeile direkte til noen lærde tradisjoner.

De lærde referansene som er eksempelvis i *Ectors saga* kan være med på å uttrykke individuelle kunnskapsforhold og kunnskap om encyklopedi i et senderperspektiv. En del av vesenene (berserkene) fremstilt i *Ectors saga* fungerer som markører på et visst forholdningssett til en større encyklopedisk tradisjon som har vært kjent på Island. Jeg har her forholdt meg til Isidor av Sevilla og den nærliggende gjengivelsen i AM 194 8vo.

De moralske referansene vil, som følge av den tid litteraturen ble nedskrevet i, være farget av en kristen fortolkningsramme. Det finnes mange indirekte moralske referanser i sagaene. De er med på å underbygge den kristne forståelseshorizonten som preget samfunnet og tiden det ble skrevet i. De direkte moralske referansene viser ytterligere bruk av religiøse, moralske kilder for å gi allegoriske fortolkningsmuligheter, slik som spenningsforholdet mellom løven og draken i *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*.

Ut fra dette kan man få et inntrykk av at de ulike tekstvitnene i Holm perg 7 fol representerer ulike typer sagaer, og derav ulike funksjoner. Noen oppviser en bevisst benyttelse av lærde og moralske referanser i en ellers underholdende form, mens andre er rent underholdende. De lærde referansene for eksempel i *Ectors saga* kan forstås som eksterne sosiale markører som kan plassere *Ectors saga* i en fortolkningsramme for en lærd type sagaer.

Oppsummering

I *Ectors saga* kommer det tydelig frem at de eksotiske vesenene de syv ridderne møter på sine ferder tar del i det felles utgangspunktet som blir lagt da Ector og ridderne hans bestemmer seg for å dra ut verden hver for seg, for å styrke sine ridderegenskaper. De vil være uovervinnelige. Dette representerer noe grunnleggende felles for motivene vesenene opptrer i i alle tekstvitnene i Holm perg 7 fol. De fremstilles i motiver der heltene bekjemper utfordringer, utfordringer som ofte fremstiller den gode i bekjempelsen av det onde. Som interne sosiale markører har eksotiske vesener ofte en funksjon i motivet de fremtrer i at de gir personlig vekst til hovedpersonen ved å bekjempe det truende eksotiske og det ikke-kultiverte.

Manuskriptet som helhet fremstiller en rekke eksotiske vesener. Alle disse eksotiske vesenene kan, som jeg har gitt noen eksempler på ovenfor, forstås som markører til ulike perspektiver og fortolkningsnivåer. Vesenenes funksjoner skiller seg merkbart mellom de ulike tekstvitnene. De fungerer som strukturelle markører internt i sagaens forløp. De eksotiske vesenene som opptrer internt i sagaene gir samtidig referanser til de eksterne sosiale forholdene rundt tekstvitnens komposisjon i et senderperspektiv, for eksempel om avsenderen er, eller vil fremstå som lærd. Både markører for lærde og moralske referanser kan knyttes til lærde, encyklopediske verk og vil være eksterne sosiale markører for en lærd type sagaer som forholder seg til en større encyklopedisk og allegorisk fortolkningsramme. Der de eksotiske vesenene utelukkende fungerer som handlingsmarkører og interne sosiale markører skaper det antydninger til at tekstvitnet er en rent underholdende saga.

Her har jeg gitt utvalgte eksempler av en tendens som synes å være tilstede i hele manuskriptet. Lesningen av de eksotiske vesenenes ulike funksjoner kan knyttes til de enkelte tekstvitners funksjon som type saga. I min phd-avhandling vil jeg utføre flere element- og motivanalyser i manuskriptets tekstvitner for å danne en mer kompleks argumentasjon for en slik typeinndeling.

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When small words make a big difference

On adaptation and transmission of texts in Late Medieval manuscripts

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The *Eiríks saga víðförla* (*Esv*) is preserved in five medieval manuscripts and several Post-Medieval manuscripts.¹ My concern here will be the medieval manuscripts of which two preserve the entire saga without *lacunae*, whereas the three others are fragmentary in varying degrees. The saga text, as far as it is preserved in each of these five manuscripts, show much variation when compared to each other. In fact, where all five can be compared, only sequences of up to 13 words are identical – not considering orthographic and palaeographic variation. However in spite of the differences between the individual text witnesses, there is general consensus that they are all *Esv*.

Eiríks saga víðförla is a short saga in Old Norse probably composed in Iceland sometime around 1300 (Jensen 1983: XIV). It is about Eiríkr, the son of Þrándr, king of Þrándheimr. One Christmas Eve Eiríkr «*strengði heit*» to travel the world in search of the place called Údáinsakr. His first stop is Denmark, where he is joined by his namesake Eiríkr, son of the Danish king. They travel south with their men to Miklagarð, where they help the Garðakonungr against some of his enemies, and are well received. One day Eiríkr starts a conversation with the Garðakonungr. This conversation is structured as questions from Eiríkr and answers from the king, and they focus on God, the Trinity, the world and universe, and finally the way to Údáinsakr. Much of this conversation is based on the *Elucidarius*, either on a Latin version or a translation to Old Norse, and the first book of the *Imago mundi*.² After the stay in Miklagarð, the two Eiríkar travel east following the king's instructions. They travel through India until they reach a river they recognise as the Phison. On the only bridge across the river lies a terrible dragon. On the other side of the river they see a beautiful land. Together with one man, the Norwegian Eiríkr enters the dragon's mouth, sword drawn, and the Danish Eiríkr and the rest of the men turn home believing Eiríkr is dead. But Eiríkr and his companion emerge on the other side of the river. The two explore the land, and the description of what they see is similar to descriptions of holy places in other stories. They discover a tower hanging unsupported in the air, and in it they find food, drink and soft beds, and they realise that they have reached their goal. After falling asleep, Eiríkr has a conversation with an angel in which the angel answers Eiríkr's questions e.g. on angels and he explains about the place they have found. This conversation also draws on *Elucidarius*. Eiríkr is given permission to return home, since his telling about what he has experienced will, according to the angel, ease the Northerners' forthcoming conversion. The angel also says that he will come and get Eiríkr after a certain time. On their way back, they stop in Miklagarð, telling the Garðakonungr eve-

¹ Jensen (1985: 501) counts ca. 60 manuscripts.

² *Elucidarius* is a theological work written in Latin (probably) by Honorius Augustodunensis (1075/80–1156) in the beginning of the 12th century. It was translated to several vernacular languages, including Old Norse. The oldest preserved Old Norse manuscript containing *Elucidarius*-text is AM 674 a 4to dated to ca. 1150–1200. (This and all further dating of Old Norse manuscripts are from *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. Registre*.) *Imago mundi* is a scholarly work also attributed to Honorius and written in Latin. There is no known Old Norse translation of this work, but it has been used as source in more than *Esv*. Some passages in *Esv* are very close to *Elucidarius*, so close that *Elucidarius* must have been a direct source either written (Jensen 1983: xx) or through *memoria* (cf. Carruthers 2005). Simek 1984 argues the source was a Latin *Elucidarius*-text. The use of *Imago mundi* in *Esv* is not as direct as with *Elucidarius* (see e.g. Springborg 1985: 204ff).

rything, and then continue to Brándheimr. And after the period designated by the angel, Eiríkr disappears during morning prayers.

In this paper I will address two questions. One is why different text witnesses of the same saga display so much variation when compared, and the other is how these variants function within each text witness. I will address the latter question first, by presenting variants from the text witnesses of *Esv*.

When describing and discussing the material, I use the threefold distinction, due to Wendt (2006), of the notion of «text»: 1) A *manuscript* or *text carrier* (*textbärare*) is a specific instance of a text as a document, i.e. as a material object (such as a copy of a newspaper), including the material object itself. 2) A *text witness* is the immaterial text that is manifested in individual text carriers. One text witness can be manifested in more than one text carrier, but this is extremely rare in manuscript culture. My use of the term *text witness* is narrower than it is often used in philological writings, since I reserve this term for the immaterial text, and define the manifestation of the text witness as (part of) the material text carrier. The five text witnesses of *Esv* that have been manifested in medieval manuscripts are all different text witnesses. 3) The *text work* is an aspect based on the reception of text witnesses. When there is agreement that text witness X, Y and Z all are the same, despite variation, they are text witnesses of the same text work. This aspect is not to be confused with «original» or «archetype» etc. I am referring to the text work when using the title *Esv*. When referring to manuscripts I use the catalogue signatures, and when referring to text witnesses I use a combination of letter and number, based on Jensen (1983). (See Table 1 and 2.)

Elsewhere I have demonstrated how the material context the different text witnesses are manifested in can give a text work like *Esv* very different rooms for interpretation.³ Here I will focus on the variation on the level of text witnesses.

Variants

Before going any further, it is necessary to define what I mean by variants and changes. As undergraduates we learn that the medieval scribes copying Old Norse texts made changes to the text as they were copying, and that some changes are simply mistakes – and there are several categories of mistakes defined by the (probable) reason for the scribes making the mistakes – or they are changes made on purpose. And changes made on purpose were acceptable since copyright or authors' right did not exist in Medieval Europe. But unless we deal with textual criticism and wish to distinguish between significant and insignificant variation, the variants rarely get more attention than filling the critical apparatus in a decent critical edition. We know they are there, but seldom make use of them more than for confronting isolated variant readings.

Variants as I define the term for the purpose of this paper, are first of all restricted to variation within the semantic field, so palaeographic and orthographic variation, including dialectal variation, is not considered. There are two main types of variation: a) changes that are the result of mistakes and that are recognisable as mistakes, such as misspellings, and b) variation that is not recognisable unless comparing different text witnesses.

The first type, i.e. the mistakes, are involuntarily made, and render a more or less meaningless piece of text (by which I mean a piece of a physically manifested text witness) that any reader will recognise as a mistake – and probably try to correct when reproducing the text witness either orally when reading or in writing in the process of copying.

The second type, which this paper will focus on, can be result of changes made either voluntarily or involuntarily. This second type of variation will of course include results of what

³ Kleivane 2009, and forthcoming PhD-thesis.

on an earlier stage of the transmission might have occurred as the result of a correction of a mistake, but is no longer «visible» as either mistake or variation within the text witness. The second type thus contains a great diversity of variation, from exchanging a single word with a different word to adding or omitting longer passages.

Studying these variants we can learn more about how medieval scribes worked when copying texts, what they changed and what they did not change. This also opens for studying what consequences the changes made have had on the individual text witnesses, that is to say how the conditions governing the reception of the text witness is affected. Since few instances of «mother-daughter»-manuscripts have been preserved (and none of these are among my material), and since variants are not visible when reading the text witnesses individually, the method for undertaking such examinations will have to be «compare and trace». *Comparing* in order to identify the variation and *tracing* in an attempt to identify tendencies within individual text witnesses.

Variants in Eiríks saga víðfjara

Jensen (1983) has demonstrated how the text witnesses of *Esv* that are preserved in medieval manuscripts must be said to belong to two different redactions, called A and B.⁴ Of a total of five text witnesses, three belong to the A- and two to the B-redaction. All manuscripts are dated to the 14th and 15th centuries.⁵ Only one text witness in each of the two redactions is preserved without lacuna. Of the two in the A-redaction that are not preserved completely, the preserved text does not overlap, and so it has not been possible to compare the same piece of text in more than two text witnesses within one redaction. (See Table 1 and 2 for the amount of text preserved in the respective manuscript.) Since orthographic or palaeographic variation is not under consideration, I will normalize the examples given in this paper.

Table 1. Number of words in the text witnesses in the A-redaction. Distributed according to the lacunae in a1 and b3. Not counting Jón Þórðarson's epilogue in GKS 1005 fol.

Manuscript	GKS 1005 fol (A3)	AM 720 a VIII 4to (a1)	AM 557 4to (b3)
	371	354	-
	204	-	-
	993	-	981
	1102	-	-
	263	-	264
Total words	2933	354	1245

Table 2. Number of words in the text witnesses in the B-redaction. Distributed according to the lacuna in B2.

Manuscript	AM 657 c 4to (B1)	GKS 2845 4to (B2)
	341	326
	1401	-
	1139	1076
Total words	2881	1402

As most of the variants in this material are insignificant variants in text critical terms, it is irrelevant which of two variants is the changed and which is original, since in most instances both may have been the result of a change. I do not evaluate the variants according to any

⁴ Jensen (1983) delimits two more redactions when also considering text witnesses preserved in Post-Medieval manuscripts.

⁵ The part of GKS 1005 fol which *Esv* belongs to is dated to ca. 1387–1394. Manuscript AM 720 a VIII 4to is dated to ca. 1400–1450; AM 557 4to to ca. 1420–1450; AM 657 c 4to to ca. 1340–1390 and GKS 2845 4to, to ca. 1450.

stemma, but only how they work within each text witness. The examples here are only a very small selection of the variants found when comparing these five text witnesses, but will serve to give an impression of what kind of variation there is, and how they affect each text witness.

Comparing B1 and B2, there is a tendency in B1 to formulate conditioned or argumentative clauses where the choice in corresponding clauses in B2 are descriptive clauses, like in Example 1.

Example 1. Conditioned vs. descriptive

B1 (10r13–14)	B2 (59v12–14)
Ok er hann varð þess viss at þeir váru norðmenn ok ætluðu víða at kanna heiminn, þá helt hann þá vel í ǫllum hlutum.	Ok hann varð þess viss at þeir váru norðmenn ok mikils virðar ok ætluðu at fara víða um heiminn. Konungr helt þá vel í ǫllum hlutum.

In B1 the *er* [...] *þá* strengthens the relation between the information the king obtains and the result that he treated the Northerners well. The corresponding clauses in B2 simply states two things: the information the king obtains and the fact that he treated them well. In Example 1 there is also evidence of other variation. First there is an instance of amplification in B2 (*ok mikils virðar*), compared to B1, which adds to the level of precision with a detail that is not in B1. Second, two variant expressions are used: in B1 Eiríkr and his crew aims at *víða at kanna heiminn* («widely get to know the world»), where they in B2 will *fara víða um heiminn* («travel widely in the world»). The expressions have more or less the same meaning, but the emphasis in B1 is knowledge whereas in B2 it is more the adventure of travelling.

Another tendency in B1, as opposed to the other text witnesses, is to avoid using introductory phrases of the kind that refers to the following having been told. (See Example 2.) In Example 2a) and 2c) B2 uses *þat er/var sagt*, and A3 and a1 from the A-redaction have the same or similar phrases in the corresponding place. The exception is 2c) in a1 where the phrase is similar to B1. The sentence in Example 2b) is omitted in B2, but a comparison to A3 and a1 strengthens the claim that introductory phrases referring to something having been told, is avoided in B1.

Example 2. Introductory phrases in B1, B2, A3 and a1 (b3 has lacuna here).

a) B1 (10r3–4)	B2 (59v2–4)	A3 (4va6–9)	a1 (1r27–1v1)
Ok einn jólaaptan strengði hann heit at fara suðr í heim unz hann fyndi Údáinsakr á heiðinna manna lýzku.	Þat var sagt at einn jólaaptan strengði hann heit at fara suðr í heim unz hann fyndi Údáinsakr at heiðinna manna lýzku.	Þess er getit eitt jólakveld, þá strengdi Eiríkr þess heit at fara um allan heim at leita ef hann fyndi stað þann er heiðnir menn kalla Údáinsakr en kristnir menn Jorð lifandi manna eða Paradís.	Þess er getit eitt jólakveld, at Eiríkr strengði þess heit at fara um allan heim <at> leita ef hann fyndi stað þann er heiðnir menn kalla Údáinsakr en kristnir menn kalla Jorð lifandi manna eða Paradís.
b) B1 (10r17)	B2	A3 (4va29–30)	a1 (1v23–25)
Ok þá hófst fyrst norðmanna sómi í Grikkjakonungsríki.	---	Svá er sagt at þar af gerðist fyrst norðmanna sómi út í Miklagarði.	Svá er sagt at þar hefist ok fyrst norðmanna sómi í Miklagarði.
c) B1 (10r17–18)	B2 (59v17–18)	A3 (4va31–32)	a1 (1v25–26)
Einn dag spurði Eiríkr	Þat er sagt einn dag, at	Þat var sagt at einn dag	Þat var einn dag at Eiríkr

⁶ This «no» is written at the end of a line, and is an example of a mistake – a variant of the first type mentioned above, in this case a dittography. The <at> in the first passage quoted from a1 is similarly an example of a mis-

þrónski konung: ‘Hefir Eiríkr Þrándarson mælti til spurði Eiríkr norróni spurði konung hvárt no⁶
 nokkurr gørt himin eða konungs: ‘Gerði nokkurr konung hvern gørt hefði nokkurr gerði heiminn⁷
 jørð?’ himin ok jørð?’ himin eða jørð. ok jørð.

Example 2 also illustrates variation in tempus. In A3 the verb *kalla* is used once, in 3.p.pl., present tense: *er heiðnir menn kalla*, and in the following clause A3 uses a paratactic construction: *en kristnir menn Jørð lifandi manna*. In a1 the verb is first given in 3.p.pl., past tense: *er heiðnir menn kølluðu*, and in the following clause the verb is repeated, but now in present tense: *en kristnir menn kalla* [...]. None of these three verbs are abbreviated. The so called «historical present» which is used for describing the to modern minds sometimes «illogical» switching between present and past tense, can not be used for explaining this variation, because this is referring to what Eiríkr is promising to do, and not describing an action. Rather, the result is an underlining in a1, from the point of view of the scribe, that people used to be heathen, but are now Christian. This is an example of the extent to which individual scribes made independent decisions regarding the choice between present and past tense. To illustrate this further, the following (Example 3) is an example of the variation of the use of the historical present in A3 and a1.

Example 3. Switch between present and past tense.

A3 (4va14–18)	a1 (1v9–12)
Ok um várit eptir réðst Eiríkr danski í ferð með nafna sínum. Váru þeir ok tólf saman. Sigldu nú ok ætla til Miklagarðs, ok þar koma þeir í þann tíma sem Grikkjakonungr bauð út her í moti víkingum er gengu mjök á ríki hans.	Um várit eptir réðst Eiríkr danski til ferðar með nafna sínum. Váru þeir ok tólf saman. Sigla nú [...] ok ætla til Miklagarðs, ok þar koma þeir. Í þann tíma hafði Grikkja konungr boðat her úti í moti víkingum er gengu mjök á ríki hans. ⁸

The variation in tense concerns the verb *sigla*, which in A3 is 3.p.pl. past tense *sigldu*, whereas in a1 it is 3.p.pl. present tense *sigla*. The preceding verbs are past tense in both, *réðst* and *váru*, and the following verb is present in both, *koma*.⁹ The two text witnesses display two different choices as to when the audience will be brought closer to the narrative by the use of present tense: In A3 it happens when they arrive in Miklagarð and in a1 when they sail from Denmark.

The final example I will give here is one where seemingly small variations cause larger and important differences between the text witnesses. In A3, b3 and B1, the Greek king equals Údáinsakr, Paradís and Jørð lifandi manna (a1 and B2 have lacunae in this part of the conversation). In Eiríkr’s dream in the tower (see Example 4), the angel can enlighten Eiríkr further. In A3 the angel states clearly that Jørð lifandi manna is the place he has found, and that Paradise is somewhere else close by. However, when the angel explains that they were to show Eiríkr Jørð lifandi manna by some image, it seems what Eiríkr has found is merely an image. This is probably what causes Ashurst (2006: 78) to argue that Eiríkr never really ar-

take, and corrected here. In this case it is an omission of a word necessary for making sense of the sentence, and it is easy to correct – a medieval reader might even not have noticed the word missing. I have chosen to add *at* here, but *ok* could also have been used.

⁷ *Heiminn* and *jørð* have more or less the same meaning since *himinn ok jørð* is a very common expression it is possible that *heimenn* should be regarded as a mistake and that readers have read *himin* for *heiminn*. But it clearly reads «heimenn» in the manuscript.

⁸ The part of a1 not quoted in Example 3 is a description of the route they sail: *vestr fyrir lønd út til Nørfasunda ok vestr í Grikklands haf* (a1: 1v9–10). There is no corresponding passage in any of the other text witnesses.

⁹ What follows after *koma þeir*, shows a variation that concerns more than choice of tempus. In A3 there is an adverbial clause explaining at which time the Eiríkar came to Miklagarð. The corresponding passage in a1 is an independent sentence, describing the situation in Miklagarð.

rives at any paradisiacal land, that it is all a vision. Ashurst refers to the *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* (1885–89), which prints the A3.¹⁰

In B1 and B2 it seems that *Jörð lifandi manna* is another name for the earthly Paradise, and that the place Eiríkr have found is something else, a place used as an image or simile (*mynd ok líking*) of Paradise. But it seems this place still is something more than a vision.

Example 4. What is the place that Eiríkr has found?

B1 (12v2–5)	B2 (60v18–61r1))	A3 (5rb35–42)
En sjá staðr er þér sýnist inn fegrsti, er at virða við Paradís sem eyðimörk, þá er byggðu inir fyrstu menn, ok nú byggja andir yfirfeðra ok spámanna.	En sjá staðr er þér sýnist inn fegrsti, er sem eyðimörk at virða við Paradís, þá er byggðu inir fyrstu menn ok nú byggja andir yfirfeðra ok spámanna.	En sá staðr er þú sér hér, er sem eyðimörk til at jafna við Paradís.
En sá staðr er skamt heðan, ok þaðan fellr á sú er þér fórut yfir.	En sá staðr er skamt heðan, ok þaðan fellr á sjá.	En skamt heðan er sá staðr, ok fellr þaðan á sú er þú sátt. Þangat skulu engir lifs koma, ok skulu þar byggja andir réttlátra manna.
En áðr þér komut hingat, þá bauð Guð oss at vökva ok blomga þenna stað til at sýna þér Jörð lifandi manna með nokkurri mynd ok líking, at gera þér veizlu ok launa þér svá erfiði þitt.	En áðr þú kemr þangat þá bauð Guð oss at vökva ok blomga þenna stað til at sýna þér Jörð lifandi manna með nokkurri mynd ok líking, ok gera þér veizlu ok launa þér svá erfiði þitt.	En sá staðr er þú hefir hittan heitir Jörð lifandi manna. En áðr þú komt hingat bauð Guð oss at vakta þenna stað ok sýna þér Jörð lifandi manna með nokkurri mynd, og gera þér veizlu ok launa þér erfiði þitt.

However, the most interesting variation in this passage is in my opinion between B1 and B2, in the beginning of the last paragraph starting with *En áðr*. The variation I am referring to is the difference in tempus (B1 past and B2 present tense) and the choice of adverb. B1 says «But before you (pl.) *came here*, God instructed us [...]» whereas B2 says «But before you (sg.) *will come there*, God instructed us [...]». Jensen discusses the present tense used in B2 (1983: LIII) and concludes that it is meaningless. But she does not mention that B2 has *þangat* following, which none of the other text witnesses have. The question is what *þangat* («there») refers to, and in my opinion it is clearly the previously mentioned *sá staðr* which is not far away that the river flows from, and that it Paradise – already introduced in the beginning of the passage quoted in Example 4. This is the earthly Paradise which Adam and Eve lived in, and where the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament now live. So, in B2, the angel says that before Eiríkr gets there, God wanted to show him an image of that place as a reward for his effort. This could be a hint that Eiríkr is seen as an «Old Testament» prophet for the Nordic countries, which has not yet received the Gospel, and may suggest that he will await Judgement Day in the earthly Paradise. However, later the angel says in both B1 and B2 that God has chosen «this place» for Eiríkr’s bones to be kept until Judgement Day, the reference being to the place he has already found. In the corresponding passage A3 (b3 has partially a lacuna) does not say as clearly what place it is his bones and his soul shall be kept.¹¹

Hence not just the text work *Esv*, but each individual text witness are in their own way commenting on the huge and important medieval discussion of where the heavenly and the earthly Paradise were situated, whether or not they were populated now, prior to Judgement Day, and by whom.¹² Especially B1 and B2 offer a specific solution for Eiríkr after he is bodily removed from this world by the angel. Such a removal instead of ordinary death also happened to the Old Testament prophets Enoch and Elijah (2. Kings 2:11 and Heb. 11:5). They

¹⁰ *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda* (1829–30) prints the B1 with some variants from A3 and B2.

¹¹ B1 12v19–22; B2 61r18–21; A3 5va6–8 and b3 44r1–3. a1 has lacuna.

¹² On different medieval views concerning this, see e.g. Ashurst 2006.

are also mentioned in *Elucidarius* as having been «translated» (*The Old Norse Elucidarius* 1992: 86–87).

Why so much variation?

The question of why the comparison of these five text witnesses reveals so many variations is not a question particularly related to the *Esv*, but rather to the transmission of Late Medieval vernacular texts in general. Disregarding obvious mistakes, what I called variants of the first type, why did the medieval scribes make so many deliberate changes when copying the Old Norse texts? So many in fact, that the process of copying often looks more like reproduction. It is not a sufficient explanation to claim that this is simply a result of the manuscript culture. That is certainly part of the explanation, but if it were sufficient, one would expect Latin texts to have been subjected to the same kind and amount of changes during the copying process as Old Norse texts. Latin texts are, certainly, also subject to such changes, but not to the same extent. On the other hand one can not claim that this is exclusive for the transmission of Old Norse texts, since other medieval vernacular texts display the same kind and amount of variation.¹³

I argue that the process of copying texts written in Latin was regulated by a different set of norms than the copying of vernacular texts, and that this is the result of different views of the fixity of written texts and of how one should treat written texts.¹⁴ Several elements jointly contribute to the shaping of such sets of norms. For Latin texts, the quality of the language is one element (Machan 1991). People living in the Medieval period were aware that Latin displayed much less variation regionally and over time than did vernacular languages. As a result, higher expectations of fixedness and stability were connected to Latin. Also, since Latin was no longer anybody's first language (perhaps with a few individual exceptions), most scribes had less skill for improvising and improving on Latin texts than they would have with vernacular texts. Another element is that the *auctores* had chosen Latin for their writings, thereby further adding to Latin as a language chosen for texts imbued with important and lasting knowledge.¹⁵ Finally, there is the question of genre. When composing a text, there is the question of what form would be the most opportune and suitable – the classical rhetoric's demand for *aptum*. This involves choices regarding style, content, and composition, in addition to the text being adjusted to the situation (*kairos*) and the competence of the receivers (*doxa*). Educated medieval people were trained in this, and would choose the most suitable language for the text they were composing; texts in some genres would be more suitable in a vernacular language than in Latin.

The qualities connected to the Latin versus vernacular languages in the Medieval period seem to be the main reason why scribes could take greater liberties in the copying of vernacular texts. But why would they take such liberties? In asking this question, one is asking for the intention behind the production of manuscripts and the selection of text witnesses to be manifested in them. Except for the occasional meta-commentary, our sources to these intentions are the manuscripts themselves, the material variation between them, and textual variation between text witnesses of the same text works. The answers these sources present are that changes are made for esthetical reasons; for making opinions clearer; to adjust to new con-

¹³ See e.g. for medieval German texts Höver 1995, for medieval Spanish texts Dagenais 1994, for medieval English texts Machan 1991 and Jacobs 1992, and for medieval Anglo Norman/French texts Busby 2002.

¹⁴ By *norms* I do not mean rules than one has to follow, but rather a competence in what is expected and of the conventions relating to the activity in question. Clearly, the same person can be competent in and use more than one set of norms.

¹⁵ On *auctores* and *auctoritas* see Minnis 1988, Machan 1991 and Carruthers 2005.

texts and uses; and, when a text witness appears confused or damaged, to try to make sense out of it.

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Rune stones and Saga

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Introduction

“Rune stones and saga” is the title for a whole session at the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala. In this paper I would like to ask if both sources have anything to do with each other. Are there any rune stones mentioned in saga texts? What do both sources have in common and what is the difference between them?

Living in Scandinavia today means that you can't avoid to meet one or another rune stone in your life, because they are still visible in the landscape and a lot of them are even preserved in museums or churches. Because of their monumentality and position in the landscape rune stones have already been an object for scientific investigations in the early stages of research. As early as in the 16th century Johannes Bureus came out with his *Runakänslones lärespån*. I would argue that the reason for this early and ongoing interest in rune stones is the fact, that, in contrast to smaller personal items or archaeological remains under the surface, rune stones were and still are present in the landscape.

The stones

Although it is still difficult to date rune stones properly we know that the earliest stones from Vetteland and Einang were raised in the 4th century. The earliest stones were mostly found in Norway and Sweden and a little later also raised in Denmark, where the erection cumulated between 900 and 1000, while the Swedish rune stone production had its climax between the years 1000 and 1100. Later rune stones went out of fashion and stones with runic or Latin inscriptions were laid directly on the graves of the deceased at the Christian cemetery. Today around 3000 rune stones are known from Scandinavia, 2500 alone from Sweden.

The literature

The Old Norse literature is my last introductory field. Dating it is even more complicated than dating rune stones, but I hope that you will agree when I postulate that most literature was written down between the 12th and 14th century, in some cases going back to an older oral tradition. This means that they have to be seen as secondary sources for the Viking Age and the period when rune stones were erected. In some cases it is possible that the topic of the story goes back to an older tradition which was spread orally, but we have to take into account that this tradition was altered during the centuries. It is also possible that the collectors and authors of the written texts changed or shortened passages for several reasons. Therefore we have to be very careful when we take the written sources as an evidence for the Viking Age.

In contrast to continental medieval documents the Old Norse Sagas give a much more personal view of the characters' everyday life. We can for example read in detail about the furnishing of the long house or the bright coloured clothes the hero wears. Therefore it can be seen quite often in modern Viking Age research that the Old Norse literature is taken as a main source for the Viking Age everyday life.¹ There can be much truth in the texts, but at the same time it is a big risk to transfer medieval texts back into the Viking Age without a careful source criticism.² Therefore it is important to state that the literary sources don't reflect the

¹ Look for example at Price 2002 or Nordberg 2003.

² Meulengracht Sørensen states: "[...] ist es allgemein geübter Brauch geworden, die erzählenden Texte des Mittelalters als im großen und ganzen unbrauchbar abzulehnen." [Meulengracht Sørensen 1990:58].

times they are dealing with, but the perception of the writer: the writer is of the opinion that in Viking Age Iceland the hall building was furnished with a bright tapestry, but he has not seen a Viking Age hall with a tapestry. He has maybe heard of it, but not seen. Old Norse sources are no direct copies of the past, but a reflection.

Rune stones in literature

As those texts claim to portray the Viking Age it seems natural to look for rune stones, because compared to long houses, ships and weaponry rune stones are fragments from the material culture and strongly linked to the Viking Age.

Unfortunately my research about rune stones in Old Norse texts ended faster than expected: There are no rune stones in Old Norse literature! Not a single saga uses the word rune stone, no skaldic, no eddic stanza mentions it.³ And here it becomes obvious that Old Norse literature can't be the only source in discussing Viking Age Scandinavia: If we would only use literature as our source we have to conclude that rune stones did not exist during the Viking Age. But reality paints another picture: From northern Germany to southern Norrland: In Scandinavia, and especially Sweden, rune stones are present and we can be sure that there were many more stones, which are lost today. Every traveller who made his way through Uppland in the late Viking Age has seen at least one rune stone, clearly visible in the landscape. But also in Denmark and Norway rune stones were raised at prominent places: Those visiting the kings at Jelling would surely pass the brightly coloured stone between the mounds.

How is it to explain that rune stones are totally unknown to Old Norse literature, while they are visible to the naked eye for everybody? After my unsuccessful search for rune stones in literary sources I would like to present some possible explanations for the fact that they are obviously absent in literature.

The wrong word?

The first explanation could be that I was searching for the wrong word. No runic inscription⁴ designates the rune stone as a rune stone. The single characters are named as *rúnar þær*⁵ or as *stafir runa*⁶. Even the inscription which emphasizes the long life of the stone from Nöbbele in Småland (Sm 16) differs between stone and runic symbol. The inscription is:

Inscription	Old Norse	English
§A rostein * auk * eilifr * aki : auk * hakun : reisþu * þeir * sue- inaR * iftir sin * faþur * kubl keni*likt *	§A <i>Hróðsteinn ok Eilífr, Áki ok Hákon reistu þeir sveinar eptir sinn foður kuml kennilikt</i>	§A Hróðsteinn and Eilífr (and) Áki and Hákon, these lads raised the remarkable monument in memory of their father
§B ftir * kala * tauþan : þy : mun * ko... [...] -m kitit * uerþa * meþ * <u>sin * lifir * auk * stafir * run</u>	§B <i>eptir Kala/Kalla dauðan. Því mun gó[ðs] manns u]m getit verða, <u>meðan steinn lifir ok stafir rúna.</u></i>	§B In memory of Kali/Kalli the deceased. So the good man will be commemorated while <u>the stone and the rune-staves live.</u>

³ In contrast runes in general are used frequently in all genres of Old Norse literature, look for example at Dillmann 1995.

⁴ All runic inscriptions are quoted after Samnordisk Runtextdatabas, version 2.0

⁵ Inscription from the rune stone in Rök, Östergötland (Ög 136). The complete inscription is much too long to be cited here. It starts with the runes: **aft uamup stonta runaR þaR** > Old Norse: *Eptir Vémóðr/Vámóð standa rúnar þær.* > Translation: In memory of Vémóðr/Vámóð stand these runes.

⁶ Sm 16, Inscription on side B: **þy : mun * ko... [...] -m kitit * uerþa * meþ * sin * lifir * auk * stafir * run** > Old Norse: *Því mun gó[ðs] manns u]m getit verða, meðan steinn lifir ok stafir rúna.* Translation: So the good man will be commemorated while the stone and the rune-staves live.

Hróðsteinn and his brothers do not call the rune stone a rune stone, but a *steinn* with *stafir rúna*.

Even if we take a look at the carvers formula we can see that the carvers name stands together with the verb *rista* = *carving*, for example U 893 **ubiR ‘risti**,⁷ and sometimes the carvers name stands together with the phrase *risti rúnar*.⁸ Not at any time the carving of a whole rune stone is mentioned. Was it because of the fact that carver, erector and the person who prepared the stone were different persons and the rune master wasn't allowed to claim that he made the whole monument? Some people commissioned a stone and they are named as erectors of the stone, in some cases a carver cuts the runes into the stone, but no one makes a rune stone. Or was it because this monument wasn't simply called rune stone?

If we assume that the word rune stone was simply unknown and therefore not mentioned in literature, which word do we have to expect?

Only one type of stone is erected in literature: the *bautasteinn*. This type of stone is normally defined as an upright standing stone without inscription or ornamentation and is to be found in combination with graves since the Bronze Age [Burenhult 1999]. The German philologist Heiko Uecker claims that people used the word *bautasteinn* for heathen rune stones "[...] für die heidnischen Runensteine das Wort 'bautasteinar' zu verwenden." [Uecker 1966:112]. This argument is quite weak, because most Swedish rune stones are clearly Christian and very few clearly heathen. Only the earliest rune stones written in the elder futhark lack the Christian sign and formula, but why should literature only mention the old stones and not the younger ones?

But let's take a closer look at the *bautasteinn* in literature:

The first king who is cremated in Ynglingasaga is Vanlandi. About his funeral we can read in Ynglingasaga chapter 16:

Old Norse

”Sviar tóku lík hans, ok var hann brendr við á þá er Skúta heitir. Þar váru settir bautasteinar hans.”

English

The svear took his body and he was cremated at that place, which is known as Skuti (= rock spur) today. And there were his *bautasteinar* raised.

According to Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar *bautasteinar* were also raised at the grave of Egill ullserkr, and likewise right on the graves of king Dómarr and Qgvaldr [Pesch 1996:112]. In general the Ynglingasaga states that the graves of the *brunna-öld* were provided with *bautasteinar* [Uecker 1966:111].

As the only saga of the Icelanders the Egilssaga names a *bautasteinn* in describing the burial of Þórólfr in chapter 22. The text says:

Old Norse

”Bjuggu þeir um lík Þórólfs eftir siðvenju, svá sem títt var at búa um lík göfugra manna, settu eftir hann bautasteina.”

English

To Thorolf's body they gave all the customary honours paid at the burial of a man of wealth and renown, and set over him a *bautasteinn*.

The burial of Þórólfr takes place in Norway and due to the fact that *bautasteinar* are only mentioned in this saga of the Icelanders, referring to Norwegian custom, and in the Ynglingasaga, referring to Swedish and Norwegian custom, we can assume that the custom of rais-

⁷ Old Norse: *Æpir risti*. Translation: Öpir carved.

⁸ For example on the stone from Källbo/Uppland (U 1042) the carvers formula is: **kuli risti ‘run** > Old Norse: *Kjúli(?) risti rúnar*. Translation: Kjúli carved the runes.

ing *bautasteinar* simply refers to Norwegian or Swedish custom. Archaeological investigations on Iceland showed in conformity with the literal account that upright standing stones did not occur on Icelandic Viking Age graves, so this may indeed be a mainland custom.

The last source for the word *bautasteinn* is the well known Havamál stanza 72, which says:

Old Norse	English
” <i>Sonr er betri,</i> <i>þótt sé síð</i> <i>of alinn</i> <i>eftir genginn guma;</i> <i>sjaldan bautarsteinar</i> <i>standa brautu nær,</i> <i>nema reisi niðr at nið.</i> ”	73. (72) A son is better, though late he be born, and his father to death have fared; seldom <i>bautarsteinar</i> stand by the road save when kinsman honours his kin.

The statement of the stanza that the named *bautasteinn* is raised close to a road contradicts the observation that *bautarsteinar* both in literature and in the archaeological data were raised in connection to graves. By looking at the context of the stanza the whole meaning deals with memory and death and it would also be possible that the *bautasteinn* should be raised as a memorial for the deceased – close to the road so that everybody can see it, but at the same time close to the graves of the deceased – which became apparent and thus not worth mentioning.

However we interpret the Havamál stanza we cannot be sure, that the named *bautasteinn* should be a rune stone, because no inscription is mentioned in the poem. As easy as naming the *bautasteinn* in the poem it would have been possible to name a memorial inscription or a rune stone, but it was not. The poem says that people were commemorated by stones – and not with words or runes. We cannot translate the word *bautasteinn* as a rune stone by implication, because the *bautasteinn* as an upright standing stone without inscription exists in the archaeological account and not at any time it is mentioned in literature, that the named *bautasteinn* is provided with an inscription. Different types of memorial stones were found from the Viking Age, but only one type, the simple *bautasteinn* is mentioned in the texts.

So lets look for other evidence for rune stones in literature:

Snorris description of the king’s funerals is very stereotypically [Pesch 1996:149]. His used vocabulary gives no room for special features. There is only one funeral in Snorris Heimskringla which differs from the other stereotypical descriptions: The funeral of king Guðlaugr in Ynglingasaga 26. In a stanza, which Snorri assigns to the scald Eyvindr skáldaspillir, the king’s grave is described in the following manner:

Old Norse	English
” <i>Þar er fjölkunt</i> <i>um fylkis hrör</i> <i>steini merkt,</i> <i>Straumeyjarnes</i> ”.	This is widely known the stonegrave of the leader marked with stones in Straumeyjarnes

The king was buried in a “*hrör*”, which is a special type of grave, where the grave mound is build up out of smaller stones. This kind of grave is mentioned in at least two runic inscriptions (Sö 47 & Sö 176) and well known in the archaeological account. Besides this special type of grave construction the mound is *steini merkt*, marked with even more stones. To flag a mound which is build up out of stones you need even more and bigger stones to mark it visible in the landscape. May these marking stones refer to a rune stone? Or is it a repetition of the smaller stones, where the mound was build up with? The stanza needs the “s” in this verse

for the alliteration, the “s” bears the stave in this line together with “Straumeyjarnes” in the last line. So how are these stones to be understood? As the stones from the mound? As upright standing stones to mark the mound (*bautasteinar*)? As a purely metrical instrument to keep the rhythm? Or do we have a rune stone standing at Straumeyjarnes? Unfortunately – we can’t decide.

In the same way uncertain is my last example from literature: The *Hlōðskviða*, probably one of the oldest eddic poems [Marold 1998:22], describes in stanza 10 the land which Hlōð wants to archieve:

Old Norse

”Hrís þat it mæra,
er Myrkvið heita,
gröf þá ina helgu,
er stendr á Goðþjóðu,
stein þann inn fagra,
er stendr á stöðum Danpar,
halfar herborgir,
þær er Heiðrekr átti,
lönd ok lýða
ok ljósa bauga.”

English

Famous forest,
folk call the Myrkvið,
at the holy grave
of the Gothic highway,
that famed boulder
on the Banks of Danp,
half the war-gear,
that Heidrek owned,
land and people
and pretty rings.”

At the holy grave and close to the main road through the land of the Goths a beautiful stone is standing. Due to the fact that most stones are normally grey and far from being beautiful, this stone may be a special one: Maybe coloured, with ornaments or maybe an inscription? At least this stone marks the grave of an important ancestor, and by naming the grave a claim for both land and ownership is combined. Moreover the grave and the stone are positioned close to a main road, which reminds us of the *Havamál* stanza, where the *bautasteinn* for the dead ancestors should be raised close to the road. All this indicates a special place in the landscape which would be strongly suitable for a rune stone. Another argument would be that the poem presumably derives from Sweden and the action mostly takes place there⁹.

But, unfortunately, again no inscription is mentioned in the text.

An unknown word?

After all these examples for special stones close to graves and roads in the Old Norse texts and the observation that a stone with inscription is never named in literature, although we know about over 3000 rune stones which are still preserved from the Scandinavian Iron Age, a possible conclusion would be that the word rune stone was simply unknown when the Old Norse sources were written down. This would be the easiest explanation, but unfortunately it is wrong.

In a letter dated to the 19th of March 1287 from the hands of king Magnus Ladulås (1275–1290) a rune stone is named for defining the juridical borders in Västergötland. The text is:

Latin

Hos terminos inter premissa pascua statuimus, videlicet. de vinnbro. jn jadhurin. jnde in Runustenen. jnde in mædhalstenen. jnde in Hallinæ owæn widh odhens kyældu.¹⁰

English

As borders between the named grazing land we decide the following: from Vinnbro crossing Jadhurin [a river¹¹], crossing the rune stone, crossing the Mædhalstone and upside Hallinæ with Odens spring.

⁹ Uppsala is for example named as the seat of the king.

¹⁰ Cited after Jungner, Svärdröm 1970:150

¹¹ Jadhurin is probably an older term for the rivers Hornborgaån or Slafsån.

Together with a bridge, a river, another stone and a holy spring the rune stone marks the borders between the medieval village of Håkantorp and the monastery of Gudhem in Västergötland. The named rune stone may be Vg 90 from Torestorp. The document shows that the word *runustenen* was known in 13th century Sweden and rune stones were already in medieval times used as landmarks for juridical purpose. They were observed, mentioned and left on its place. Therefore we have to conclude, that the stones under the name “rune stone” were already known in the times when the Old Norse texts were collected and written down.

Results

The results of my paper can be summed up to the following:

- 1) Rune stones were important elements of the Viking Age memorial culture
- 2) Rune stones existed in the Viking Age, where the action of most of the Old Norse texts takes place. They also existed in medieval times, where most of the Old Norse texts were written down. And they still exist today
- 3) The term *runusten* = “rune stone” was already known in the 13th century
- 4) Both runes and stones occur in literature, but no rune stone is mentioned. People threw stones, they hit their head on bigger stones, but never meet a rune stone. Runes are carved in wood or horn. Far away, in Norway and Sweden, they raised upright standing stones at the graves of their forefathers, but no runes are mentioned.

To explain this obvious discrepancy, my interpretation is the following:

Rune stones were known in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, where they were still visible in the landscape, but not on Iceland, where the texts were written down. The collectors didn't know what was meant when someone raised a stone for his ancestor or king.

This conclusion may lead to a much bigger result: The Old Norse texts reflect the life on Iceland in a retrospective manner, they describe Viking Age Iceland out of their medieval way of thinking, when already a lot of elementary knowledge about the Viking Age was forgotten.

In how far can we trust the Old Norse texts in explaining Viking Age Norway, Denmark and Sweden? Do these sources provide any useful information for research about the Viking Age Scandinavian mainland?

Apart from any source criticism it is obvious that rune stones and saga are two very different types of sources for the Viking Age. They were made at different times, by the hands of different people and with different intentions. Rune stones were erected in the Viking Age, saga texts were written down in the medieval period. Rune stones were erected in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, while sagas were written down mostly on Iceland. Male scholars wrote on the vellum, while men and women from different social classes erected stones. They erected stones to praise and honour other men and women, while the sagas were written down to preserve a special kind of history for a special purpose. But there is one thing, both have in common: They were written down to be read by future generations.

We have to thank all the erectors who raised their stones in the hope that they would stand *meðan veröld vakir* (G 343), as long as the world is awake. Otherwise a lot of men and women were forgotten today, people of the Viking Age. To understand the Viking Age properly we need those relics and cannot rely only on the written sources. In combination of willful and unwitting relics the ideal picture, painted by the written sources, is widened. By studying rune stones a living society can be reconstructed. Historical data may give all relevant information about when and where and who. But to understand history properly, subjective sources from all strata of society paint a vivid picture of the past. Maybe rune stones were too personal, too archaic to be named in sagas. But they provide us with information, which oth-

erwise would have been forgotten: All the names, men and women, their family relationships, journeys and their beliefs.

Therefore I would like to thank Jarlabanke and Odendisa and thank you for reading!

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Sverris saga in Uppsala De la Gardie 3

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The text of *Sverris saga* is preserved in five complete or fairly complete medieval vellum manuscripts, twenty vellum fragments coming from eight otherwise basically lost medieval manuscripts, six paper copies of varying length of lost vellum fragments with text-critical value, one somewhat abbreviated Swedish translation from the seventeenth century of a now lost vellum, one Danish epitome from the sixteenth century based on a lost medieval manuscript, and a multitude of post-reformation paper copies of preserved manuscripts.

There is no modern critical edition of *Sverris saga*, and therefore the Fornmanna sögur edition of 1834 is still useful, particularly concerning readings from the vellum fragments in the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen. The four most complete medieval manuscripts containing the text (AM 327 4to, Eirspennill, Flateyjarbók, Skálholtsbók yngsta) have each been published in separate critical editions, and the earliest parchment fragment has also appeared (Jensen 1979). AM 327 4to contains only *Sverris saga* and is considered to be the *codex optimus*, in spite of three lacunae near the conclusion.

The Íslenzk fornrit edition (hereafter ÍF), vol. 30 edited by Þorleifur Hauksson, appeared in 2007 with the text from AM 327 4to normalized and with a number of eclectic corrections taken from readings in other manuscripts. The choice of corrections was based mainly on the genealogical stemma of the major manuscripts.

In the ÍF volume selected readings from the fifth vellum, Sth. perg. 8 fol., are presented. The manuscript preserves 50% of the text, but can be supplemented by a mid-seventeenth-century paper copy, AM 304 4to, made when the original was more complete; together they preserve 70% of the text. In addition, selected readings are included from the fragmentary and now lost Gullinskinna version (only chs. 1–16, now preserved in paper copies).

A genealogical stemma for the four major vellum manuscripts was established by Gustav Indrebø in his diplomatic edition of AM 327 4to (1920:xxxī–li). His results were challenged by Lárus H. Blöndal in 1982, who proposed a separate stemma for the placement of Flateyjarbók in particular in the first half of the text (chs. 1–100), but Hallvard Magerøy (1990) refuted Lárus Blöndal's suggestion. Þorleifur Hauksson's attempt to place the Sth. perg. 8 fol. recension in the stemma led to the proposal of a slightly different and somewhat more refined stemma (2007:xli–liii, particularly xlvi).

There are some weaknesses in the ÍF edition. Unfortunately, not even selected readings were included from several of the minor text witnesses (in particular the vellum fragments), and one recension is only commented on in passing, namely Uppsala De la Gardie 3. Þorleifur Hauksson mentions Jón Rúgmann's seventeenth-century Swedish translation twice, relating that it was based on De la Gardie 3, a fourteenth-century manuscript destroyed in the fire in 1702, and stating simply (2007:xlvii, lxxviii):

Sérleshættir í þýðingunni bera með sér að þetta glataða handrit hefur verið skylt B-handritum [i.e., all manuscripts other than A = AM 327 4to], en erfitt er að afmarka það nánar þar sem textinn er talsvert stytur. [...] *Sverris saga* er allmikið stytt í þýðingu Jóns og því erfitt að kveða á um stöðu hins glataða handrits í ættarskránni, að öðru leyti en því að ýmsir sérleshættir eru sameiginlegir B-handritunum.

In the present paper, the version of *Sverris saga* in the lost Uppsala manuscript will be examined using all sources available, and an attempt will be made to place that recension in the genealogical stemma. In the following presentation, the sigla from the ÍF edition are employed (cf. 2007:2): A = AM 327 4to, E = Eirspennill, F = Flateyjarbók, Sk = Skálholtsbók

yngsta, 8 = Sth. perg. 8 fol., 304 = AM 304 4to, 42 = AM 42 fol. The siglum *U is introduced for the lost manuscript Uppsala De la Gardie 3. In addition, the siglum X is introduced for vellum fragments in AM 325 X 4to. All textual references are to the page and line in the ÍF edition, designated Sv. In order to facilitate comparison of the different versions, the standard chapter numbers are provided. In cases when readings in normalized orthography from manuscripts other than A were not included in the ÍF edition, they are cited, normalized, from the diplomatic edition of the manuscript or from the manuscript itself.

Whether Indrebø's stemma or that of Þorleifur Hauksson is to be accepted, is not the issue here, and for the genealogical placement of *U, this question turns out to be of little importance.

Uppsala De la Gardie 3

Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622–86) possessed in the 1660s a vellum manuscript containing various kings' sagas (Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:1077). It was among those donated by De la Gardie to Uppsala University in 1669 where it is termed in the letter of donation "Historiæ Regum, alias Konunga Sagurne". The manuscript, Uppsala De la Gardie 3, was on loan from the university library to Olof Rudbeck and perished in the conflagration in Uppsala in 1702. There are, however, various sources for information on its contents.

In the 1660s the Icelander Jón Rúgmán made a translation of the manuscript into Swedish, and this translation was published at Visingsborg in 1670 as *Norlandz Chrönika och Beskrifning* (hereafter called R, for Rúgmán; *Sverris saga* concludes the translation). Johnsen and Jón Helgason examined the separate Óláfs saga helga version in *U (1941:1078–88), a manuscript which they date to the fourteenth century, and concluded that the text was not interpolated and should have been used in their edition, but that this fact was realized at too late a stage; besides, a reconstruction would have been a great and probably unrewarding task. In their characterization of the translation of Óláfs saga helga in R, they relate, among other things, that the language is frequently tainted by Icelandic expression and that skaldic verse is as a rule dropped; other than that, the translation does not seem to be abbreviated. They mention that the version preserved in *U of the following kings' sagas up to King Sverrir, an interpolated reworking of *Heimskringla III*, is closest to the *Eirspennill* recension, and state that the text of *Sverris saga* that follows is "forkortet, særlig mot slutningen".

The text in the second part of *U, covering the Norwegian kings from 1030 until 1177 (*Heimskringla III*), was examined in detail by Jonna Louis-Jensen (1977:34–40). In this part, *U was confirmed to be a sister text of *Eirspennill*.

Another source for the contents of *U, often containing direct quotations of short phrases or longer contexts, is Olof Verelius's Old Scandinavian dictionary published in Uppsala in 1691 as *Index lingvæ veteris Scytho-Scandicæ* (hereafter termed V). Here one finds some 190 citations of words or text from *Sverris saga* identified as deriving from *U. The dictionary quotations complement the Swedish translation: phrases omitted by Rúgmán frequently appear in the dictionary, and at times translations turn out to be fairly free reformulations.

There are, of course, great difficulties connected with attempting to employ a seventeenth-century abbreviated Swedish translation as the main witness for an Old Norse text, even if one has a number of dictionary supplements in Old Norse. Various methodological problems will be illustrated below.

Rúgmán's translation of *Sverris saga*

Rúgmán's translation of *Sverris saga* in *Norlandz Chrönika och Beskrifning* covers pp. 411–52[3]. The chapters are numbered consecutively, and the saga "Om Konung Swerre" begins with ch. 451 and ends with ch. 596.

The text of Óláfs saga helga in *U was not abbreviated, and the same is basically true concerning the text from Heimskringla III. The text is apparently not shortened to any degree at the beginning of Sverris saga either, and the Swedish retelling follows the Old Norse text closely. Although there is a general simplification and reduction throughout the text, Þorleifur Hauksson's statements concerning the "considerably/greatly" abbreviated form of Rúgmann's translation of Sverris saga is an oversimplification and an exaggeration. There are indeed some sweeping shortenings of long battle presentations and also of long or repetitive speeches in the first half of the saga, but the impression of an abbreviated text applies in the main to the last half or third of the saga concerning chiefly the conflict with the Eyjarskeggjar in 1194, with the Baglar from 1196 onward, and particularly with the farmers in Oslo in 1200. Comparing the length of the translation with the length of the printed text in the ÍF edition gives an indication of the relative degree of shortening. For chs. 1–100 (excluding a lacuna in *U), one page of translation corresponds to 2.1 pages of the edition, whereas for chs. 101–75 (where *U broke off, see below), one page corresponds to 2.9 pages of the edition. Comparing only chs. 150–75, one page of the translation corresponds to 3.5 pages of the edition; thus in comparison with the first hundred chapters, there is a reduction of 40% in the translation. It seems reasonable then that Rúgmann either tired of his task, or ran out of time as work progressed, and gradually was forced to or decided to abbreviate more and more. The first half to two-thirds of the text, however, provides a reasonably good source for an attempt to reconstruct the text of Sverris saga in *U.

Fifteen parenthetical comments, probably as a rule written by Rúgmann, are included in the translation, generally in petit roman type. The parentheses usually contain the explanation of a word, e.g., R425.6–7/ch.18 "een Einstig/ (een smal Wäg/ som intet kan gåås mehr än aff een Man/)" and R468.4/ch.78 "Gullwönden (Sceptrum Regale.)", but there is also one cross-reference (R436.32–33/ch.30) "Hecklingar/ (vide Cap. 484. infra)". In connection with the lacuna in *U encompassing Sv10.22–18.7/chs.6–10, a parenthetical statement (R415.20–23) explains that the following text is taken from "Den Danska Per Claußons Version"; there is no comment, however, when translation from *U again begins at R416.26. Likewise the fact that the end of the text, from Sv272.16 on, was missing in *U and was taken from Peder Clausson Friis's translation is related parenthetically.

In addition to the use of individual Icelandic words such as "Einstig" mentioned above and the Icelandic spelling especially of several personal names and place-names, Old Norse direct quotations are three times included in the text: (1) R438.37–38/ch.33 "Fall er farar Heill"; (2) R448.29–30/ch.47 "Ty ecki kiemr ufrigum [!=ófeigum] i hel/ ock ecki ma frigum forda i Flotta er fall werst"; (3) 449.5–8/ch.47 "Ælla [!=Ætla] eck mier ena Märu / Mune fagru Jorunni / Huegi er fundr med freygium / Ferr Magnus ok Suerri". (Poetic stanzas, as in the third quotation, are otherwise as a rule dropped, although they are usually introduced or mentioned, e.g., R446.15/ch.44 "Tå bleff een Wijsa qwäden".)

There are abundant typographical errors in the text. Of more interest are the mistakes clearly made by the translator. Abbreviations in *U were sometimes apparently misunderstood, e.g., when R428.16 mentions twelve "Bröder" (Sv36.16/ch.21 *Bændr tólf*). Likewise reference to a person only by title could be misunderstood. Thus in the description of Sverrir rowing between his ships in a small boat and giving instructions during the battle at Fimreiti, one finds (R475.3) "K. Magnus rodde och så emellan Skepen"; the mistake was caused by the reading Sv141.23/ch.91 *Konungr* referring to Sverrir.

Further interesting readings from the text will be discussed below.

Verelius's entries from Sverris saga in his Index

Olof Verelius (1618–82) compiled the first printed Old Norse dictionary. His *Index lingvæ veteris Scytho-Scandicæ*, published posthumously (1691) by Olof Rudbeck, was actually an Old Scandinavian dictionary based on Old Swedish provincial laws and a multitude of Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian texts (laws, sagas of various kinds including the entire *Ormsbók*, religious literature, learned texts, Eddic and skaldic poetry, etc.).

The dictionary entries consist of headwords, translations into Swedish and Latin (or explanations, sometimes with additional cultural comments or etymologies), a reference with page or chapter specification to the text where the word was registered, and often citations presenting the keyword in context and accompanied by a Swedish and/or Latin translation of the phrase or sentence. A sample entry will illustrate the dictionary. (Gothic typescript is the standard and is here represented by roman type, whereas roman type is here underlined; page numbers in V are included, with column, to compensate for the somewhat haphazard alphabetization in the dictionary.)

Sibyrt. & sidbyrt. Skepzbord/ Latus navis Ab Sida Latus & Bord latus. Kong. pag. 223. Kong. S. pag. 223. Ef þeir hefdu sibyrt. Si latus navis, lateri hostilis navis, applicuissent. ibid. Han lagdi skip sibyrt vid skip þeirra. Han lade om bord med Fienden. [...] (V219a)

It is not easy to determine the exact number of citations from *Sverris saga* in V. Two have not yet been identified as definitely coming from this text (see below). In the sample entry just quoted, there are two individual citations for one headword. On the other hand, “Sald” (V214a), with the cited phrase “[...] romborat. Sald [...]”, corresponding to Sv154.8/ch.99, and also the entry “Romboral [!] salld” (V210b) appear, both referring to the same citation. Since there are two headwords, they are nonetheless included as two separate citations in the total of 192 registrations in V from *Sverris saga*. On the other hand, the entry “Birkbenar” (V35b), simply from “Kong. S.” with no page specified, could be from either *Heimskringla III* or *Sverris saga*, and is not included in the 192 registrations.

There are at least seven mistakes in the page numbers for citations, making it at times difficult to identify the quotations. An example is “Flemta” (V73b) with the citation “Han flempar yfr [!=ydr] af rikeno” corresponding to Sv192.10–11/ch.126 and with “pag. 288” incorrectly for “238”. The last quotation from *Sverris saga*, “Hus” (V128b), comes from “pag. 262” (corresponding to Sv272.15–16/ch.175), and in a parenthetical note starting in the very next line in Rúgmann’s translation (R521.35–522.4), it is related that the manuscript breaks off there. Such mistakes with page numbers necessitated examination of all citations from “Kong. S.” in case any of the others might actually represent text from *Sverris saga*. This, however, did not prove to be the case. In general, entries with bare references to somewhere before *Sverris saga* began, but that could perhaps have come from *Sverris saga*, were as a rule words found in other dictionaries with references to *Heimskringla III*, *Morkinskinna* or the *Hulda-Hrokinskinna* compilation, thus from the kings’ saga texts in part two of *U. Only one such headword was identified as referring to *Sverris saga*: “Blistra”, cited from “pag. 176”, which corresponds, based on the citation “Atti han þa af [!=at] blistra i spor honom”, to Sv38.12–13/ch.23.

A minor problem with the dictionary is that headwords do not always correspond with the keywords in the citations, e.g., the headword “Byrleidi gott” (V047b) with the citation “Byr rann à” (Sv201.1/ch.134). Typographical mistakes also occur, e.g., “Eidstafr” (V55a) with the citation “Ganga à lidstaf [!]” (Sv96.6–7/ch.60). The headword “Flur” (V74b) with the citation “Flur oc hueti” illustrates, when compared with Rúgmann’s translation, that Verelius could rephrase the original; R482.31 has “Hwete/ Honing/ Floor och Kläde”, corresponding exactly to Sv159.10–11/ch.104.

Several incorrect translations by Verelius occur, e.g., “Gryla” (V100b) defined as “Gry/gryning/ *Diluculum*” (from “*pag.* 187”; this word comes from the preface, thus establishing the first page of *Sverris saga* in *U). In reconstructing the text of *U, however, translation mistakes by Verelius as such are not of interest.

There remain two unidentified entries attributed by Verelius to *Sverris saga*. “Þarnast” (V261b), clearly for *þarfnask* (defined as “*quasi* Tarfuas, *Carere, amittere, Fattas*”) and with the corrupt and unidentified quotation “Hui þarnar þæssar huegra at? Hwar till tarfwades det högre”, could not be found in any version of the saga where it is supposed to occur (somewhere between Sv91.23/ch.58 and Sv99.17/ch.62). “Harfengiliga” (V109b) for *harðfengiliga* does not occur in any other recension of *Sverris saga* in the description of the battle at Fimreiti, although the bare reference implies that it occurred between Sv141.11/ch.91 and Sv146.10/ch.94.

Three problematic entries have been identified with some probability. “Harðræði” (V109b) on “*pag.* 204”, corresponding to somewhere between Sv63.19/ch.38 and Sv73.7/ch.47, may represent a singular reading for Sv64.18/ch.39 *ofsi*. The bastard word “Mandyrdarmenn, *Heroes* [...], Hieltar [...]” (V168a), with a bare reference to “*pag.* 220” and thus supposedly occurring somewhere between Sv125.11/ch.81 and Sv134.13/ch.87, probably corresponds to Sv128.21/ch.83 *margir lendir menn* AFSk 8; the variants *margir mikilsháttar menn* E333.25 and *margir ágætir menn* X5vb13–14 might allow one to assume that the original reading in *U was *margir dýrdarmenn*, or perhaps rather that it included this reading, as indicated by the doublet in R471.8–9 “månge förnehme och Ländamän”. The unknown Old Norse word “Traka” (V258a), defined as “*Transenna, Stacket hakelwärke*”, is said to have been on “*pag.* 228”, which would correspond to somewhere between Sv159.10/ch.104 and Sv164.20/ch.107. The probable identification is with Sv269.30/ch.172 *flaka* (nom. *flaki* ‘wicker-work shield’), mentioned in connection with Sverrir’s attacks during the siege of the fortification in Tønsberg. This solution is attractive, in spite of the fact that both the spelling and the page reference would be incorrect (R520.28 “Flaackar” would have been on *pag.* 261 or 262).

Verelius has taken excerpts from the entire text but was clearly more interested in the vocabulary of certain sections. There are a total of 192 citations from the 76 pages of text, thus about 2.5 per page. Several pages, however, have not been excerpted, whereas others have more than their share of quotations. The largest numbers are from *pag.* 223 and 224 concerning the battle at Fimreiti in chs. 91–96 where twelve and fifteen quotations were registered respectively, and *pag.* 241 concerning Sverrir’s conflict with the Baglar and Bishop Nikulás in chs. 131–34 with twelve citations. The proportion of quotations where text corresponding to Verelius’s headwords or citations is not found in some form or other in the translation, around one-third, gives an indication of the amount of abbreviation. The sample entry quoted above for *síbyrt* illustrates the relationship. The first quotation is translated by Rúgmann (475.21–22) “om the hade laget Sijda wid Sijda” (corresponding to Sv142.23–24/ch.91), whereas the second quotation is not represented in Rúgmann’s translation since the text is abbreviated (at R475.29, Sv143.14–15/ch.92).

At times the translation in R can be misleading as to the exact wording in *U, and V can be used to correct this. For instance, R422.12 “Tijnder” corresponds to Sv27.9/ch.16 *tíðendi* A, but the synonymous headword “Nymæli” (V183b, with a bare reference to “*pag.* 193”) illustrates that the reading in *U corresponded to the variant *nymæli* EFSk. A singular and interesting reading from *U is the headword “Tuisynt” (V260a) with the citation “Tuisynt þotti huart fyrr myndi hrodit it mikla skipit” corresponding to Sv143.11–12/ch.92 *at engi maðr þóttisk vita hvárt fyrr [...] mundi it mikla skipit vera hroðit*; this word does not occur in any other version, nor is it reflected in Rúgmann’s translation, which has simply R475.29–30 “at man icke gierna kunde see hwilken ther skulle winna”.

The genealogical affiliation of *U

In the following, readings from *U are compared first with manuscript readings presented by Þorleifur Hauksson in his discussion of the stemma (2007: xli–liii) and then with the variant readings provided in footnotes to his ÍF edition. Frequently the readings from R cannot be used to place *U conclusively with respect to the other manuscripts, since there are simply too many possible sources of error. Such instances are passed over below without further notice.

Of the three shared errors that establish the B-class of manuscripts (2007: xliii), two are found in *U: R418.1/ch.12 “Rijkes Hæradt” and R467.35/ch.77 “Strindar Fiord”. R also has “een Gård/ som heeter Steen” (R446.24/ch.44), agreeing with A and E (*bæinn á Steini* A, *bæinn Stein* E) against *Beinstein* Sk and *Bensteini* F. Þorleifur Hauksson suggests here that this mistake was in all the B-manuscripts, but was corrected in E; it would then have to have been corrected twice, in E and *U, or in a common original for the two. In connection with a mistake shared by F and 8, about Eilifr in ch. 86 with the by-name *æra* E (÷A, *Arason* F, *Erason* 8), *U agrees with *orra* Sk (R471.29 “Orra”), a reading that could be just as correct as E’s. The common mistake found in F and 8 in ch. 164, *Svartabúðum* for *Sútarabúðum*, also occurs, perhaps independently, in *U (R516.20 “Swarta-bod”; A has a lacuna here). Concerning the other cited variants, R appears a few times to be closer to Sk, e.g., in ch. 1 (2007: xlvi) “som vhr ett Jærn/ som hefftigt blæses áth i Smedieæsan” (R412.17–18). The examples of doublets (2007: li–lii) are discussed in the conclusion below.

A comparison of the textual variants in notes to the ÍF edition shows clearly that E, Sk and *U constitute a group of closely related manuscripts. The following are two striking examples. In connection with Þorsteinn kúgaðr’s surrender of the fortress near Niðaróss and the Kuflungar’s subsequent taxation of the townsmen, only ESk*U, not AF 8, relate that the townsmen paid the tax (at Sv167.8/ch.108): *en bæjarmenn greiddu heldr gjaldit* (R485.16 “hwilcken Borgarena vthgofwo”). The conversation between Sverrir and Óláfr jarlsmágr in Sv179.22–180.5/ch.118 is found in AF 8, but not in ESk nor in *U (at R490.15).

Readings also point in other directions, but these instances may be only individual anomalies. In connection with Sv24.8/ch.14 *Vazfell* E (correct only here, for present-day Vassfjell in South Trøndelag), *U apparently had the same minor misspelling (R420.12 “Wasa Fiäl”) as *Vazafell* A; the other text witnesses have *Vaðafell* Sk (and 42), *Nafnafell* 304, ÷F. A shared cardinal mistake even separates E and Sk from *U, namely Sv127.26/ch.82 (cf. Sv135.3/ch.88) *Hugastrandar* ESk against *Hugastrandar* AF 8 X5va23 *U (R470.32 Hugastrand), but both readings are mistakes for present-day Hugastranda in Sogn.

The majority of readings point toward a closer connection between *U and Sk than between *U and E. For example, *U and Sk have the same reading of the by-name Sv69.27 /ch.45 *Skuðu-* A, namely *Skrýddu-* (R447.3 “Skryddu”), and here each manuscript otherwise has its own reading (*Skrúðu-* F, *Skrýðu-* E); by-names are, however, not entirely reliable as evidence, i.a. since they may be remembered from elsewhere and introduced by a copyist. The special reading corresponding to Sv52.7/ch.32 *en þá myndi þykkja vænligast um þeira ráð* found otherwise only in Sk, namely *en þá horfðisk á*, is shared with *U (R438.1 “än hwad Ögonnen tänligit war”). Likewise, the headword “Þefur” (V262a), with the cited phrase “Hræfa þefr af valnum” (corresponding to Sv146.21/ch.95 *hrævadaun af valinum*), affiliates *U and Sk124.7 against all other recensions, including E344.35.

Other readings, a smaller number, point in the opposite direction and group *U with E against Sk. Some appear convincing, however, in particular in ch. 16 concerning the transporting of ships over land either a distance of Sv29.12 *fim rastir* AF 304/*fim milur* Sk, or over *eið mikit* E (*yfir* missing); *U too has the large isthmus (R423.28–29 “öfwer et stoort Eed”).

E, Sk and *U form a group of manuscripts with related readings. Either all three are simply sister manuscripts, deriving from the same original, or two of them are sister manuscripts, and

their original is a sister to the third. The impression arrived at from all the examined variants is that Sk and *U are sister manuscripts, and their original is a sister manuscript to E.

There might be one clear error shared by R and Sk that would underpin this suggestion for the genealogical placement of *U. The mistake concerns Magnús Erlingsson's man Sigurðr Nikolásson mentioned in chs. 14, 34, 36 and 37. He is in ch. 34 concerning 1179 (at Sv56.2–3) in Sk not only confused but combined with Sigurðr af Saltnesi, Sverrir's man mentioned in ch. 14 and whose death in 1178 was related in ch. 28. Sk42.23–24 reads *kom til Sigurðr af Saltnesi Nikolás<son> ok Jón af Randabergi*, and *U has (R440.17–18) “kom Sigurd Nikulasson aff Saltnäs til honom/ tillijka med Jon aff Randaberg”. Since, however, there is an additional mistake in Sk (-son is missing, and thus the reading implies three men, including Nikolás and Jón, both *af Randabergi*), this shared mistake may not be entirely conclusive.

Conclusion

If *U is indeed a sister manuscript of Sk (and their original a sister manuscript of E), it can be used to identify several readings that most likely were in their common original, particularly mistakes, deletions, and innovations in Sk. Regardless of its exact placement in the genealogical stemma, readings from *U can be used to check some of Þorleifur Hauksson's choices of specific corrections to A. In addition, support for readings in A can be found in cases where *U as the only B-group manuscript contains the same reading as A. These uses of *U are illustrated in the following.

Þorleifur Hauksson (2007:li–lii), following Lárus Blöndal, considers the use of double expressions in Sverris saga, especially in A, as a good explanation for much synonymous variation among manuscripts: tautologies could be simplified to single expressions and choices could vary. For example, the assumed original doublet Sv35.10–11/ch.20 *handfesti ok vápnatak* A was simplified to *handfesti* E and *vápnatak* FSk. The same tautology as in A is found in the B-class manuscript *U (R427.25 “Handslag och Wapnetack”), confirming its existence in both classes and thus as far back as the original *X. The other double expression listed there from the same chapter is also in *U, although with a slight mistranslation: R427.29 “brádt aff hög Miskund” (Sv35.14/ch.20 *bráða ok háleita miskunn*). *U even contains additional tautologies that most likely were in the original of Sverris saga. The variants in Sv31.9/ch.28 *troða* FSk 304 and *ganga* AE can be explained as simplifications of the tautology in R424.37 “gå och träda”. Perhaps even the variants in ch. 16 mentioned above, where a length of “five rests/miles” alternated with a topographic statement, “over a large isthmus”, could be explained as resulting from the simplification of two-fold information: “five rests/miles over a large isthmus”.

*U can contribute to the understanding of the genealogical relationships between the other manuscripts of Sverris saga. It can be used to correct corrupt readings in Sk, to confirm some readings from A as more original than other readings, and to demonstrate additional doublets probably in the original text. The lost Uppsala manuscript is thus an important witness concerning the text of Sverris saga.

Bibliography, abbreviations, sigla

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F = Flateyjarbók (Gl. kgl. sml. 1005 fol.) = Flateyjarbok. En samling af norske Konge-sagaer. [Ed. by Guðbrandur Vigfússon & C. R. Unger.] 3 vols. Christiania, 1860–68.
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ÍF = Íslenzk fornrit.

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R = Rúgmann's translation of *U, see *Norlandz Chrönika och Beschriffning*.

Sk = *Skálholtsbók yngsta* (AM 81a fol.) = *Det Arnamagnæanske Haandskrift 81a Fol.* (Skálholtsbók yngsta). Ed. by A. Kjær and L. Holm-Olsen. Kristiania/Oslo, 1910–86.

Sv = *Sverris saga*. Ed. by Þorleifur Hauksson. Reykjavík, 2007. (Íslenzk fornrit 30.)

Þorleifur Hauksson, 2007: "Formáli" (pp. v–xc), and edition. In: Sv.

*U = *Uppsala De la Gardie 3*.

V = *Verelius, Olof, 1691: Index lingvæ veteris Scytho-Scandicæ sive Gothicæ*. Ed. by O. Rudbeck. Vpsalæ.

X = AM 325 X 4to (plus AM 325 VIII 3a 4to; readings from the manuscript).

8 = *Sth. perg. 8 fol.* (readings from the manuscript or from Sv).

42 = AM 42 fol. (one of Ásgeir Jónsson's copies of the *Gullinskinna* fragment of *Sverris saga*).

304 = AM 304 4to (readings from the manuscript or from Sv).

÷ = dropped or missing.

When was the Battle of Helgeå?

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The power balance between the three Scandinavian countries was challenged during the reign of Cnut the Great. Alliances between countries were based upon personal relations between powerful people. When King Swein Forkbeard of Denmark died, the firm coalition that secured peace in Scandinavia during the years 999–1014 crumbled. His successor on the Danish throne was, however, capable of maintaining good relations to the Swedish neighbour. This was partly due to the fact that his sister, the Danish princess Estrid, was a sister to the Swedish king as well. That is, her mother Sigrid was at the time of her marriage to king Swein a widow of King Erik of Sweden by whom she had given birth to king Oluf of Sweden.

Since the Battle of Svold in 999, Norway was governed by the brothers Erik and Swein, sons of Earl Haakon. Erik had married a daughter of King Swein of Denmark, while Swein's wife was a sister to King Oluf of Sweden. The Norwegian earls ruled Norway in concert with their families in law, and all of Scandinavia was dominated by strong mutual interests and united with ties of kinship.

After the death of King Swein, Cnut travelled to England to recapture the country, and he was assisted by Earl Erik. At this time at the latest, Earl Erik's son Haakon was made a co-ruler in Norway with his uncle Swein. Olav Haraldson – a descendant of King Harald Haarfa-gre of Norway – fought on English side, but afterwards he went to Norway and claimed the throne. The political stability of Scandinavia was shaken as Haakon and Swein were driven out of Norway.

In the beginning of his reign, King Olav Haraldson was rather isolated in a Nordic context. After some years he married a Swedish princess and when her brother, King Anund Jakob acceded to the throne, the possibility of reconciliation between Norway and Sweden appeared as a reaction towards the strong Danish-English royal power.

The growing tension between the two groupings resulted by the end of the 1020's in Cnut's sovereignty in Norway, while Sweden remained an independent state. But it is not quite clear how things came to that point. The only military battle we know of from that period is the Battle of Helgeaa. Even it has been investigated by many historians (e.g. Steenstrup 1972, Moberg 1941, Lawson 1993 and Lund 1994), the events before, during and after the battle are still dimly elucidated. This is due to the difference and frequent contradiction between the sources.

The enmity between the Scandinavian kings is firstly expressed in a request of submission from Cnut to Olav. Olav's rejection and subsequent alliance with King Anund Jakob resulted in a Swedish-Norwegian raid on Denmark. Cnut met the aggression with a Danish-English army and haunted the allied troops to Helgeaa. Here, the two armies met in a battle ending up with a suspended victory to Cnut. Anund Jakob was capable of sailing home but Olav was forced to leave his ships in Sweden and travel home by land. Cnut headed for the coronation of Conrad II in Rome. On his way home to England he made a detour to Denmark, but Norse sources do not mention his errand. Only a letter, written home by Cnut, indicates some sort of conflict that had to be settled. The next year Cnut left England with the army and sat sails for Norway. Arriving there, he was elected king by the people while Olav escaped to Russia, eventually returned and fell in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030.

This very brief version covers the general perception of the events and their chronological order, build on a variety of sources among which are the above-mentioned letter written by Cnut (Whitelock 1979:476). This letter has been crucial for the dating of events since Cnut from Rome seems to be addressing the battle of Helgeaa. A lot of questions rise from this fact, of which just three are to be mentioned here: Why did Cnut choose to go to Rome and

thereby prioritising his European contacts when at the same time he was threatened by well equipped and hostile neighbours? Why did he make the decision to travel back to England via Denmark? And, considering the fact that the three armies split up and went each to their destination after the fight, who won the battle of Helgeaa?

I intend to challenge the interpretation of that specific passage in Cnut's letter which is used to date the battle of Helgeaa and, in doing so, provide a new explanation of the order of the event; an explanation which more logically explains Cnut's route home from the coronation, and which contributes to an understanding of time and outcome of the Battle.

Snorre's chronology and other sources

The most detailed account remaining of the events is to be found in the Norse sources and the far most coherent of them is Snorre Sturluson's saga on Olav Haraldson. This saga is part of *Heimskringla*, which Snorre finished in the second quarter of thirteenth century – 200 years after the events described. The saga constitutes a crucial part of the entire work, and Snorre wants to tell the story of king Olav who lost life and land in the final battle of Stiklestad but nevertheless ended up as *Rex Perpetuus Norvegiae*.

Despite the long time past, Snorre and his contemporaries had a detailed remembrance of Olav. As a great-grandson of Harald Haarfagre who united all of Norway, people took interest in documenting and preserving memory of his deeds from his very youth. Only a little more than a year passed after his death before the first stories of his sanctity were told, and he was soon to be worshipped as a saint. The tradition emerging in his cult is therefore likely to be close to contemporary knowledge – at least in its origin. The memory of Olav's political life was vivid already when he was first mentioned a saint. As a consequence, the freedom of the historians to arrange the history for their own purposes was somewhat restrained.

Snorre gives a detailed account of Olav's life from the moment he set foot on Norwegian soil, and he arranged the episodes in a strictly chronological order. Even the inserted secondary stories are fit in very neatly: time and geography of the outset or the end of the story hits the main epic at the proper place. It is vital for Snorre to date every incident. To mark the passing of time Snorre usually uses the names of seasons or holidays. "When spring came" or "in summertime" are expressions found frequently during the narrative. Snorre gives a special remark on the 3rd, 7th, 10th and 15th year of Olav's reign and these explicit years are in accordance with the epic time of the story.

Snorre recounts the continuation of bad relations between Sweden and Norway in the beginning of the reign of Anund Jakob. Olav keeps armed forces ready at the border between the two countries in case of need. Snorre describes how the two kings came to an agreement, and contributing to this is Cnut's request of submission by Olav. This made Olav contact Anund Jakob during the autumn. The two brothers in law reached an understanding, and when Cnut sent letters of friendship to Anund Jakob they were received "nok så koldt" (Sturluson 1979:344), Snorre reports. This incident happened in the winter of 1025/26 according to Snorre's chronology.

Olav and Anund Jakob had a meeting in Elv in 1026. The outcome was not seen until the following winter. Olav gathered his army and when spring broke, he sailed south from Trondheim where he had spent the 13th winter of his reign.

After a few stops, he sat sails for Denmark and started to plunder and harass on Sjaelland. King Anund, too, gathered an army and attacked Skaane. When Cnut heard about the raid on Denmark he also gathered his army and sailed, via The Limfjord, against the aggressors. His two adversaries escaped but were caught up at Helgeaa. With fairly even forces on their hands, the outcome was a dubious victory in Cnut's favour. Olav and Anund Jacob were capable of leaving the battlefield with ships and men, but Cnut was too strong for them to fight.

Anund Jacob sailed home but Olav did not dare to sail his ships through Oeresund through Cnut's blockade. He therefore left his fleet in a Swedish harbour and travelled by land to Norway.

Snorre gives a fairly accurate dating of the battle of Helgeaa. Ahead of the battle, he states an indication of time: This was the year where Olav went to Nidaros to spend the winter. And it was the 13th winter of his reign, Snorre writes (Sturluson 1979:354). Later in the saga he states the day of Olav's death as Wednesday July 29th (Sturluson 1979:440). This combination of weekday and date points to the year of 1030 (Einarsdóttir 1964). When Snorre marks the time of Olav's departure from Norway in the saga, he says:

Da hadde kong Olav vært konge i femten år når vi tager med den vinteren da han og Svein jarl var i landet begge to, og så denne som vi nå holder på at fortelle om. Det var alt over jul da han forlot skipene sine og gikk opp i landet, som vi nå fortalte. (Sturluson 1979: 404)

Counting the years, from this time to the Battle of Stiklestad makes 1½ year – or two winters in Snorre's chronology. According to the text, Olav leaves Norway right after Christmas at New Year 1028/1029. He must have ruled 13 winters by New Year 1026/27, and we can therefore conclude that Snorre dates the Battle of Helgeaa to late summer or early fall 1027.

Nevertheless Snorre does tell us, that Cnut stayed in Denmark during the winter 1025/26. He wrote Anund Jacob in order to make an alliance between the two countries and at the same time, he installed Earl Ulf in power along with Hardeknud. We only learn about this journey to Denmark from Snorre and usually the historians ignore this information. However, there are reasons to consider its validity anyway.

We consider the position of Ulf as ruler of Denmark on behalf of Cnut as a fact, but we don't know when he took up this position. In Fagrskinna, considered a few years older than Heimskringla, the only date of the battle is hidden within the information about Earl Ulf governing Denmark "at this time" (Finlay 2004). According to the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, Cnut appointed Earl Thorkell as his substitute in Denmark in 1023 and left his son with him. That is about the last we hear of Thorkell, and he is therefore believed to have died shortly after. He must have been followed by Ulf but we have no information about this.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle dates the battle of Helgeaa to 1025:

In this year King Cnut went with ships to Denmark to the Holme at the Holy River, and there came against him Ulf and Eilaf and a very great army, both a land force and a naval force, from Sweden. And there very many men on King Cnut's side were destroyed, both Danish and English men, and the Swedes had control of the field. (Whitelock 1979:100)

No other sources support this date, and the Battle of Helgeaa is far outside the geographical and political environment of the Anglo-Saxon clergy. Consequently, Lawson suggests (Lawson 1993:96) that the wrong date originates from the fact that next entrance of the Chronicle is 1028. The Battle could therefore easily be recorded a year or two on the wrong side without the author himself having any opportunity to discover his mistake.

But the argument is pointing in the other direction as well. Since no recordings seem to have been made simultaneously during these years, it is possible that Cnut actually travelled to Denmark that winter as claimed by the Norse sources. In that case it would be an understandable mistake to connect the purpose of the trip to the battle of Helgeaa – not least because Cnut actually had received a rejection of his proposal to the Swedish king at this point.

Another unexplained discrepancy may be worth noting. Snorre writes:

Da det lei på våren, gjorde kong Knut seg ferdig med hæren til å reise vest til England; han satte Horda-Knut, sønnen sin, igjen i Danmark, og satte Ulv jarl, sønn til Torgils Sprakalegg, hos ham. (Sturluson:350)

This has puzzled historians, since Snorre seems to date this event to 1026, while the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 1023 reports about Cnut leaving his son in Denmark with Thorkell to rule the country. Immediately after Cnut's return to England in 1023, he is recorded as present at the translation of Archbishop Aelfheah along with Queen Emma and their son Hardeknut. The son to be left in Denmark in 1023 may therefore have been Harold whose mother was Aelfgiva of Northampton, Cnut's first wife.

On the other hand, all sources agree that Hardeknut was the royal son present at the time for the battle of Helgeaa. The coins left us may point in the same direction. Hardeknut became king of Denmark a few years later, and it is therefore not surprising to find coins minted in his name in Denmark. However, it is worth considering that C.J. Becker suggested a date of 1030 at the latest and possibly some few years earlier for a group of coins with a lindworm on the adverse minted in Lund in Hardeknut's name (Becker 1988:123).

We may therefore conclude that the younger brother replaced the older during the period 1023–1026. The trip to Denmark in 1025/26 could have been due to Thorkell's death. Cnut may have wanted to appoint the new person in charge as well as to plan the succession of royal power in England and Denmark. Since Harold had strong relations to the English nobility through his mother, Hardeknut may have been left with Denmark.

Fagrskinna and Snorre seem to point to the fact that Cnut was in England when he heard about Olav's attack on Denmark. They both specify that Cnut went with a big fleet of ships through the Limfjord to pursue the two Scandinavian kings round the eastern part of Skaane and Smaaland, and they both quote the memorial drápa composed for Cnut by the scald Sighvatr. However, the poem itself does not indicate that Cnut was in England while getting the news:

Knutr was under the heavens [...]
Who heard from the east of peace, prince's son
Piercing-eyed, of the Danes.
From the west the wood, wake shining, glided,
Bearing the adversary
Of Adalrádr from there. (Finlay 2004:147)

The sources lack information about Cnut's trip to Rome, though Fagrskinna mentions it but dates it – wrongly – to the year 1031, same as the Anglo-Saxon chronicle. This event was evidently not important in the collective memory of the Norwegians and Icelanders of the 13th century and they had no reasons to research on Cnut's specific point of departure for the trip leading to Helgeaa. Not aware of the trip to Rome and taking into account that the fleet came through the Limfjord, they assumed that Cnut came from England.

Regno et vita privata

Snorre's account of the events is basically supported by other Norse sources, but the chronology in Snorre's Heimskringla is not accepted by historians. This is solely because of a single sentence in a letter which Cnut wrote to the English people while in Rome.

Independent sources confirm that Cnut participated in the crowning of Emperor Conrad II in Rome. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle dates like Florence of Worcester (and like Fagrskinna) the ceremony to 1031 but from continental sources there is no doubt about the date, Easter Sunday March 26th 1027. Cnut had a prominent role at the ceremony as he and the king of

Burgundy, Rudolph III, escorted the newly crowned emperor back to the celebration dinner after the solemn ritual in the church.

This is undoubtedly the event described in Cnut's letter to the English people. The letter is not dated but Cnut tells about his travel to Rome where he has met the pope, the emperor Conrad and many other princes. A single passage of that letter has been decisive for historians:

Ego itaque uobis notum fieri uolo, quod eadem uia qua exiui regrediens, Danemarciam eo, pacem et firmum pactum omnium Danorum consilio cum eis gentibus et populis compositurus, **qui nos et regno et uita priuare**, si eis possibile esset, uolebant, sed non poterant, Deo scilicet uirtutem eorum destruyente, qui nos sua benigna pietate in regno et honore conseruet omniumque inimicorum ostrorum potentiam et fortitudinem deinceps dissipet et adnichilet. (Diplomatarium Noruegicum)

This manifest declaration of somebody who wished to bereave Cnut of power as well as of life has since Johannes Steenstrup been linked closely to the battle of Helgeaa, since this is the only known military encounter involving Cnut during this period. The sentence accentuated above is understood as a reference to a specific and violent meeting, but the words are rather vague. We therefore have to interpret the meaning.

“Regno et uita priuare” is not a commonly used cliché. However, a similar expression is to be found in the Book of Ester, chapter 16. In the modern version of the Bible, the Book of Ester contains only 10 chapters. A version directly translated around A.D. 400 from the Greek Septuagint, called The Vulgate, presented 16 chapters and was recognised by the church as the official Latin version. Only following the Reformation and Luther's aversion of Ester's Book the last six chapters were deleted.

The Book of Ester tells us about the Persian king, Ahasverus, who made Ester queen. Ester was Jewish. Her guardian, Mordechai, prevented an assault on the king. But Haman, who had a trusted position at Ahasverus' court, was offended by Mordechai who refused to kneel for him. He therefore sought the life of all Jews, and particularly of Mordechai, to revenge himself. Ester revealed Haman's intentions to the king and Haman was hanged for his crime.

Chapter 16 quotes a copy of a letter written by Ahasverus about the Jews and about the plot planned by Haman against the Jews and the king's wife Ester:

qui in tantum arrogantiae tumorem sublatus est, ut regno priuare nos niteretur et spiritu.

The king had not been subject to an attack in person, and neither had he participated in some sort of conflict. The expression is used to describe a situation where a person, because of his greed for power, abuses the power delegated to him from the king and thereby disregards an obligation. Since the Vulgate was recognized by Cnut's contemporaries, the term “regno priuare nos niteretur et spiritu” was well-known in the context mentioned. It may therefore have made sense to use the expression about an attack on Denmark in the king's absence. In Cnut's letter to the English people, the expression is followed by the sentence:

Si eis possibile esset, uolebant, sed non poterant, Deo scilicet uirtutem eorum destruyente.

This declaration does not necessarily refer to the Battle of Helgeaa but could point to the harassment of the enemy which had not (yet) defeated the Danish defence.

The expression “Vita et regno priuare” is also found in an English charter, S 406, which is dated to 930. This document has been kept in the archive of Worcester. Athelstan donates land to Worcester Minster and refers to a trophy gained by king Anlaf of the Normans

tropheum ex Anolafu rege Norannorum. **qui me vita et regno privare** disponit possim armis superando adipisci (Barrow 1996)

The document is not genuine but was written in the 1090's with the purpose of documenting the right of the monks to their possessions.

Cnut's letter from Rome has survived only in a Latin version in Florence of Worcester's chronicle. M. K. Lawson expresses some reluctance in accepting the letter word by word.

It could have been written by its bearer, given by Florence as Abbott Lyfing of Tavistock, who eventually became bishop of Worcester, for this would further explain why Florence had a copy. (Lawson 1993:64)

And in the beginning of the letter Cnut claims to be king of Norway as well as of part of Sweden. This prediction of a future victory may be a verbal underlining of the claim on Norway as Peter Sawyer remarks. (Sawyer 1994: 19) It may also be a later adjustment of the wordings of the original letter. We should therefore be prepared to accept the same for certain phrases within the letter.

Rome

Cnut's letter to the English people has made the historians insist on dating the battle of Helgeaa to the time before the coronation of Conrad II. The above mentioned arguments raise the question whether this dating is valid against other sources solely because of the letter itself. If the text is merely a reaction to information about the attack of Olav and Anund Jakob then we have to suppose that Cnut knew of the harassments of the Swedish and Norwegian troops. We cannot document the access of such knowledge in Rome, but Snorre tells about possible ways in which information could reach King Cnut: Erling and his sons left Norway to go to Cnut in England in the early spring of 1027. Olav watches them when passing Jaeren on his way south, according to Snorre. And ahead of that, Stein Skaftason had left Norway according to Snorre:

Tidlig på våren drog han vestover til England og så til kong Knut den mektige og ble hos ham lenge og var velsett der. (Sturluson 1979:360)

These two contacts between Norway and England document departures from Norway before Olav sat sails for Denmark but after it may have been known that Olav sent out a call for the levy.

No one has explained why Olav chose that particular moment – supposedly in 1026 – to attack Denmark, and historians has just accepted the fact that Cnut, according to the general assumption, decided to travel abroad in a time of crisis. If Olav attacked Denmark after Cnut left for Rome it makes sense. It also explains Cnut's own description of the route he chose on his way home:

And therefore I wish to make known to you, that, returning by the same way that I went, I am going to Denmark, to conclude with the counsel of all Danes peace and a firm treaty with those nations and peoples who wished, if it had been possible for them, to deprive us both of the kingdom and of life, but could not, since God indeed destroyed their strength. (Lund 1994:38)

We know very little of his actual choice of route. But we do know that the encomiast, who wrote the appraisal of Queen Emma, saw Cnut in the monastery of St. Omer when he was on

his pilgrimage to Rome. (Campbell 1949:37) *Knytlingesaga* underlines this fact too (*Ægidius* 1977:33). Cnut may have started the trip in Flanders and passed Burgundy on his way south.

He is generally thought to have departed Ribe to reach Flanders, and from there taking off for Rome. That would have been a detour unless he sailed to Flanders and left his ships there. We don't know whether Cnut originally departed from England or Denmark, but if he sailed to Flanders from any of the two places he may have had to fetch his ships there on his way home. His letter tells us therefore nothing specific about where he started his travels.

A remark of William of Malmesbury points in either direction as well. William explains that Lyfing was bishop of Crediton after having been abbot in Tavistock.

“[...] (he) had attached himself to his retinue on his journey to Rome. Even when Cnut's business in Rome was concluded and the king had hurried off to Denmark by land, Lyfing sailed to England carrying the king's letters and to execute his command. Before Cnut himself arrived in England, Lyfing had wisely and skilfully completed all the tasks laid upon him by the king [...]” (William:134)

This statement confirms that Lyfing had been in Denmark with Cnut, but it may not have been immediately before the trip to Rome. However, William stresses the fact that Cnut hurried off to Denmark, while the abbot was sent home to England with certain tasks. This may indicate that Cnut received information which urged him to go to Denmark as quick as possible.

As mentioned earlier *Fagrskinna* has quite another order of the events. Cnut's trip to Rome is dated 1031 and thereby after the battle of Helgeaa, the ousting of Olav, his return and death in the battle of Stiklestad. It is not until this time that Ulf jarl deceived Cnut who let him kill in return. And straight after that, Cnut went west to England and never came back to Denmark – but he did go to Rome, says *Fagrskinna* (Finlay, 2004:164):

King Knutr set out by sea from England on a pilgrimage to the Holy See

Fagrskinna documents the story by some verses from *Sighvatr*, who is rather more modest:

Desire to journey
staff in hand,
came to the king
who thought of war;
Dear to the emperor,
close to Peter,
the road to Rome quickly
the ruler shortened (Finlay, 2004: 165)

Sighvatr suggests that the king had a future war in mind. Another of *Sighvatr*'s verse found in *Heimskringla* lets the king express a similar intention. *Sighvatr* came from Rouen and headed for Norway. For some reason he looked up Cnut to gain permission to go home. *Sighvatr* finds himself outside a locked door behind which Cnut is planning a military action. *Sighvatr* consider himself a faithful follower of Olav but realises that the Norwegian king are to face an immense power. Snorre quotes *Sighvatr* with the words:

Da Sigvat merket at kong Knut rustet seg til hærferdmot kong Olav, og han fikk vite hvor stor styrke kong Knut hadde, da kvad Sigvat:

“Den ødsle Knut og Håkon

vil prøve å velte Olav,
alt har han som fór ute;
for kongens død jeg engstes.
Må verneren leve, enda
ei Knut og jarlene vil det.
Godt bliver et møte på fjellet
først når du slapp fra det.” (Sturluson: 376)

Olav had definitely not travelled “out” in the preceding 13 years, but we know for sure that Cnut did. Snorre doesn’t reflect on this information. He does not mention anything about Cnut’s journey to Rome and generally, Snorre has a rather uncomplicated view on where to find Cnut: When not in Denmark, he stays in England. It is therefore not striking in the saga that Sighvatr goes to England to find Cnut but looking at a map, it seems peculiar that a traveller should go to England in order to reach Norway from Rouen. Naturally, one would follow the continental coastline up along Jutland and from there to cross north to Norway. Even though the ships could manage the open sea, there were advantages by staying close to land.

A rational mind as Snorre’s may have known about Sighvatr visiting Cnut. In *Knútsdrápa* the scald tells about a meeting with Cnut before the battle and it is therefore necessary for Snorre to find a way for the king and the scald to meet. Logically Snorre lets Sighvatr look up Cnut in England. If we are not bound to presume that Cnut is in England, the two Scandinavians may have crossed each other somewhere on their way – the king hurrying home to meet the enemy and the scald afraid of the war to come.

Conclusion

Contrary to what has hitherto been believed, the letter from Rome is not an authority to define the *Terminus Ante Quem* as it is usually assumed. The decisive sentence in the letter can not for certain be said to address an already fought military battle, and related passages in two other documents seem to describe situations characterised by a mere threat.

The Norse sources on the other hand are very certain concerning the dating of the battle to late summer or fall in 1027, i.e. after Cnut’s trip to Rome. This chronology would explain why Cnut went back to England via Denmark. If he heard about the attack while in Rome he would of course feel an urge to go to Denmark. Lyfing was given a letter to the English people to explain the change of plans. He has had other tasks to do as well, and they may have included orders for the army to go to Denmark and meet Cnut at a suitable place. According to Snorre, two fractions of the Danish-English army actually met in Limfjorden. That would be the natural way to enter Danish waters no matter if you came from England or Flanders. Such an explanation also eliminates the fact that Cnut should have left Denmark for a coronation in Rome after a battle, that ended almost unsettled and with half of his enemies still vigorous.

Accepting the year 1027 for the battle of Helgeaa means, that Cnut hastened to Denmark when he heard about the threat. Olav was forced to leave his ships after the battle, and he left the battlefield as the undisputed loser. Cnut went to England in the winter 1027/28, but left the army guarding Oeresund and thereby prevented Olav from regaining the ships. Upon realizing, that he had lost not only the ships but also the confidence of the Norse chieftains, Olav left for Russia in the winter. Next spring Cnut was back in Denmark and set out for Norway, where he was hailed as the victor of Helgeaa and king of Norway.

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Frithjof and Röde Orm: Two Swedish Viking impersonations

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It took me a while to get approval for talking about such a modern topic. Old Norse scholars, like Classicists, are comfortable with the limited number of texts they deal with and, with honourable exceptions, a little reluctant to extend the range of their field of study.

Swedes, unlike Norwegians and Icelanders, do not figure large in the sagas, despite their Viking raids and settlements, especially in the East. Yet the Swedes were eager, over the centuries, to claim these texts, or at least the activities and attitudes they reflect, as part of their heritage, as Anna Wallete recently showed in her examination of the treatment of the ‘Viking age’ in popular histories of Sweden from the 17th to the 20th centuries (Wallete 2004). They also inspired writers, artists and musicians, especially with the coming of Romanticism, when the Dark Ages were no longer seen as dark but as unspoiled by the march of civilisation and foreign influences. The founding of *Götiska förbundet* in 1811 marked its arrival in Sweden, and in the first number of its periodical *Iduna*, Geijer published the poems *Vikingen* and *Odalbonden*, where the adventurous, roaming Viking was posited as a second national archetype next to the steady and tradition-bound free farmer (cp. Kuhn 1983). More than 20 years ago, I sketched the treatment of *Hervarar saga* by the Romantic writers Grundtvig, Hertz and

Ling (Kuhn 1986). But while those works never reached beyond their countries of origin, the two works discussed here, Tegnér’s *Frithiofs saga*, completed 1825, and Bengtsson’s *Röde Orm*, published 1941–45, found an international audience and echo. Tegnér was, like his Danish colleague Oehlenschläger, whom he was to crown ‘King of Nordic poets’ in Lund Cathedral in 1829, an eclectic, and Oehlenschläger’s *Helge* of 1814 may well have inspired him as well as a desire to do better than his countryman Ling in his epic poem *Asarne* and his tragedies. He knew the subject matter of the mythic-heroic *Friþjófs sags ins frækna* since his boyhood, when he read Biörner’s *Nordiska kämpadater* of 1737, the first Swedish collection of translated sagas. His verse treatment in 24 cantos is classically inspired, but unlike Homer, he uses a different metre in every canto. It is very much a story on the folktale pattern where the protagonist, a loner on the move, ends up with the princess, here called Ingeborg, and the kingdom, here located in Ringerike in Norway; his enemies are Ingeborg’s two unworthy and treacherous brothers who do their best to get him out of the way, including by weather magic. It also follows the folktale pattern by including, when the hero already seems to have reached his aim, a reversal that sends him on another round of adventures. The fact that Ingeborg is married off to a much older suitor turns it into a triangle drama with echoes of Tristan and Isolde.

One could see why this story should be particularly appealing to a 19th c. audience. The love between Frithiof and Ingeborg, who grow up as foster children, unifies the rambling tale; the villainy of Helge and Halfdan is balanced by the support of Frithiof’s friend Björn and the magnanimity of old King Ring, Ingeborg’s husband. So, *Frithiofs saga* combines the elements to make it effective as an adventure story, a love story and a morally uplifting tale: the good and patient prevail in the end, and they can expect happiness ever after. And while the fairly short saga, which is studded with with 35 (rather mediocre) *lausavísur*, only gives a fairly rough outline, Tegnér expands both the descriptive, the emotional and the reflective elements. He is at pains to show Frithiof as a dashing and daring, but also, in contrast to Björn, as a moral Viking. In Canto XV, *Vikingabalk*, he draws up rules for a Viking’s proper behaviour; the following cantos, where, after reflection, Frithiof abstains from taking advantage of King Ring, were the first that Tegnér wrote. A religious dimension is added by Frithiof accidentally setting fire to Balder’s temple, his meeting-place with Ingeborg in happier days; after that, he feels guilty, an outlaw, and is at a loss how to be reconciled with the

god. In a vision at his father's grave, he is shown the new temple he has to build, and when he first visits it, the high priest, who, in a long sermon, even anticipates the coming of Christianity, shows him that he also has to seek reconciliation with humans, in his case Ingeborg's surviving brother Halfdan. All of this is Tegnér's addition, and in passing, as later on in Canto I, the reader gets a refresher course in Northern mythology and skaldic diction; this may have been part of the work's attraction. In some respects, Tegnér renders the story more archaic than it is in the saga. There, King Ring dies a natural death, while Tegnér lets him end his life with his spear to escape a 'straw death', and then he devotes a whole canto to Ring's arrival in Ásgarður, again a pure fantasy. In a commentary, written 14 years later, he said that he had tried to give his hero "något individuellt nordiskt, det lefnadsfriska, trotsiga, öfvermodiga, som hör eller åtminstone fordom hörde till nationallynnet" (Tegnér 1872, p. 281). Tegnér's Frithiof shares with his author an open, enterprising and spontaneous disposition but also brooding and bouts of melancholy. Tegnér could not be aware of the likely oriental origin of the story (Gould 1923; Mundt 1991), and the hero's name, implying a compulsive fighter ('Peace-Thief'), did not prevent him from turning Frithiof into an exemplary peacekeeper in the end, the matured young man of a Bildungsroman. In literary style, being visually concrete, sublime, and concise in expression, Schiller was the example Tegnér followed.

He thought *Frithiofs saga* untranslatable; yet the year after the original was published in its entirety, three different German translations appeared, and many others were to follow. There were four English translations in the 1830s, one with the subtitle *A Scandinavian legend of royal love*, and Andrew Wawn has written about the cult of 'Stalwart Frith-thjof' in Victorian Britain (Wawn 1994). There were three Danish and at least one French translation. Selma Lagerlöf wrote a libretto for the organist Elfrida Andrée, but the resulting opera was only performed privately, in 1899 (Walette 2004, p. 265). By far the most influential musical setting was *Tolf sånger ur Frithiofs Saga* by the Finnish clarinet virtuoso Bernhard Crusell; they spread to Denmark and Germany, and in 19th c. Danish songbooks I have often seen these melodies used as *timbres* for other songs, which shows how well-known they were. In 1828, Hedda Wrangel, P.C. Boman and Karoline Ridderstolpe published music for other parts of *Frithiofs saga*, and in the 1830s, the German composers Joseph Panny and Friedrich Silcher wrote music for parts of it, followed in 1866 by Max Bruch (for Crusell and Bruch, see Nordenfors 2008). Visual artists, too, responded to the work in great numbers, starting with Hugo Hamilton in 1828; in Adolph Tideman's 'Frithiofs avsked från Ingeborg' from 1836, he is a very Romantic-looking hero saying goodbye to a young lady dressed in Empire fashion. The best-known illustrations were August Malmström's, published in book form in 1868 and reprinted many times both in Germany and Sweden, last in Niloe's facsimile edition of 1984. Purely in size, none was a match for the 26 meter high statue by Max Unger the Emperor Wilhelm II, a great fan of the Scandinavian North, had erected in Sognefjord in 1913 (Grimm 1997; for other artists, see Mjöberg 1967f.).

There are a number of features that Tegnér and Frans G. Bengtsson (1894–1954), the author of *Röde Orm*, share. Lund was their spiritual and, for long periods, also their actual home, and in that university environment scholarship, wit and the art of repartee were refined. They both knew how to express themselves concisely, elegantly and in memorable form, and they both could be provocative and paradoxical. They both grew up in the countryside; Bengtsson's farmer was a steward on the country estate Rössjöholm in Skåne, and Frans worked there with cattle after he had been diagnosed with a serious kidney complaint by military doctors. When he went back to Lund in 1920, he was seen in cafés rather than lecture rooms; he had some contact with Fredrik Böök and his students but never took any course in history, although he turned into a gentleman historian of distinction as shown by this two-volume biography of King Charles XII, also the subject of one of Tegnér's most memorable poems. He started as a poet but made his mark first as a brilliant essayist where he could sug-

gestively evoke figures or incidents from the past that charmed him and scourge aspects of the present that irritated him such as psychology and social realism and political commitment in imaginative literature. He had a fabulous memory and could recite Icelandic sagas practically by heart (Holmberg 1963, p. 204); no wonder, since they had the features he valued in narratives, action and dialogue, not interior monologues or stream of consciousness (Bengtsson 1951). He claimed that the idea for *Röde Orm* was born from thinking about the evocative bynames of medieval Scandinavian leaders, concentrating on Harald Bluetooth of Denmark, and his contemporary Almansur in Southern Spain (Bengtsson 1948); to connect the two, he needed an adventurous Viking, a young redhead from Kullen in Skåne that he named Röde Orm. So this was not the re-telling of an existing saga but the birth of a new one fed by what the sagas told about Vikings (cp. Bengtsson 1931); the one expanded historical element used is King Ethelred the Unready and the Battle of Maldon (see Ploman 1993). Eric Linklater, whom Bengtsson translated, may well have been an inspiration.

Orm shares with Frithiof his fairy-tale hero character whose story begins when he leaves home; he is not embedded in a genealogical tree as the protagonists of the family sagas are. And again, his is a rags-to-riches story; his adventures in the West, which fill the first book, land him for a while on the lowest rung of the social ladder, as a galley slave, from where he rises, via service as a guard at Almansur's court, through bravery, daring and resourcefulness, ending up at the Danish court in Jutland and getting his princess, Harald Bluetooth's daughter Ylva. Like Frithiof, he has a somewhat naive but trusty friend, here called Toke. But unlike Frithiof, he is not a moral Viking; he measures happiness in material terms (Egill Skallagrímsson may have provided a model), and in Book 2, when he has settled as a family man in the Göinge area, he sets out to the East to bring back the treasure of the Bulgars that his brother had hidden in the River Dnjepr. His encouragement of the Christian missionary Willibald is also partly motivated by economic considerations. Orm has matured, but not so much morally as into what one reviewer called "en myndig betänksam storföretagare", a self-assured, wary big businessman (Tykesson 1948), and he lacks the tragic heroism that can be glimpsed in skaldic verses and in some of the family sagas.

Bengtsson, writing during the Second World War, did not glorify war; his description of fighting and killing was a great deal more realistic than Tegnér's. But he also recognised that for the individuals involved, fighting was not just a test of strength and character but part of an exciting adventure. It must have been a reaction to the high seriousness of much fiction in those years that he spun a tale that was full of drastic incidents and humorous dialogue; by calling it a 'rövarroman', he indicated that his main aim was to entertain. 'Escapism' was one of the negative characterisation the work received, and it was also claimed that it exaggerated the grotesque elements that can be found in saga literature, and that the sober factuality of action and dialogue was undermined, more strongly in the second book, by a spirit of parody that betrayed the *spex* tradition that was especially strong in Lund; the illustrations by Gunnar Brusewitz reinforced a humorous view. But it did not take long before the book, as *Frithiofs saga* in earlier times, became a much-loved school text, a position evidenced by the publication of a 117-page "Studiehandledning" (Larsson 1979).

No wonder the high priests of literature gave it only grudging recognition ("Lögn i Lund" was Victor Svanberg's characterisation according to Göran Hägg 1996), while the public, both in Sweden and abroad, took it to heart. The publisher risked printing only 4000 copies when when it first came out in 1941; by the mid-1960s, around 330'000 copies had been sold, and Bengtsson's collected works were re-issued for the 100th anniversary of his birth in 1994. German and English translations of Part I appeared already in 1943, both parts in 1951 in Germany and 1954 in England; *The Long Ships* sold about 42,000 copies within one year. It was probably on the back of their success that the two volumes of *Karl XII's levnad*, the only other work of Bengtsson's that could be called a novel, were translated, 1957 in German,

1960 in English. According to Wikipedia, *Röde Orm* has been translated into 22 languages. Yet the most powerful medium for spreading knowledge about the book was one that did not exist in Tegnér's time: the film. It is true that Richard Widmark treated Part I freely and rather selectively in his *The Long Ships* of 1964, making the bell of Santiago that Orm (here called Rolfe) and his companions steal from the Moorish court the central motif of the story and ending with Vikings, sent by King Harald Bluetooth to recover his abducted daughter, defeating the Moors. But it can be assumed that the film significantly contributed to the success of the book on which it was based.

Both *Frithiofs saga* and *Röde Orm* differed from the sagas by fleshing out the descriptions a modern reader has come to expect in narrative fiction. Both works reacted against the ways Old Norse literature and mythology had been used by contemporary writers. Tegnér, though formally a member of Götiska förbundet, thought it absurd to pretend that the world had not moved on since the early Middle Ages; he reacted to writers such as Ling as Oehlschläger, the poetic voice of his nation as Tegnér was of his, reacted to Grundtvig in the years of the latter's 'asarus'. But Tegnér lived in an age when it was thought to be one of literature's function to extend and improve the mind of readers; idealism was part of the cultural scene. Bengtsson felt under no such obligation; he was a sceptical observer of human nature and made no claim for Orm to be the embodiment of a national ancestor; if anything, he could be seen as a typical *skåning*. He was content to tell a story graphically. He was not the only writer of his generation who re-created the Sweden of the Viking period in fiction. Jan Friidegård wrote his Viking-time novels *Trägudars land* (1940), *Gryningsfolket* (1944), *Offerrök* (1949) during the same years; but Bengtsson's Viking was, like Tegnér's in his time, the only one to reach an international audience.

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Biðk hugstóra verðung hressfærs jöfurs heyra, hvé þolðak vás: Sigvatr's Austrfararvísur between praise poetry and lausavísur

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These first words of Sigvatr's Austrfararvísur show a mixture of elements from both praise poetry and lausavísur. Sigvatr uses the bid for a hearing (*biðk hugstóra verðung hressfærs jöfurs heyra* "I ask the mighty-hearted retinue of the energetic ruler to hear"), which is a common formula in praise poetry, to introduce his poem. However, he does not praise the prince's deeds, as one might expect, but he speaks about himself (*hvé þolðak vás* "how I endured hardship"), which is a common feature of lausavísur.

In this paper I want to demonstrate by means of Austrfararvísur that the distinction between praise poetry and lausavísur is sometimes not clear-cut, because some elements are found in both genres and sometimes praise poems focus not only on the prince but also on its poet. I will thus compare expressions of Austrfararvísur with those elements which occur in praise poetry and lausavísur, and I will examine the function of the poet in both genres.

Finally, I want to answer the question about how to classify Austrfararvísur, that means, if these verses are a sequence of lausavísur or if they can be regarded as a praise poem in which the poet focusses on his voyage to Sweden. This question is intended to be a starting point for a discussion of the classification of skaldic stanzas and whether a third category is needed besides praise poetry and lausavísur.